



# NEWSLETTER

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## TRADITIONAL DACORUM PROJECT

We are very excited to participate in this new project. We will partner other Hertfordshire museums including Stevenage Museum and Hertfordshire Archives & Local Studies in this Heritage Lottery Funded project.



As part of this project we hope to create a Ghost Map of Dacorum, which will include historic and contemporary accounts of apparitions and local hauntings – we would love to hear your stories.

To inspire you here is a transcript of a story from the Gazette, which was published on 20<sup>th</sup> January 1956.

Reports of supernatural occurrences at Ye Olde Bell Inn, High Street, Hemel Hempstead, have this week been investigated by the Gazette. A resident at the hotel says that he has seen the phantom figure of a lady in white on three occasions, and other 'phenomena' have been brought to our notice. A Gazette reporter kept a night vigil on a landing in the part of the building that is said to be haunted.

'The Bell', an old coaching house, has been an inn since 1603, but parts of the building are much older. According to tradition, the original premises formed part of a hunting lodge, which was used by King Henry VIII.

The present licensee, Mr. John Buteux, and his young wife, Elizabeth, have only been at 'The Bell' for eight months. Living in a house that may be haunted is a new experience for them. Says Mr. Buteux: "I am not scared, but I am very interested. If there is a ghost here, I want to learn more about it, because, after all, I have to live with it".

Mr. George Derric de Vere Weston, a 33-year-old salesman, employed by Roto Finish Ltd., of Adeyfield, has been living at 'The Bell' for a little over a fortnight. He occupies one of three top floor bedrooms leading from the landing.

He told the Gazette: "About a week ago I was standing on the landing of the first floor at about 8 pm., I looked up the stairs to the landing above, which was in darkness, and saw the figure of a woman, wearing a white dress, standing in the middle of the landing. The figure was there for only about a second and it was not clear enough for me to describe. The whole thing happened so quickly that I thought my imagination was playing tricks, so I said nothing about it.

The following night, however, I saw it again from the first-floor landing, but only momentarily. I wondered if it was caused by a light shining through a window, but I looked round and there was no light in view. I had another glimpse of the figure the night after that. This time I was coming out of my bedroom on the second floor. It appeared to be in about the same position and, again, it vanished too quickly for me to have anything but a fleeting glimpse.

All I can say is that it appeared to be a woman in a white dress and, as I experienced no sense of fear, if it is a ghost it must be a friendly one. I am not at all worried by the experience, but am, naturally, interested in finding an explanation".

Mr. John Hey, an engineer, who also occupies a room on the top floor, is not worried by the fact that there is a ghost outside his door. "I'm a good sleeper - it won't keep me awake," he said.

Other strange things have been happening at 'The Bell'. The chambermaid, Mrs. Marjorie Roberts, while ironing in the staff room, which leads from the first floor landing, heard footsteps outside the door. Then the door opened for no reason that can

**Photo:** The Bell Inn, High Street, Hemel Hempstead, decorated to celebrate the Falkland's War victory taken by Martin Atkinson in 1982 and entered into 'The Public Houses of Dacorum Competition' in 1983.

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be explained. The Gazette inspected the door-catch and found it to be in perfect order.

Mrs. Buteux, too, has had some alarming experiences. Twice, her shoes have been moved (without any apparent human agency) from one side of her bedroom to the other. A resident told her that her shoes had been similarly moved.

Late on Saturday night, Mrs. Buteux's cat was screaming outside the bedroom door. It seemed so upset that Mrs. Buteux let it in. At about 2 am. Mrs. Buteux saw a strange light near the bedroom door. She thought that perhaps she had left the door open when she let the cat in and that the light was shining from the passage outside. Then she remembered that she had closed the door; so, becoming alarmed, she woke her husband up. "We found that the door was closed and that there was no light in the passage outside," she told the Gazette.

"When I woke my husband up he switched on the light. When he turned it off again, the strange light near the door had disappeared. After full investigations we could find no reasonable explanation for the strange light that I saw". Mrs. Buteux added that she had spoken to the wife of a former licensee, who told her that the top floor was reputed to be haunted.

The Gazette reporter, who this week kept an all-night watch on the eerie, darkened landing, wrote: "At 10.30 pm. a tap was monotonously dripping out the hours. A chorus of night sounds – the wind, creaking board and slight rustlings – seemed to assume importance as the minutes ticked by and midnight drew near.

Senses alive with eager anticipation, I kept my eyes riveted on the immediate surrounds, particularly the door on the top-floor landing which opens to reveal a flight of age-worn steps leading to the roof, there to abruptly end. Although I started my night-watch with an open mind, perhaps rather sceptically, as the night grew old and the uneasy quiet became almost oppressive, small doubts began to form in the back of my mind.

Midnight passed without event. Then, at 12.31, something happened which did nothing to set my mind at rest. A shaft of light illuminated the ceiling. That was all. No sign of The Lady in White – and the broad, penetrating beam vanished after a few minutes. Time lost meaning. When I next checked my watch it was past 3 am. still nothing had happened.

The night dragged on. The only incident was that, unexplainably, a door, which I had previously ascertained to be well and truly closed, made a nerve-jumping thump, as if opened and then slammed. I investigated. It was closed."

## BREAM'S COACHES OF HEMEL HEMPSTEAD



**G**reat Grandmother Emma's Charabanc Outings.

My great grandmother Emma Hall (nee Hearn) is the second lady from the left.

I believe this photo was taken along Piccotts End Road.

She is also seen in the second photo, outside The Whip & Collar in Two Waters, the third lady from the right.

*Natalie Hall*

Charlie Knight ran his Bream coaches business from the garage in Bury Road during the mid 1930s and 1940s.

The coaches ran a daily service between Bury Road and Apsley Mills morning, noon and evening for Apsley Mill workers. After the war Bream Coaches ran Sunday day trips to Southend and Brighton.

The lower image shows that at the licensee of the Whip & Collar public house was Albert Samuel Ryan and they sold 'Chesham Ales'.

The Whip & Collar in Two Waters Road is just one of the many 'lost' public houses of the area, now the popular Balti House K2.

**Images:** both images appear to be around the mid to late 1920s and are in the public domain.

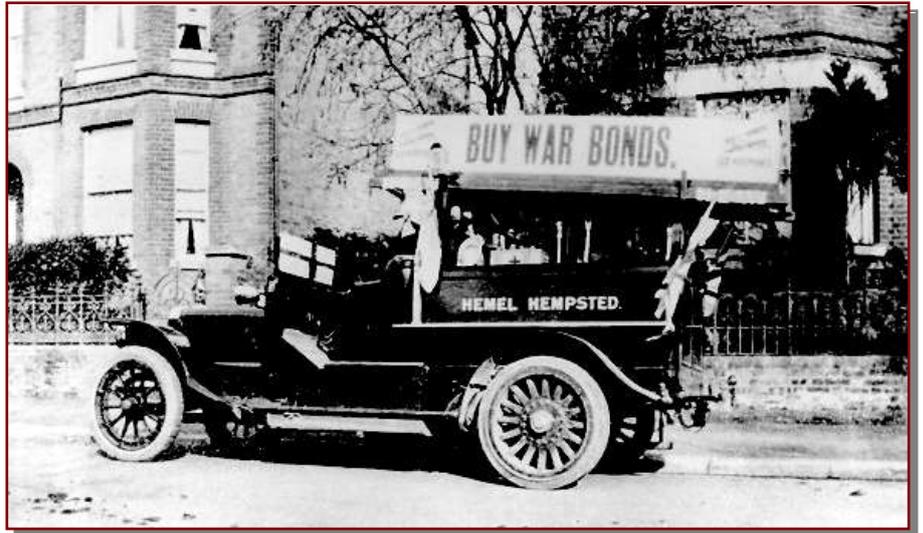


## WWI – 100 YEARS ON

The Gazette reports on local war items, tribunals and news from the front, which now includes mostly accounts of servicemen missing, wounded or killed in action. The following articles give a taste of the impact on local lives.

### 6<sup>th</sup> January 1917

Two Berkhamsted brothers have been killed in action. They are the sons of Mr. and Mrs. Dyer, Lock House, Ravens-lane. Private Arthur William Dyer, aged 27 years, married and with two children, was employed as a baker with Mr. R. Barnes, of Chapel-street, when war broke out. Afterwards he joined the Essex Regiment, and was killed in action of the 23<sup>rd</sup> September, after being only a fortnight at the front. Private Walter Dyer, aged 23, worked at Castle Dock before joining the Norfolk Regiment on the 23<sup>rd</sup> August, 1914. He went to France on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 1915, and was killed in action on



November 29<sup>th</sup> of last year. The parents of these brave men who died for King and country have a third son serving in France, Private Joseph Dyer, and he has been twice wounded and gassed.

Sadly, Gunner Joseph Dyer of Royal Field Artillery was later killed in action in France on 14<sup>th</sup> June 1917.

The 'Berkhamsted Deanery Magazine' states: "Much sympathy is felt for the wife and parents of Alfred Cooley, Norfolk Regiment, of Potten End, who is reported 'missing' by the War Office, but for whom the worst fears are entertained. On October 21<sup>st</sup>, he was seen lying wounded outside a German trench, but not near enough to it to be taken prisoner. The area was being heavily shelled, and he has not been traced as having been admitted to any hospital. He was one who was deservedly respected in this neighbourhood. Till a short time before the war broke out, when he removed to Chesham, he had been a most regular member of the choir at Potten End Church, and if it turns out that he has laid down his life for the country none will be more sincerely regretted. We have already chronicled his brother Clifford's death on July 1<sup>st</sup>, and his brother Frank is now in hospital at Malta.

### 10<sup>th</sup> February 1917

Private Herbert Walker, Herts Machine Gun Section, has been severely wounded in the head, in action in France. Private A. H. Walker, Essex Regiment, has been severely wounded in the right leg, in action in France. The two brothers, both of Hemel Hempstead, were brought together very strangely. They had not met each other in France, but when Harry was put on the hospital ship to be brought to England to his great surprise in the next bed to him was his brother. They are still happily together in a hospital at Guildford, and on Thursday night were reported to be going on as comfortably as could be expected.

### 17<sup>th</sup> February 1917

MARKYATE – News of Major Wells Wounded and Decorated.

News has arrived at Caddington Hall that Major R. P. Wells has again been wounded, also that the gallant officer has been awarded the Distinguished Service Order, and has also received the Medaille d'Or (Khedive Gold Medal), a rather rare distinction.

"Mr. Russell", as he is locally known, is the second son of Mr. A. Collings Wells, J.P., of Caddington Hall. On the outbreak of war he went to France with his cavalry regiment, and was very severely wounded in the first fight. After long hospital treatment and a further period of home service, he was attached to the motor machine guns, and eventually went to Egypt as second in command of the Duke of Westminster's armoured cars, which have proved of the greatest assistance in suppressing the Senussi with their German and Turk leaders in Western Egypt. Since the invaliding of the Duke, Major Wells has been in command, and has again been wounded in recent fighting, and his many friends wish him a speedy recovery.

### TRIBUNALS

Arthur Kingham (18), a general labourer, employed by George Rowe, of Wigginton, who is lying seriously ill, was appealed for. It was stated that both Rowe's sons were in the Army. Three months exemption was granted.

Private Arthur Kingham of 7<sup>th</sup> East Kent Regiment died of pneumonia in France on 19<sup>th</sup> October 1918.

HEMPSTEAD MAN JOINS UP - When the appeal of John Mayo Biggs, of Hemel Hempstead Borough, was reached

there was no appearance, and Mr. Marnham, military representative, said he had heard that Biggs since entering the appeal had joined up. The Chairman: "Very glad to hear it". The appeal was dismissed.

Private John Mayo Biggs of 23<sup>rd</sup> Royal Fusiliers was killed in action in France on 25<sup>th</sup> March 1918.

Alfred George Tebby (31), married, Cheapside, Hemel Hempstead, manager of furnishing stores; appeal by employer, J. T. Tebby, High-street, Chesham. Mr. Marnham said the appellant had had ten months exemption and he could not consent to any further time. Appeal refused. Appellant asked for an appeal form.

Sapper Alfred George Tebby of the Royal Engineers died of influenza and pneumonia in Italy on 9<sup>th</sup> November 1918.

*Photo: Hemel Hempstead fire engine fundraising encouraging people to invest in War Bonds (note the spelling of 'Hempsted').*

## CURATOR'S CORNER

### Introducing Our Newest Member of Staff.

My name is Nicola Minney and I have recently joined the Dacorum Heritage Trust as the Collections Manager whilst Nina is on maternity leave.

I have a BA in Classical and Archaeological Studies from the University of Kent as well as an MA in Museum Studies from UCL. I also completed a dissertation on the importance of advocacy in museums. I am passionate about getting local communities involved with their heritage through outreach and exhibition production, something which I hope to see happen here at Dacorum.

Over the course of my studies and beyond, I have been involved in projects with English Heritage at Dover Castle including the Secret Wartime Tunnels, which date back to the Napoleonic era. I also participated at the Harrow Heritage Centre and Brent Museum and Archives, where I have gained experience in conservation, exhibition production and supporting workshops for mixed age groups.

I look forward to the year ahead at Dacorum Heritage Trust, and hope to share a lot of success with you all.

Thank you very much for such a warm welcome!



### Traditional Dacorum Project – We Need Your Help.

**Ghost Stories.** We would love to hear from you to help us create a Ghost Map of the Borough, so if you have any ghost stories to tell us, we are keen to hear from you. Your stories can be anonymous.

**May Queen's.** We are collecting photos of all Dacorum May Queen's, if you or your friends or family members have been crowned May Queen we would love to hear from you and add your photo to our wall.

*Photo: May Queen and May Day celebrations at Park View School, Berkhamsted, early 1900s (Berkhamsted Local History & Museum Society collection, cared for by Dacorum Heritage Trust).*

**Legacy Giving.** Help us to safeguard our Trust in your will. See our website for more

collections for future generations by remembering Dacorum Heritage information <http://www.dacorumheritage.org.uk/support-us/legacies/>

*Everybody should have a will. Please remember to include a bequest to The Dacorum Heritage Trust Ltd. when you make or revise your will.*

*The Museum Store is open by appointment only. For enquiries email Nicola our Collections Manager.*

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		<p><b>EDITOR: Pam Gasking</b> <a href="mailto:office@dacorumheritage.org.uk">office@dacorumheritage.org.uk</a> <i>Like us on Facebook.</i> <i>Follow us on Twitter @DacorumHeritage</i> Authors are responsible for content accuracy. <i>Deadline: for next issue is 15<sup>th</sup> March 2017.</i></p>	 <p>Funded by <b>DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL</b></p>
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