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Chairman's Report

The Hertfordshire Association for Local History was founded in 1949 to promote the study and enjoyment of local history in Hertfordshire and, thirty-six years later, in 1985, the Hertfordshire Record Society was formed as an offshoot of HALH.

The HRS came into being in order to publish important and significant materials relating to Hertfordshire and to therefore make accessible documents, diaries and records relating to the county over time, exploring its past and the lives of those who lived here. As a publishing body our Annual General Meetings are held in historic Hertfordshire buildings not usually open to the public, such as Rothamsted Manor, Haileybury school and some of the private rooms at Hatfield House.

Excitingly, there are three publications planned for 2025. *Hertfordshire Miscellany* will be an extra publication celebrating a wide range of materials relating to Hertfordshire over many centuries. (For details see page 2.) Volume XL (for 2024/25), *The Poor, the Sick and the Stranger in Hertfordshire, 1690-1890*, explores some of the lives of the poor who were subject to the Poor Laws and Settlement Examinations in Hertfordshire over two centuries. This is unusual, as it gives a voice to the poor and largely illiterate people from the past and tells us something of their lives. Your copy will be available at the HALH Spring Meeting or at the HRS's AGM. Volume XLI (for 2025/26) is *The Earliest Final Concords from Hertfordshire*, providing a detailed calendar of the earliest surviving Hertfordshire feet of fines.

Another planned future publication is *The 1610 Royston Survey and Surveys of 1649, 1650 and 1652*. This comprises four 17th century documents which, intriguingly, directly relate to the short period when James VI and I bought up parts of Royston town centre and made his house there one of his principal royal residences.

The close connection with HALH continues, of course, and I would like to draw your attention to their annual symposium. This year it will be in partnership with the British Association for Local History and the Bedfordshire Local History Association, and will be held on Saturday 11 October 2025 at Barton-le-Clay, Bedfordshire, in the village hall. Do check the HALH website for more details.

Alan Thomson

2025 AGM Venue

This year's AGM will be held at The Quaker Room, The Quaker Meeting House, 50 Railway Street, Hertford, SG14 1BA, on Saturday 14th June at 2.30pm.

This Friends Meeting House dates from 1670 and is the earliest purpose-built Quaker house still standing. Parking is available at the Gascoyne Way car park and the Bircherley Green multi-storey car park.

Volume XL, *The Poor, the Sick and the Stranger in Hertfordshire, 1690-1890*

The Poor Law records and Settlement Examinations of the county recorded the names, health, occupation and family members of those in want. This process also identified which area they should be sent to and therefore which parish was to be financially responsible for them during times of need.

Settlement, however, was defined by birth or by work or apprenticeship, and these were often not the same thing. It was not unheard of for people to be moved from the parish of birth to the parish of occupation, and thereafter returned by overseers to the place where they were born.

These records, developed with close attention to court proceedings, where the poor were often arraigned for stealing food, as well as census records and local newspapers, tell us a good deal about the lives of the working and labouring people of the county of Hertfordshire and beyond over two centuries. They provide, too, a wealth of material for the professional genealogist and for family history societies, including those beyond the county of Hertfordshire, not only in demonstrating a changing world in occupations listed, but in the records of tenements in our county towns which at one time housed several poor families, as well as forgotten hamlets still discernible in the name of a local road or a lane.

Anne-Marie Ford

Volume XLI, *The Earliest Final Concords from Hertfordshire: A Calendar of Feet of Fines from the reigns of King Richard I and King John*, edited by D. P. Johnson

From 1195, the royal courts began to produce records of agreements – or final concords – made before the king and his justices. The text of each concord was written out three times on a single piece of parchment. The first two copies, on the upper two thirds of the parchment, were given to the parties to the concord. The third copy was written at the bottom ('foot') of the sheet and subsequently retained by the court. This volume

provides a detailed calendar (English summary) of the earliest surviving Hertfordshire feet of fines now preserved at The National Archives.

Most often, these settlements involve land transactions, but there are also a significant number of cases relating to 'dower' (the life-share of a husband's property allowed to a widow after her husband's death) and a smaller number concerning other subjects such as advowsons (the right to present a new incumbent to an ecclesiastical benefice). This volume therefore reflects a wide range of aspects of Hertfordshire life during the reigns of Richard I and John. The detailed nature of these final concords means that they often contain a great deal of information on particular individuals and localities not found elsewhere. And the majority of them relate to men and women who are otherwise unknown to historians.

David Johnson

Hertfordshire Miscellany

The first Hertfordshire Record Society volume, *Tudor Churchwardens' Accounts* edited by Tony Palmer was published in 1985. In 2025, to mark the 40th anniversary of the foundation of the Society, we intend to publish an extra volume to be sent out to all members at no charge. This will be a collection of miscellaneous documents ranging in date from the tenth to the twentieth centuries. They represent wide-ranging research and interest in the history of our county by both members and friends. A transcript of the whole document, or a short extract from a much longer item, will be accompanied by an explanation of its historical significance, setting each item in the context of Hertfordshire's history.

The items include: the will of Aethelgifu dating from the tenth century, a document originally belonging to St Albans Abbey; late sixteenth century inventories of church goods; steward's accounts of Hadham Hall, 1628-9; the declaration of Hertfordshire's Quakers, 1697; the travel journal of Sir Matthew Decker, 1728, focussing on Hertfordshire's historic gardens; the 1739 inventory of Benjamin Haskin Styles of Moor Park, Rickmansworth; the only surviving list of a tax on male servants, 1780; a 1787 survey of Barnet; diary extracts concerning the Fordham family of North Hertfordshire, 1795-1846; and the 1858 foundation document of the Herts Training School, Chapmore End, Bengoe, with a discussion of the school's twentieth century history.

With such a wide range of items, we hope there will be something to interest everyone. Members need do nothing – the volume will be sent out when it is ready.

Susan Flood

Review by David J. Cox in *The Local Historian*, 54 (4) (November 2024) of *Governors' Journals Hertford Gaol, 1834-1844: a study of the silent and modified separate system*, edited and with an introduction by Eileen Wallace (HRS XXXV, published 2024)

As a criminal justice historian who has written about the role played by prison governors in the Victorian convict prison system, I was very interested to read and review

this substantial publication which covers a formative period of penal history; just over a decade since the Gaol Act 1823 and two years after the completion of Pentonville, one of the first of the new generation of Victorian prisons built to a specific design and with the particular purpose of holding convicts prior to their transportation to Australia. Indeed, Wallace comments on two prisoners (William Rose and John Chapman) listed in a journal entry as being the first such individuals to be removed from Hertford Gaol for the purpose of entering the New Model Prison (as it was called by the governor).

The 'Introduction' is almost a book in its own right; it provides a substantial overview of the English prison system during an often overlooked period, together with potted biographies of the governors whose journals are reproduced later in the publication. It also has an excellent account of the duties of a conscientious governor; prison bureaucracy was (thankfully from an historian's point of view) onerous and detailed. Wallace states that from 1840 all governors were required to keep a total of thirteen books and journals, each recording distinct aspects of the minutiae of running a prison. This book focuses on perhaps the most significant record, a journal of day-to-day activity within the prison.

Hertford New Gaol was opened in November 1779, replacing an earlier gaol built in 1703. It was typical of its period, being a relatively small institution usually holding just over 100 prisoners at any one time. It was in effect three separate but linked carceral institutions, as an adjoining House of Correction (where the least serious offenders were housed for offences such as vagrancy) was also constructed. This institution and the County Gaol (which also contained a debtors' prison for those unfortunates being unable to pay their debts) were all governed by one man—initially with the title of Chief Gaoler and later Governor. It was pulled down in 1881 as part of the building programme of new local prisons initiated by Sir Edmund du Cane (chairman of the Prison Commission), its existence now only hinted at by a few stretches of boundary wall.

Moving on to the numerous entries in the Governors' Journals themselves, Wallace provides a detailed series of footnotes and further explanations concerning a number of individuals mentioned in the text, including prisoners and prison staff. This adds immeasurably to the reader's interest in the entries and is indicative of the very detailed research that the author has invested in this publication. Also to be commended is the extremely detailed series of indexes at the end of the book, including names, places and subjects, along with several useful appendices which give notable dates in penal history, a reproduction of the Rules and Regulations for the Government of The Gaol and House of Correction, for the County of Hertford 1824, and a selection of extracts from Her Majesty's Inspectors of Prisons Second Report of 1837. Finally, for readers unfamiliar with the penal system of the early nineteenth century, a glossary is provided.

The entries themselves make for interesting and sobering reading; the innumerable largely petty offences listed as being committed by the prisoners and the harsh

discipline meted out by a system that had little real interest in reform and rehabilitation are depressingly familiar to penal historians. Some evidence of humanity can however be found in the occasional entry. I was particularly taken by the case of Harriet Josey, a woman in her mid-20s who appears five times in the Journals from 1842-3. She is commended to the visiting justices (who inspected the Journals on a quarterly basis) by the governor on 12 January 1842 for her 'undeviating good conduct' over the past 12 months of her imprisonment. Her case for early release was considered, but nothing seems to have resulted, as her good conduct is again commented upon in an entry dated 25 March 1843. The latter entry gives details of the date of her committal and trial. I was intrigued by this case and a little online research revealed that she was tried at Hertford Assizes on 3 March 1841 on an indictment for 'Wilful Murder'.

The Morning Post on 6 March 1841 was one of several newspapers to report on the distressing circumstances of her case. She was a cook at Beaumont Hall, Redbourn, and was accused of murdering her newborn baby and concealing it in a cesspit in the cellar of the house. The jury (as was often the case in such situations) took a lenient view and found her 'Not Guilty' of murder (a capital offence) but 'Guilty' of the lesser charge of concealing the birth of a child. The last two entries in the Journal refer to her being dangerously ill, and the Governor, showing considerable humanity for the time, wrote to her friends informing them of this turn of events on 15 January 1843. Two days later he wrote to her father, permitting him to see her as she was 'considered by the Surgeon still in great danger'. A woman of the same name is recorded as dying in September quarter 1849 in Berkshire, the county in which Harriet is known to have been born, so there is a possibility that she is the same individual who had behaved so well in Hertford Gaol a few years earlier.

This case illustrates the immense potential that the publication has for local and family historians to use it as an invaluable research tool. Its publication is to be thoroughly commended as a wonderful (and keenly priced) addition to the surprisingly small number of published governors' journals of this period.

Review by Jennifer Ayto in *Hertfordshire People*, 171 (December 2024) of *Governors' Journals Hertford Gaol, 1834-1844* (HRS XXXV)

On first sight this looks to be a minority interest subject for the family historian. How many of us would own up to a criminal past? However, as Eileen Wallace points out in her meticulous and well researched introduction, many prisoners were convicted on charges that today would be classed as trivial, such as stealing turnip tops, goods of trifling value, damaging property and poaching. Furthermore, there were many who were not convicted of crime, but associated with Hertford gaol and who feature in this book.

The introduction explores the purpose of imprisonment and the 19th century views, mirroring those of today, on whether incarceration was a punishment or a means of reform. It also explains the role of a wide range of

personnel associated with the gaol at Hertford, including the Governor, warders, surgeon and Chaplain which, in turn, introduces a wider cast of characters.

The first two surviving journals of the Governors of Hertford County Gaol (William Willson, 1834–1838 and G. P. Duins, 1838–1843) have been transcribed and provide a fascinating but very depressing picture of prison life. One who was spared gaol was J. Smith, convicted of stealing turnips at Hitchin. On reaching the prison on 23 December 1840, the Governor noted that he paid his fine & was discharged, it appearing a friend on the road lent him the money. For those not so fortunate life was spent picking oakum and working on the tread wheel. Talking was not allowed and any infringement of the rules was punishable by solitary confinement. Three days in 1843 are typical entries:

Wednesday October 11th Ordered Wm Marshall 3 days solitary for being very idle in picking his oakum. Thursday October 12th Ordered Ann Gubby to lose her Dinner 3 days (it being impossible to place her in Solitary owing to her being subject to fits) for using a leaf out of her prayer book to curl her hair. John Hart 2 days for inattention in Chapel. Friday October 13th Ordered Jn Anderson 1 Day Solitary confinement for inattention to orders & Geo Pearce 3 days ditto for talking & falsehood.

The gaol staff were also punished. J Bolton, a Turnkey, was fined sixpence on 9 April 1842 for failing to send a prisoner to his labour after dinner and the same fine was imposed on Warder Dunning on 16 November 1844 for having a newspaper in the gaol.

It was a hard life and very few concessions. In June 1842 it was recorded that *In consequence of the Extreme heat of the Weather & the apparent suffering of the Prisoners on the Wheel, the Governor altered the usual manner of working (being ½ an hour on & 10 minutes off) to ¼ of an hour on & ¼ off Yesterday & part of this Day.* In August of that year, the Visiting Justices ordered that *one ounce of onions be added to each miscreant's allowance of soup.*

The appendices contain more information rules and regulations and reports on Hertford gaol, but the treasure trove for family historians is the index. There are 23 pages of the names of all those associated with the gaol, ranging from the prison reformer, Elizabeth Fry, who visited in 1843 to the prisoner, Mary Savill, *a most hardened, incorrigible prostitute.*

Review by Heather Falvey of *A Much-Threatened Village: Northchurch in the English Civil War* by Tim Prouse (New Generation Publishing, 2024) £9.99

A Much-Threatened Village reveals what happened in and around West Hertfordshire during the English Civil War, an area that was 'strongly Puritan' even by 1640. Northchurch, situated near Berkhamsted on the road from London to Aylesbury and beyond, was an 'unremarkable' village, but which, due to its location, was greatly affected by the civil war.

Early on, Aylesbury had been created a Parliamentary garrison town, and thus Northchurch was on the direct line for supplies and reinforcements, and probably supplied men to serve that garrison. Prouse describes various military raids near the village, and the likely effects of the King's base in Oxford, the major Parliamentary army encampment at St Albans, and garrisons at Aylesbury and Newport Pagnell. Using wills and inventories Tim Prouse reconstructs what local houses, farms and businesses would have been like, and identifies some of the villagers who, contributed to the appeal for the 'distressed Protestants in Ireland' in 1642.

He also discusses changes in religious practices, giving examples from neighbouring parishes where parliamentary soldiers destroyed stained glass windows and altar rails in protest against fixtures advocated by Archbishop Laud. 'Life under arms' describes life as a soldier in the Parliamentary army and how each community was expected to contribute in terms of money, men and weapons.

'Active service' covers how the Hertfordshire regiments were formed under the Earl of Essex and where they were in action, in addition to garrison duty at Newport Pagnell and Aylesbury. The issues of death, disease, discipline and desertion are also considered. Feeding and paying the Parliamentary army was prohibitively expensive, in terms of crops and animals requisitioned, as well as money in the form of taxation.

On the other hand, accounts presented to parliament indicate that some locals had provided services for which they expected to be paid. 'The shock of the new' looks at the aftermath of the war in Northchurch, revealing, amongst other individuals, Richard Tisdell, a disabled veteran of several battles, who was granted a pension of 40s per year, and lived until 1691. Having assessed the overall effects of the war on the village, Prouse closes with the celebrations recorded at Berkhamsted when Charles II was restored.

This well-researched history of the civil war's effect on one village draws on a wide range of sources. It is gratifying that the author has drawn on various HRS volumes, including Volume XXIII, *The Impact of the First Civil War*, Volume XXXVIII, *Berkhamsted St Peter Churchwardens' Accounts* and *Hertfordshire Population Statistics*. Indeed, following up records transcribed in Volume XXIII, Tim also consulted related documents at TNA and elsewhere.

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The HRS has a data protection policy which is available to members upon request to the Secretary.

Richard (Dick) Busby

The February 2024 issue of the *Bulletin of the Monumental Brass Society* includes a fulsome obituary to Richard (Dick) Busby, who passed away peacefully in The Freeman Hospital, Newcastle, on 6 October 2023, aged 85. Dick grew up in Hertfordshire and, following his formal education, he qualified as an Associate of the Library Association and spent his entire career working for Hertfordshire Library Service. He wrote, or co-wrote, several books on Hertfordshire local history including *The book of Welwyn: the story of the five villages and the Garden City* (Chesham, 1976). From the HRS's formation in 1985 until 2008, Dick served on its Executive Committee (as it was then known) in various roles. He was the General Editor for Volumes I to VI, then an 'ordinary' committee member, then General Editor for Volumes XIII to XV, and finally the Library Service's representative from 2000. He was also on the Map sub-committee assisting with *Bryant's Map* and the *Dury and Andrews' Map*. In 2008 he retired and moved to Hexham.

In 1954 Dick rubbed his first monumental brass: the one commemorating John Peryent, and wife Joan, 1415, at Digswell. He joined the Monumental Brass Society in 1967 and two years later published *A Beginner's Guide to Brass Rubbing*, which was hugely successful as a practical guide for beginners. He also compiled the 'Notes on Books and Articles' section of the *Bulletin* from issue 4 (December 1973) to issue 149 (February 2022), a remarkable contribution spanning almost half a century. He served on the MBS's Executive Council in 1972-5 and 2005-8.

As Sue Flood commented, 'He was a lovely man and a very kind colleague'.

Subscriptions are due on 1 April each year and remain unchanged at £17.50 per annum.

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