

Chairman's Report

By the time you read this report, members should have received Volume 21, *The Hellard Almshouses and other Stevenage charities 1482-2005*, edited by Margaret Ashby which was featured in the last Newsletter. Publication had been scheduled for the end of 2005 but this proved impossible due to unforeseen problems with indexing and layout. Volume 20, a transcript by Kate Thompson of *The Letters of Julian Grenfell*, is expected to be sent to members later in the summer. The Society will then have caught up with the issue of its annual volumes. On enquiry of other county Record Societies, I find that many of them feel that the production of a book each year plus the occasional extra map would be beyond them, so we in Hertfordshire have set a standard not only in quality of presentation but also in the number of volumes we produce.

Volume 22 will be *The Diary of Lady Adela Capel of Cassiobury*, Watford, transcribed and edited by Marian Strachan. Volume 23, due in 2007, will be a transcript by Alan Thomson of Hertfordshire Civil War Papers. Work on several other volumes is also underway. Volume 19 *The Layston Parish Memorandum Book* continues to receive favourable reviews, which are reported elsewhere in this Newsletter. It is hoped that the text of at least some of our early publications will appear in due course on our website, which has been excellently developed by our secretary, Heather Falvey.

The county maps by Dury & Andrews and Bryant continue to sell well and reprints have been ordered. These maps have proved our most popular initiative. For our next venture, the map sub-committee expects to reproduce the maps contained in the 1818 Barnet Enclosure Award file held in HALS, together with a transcript of the schedule and an index of the owners and tenants of each house. The documents have already been sent to the London Metropolitan Archives for digital reproduction and transcription of the text is underway. We are grateful to Dr Gillian Gear for her help and advice in this matter. After the Barnet Award we hope to republish a folder of maps of the main county towns from late-18th and early-19th century originals.

The 2005 AGM was held on 11 June at Springfield House in the High Street, Stevenage. A departure for us was to visit the old almshouses nearby at the invitation of one of the occupiers of these tiny homes, and to see the location of the famous Trigg's coffin in the rafters of a nearby former barn.

We hope that as many members as possible can be at our AGMs in order to visit historic sites at locations in the county which are not usually accessible. In 2006 our AGM is to be at Reveley Lodge in Bushey, where we will see a home and garden kept intact from the early 20th century that is normally not open to members of the public.

I want to conclude by thanking my fellow officers and committee members for their work and commitment to our task, and in particular our General Editor, Susan Flood, under whose painstaking care and attention our fine volumes are produced.

Alan Ruston

Forthcoming Volume 22: *A Victorian Teenager's Diary; the Diary of Lady Adela Capel of Cassiobury 1841-42*, edited by Marian Strachan

Lady Adela Capel's diary (1841-42), provides fascinating insights into one year in the life of a thirteen/fourteen-year-old girl growing up in an early Victorian aristocratic household. Her father, the 6th earl of Essex, had inherited Cassiobury House, the elegant Gothic mansion near Watford, together with its extensive, beautiful estate. This was the home and playground of Adela and her two younger brothers. The diary affords a unique and intimate glimpse into life at Cassiobury and Adela's relationships with her family, governess, servants, farm tenants, friends and visitors.

Alongside naive accounts of her daily interactions with the animals on the estate and her care of her pets, in what is almost a nature diary, we find references to various members of the aristocracy including Queen Victoria. When the Queen and Prince Albert passed through Watford, she found Prince Albert '*very handsome ... but I cannot say so much for the Queen. She looked very pale and fatigued*'.

Adela also writes of journeys to London to visit Lady Caroline Capel, her grandmother. Despite visits to the theatre, places of interest and mixing with London society, city life held few attractions for the young diarist.

The diary describes gender roles and the education and socialisation of a sensitive, caring girl as she moves towards womanhood. Her passionate outburst on cruelty to animals, and the example of masters in combating their unnecessary suffering, is an illuminating comment on attitudes during this period.

Hertfordshire historians with a special interest in Cassiobury and the social life of early Victorian Watford will find references to families overlooked by the 1841 Census, and details of the 6th earl's Cassiobury House, family, grounds and staff that are only to be found in the diary.

Historians generally will find a very different perspective on Victorian social history; in particular the invaluable portrayal of children's everyday lives in an unusually liberal Victorian aristocratic household. The content and style of the diary provide an accessible, personal and informative resource for those involved in teaching or studying the Victorian Period for the National Curriculum.

Lady Adela Capel's diary is held at HALS, reference D/Z 32 Fl. Between its half board cover is an almanac and the scrawled handwritten diary now browning with age. The editor has provided a valuable service in transcribing and introducing the diary, where she has brought together details of the Earl's family from previously unpublished sources. She also draws on these to trace the events of Adela's later life, where in womanhood she shares in the career of one of Scotland's prominent and controversial Victorian statesmen.

AGM venue 2006: Reveley Lodge, Bushey

Reveley Lodge was left to Bushey Museum in 2003 by the generous bequest of Mrs Eila Chewett, late President of the Friends of Bushey Museum. The main structure was built between 1842 and 1845 by John Titsel. The property included a chaise house, stable and other buildings. The house was purchased by Mrs Ann Reveley in 1845 and additional grounds were acquired shortly after. Upon her death in 1852, the property passed to her eldest son, William Austin Reveley who in turn passed it in 1854 to his brother George Johnson Reveley. He further extended the property before his death in 1877.

Reveley House was then purchased by William John Marjoribanks Loftus Otway who in 1894 was succeeded by his son, Jocelyn Tufton Farrant Otway. He commissioned the architect A E Hubert to extend the building, adding new servants quarters to the eastern end and an enlarged drawing room, large billiard room and conservatory to the western end.

The new owner in 1898 was Robert Leicester Harmsworth, MP for Caithness and Sutherland. He expanded the estate by the addition of several cottages and used the house as his southern base for four years.

The house was then purchased by Edmund Littler Johnson and Mrs Maria Susan Chewett became its tenant in 1909. An Inland Revenue survey of 1910

shows the house to be extensive, with eight bedrooms on the first floor, presumably enlarged from the thirteen bedrooms advertised in 1901. Outside there was a covered washing yard, coal store, garage with space for three cars, stables for three horses, a loose box and harness room, a greenhouse, potting shed, tennis lawn and pig sties.

Mrs Chewett arrived in England from Canada in 1898. With her were her daughters and youngest son, Albert Ranney Chewett. The son joined the Herkomer Art School and was active in music and painting before turning to photography. His mother and sisters were skilled in wood-working, metal work, lace making and book-binding. Albert bought the estate in 1921 and in 1931 married Violet Georgiana Eila Chewett. She had a talent for music and dancing. The billiard room was converted into a dance studio where Eila taught well into the 1950s. Albert died in 1965 and Eila qualified and practiced as a medical secretary until she was 75.

Loosely based upon an article by Janet Murphy and Bryen Wood published in the *Journal of the friends of Bushey Museum*.

Reviews

Two reviews of Volume XX, *This Little Commonwealth: Layston Parish Memorandum Book. 1607 - c.1650 and 1704 - 1747*, ed. Heather Falvey and Steve Hindle, HRS, 2003.

From *Ecclesiastical History Review*, vol.120, Dec. 2005.

Layston parish, Hertfordshire, included the market town of Buntingford and is of more than local interest because of the activities there of Alexander Strange, incumbent in the early seventeenth century, and his efforts to deal with the increasing problem of poverty in the parish. Some of them, including a scheme of 1636 to exclude poor tenants coming in from outside, are documented in the town book, edited here and thoroughly explained by Steve Hindle, who has written about it in other publications on the politics of the early modern English parish. The later parts of the book, from the time of Charles Heton, are less rich in material, but touch on some of that incumbent's astronomical and antiquarian interests. There is also plentiful background information, including an edition of the parish register which was unusually full in Strange's time, the text of an Assize sermon of 1608 which further expounds Strange's civic attitudes, and a reproduction of a very nice brass showing Strange in his pulpit preaching to attentive parishioners. Historians of Hertfordshire will find much of value here, but so will historians of early modern England generally. The volume brings out the great importance in

places like this of charitable resources (including in this case almshouses of 1684 probably designed by Robert Hooke), and the impact on local communities of clergymen of decided, and sometimes idiosyncratic, opinions. The volume as a whole is a scholarly parish collection of much more than parochial interest: just the kind of thing local record societies are best placed to publish.

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From *The Agricultural History Review*, vol. 53, part II, 2005, pp. 253 – 254.

Parish books, vestry minutes and overseers' accounts, like the men whose activities they record, represent the bricks from which that rather roughcast edifice, the early modern state, was constructed. Part of their attraction to historians is that they are as diverse in form and content as they are common in county archives. It is impossible to predict what one will find in such sources, and sometimes they do contain historical gems. Layston, in Hertfordshire, which incorporated much of the small town of Buntingford within its boundaries, contains just such a gem in its parish memorandum book, namely the (rather unprepossessing) 'advice' drafted by the vicar, Alexander Strange, to his 'good neighbours & lovinge parishioners' on 15 February 1636.

In it, Strange sought a solution to the problem of the in-migration to Buntingford of numbers of poor families, attracted (he thought) by the town's accessible charities, and the efforts of its neighbours to unload their dependent poor onto the town. He suggested that his loving parishioners shun newcomers as tenants, club together to buy and demolish cottages like to receive more poor incomers, and negotiate with non-resident house owners to prevent the accommodation of further undesirable paupers in the future. He wanted to ensure that (the quite extensive) parish charities were restricted to 'your antient poore & such as have byne ... a good tyme dwellers among you'.

Strange's advice is notable for its breathtaking candour, so much at odds with the routine, laconic records of parish pensions and memoranda on charitable gifts that fill the first half of the volume. As Hindle remarks, 'the 'advice' represents a full-blown exegesis of the micro-politics of settlement and belonging, touching almost every aspect of the social and economic life of the parish'. It also presents two historical problems. Firstly, apart from the occasional incautious statement in equity depositions, few other sources broach its frank, even brutal, remedies. Secondly, it is clearly a draft (albeit in a volume presumably open to the wider vestry), and we do not know how, or even whether, it was ever delivered. However, it is similar to the 'ratepaying' hostility to inmates, paupers and vagrants

expressed throughout the country in the early seventeenth century, and encapsulates these feelings in stark terms.

After Strange's vehemence, the rest of the material in this volume impresses more by its sheer heterogeneity than by its capacity to surprise – although his 1607 Assize sermon comes close. Agricultural historians foraging for tithing customs or commodity prices will have short commons here, and will have to content themselves with the perambulations of 1591 and 1708, and Thomas Heton's eighteenth-century notes on parish lands and income. However, the volume contains detailed records of disbursements to paupers during Strange's incumbency, a characteristic early seventeenth century scheme to set the poor on work, and shows the difficulty parishioners had in acclimatizing to the financial burdens of the Elizabethan poor law. Hertfordshire horologists will apparently be gratified to learn that Henry Kennex repaired the parish clock in 1621, while Heton's conjectures on the clockwork of the heavens as well as his antiquarian endeavours are symptomatic of clerical learning a century later.

While the memoranda tend to dissolve into a miscellany after Strange's death in 1650, both sections of the book benefit from detailed historical introductions by Hindle (on Strange) and Falvey (on Heton). These place both subjects, and the social history of the parish, in the appropriate historical and historiographical contexts. Similarly, the earlier ecclesiastical history of the parish is dealt with comprehensively in an additional introductory contribution by Philip Plumb, who explains the early medieval origins of the complicated parish structure of Buntingford. For those interested specifically in Layston, or in Hertfordshire more generally, this volume will be an essential resource. For those concerned with the wider social and economic history of the poor law and poverty, parochial government, and the byways of eighteenth-century intellectual endeavours, this volume provides a series of suggestive and apposite examples. While these memoranda are likely to raise the historical profile of the parish of Layston, they will definitely launch Alexander Strange into the fabric of early modern social history.

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Forthcoming map: Barnet

Our latest map project concerns Barnet in 1815. The maps are derived from enclosure awards of the manors of Chipping and East Barnet in the parish of Barnet. The source (HALS QS/E 13) is a handsome bound volume which contains five sheets of maps measuring some 26"x20" and drawn at a scale of some 13" to the mile.

The preamble contains declarations relating to oaths of office and reference to the parliamentary Act concerned. There then follow numerous entries of individual awards of which the following are two random examples.

The Wood Street Road forty feet wide beginning at Chipping Barnet Chapel and extending westwards to the Black Horse public house.

and

To the Deacons having the management of the poor of the Dutch Church of St Augustine Friars [B—dd]* Street London and their successors for the time being for ever All that parcel of freehold and tithefree waste land situate in the lane leading to East Barnet marked on the plan hereunto annexed 687 containing one rood and sixteen perches bounded on the north and east by the East Barnet Road and on the south by the old inclosures belonging to the said Deacons The fences for inclosing the said parcel of land to be made and maintained on the north and east sides thereof by and at the cost and charges of the Deacons and their successors for the time being for ever.

This section is followed by the map sheets which show individual buildings, roads etc. (see detail, with apologies for my hand held photograph). There then follows a comprehensive schedule listing, against the number on the plan, proprietors, premises, quantities (land area), tenure and parish. For example:-

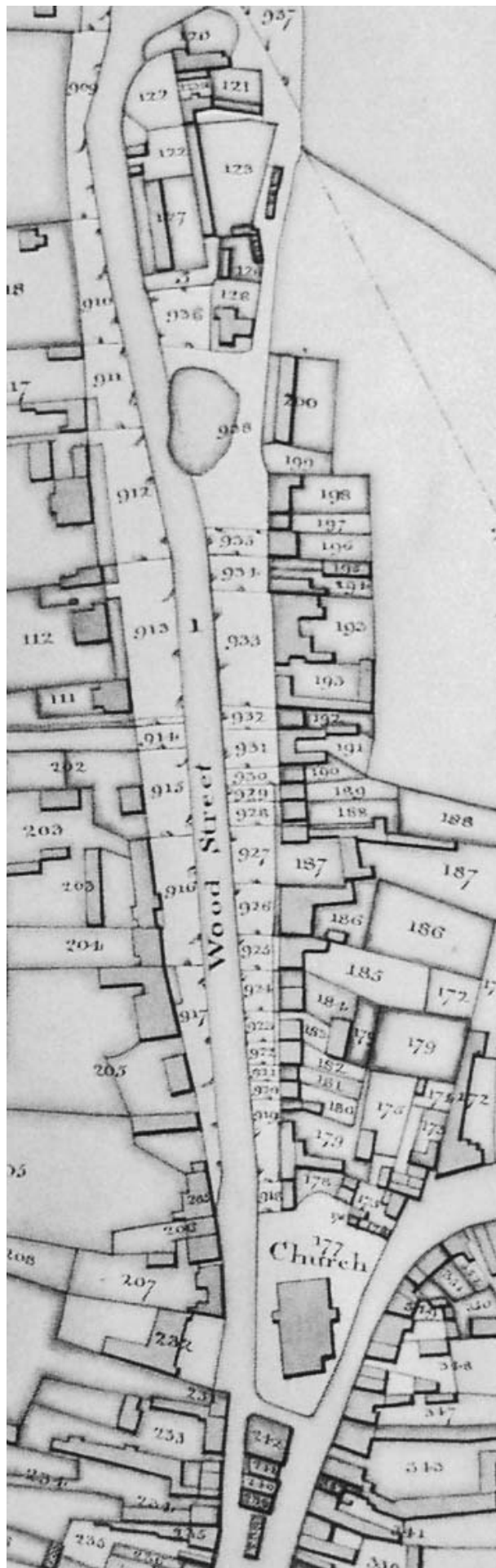
12 Peter Clutterbuck Bell Public House 14 perches (in) tenure of Peter Clutterbuck (in) parish of Chipping Barnet.

The maps extend beyond local interest being early examples of map providing such detail and thus of particular value to urban landscape historians.

* This name does not appear to be included in *The A to Z of Regency London*, in Faden's update of Horwood's map, republished in 1985 by London Topographical Society.

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Detail from Barnet Inclosure Award, 1818.