

Chairman's Report

This year some long awaited projects have been published. First, in June 2007, came Volume XXII, *A Victorian Teenager's Diary: the Diary of Lady Adela Capel of Cassiobury 1841-1842*, edited by Marian Strachan. The paperback edition of the book was launched at Watford Museum at a special wine and cheese event on Monday 10 December. Printing two versions – in both paperback and hardback – has proved successful and we have sold quite a few of the paperback version in the Watford area. It is possible that in future other volumes that have a more general appeal will also be published in both formats.

In November, Volume XX, *Julian Grenfell, soldier and poet: letters and diaries 1910-1915*, edited by Kate Thomson, appeared. With 362 pages, this is one of our larger books. Various problems arose during the process of its publication so that sometimes it seemed as if it would never see the light of the day. However a final effort by all concerned early in 2007 produced the result, a handsome volume that has already been well received by members and reviewers. I want to thank everyone who has worked so hard on what is a significant and very different production.

The production of Volume XXIII, *The Impact of the First Civil War on Hertfordshire, 1642-47*, prepared by Alan Thomson, is in its final stages and we hope to send it to our new printers, Biddles of Kings Lynn, very soon. We have made the change in printers as it has become apparent to the Committee that new methods of production are now available that will significantly reduce our costs but at the same time keep the high standards of printing and binding that have always been associated with our finished volumes. We hope that the result will meet with members' appreciation.

Following not long after that should be Volume XXIV, *The Journal of Benjamin Woodcock, master of the Barnet Union workhouse, 1836 to 1838*, edited by Gillian Gear. The text has already been transcribed and the volume may be available in November at the Symposium of the Hertfordshire Association for Local History, to be held at Barnet on the subject of the poor. We expect to have an interesting cover illustration to match the content.

Other volumes in the course of development include the diary of Mary, Countess Cowper (Professor Stephen Taylor), the Datchworth Tithe Accounts (Jane Walker) and Mrs Dimsdale's 'Receipt Book' (Heather Falvey). The last item is a collection of eighteenth century recipes in a

manuscript book owned by Mr Robert Dimsdale. The work on the 1818 Barnet Enclosure Award map has been completed and the text is now at HALS, where members of staff are checking the various transcripts against the original. This is a complex task and is taking longer than originally expected; however hopefully we will soon be able to give information as to when it should appear.

As ever we rely on the commitment and work of our officers and committee, in particular Heather Falvey, Gwynneth Grimwood and Sue Flood. They have made the volumes which have appeared possible as well as aiding in the development of those in the pipeline. Not least they have helped to sell our books to non-members at outside events, especially *Lady Adela's Diary*. I'm also pleased to add that the increase in our annual subscription has not meant a loss in membership and that new people are joining the Society.

In conclusion I want to say thank you to Richard Busby, who is moving away from Hertfordshire. He has served on the Committee for many years and has been involved with the Society since its early days. In addition David Dean has now passed over the editorship of the Newsletter to Peter Elliott whom I want to welcome to the task. David also has a record of long commitment to our work for which we give our grateful thanks.

Alan Ruston

Forthcoming Volume 24

The journal of Benjamin Woodcock, master of the Barnet Union workhouse, 1836 to 1838

The journal that forms the basis of this book was begun on 1 September 1836 by Benjamin Woodcock, the master appointed by the newly formed Barnet Union. It begins almost a year after his appointment and although the site for the new workhouse had been selected, the district's paupers were still living in some of the parish poorhouses. Ending on 10 May 1838, the diary covers the period of the building's completion in the late spring of 1837, the transfer of inmates from the Barnet, Shenley and East Barnet poorhouses to the new central workhouse and the establishment of a settled routine for staff, inmates and guardians.

In the journal Woodcock describes his daily routine, admitting and caring for the workhouse inmates, his handling of problems he experienced in creating a

smooth-running regime in the new buildings and coping with the demands of the many visitors who took an interest in this newly conceived method of dealing with the poor. The journal was produced to be seen by the board of guardians. Its survival and publication in full provides an opportunity for readers to reach a better understanding of the running of an early workhouse, the views and actions of the master, guardians and paupers. This is a rare opportunity for, whilst the journal was written to be read by the board of guardians, it has a personal touch that reflects the attitudes of both master and guardians in a way that is not the case in more formal communications such as those with the Poor Law Commissioners.

The journal is a small, hand written, volume. It is held at the Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies under reference 70876. In 1984 extracts were included in *Down and Out in Hertfordshire*, produced by Hertfordshire Publications. The book, which included two other chapters on associated topics, is out of print. To provide a better setting and increase understanding, the new volume will include additional information, such as the early admission and discharge register, early accounts and extracts from correspondence between the Poor Law Commissions and the Board of Guardians and the latter's correspondence. Analysis of the first admission and discharge registers has been undertaken in order to establish the reasons for admission, gender and age of inmates on admission, the number of occasions an individual was admitted and the reasons for their eventual discharge. A comprehensive index to the journal has been designed to identify the behaviour of the inmates and their treatment and the actions, and sometimes the opinions, of those in charge of them.

A bibliography of both published work relevant to the subject and original sources and their locations will be included. Copies of plans of the original architect's design, together with maps showing the location of the former poorhouses and of the new district workhouse are included, together with a selection of photographs. An especial effort has been made to ensure that the coloured cover has been designed to reflect the wealth of information that can be found within and attract the general reader.

Gillian Gear

AGM venue

This year's AGM takes place at the Brickendonbury Conference Centre. Since 1974 it has been the home to the Tun Abdul Razak Research Centre, a research laboratory and promotion centre of the Malaysian Rubber Board. We hope to have a short tour around the public rooms of the house and – weather permitting – to explore the splendid gardens. It may also be possible to have a short

talk about the mansion and model farm, the records for which were rescued by HALS from a loft!

The Brickendonbury estate has a long and colourful history. Little is known about it until Saxon times (approx. 500 AD), when the hill site was claimed by the Saxon, Brica. The word don means hill - the bury was added in medieval times and indicates the site of a manor house: hence Brickendonbury, a fortified manor house standing on Brica's hill. It is probable that Brica's land extended from the River Lea to the north, where he would have been able to build a mill, back to uncleared land to the south which would have provided timber for construction and fuel, together with game. Perhaps Brica merely claimed an earlier site, although the only evidence for this is the 'Brickendonbury Hoard', consisting of some 430 Roman coins dug up from the moat in 1893 when the gardens were being renovated. All the coins date from the same period, which may indicate that there was a Roman settlement on the site two thousand years ago. An L-shaped part of the moat still exists on the south and west sides of the mansion. It was probably a dry moat until the construction of the present mansion.

In 1682, Edward Clarke purchased the estate from the Soames family. Clarke was a successful merchant, who moved to London from Leicestershire at a time when the city was recovering from the dual devastations of plague and fire. He was knighted in 1689, became Master of the Merchant Taylor's Company from 1690-91 and eventually Lord Mayor of London in 1696. He was probably responsible for the first, and what has remained the most imposing, part of the mansion. When Sir Edward died in 1703 the estate passed via his son to his granddaughter Jane Morgan. She in turn left it to her daughter, who had married Charles Gould, the Judge Advocate General and Judge Martial of H.M. Forces. Charles Gould changed his name to Morgan upon his wife's inheritance. The Morgan family appear to have been responsible for many of the extensions to the mansion. They also laid out the fine avenue of trees which connects the mansion with Hertford, known as Morgan's Walk. The last Morgan to have lived at Brickendonbury was George Gould Morgan who died there in 1845.

For the next 40 years or so the estate appears to have been leased or let to a series of tenants, the most notable of whom was Russell Ellice, Chairman of the East India Company, who died at Brickendonbury in 1873; his position in this company provides a first link between the estate and South East Asia. By the 1870s the Morgans had clearly lost interest in the estate and disposed of it in a series of sales between 1878 and 1883. Not only did the estate shrink in size during this period, but its Lordship, was also sold.

In 1893 George Pearson acquired the mansion, with an estate extending to over 1000 acres, for £30,000; it seems likely that by this time both the

house and the estate had fallen into poor condition. On his death in 1902 the estate passed to Sir Edward, a civil engineer who was also a Justice of the Peace of Hertfordshire and High Sheriff for the County in 1909. Sir Edward did a considerable amount of work on scientific farming, which involved soil analysis and intensive cultivation of arable crops, as well as breeding a fine stud of Shire horses and first-class herds of cattle. The dairy was built in 1900 to a design based on the dairy at the Queen's residence in Sandringham. Later the estate lodges, cottages and much of the Home Farm were redeveloped with a part of the farm subsequently forming the site for the laboratories – an appropriate conversion given Sir Edward's leaning to scientifically based farming.

The Pearsons were also responsible for extending the mansion, rebuilding the west end of the south front, adding an extra storey and, in 1919, a Jacobean style banqueting hall, which now serves as the conference room. The gardens were redeveloped to include an artificial rock garden made from a special type of concrete known as Pulhamite and developed by Pulham and Son who described themselves as "Garden Craftsmen".

After her husband's death in 1925, Lady Pearson, who herself survived until 1973, moved from Brickendonbury and the mansion was eventually used by Stratton Park School, a private preparatory school for about fifty boys. Two reminders of this function remain. The conference room, which then served as a gymnasium, has hooks for ropes, and there is a swimming pool in the grounds. In the late 1930s Mrs Pearson finally sold the estate, but the new owner - Mr Ernest Gocher - was unable to take up residence because the property was requisitioned by the Government following the outbreak of war in 1939.

Throughout the Second World War Brickendonbury was used by the Special Operations Executive and became Station 17, specializing in training agents and resistance workers in industrial sabotage. A reminder of these activities was found during building work in 1973, when unexploded hand grenades and live mortar shells were discovered in the drained moat! After the war, Brickendonbury reverted to peaceful roles. The mansion was used by the Highways Department of the County Council and as offices for the local branches of the National Agricultural Advisory Service and the War Agricultural Executive.

Today, Brickendonbury's role as home to a research laboratory and promotion centre has seen the estate revived to a thriving condition. The mansion, both inside and out, has been restored to provide elegant working accommodation, and the grounds are well cared for. The purpose-built laboratories, housing the practical work of the Research Centre, are in part concealed behind the facade of the Pearson's model farm, which still retains the family motto, just as appropriate for the

endeavours of a large rubber research laboratory as it was for the Pearsons - 'Do it with thy Might'.

Peter Elliott, from information at
www.brickendonbury.co.uk/

Review of Volume 21, in *The Almshouse Gazette*, 207 (Summer 2007)

The Hellard Almshouse and other Stevenage Charities 1492-2005, edited by Margaret Ashby

I had always thought of Stevenage as a town that was synonymous with "new town" in like manner to Bracknell or Milton Keynes. How pleasing, therefore, to be shown through Margaret Ashby's work that the town has at its core an old foundation.

In her preface, Dr Evelyn Lord describes the work as a model for other record societies to follow and without doubt it retains a human touch so often sidelined by historians or archivists. "The most important elements of a charity are often an unknown quantity – its recipients, who too frequently disappear from the pages of history without a trace. But this is not the case with these records ..."

The wealth of detail provided throughout the book will re-invigorate both the casual reader and the dedicated enthusiast of the almshouse movement such as I with morsels of delight from carefully recorded, and now published, minutes of trustees' meetings over the centuries. These serve both as a wonderful insight not only into the work of local charities and the almshouse movement but also the social history of the time.

Fascinating excerpts

It would be remiss of me not to tempt the reader further:

1812 – "Agreed at the same vestry that the garden ground behind the almshouse in the Back Lane to be let to Thomas Muncey for One Pound (£1) per annum from Michaelmas last, 1812 and the money to be divided equally and distributed by the overseers to the tenants of the almshouse according to their respective right to the same."

6 February 1911 – "Applications for almshouses were received from Sarah Piggott and Caroline Piggott. Both applicants were in receipt of poor relief and were therefore, under the Scheme, ineligible as almspeople. It was proposed by Mr Fresson and seconded by Mr Flack "that the Charity Commissioners be informed of the disqualification of the only applicants from almshouses and that the Commissioners be asked whether the pauper disqualification might be removed." Carried unanimously."

26 June 1944. (Item 4 – Almshouses) – "The Clerk stated that Miss Winter had again complained about mice in her bedroom. The Clerk was directed to obtain a price for work to prevent

mice entering the bedroom occupied by Miss Winter and it was resolved that *if the price was reasonable* the work to be carried out.” (Reviewer’s italics!)

The year 2006 marked the 500th anniversary of the foundation of the Stevenage Almshouse Trust by Rector Stephen Hellard and a group of devout men and women of Stevenage. This publication is a very fitting record and tribute to those who have acted historically, and to those who still act today, in support of one’s community. I would strongly recommend the publication, confident that every reader will find many matters of considerable interest and perhaps some familiarity.

Trevor Hargreaves, Deputy Director of the
Almshouse Association,

Review of Volume XXII in *The Watford Observer*

Cassiobury House may be no more but the discovery of the diary of Lady Adela Capel of Cassiobury has thrown light upon the daily routines of a 13-14 year old girl growing up in an early Victorian household.

Marion Strachan has written a comprehensive introduction to the book, which explains how Adela’s father inherited the elegant gothic mansion and its extensive grounds. Adela devotes most of her pages to detailed accounts of the welfare and care of her pets including a number of ill-fated songbirds and a fawn, as well as other animals on the estate. She also makes mention of activities concerning various members of the aristocracy including state visits to the area by Queen Victoria. Although much of the book relates to her domestic rounds, Adela does pay occasional visits to London to stay with her grandmother.

Hertfordshire historians will be intrigued to find references to families overlooked by the 1841 census and details of Cassiobury House, its grounds and staff that are only to be found in the diary. Local people, particularly schoolchildren and their teachers will be intrigued to learn more about a house that is now gone but not forgotten.

Review

Veronica and Philip O’Donoghue (eds), *Georgian Cookery: Recipes and remedies from 18th century Totteridge* (New Barnet, 2007), 96pp, 5 illustrations, ISBN 978-0-9556555-0-0, £9.50 + postage & packing (available from the editors at 21 Holyrood Road, New Barnet, EN5 1DQ)

The core of this little volume comprises a transcript of just over 130 recipes and medicinal treatments that were written into a vellum-covered book sometime in the mid-eighteenth century. Each entry is reproduced in the original spelling, including the use of thorn (y) and the long s,

followed by a version in modern spelling and with metric measurements, to make it easier to understand and follow (at the reader’s peril). Indeed, the editors have placed a ‘health warning’ at the beginning. The recipes range from savouries, such as (bone) marrow pudding (no. 8), calf’s foot pudding (no. 57) and hare pie (no. 79) to desserts and cakes, such as lemon cheesecake (no. 48) and seed cake (no. 50). Some of the remedies *look* as though they might be relatively harmless if not altogether efficacious, such as the cure for bowel looseness (no. 1). Others, such as the cure for the bite of a mad dog (no. 3), seem hopeful rather than useful (amongst other things the patient had to take a cold bath every morning for a month). There is even a handy paste to brush onto furniture to get rid of bugs (no.129).

In addition to the various recipes, the original document also contains a ‘Line of descent’ from William King (born 1705) and Elizabeth Bennett (born 1712) and a list of the costs incurred in the schooling of ‘Maria Bennett’ in 1742. These pages present something of a conundrum as link with the rest of the book are unclear. Despite trying many lines of enquiry, the editors have been unable to positively identify the compiler, although they argue a fairly convincing case for Elizabeth Bennett.

In their introduction, following a detailed description of the original book, the editors investigate possible sources for the recipes. It becomes clear, however, that the compiler did not use any particular source, indeed her ingredients and methods rarely correspond exactly with those in any of the published books that might have been available to her. It seems likely that many of them were passed on by word of mouth. There is also a brief section on the meaning of ‘marrow’ and the use of silver in items of kitchen equipment. At the end of the book, the index doubles as a glossary and the bibliography lists many original household books as well as those now available in reprint or facsimile.

Heather Falvey

Plea from the Hon Editor

You will see from the Chairman’s report on the front cover that various volumes are in course of preparation. However we cannot stand still if we are to fulfil our aim of producing a volume for the Society each year. We need to have as many works as possible in the pipeline for future years. If any member has a project in mind or can let the editor know of work already in progress the Society will be very grateful. Please contact me at Hertfordshire Archives on 01438 737333 if you have any suggestions for future volumes or are thinking of a project yourself.

Susan Flood, Editor