



HARPENDEN & DISTRICT  
LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER 145  
DECEMBER 2021



## Front cover illustration:

John Bristow (left) and Gavin Ross signing the lease of the Society's Museum space in the Eric Morecambe Centre, finalisation of which took place on 24 November 2021

*Photo: Rosemary Ross*

### **Volunteer Reporters for Society meetings**

To all attendees at the Society's meetings; are you willing to produce a short report on the talk given to these meetings for publication in the Newsletter and on the website?

Our small 'pool' of reporters has shrunk recently and Joyce Bunting, who organises these reports, seeks volunteers to fill the gap.

There is a variety of subjects in the 2022 programme, some of which may be of particular interest to you.

If you are willing to produce the occasional report on proceeds at our meetings please contact Joyce at:

[joycebunting@btinternet.com](mailto:joycebunting@btinternet.com)

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**DEADLINE**

**Please note that the deadline for publication in Newsletter 146 is  
1 March 2022**

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and District Local History Society unless noted otherwise.***

**PROGRAMME FOR 2022**

Although it is hoped that this programme of talks will go ahead, they will of course be subject to any future COVID-19 restrictions.

**Visitors are welcome; please encourage any non-members that you know to come along; all we ask from them is a donation of £5 towards the cost of the evening**

January 25th	Heartwood Forest: a transformed landscape <b>Brian Legg</b>
February 22nd	Made in St. Albans <b>Steve Potter</b>
March 22nd	70 years On the Crest of a Wave: The History of the Harpenden Gang Show <b>Ewan Murray</b>
April 26th	Discover, Protect, Innovate, Inform - 175 years of the 'Arc & Arc' <b>John Morewood</b>
May 24th	Redbourn, 70 years ago, through the lens of Harpenden's John Heather <b>John &amp; Pauline Ridgwell</b>
June 28th	St. Albans Town Hall: the Making of a Museum and Gallery <b>Sarah Keeling</b>
September 27th	Elstree: Britain's Hollywood <b>Bob Redman</b>
October 25th	The Met Office at Dunstable and forecasting D-Day <b>Jean Yates</b>
November 22nd	AGM followed by Members' Evening: <b>Short contributions by members and refreshments</b>

## EXHIBITIONS

When the Museum opens displays will be changed from time to time and we will hold occasional special exhibitions.

Meanwhile do look out for our displays in Harpenden Library alongside the Local History section towards the rear of the building.

## PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

... since April 2021 as none were reported in Newsletter 144 due to space constraints.

### Pinner Local History Society

Newsletter 145 Summer 2021

SAHAAS Newsletter 222 November 2021

SAHAAS Newsletter 221 August 2021

SAHAAS Newsletter 219 February 2021

*(St Albans & Hertfordshire Architectural & Archaeological Society)*

*The February 2021 issue was previously received in electronic format*

Herts Past & Present Issue 38 Autumn 2021

*The Journal of the Hertfordshire Association for Local History -includes Diana Parrott's award for personal achievement and an article on the recently discovered Humphrey Repton plan for Lamer House, Wheathampstead.*

The Local Historian Vol 51.4 October 2021

*The journal of the British Association for Local History*

Local History News No. 141 Autumn 2021

*The magazine of the British Association for Local History*

## THE OPENING OF THE ERIC MORECAMBE CENTRE

Saturday, 16<sup>th</sup> October 2021 was set as the date for the grand opening of the Eric Morecambe Centre. There were two parts to the day, guided tours of the centre for all during the day and the official opening event in the evening. There was a certain amount of confusion: guided tours had to be pre-booked and not everyone who turned up understood this. The invited guests for the official opening were joined by members of the public who had booked tickets for the free variety show which followed the unveiling of Eric Morecambe's portrait. As the portrait is hung in the entrance foyer, the speeches tended to be drowned out by the cheerful chatter of the audience arriving for the show. All in all it provided a happy amount of slapstick comedy of which Eric Morecambe would have been proud.

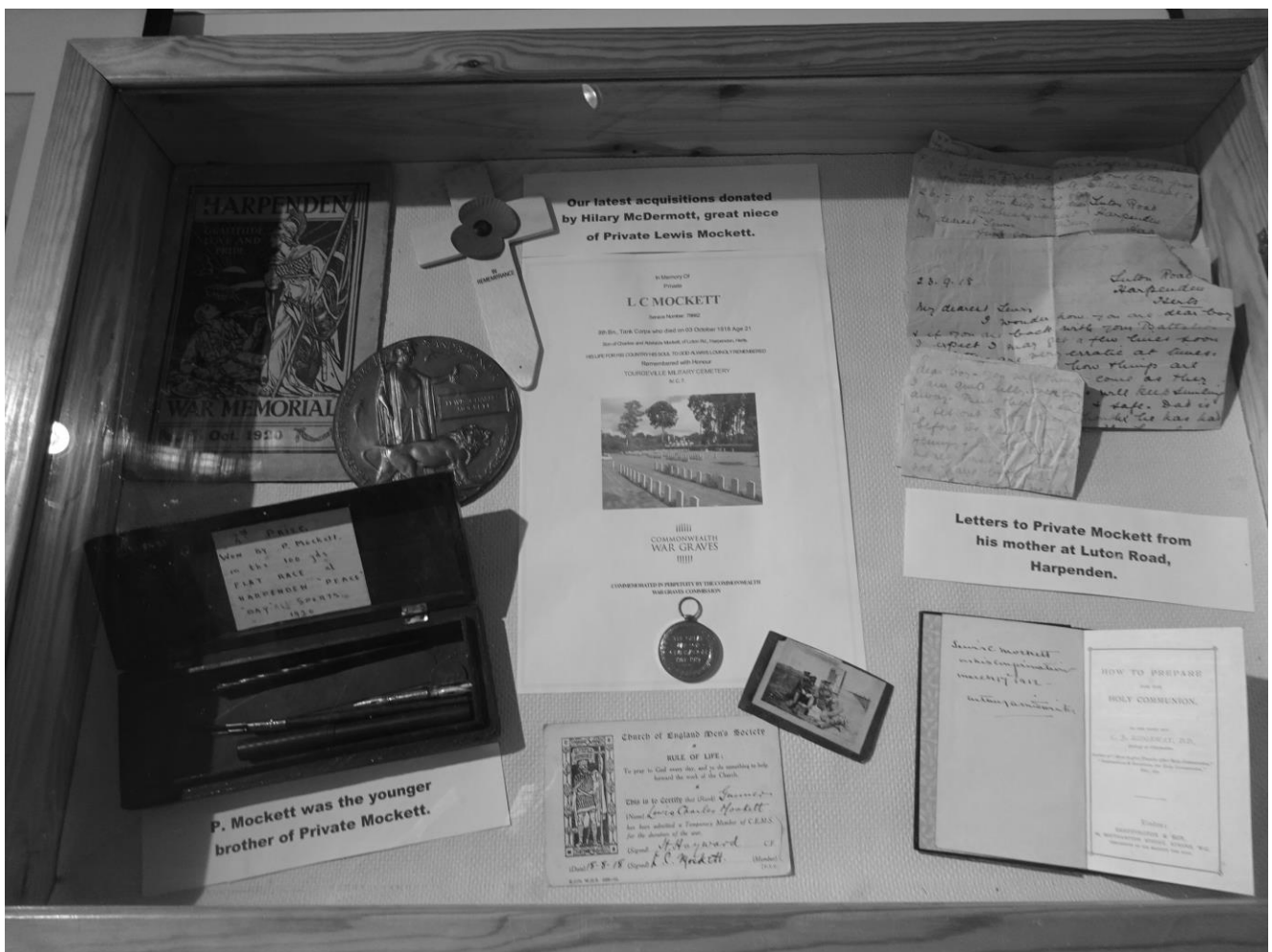
The Society's contribution was to have a small display in the Museum, so that visitors of all sorts would get the idea that a museum is coming and see selection of the items that will go into it.

We made use of previous display materials emphasising that although no battles took place in Harpenden, there was never a castle here and national historical events largely passed Harpenden by, Harpenden does have a history. This history is worth recording and displaying to local residents and others and that is what the Society aims to do in Harpenden Museum.

The White Ensign of HMS Harpenden was draped over one display stand and accompanied by two of the Second World War plaques recently rescued from the Public Hall. Another stand featured publicity material and the signboard from C & A. It became clear during the day that we needed to explain that the

High Street store was an ironmongers and household goods shop and not part of the fashion chain store.

Elsewhere newly acquired items were on show, including the collection of letters and First World War memorabilia relating to Pte. Lewis Mockett, who lived in Luton Road. He was killed in the last months of the War and his name is on Harpenden War Memorial. There was a photo of the unveiling of the memorial, a copy of the brochure for that event and an original painting by



The display of Pte. Mockett memorabilia  
Photo: Rosemary Ross

Ernest Hasseldine, the designer of both the memorial and the booklet.

We made sure that there were membership and volunteer forms available and younger visitors were encouraged to colour in letters which were suspended across the room and spelled out “Harpenden Museum”.

During the day we had several casual visitors and all of the guided tours, six groups of about twenty people, so we reached out to more visitors than we generally get at one of our Park Hall exhibitions. The Rosses, John Wassell and the Keens were on hand to answer questions and explain about the Society and the Museum.



**The colouring-in progress at an early stage**

*photo: Rosemary Ross*

All comments were positive, and we had very helpful co-operation from the General Manager, Jo Ditch and her staff from 1Life who operate the Eric Morecambe Centre. Our visitors also understood that the opening of the centre is just the beginning for



us and that a massive amount of work is needed before we will be ready to open the Museum. We're forging ahead with this and now looking to open on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays from the Summer of 2022.

David Keen, Curator

## NEW MEMBERS

Who have joined since the April 2021 Newsletter was issued  
The Society extends its condolences to members who have lost loved ones during the current pandemic.

Wendy Bush  
Lexi Diggins  
Ian & Mandy Farnsworth  
Angela Glyn-Davies  
Dallas Green  
Stephen Gregory  
Daphne Griffin  
Teresa & David Heritage  
Tony Newby-Ricci  
Dr Alan Punter  
Pauline Rawlinson  
Dr Valerie Shrimplin

## NURSING: MARY SEACOLE AND FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE

A report by Joyce Bunting on a talk to the Society by Colin Oaks in Function Room 1 of the new Eric Morecambe Centre, Harpenden, on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2021.

During the war in Crimea (1853 – 1856) two courageous nurses - Florence Nightingale and Mary Seacole - devoted their energies and resources to caring for sick and wounded soldiers. Yet Mary Seacole was seemingly forgotten afterwards.

Did Mary and Florence ever meet? Right at the beginning Mary was interviewed by Florence, but their backgrounds, skills and approaches to nursing were completely different. Florence viewed nursing as the route to serve both God and humankind. She had been superintendent of the Institution for Sick Gentlewomen in London, where she had intended to train nurses. Mary, however, was a widely travelled business woman and called herself a 'doctress' - a healer - using traditional Jamaican remedies learned from her mother. They never worked together.

### Florence Nightingale (1820-1910)

Sidney Herbert, secretary of state at war for the British government, wrote to Florence Nightingale requesting her to lead a group of nurses to the Crimea. Her family tried to dissuade her but she was determined to go. Her party of 38 women arrived in Turkey on 5<sup>th</sup> November 1854. Conditions at the official military hospital in Scutari were appalling. Nurses were all male. She introduced discipline, cleanliness, improved



sanitation, better food and particularly management skills. Under her supervision, the hospital mortality rate dropped from 42% in February 1855, to 2% four months later.

### Mary Seacole (1805-1881)

When she arrived in 1854 Mary Seacole built a hut between Balaklava and Sevastopol only a few miles from the front of the fighting. Here, in her '*British Hotel*', she offered rest, warmth, food and care to officers. She was practical and compassionate in the face of adversity. Mary sometimes went onto the battlefield to tend wounded and dying soldiers. Using her skills, she kept alive men who never would have made it to the military hospital some miles away in Scutari, where Florence Nightingale was in charge.



In spite of her wide experience and success in treating transmissible diseases like Cholera and Yellow Fever, Mary was never officially accepted as a nurse.

When the war ended, Mary returned home to London. Having used up all her financial resources, she faced destitution. In 1857 a four-day Fundraising Gala was organised in her honour. Later the same year she wrote her autobiography '*Wonderful Adventures of Mrs Seacole in Many Lands*'. Mary died at her home in Paddington and was buried in Kensal Green Cemetery. In 1991 she was posthumously awarded the Jamaican Order of Merit.

The legacies of two famous women

In 1858 Florence Nightingale devised the *Coxcomb chart* to demonstrate the rates of infection at Scutari during the war. It

looked a bit like a ‘pie chart’ and showed that more patients died from disease than from wounds, especially during the winter months. She was elected the first female member of the Royal Statistical Society in 1859.

*The Florence Nightingale Training School* - the first School of nursing in England - was set up after the Crimean war, in 1860 at St Thomas' Hospital in London. Many wards throughout the land are today named in Florence's honour, including temporary emergency hospitals to treat COVID victims in 2020.

*Mary Seacole Housing Association* has 6 hostels within the Luton area, one of which provides supported accommodation and resettlement to homeless young people and between the ages of 16 to 35. Many places of refuge and support across the country, where BAMER (Black, Asian, Minority, Ethnic and Refugees) can seek help, are named after Mary Seacole

A statue of Florence - *The Lady with the Lamp* - was created in 1915. It stands in London at Waterloo Place, St James's. But not until 2016 was a statue of Mary – (*Mother Seacole* as she was affectionately known to her patients) - erected in the grounds of St Thomas's Hospital, London.

In April 2021, a new partnership was announced between *The Florence Nightingale Foundation* and *The Mary Seacole Trust* to deliver the hugely successful *Mary Seacole Awards*. This will celebrate the achievements of nurses and midwives who follow in the footsteps of both Florence Nightingale and Mary Seacole.

Joyce Bunting



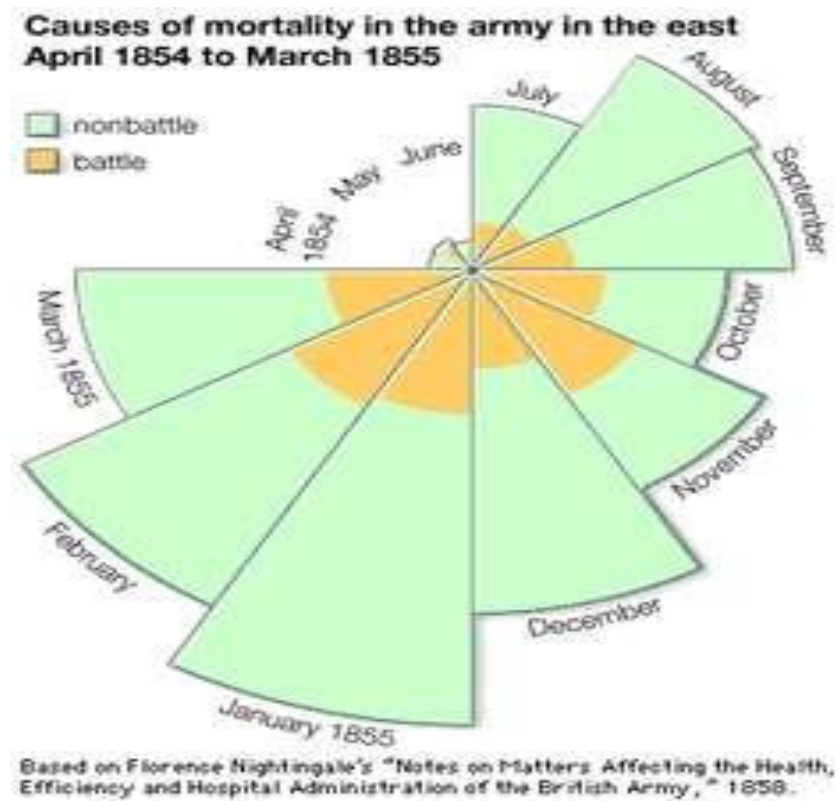
The audience at the Society's meeting on 28 September 2021 – the first such meeting since February 2020 *photo: Alan Bunting*



Greeting visitors to the Museum – 16 October 2021 *photo: Rosemary Ross*



EMC opening ceremony, 16 October 2021 – portrait of Eric Morecambe in the background  
*photo: Rosemary Ross*



Florence Nightingale's Coxcomb chart – see page 13



Wall plaque in Pimlico Place commemorating the construction of the terraced row of cottages by the Benefit & Annuitant Society in 1822 *photo: John Wassell*

**A request for assistance from Alan Punter, a member of the Society;**

I am researching the history of the Pimlico area of West Common, in preparation for a 200<sup>th</sup> celebration planned by residents in the summer of 2022. Pimlico Place is the terrace of cottages numbered 23 to 38 West Common, but the name Pimlico appears to have been in use for this area prior to 1822. So the area I am researching runs from south of the main Rothamsted & Rivers Lodge buildings through to the north of Flowton Priory – thus encompassing the dwellings from number 13 to 45 West Common inclusive.

If you have any personal recollections or documentation relating to any of the buildings or past residents of this section of West Common, I would be very grateful if you would contact me,

**[alan.punter@gmail.com](mailto:alan.punter@gmail.com)**

Thank you, Alan Punter.



# MARIANNE SHERMAN'S MUSIC AND DANCE MANUSCRIPTS (1806)

an insight into social gatherings around Rothamsted Manor



Fly-leaf of the second, larger volume, date 1806 and 1816. Credit: *LHS archive – scanms6*

In 1981/2 Frank Stageman transcribed the verses and dance routines contained in two leather-bound manuscript music books. Both bindings are in poor condition and some pages are loose, which formed Item 39 of the Hodgson bequest for the future museum of Harpenden, then stored at Harpenden Hall. He wrote a short introduction to the transcription, which is in our archives, along with the manuscripts:

‘The manuscript comprises mainly songs and dances, with music, written in a number of different hands, some quite difficult to read. The books date from the beginning of the 19th

century, when it was customary for young ladies of fashion to practice composition or to copy favourite pieces. A number of very similar volumes can be seen in the Library at Cecil Sharp House (the English Folk Dance and Song Association). The Hodgson books were shown to the librarian, who made photocopies of the pieces of interest to the Association and kindly provided extra copies for the Society, but was unable then to say whether any of the pieces might be original compositions.

A beautifully executed book-plate in the larger volume and other inscriptions in both indicate that they belong to a family named Sherman, who at that time lived in Drayton, Oxfordshire. We can safely deduce that Mrs Sherman, whose name appears in the smaller volume, was the mother of Marianne Sherman, who owned the larger. Marianne first married the Rev. D G Knox [and lived at Bowers House] and then, as the latter's widow, John Bennet Lawes the first, thus becoming in 1814 the mother of J.B. Lawes the second, later Sir John of Rothamsted'

The history, etiquette, style and steps of dancing

In 1985 Chris Green completed a monograph on *19th Century Dancing of the Gentry of Hertfordshire*, based on his study and research of the Sherman manuscripts, and the printed sources from which many of the songs or dances were hand-copied. He draws attention to the collections of dances catering for the demand for new dances at Assemblies in the fashionable centres (eg Bath) and at country houses, published during the 18th century. In Marianne Sherman's manuscripts many dances have

the names of people or refer to special happenings. There is a part of a tune and a title for 'Miss Sherman's Fancy'.

'I have found no other record of this dance and one wonders if it was composed for Marianne, possibly at her 21st birthday dance or some other such occasion'



The Irish Washer Woman, volume 1. Credit: LHS archive – scans1

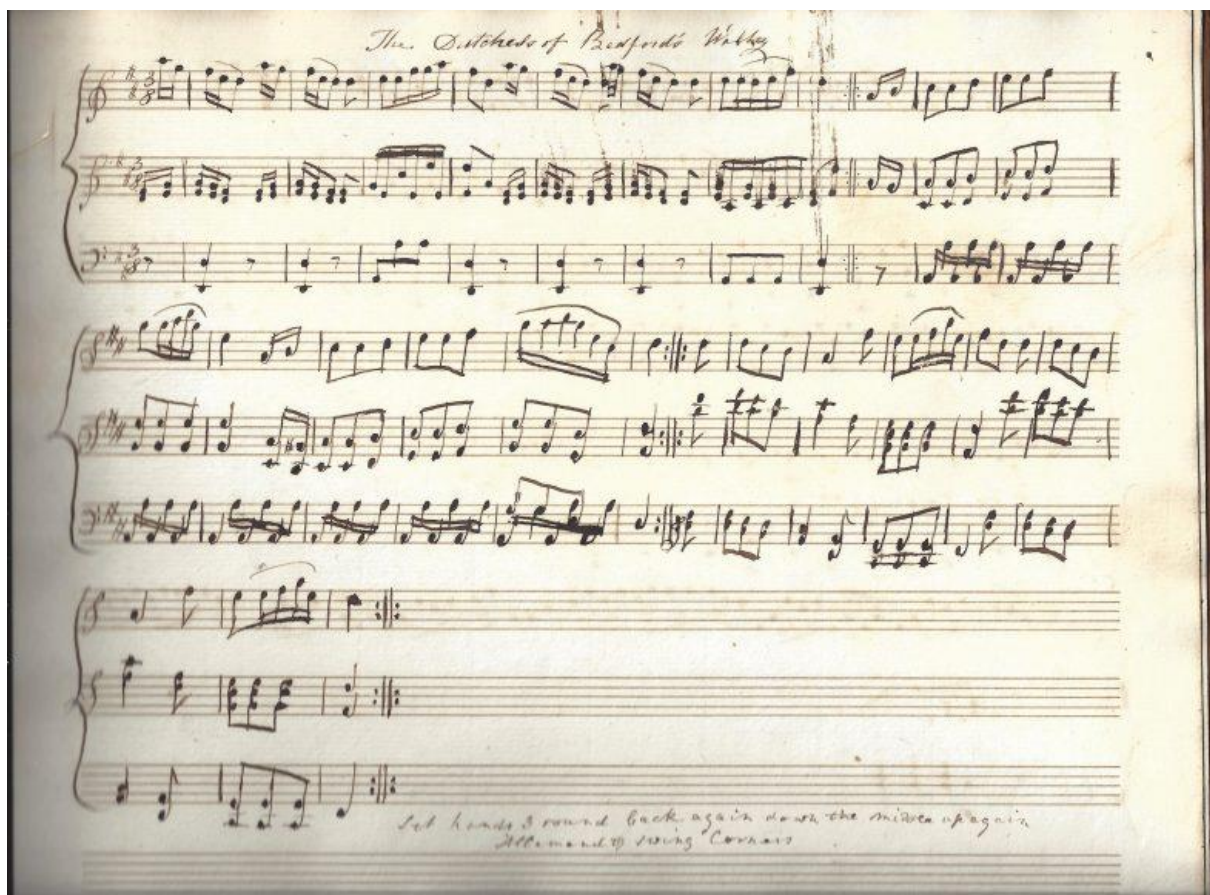
Chris Green traced many of the dances and tunes to volumes published in the 1790s by publishers such as Campbell, Preston and Wheatstone. Some dances, such as the Quadrille, had been introduced from France. A number of tunes remain untraced, and some titles have different tunes from those in published volumes.

Chris Green's account also summarises the various styles, 'figures' and steps – many still familiar to current folk dance groups.

He quotes from Thomas Wilson, a London dance teacher who published *An Analysis of Country Dancing* in 1811, with illustrations of ballroom clothing of the time – the ladies wore high waisted, loose light dresses, the men breeches and waist or cut-away coats. Both wore light shoes. Wilson describes the art of dancing:

'The person that would dance gracefully must so dance that every attitude, every movement must seem rather the effect of accident than design, nothing should seem studied; for whatever is laboured belongs not to the Graces. Some persons erroneously imagine that great execution with the feet is all that is required in dancing; but I would remind such persons that it is as much a study to make proper use of the arms and hands, as the legs and feet; for it is not the motions of the feet alone that charm the eye of taste, but the carriage of the whole figure, the action of each part corresponding with the other, a graceful elevation of the head in Setting, an easy sway of the whole frame in Heying, Casting Off, etc; the hands gently raised to turn with the arms at the same time curved without making angles'.

Marianne's enjoyment of music (and dancing) may have helped her through hard times. She was a widow at the age of 19, within months of her marriage to the Rev. Knox in 1810.



The Duchess of Bedford's Waltz, from volume 2. Credit: *LHS archive – scanms12*

In August 1812, still under 21, she married John Bennet Lawes of Rothamsted Manor, but was widowed ten years later in 1822, and brought up three children, two daughters (Marianne, b. 1813 and Emily, b. 1820) and a son John (born in 1814).

### The manuscripts

We are now in contact with the English Folk Dance and Song Association, and plan to have the manuscripts scanned to their specifications, so that they can be included in their on-line collection of early 19th century songs and dances.



Danced at Devonshire House, 15 June 1803, in volume 1. Credit: *LHS archive – scanms4*

Frank Stageman (1981/2) and Rosemary Ross

This article was published on the Society's website in 2014 and was recently updated. The following article on Harpenden East Station was recently published on the website, where the photographs may be seen in colour. Editor

## HARPENDEN EAST STATION

The Great Northern Railway, Harpenden, in the 1950s by Paul Johnston

I was born in 1953 and we lived at 30 Langdale Avenue. The railway was in a cutting at the bottom of the garden and spawned a lifelong interest in trains and railway preservation. In the 1950's, passenger trains were usually N2 or N7 tank locomotives hauling a Gresley twin art set. My parents often used the line to go shopping in Welwyn Garden City. On one trip, the driver

offered to take me on the footplate and blow the whistle. I was only about 3 years old and wanted my Mother to come with me on the footplate but she wouldn't and handed me to the driver – and I promptly started crying, so he handed me back to her!



Harpenden East station with former air-raid shelter      *Geoff Woodward collection*

Our annual holiday usually began at Harpenden East because my Parents didn't have to lug the suitcases to Harpenden Central. We would walk down the ramp from the Station Road bridge and on to the platform that had a weighing machine for luggage back then. The train would take us to Welwyn GC where we changed on to an 'express' to London, probably one of the 'Cambridge Buffet' services formed of Gresley Corridor carriages. I remember travelling in one of the distinctive Gresley

‘open third’ carriages wearing ‘Blood and Custard’ livery when I was about 3.

One day there was a fire in the cutting at the bottom of the garden, so my Father phoned the fire brigade, who laid their hosepipes down the garden and through the hedge, much to my fascination.



Harpenden East station in 1965, with a diesel train approaching  
*David Pearson - [https://disused-stations.org.uk/h/harpenden\\_east/index.shtml](https://disused-stations.org.uk/h/harpenden_east/index.shtml)*

When I got a little older and started School, I made a secret hole in the hedge and spent most evenings watching the trains. There were a lot of freight trains and I remember one evening seeing quite a long one hauled by a ‘WD’ Class loco, which I could hear clanking from quite a distance. My friend Ralph Brade lived in one of the bungalows in what was then called Sewer lane and his garden backed on to the Railway as well, but on the other



side. His Parents would often see us on the train to Welwyn GC on a Saturday. Returning home one evening, the guard had locked the carriage doors on the 'Harpenden Platform' side so we couldn't get out! He soon unlocked them for us though.

In September 1959, we moved to Station Road, so I missed my train spotting slot at the bottom of the garden. Just before we moved, Diesels began to make an appearance. I was in my last year at Batford Infant School back then and when we moved, one of the teachers would walk me to School via the Station, where a goods train from Luton (Vauxhall) would be waiting in the platform for the token. The Driver would usually give me a sweet.



Harpenden East station in 1966, when the line to the south had already been lifted  
*Ian Baker - [https://disused-stations.org.uk/h/harpenden\\_east/index.shtml](https://disused-stations.org.uk/h/harpenden_east/index.shtml)*

By 1960, Diesels were very much in evidence, usually a class 20 on the 2 coach passenger trains. On one trip to Welwyn Garden City, we were hauled by a baby Deltic on the return run. I can also remember class 26 and class 31 locos amongst others. From around 1962, 2 car Cravens DMU's were handling the passenger trains until closure in 1965.



Remains of an LNER twin art set found in Aberdeenshire 1984. This was built slightly later than the examples used on the Welwyn - Dunstable line.

*Paul Johnston*

In my '20's I became involved in saving and restoring some of the old Gresley carriages, by which time most of the survivors had been stripped of much of their interiors for use as 'Departmental' coaches. I found out that some of them were scrapped at Inverurie works in Aberdeenshire, who sold the teak bodies to local farmers. I spent much time locating these and salvaging parts. I passed this information to my mates from the LNER Carriage association who have now purchased a small fleet of Gresley coaches and restored many of them. You can ride in these on the North Yorkshire Moors Railway.