

THE HARPENDEN SOCIETY.

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1947.

After the break caused by the war the Society resumed its activities on 7th November 1946 with the bidding of a Special General Meeting at which the name of the Society was changed from the Harpenden and District Preservation Society to the Harpenden Society, and the constitution was altered to include in the aims "the promotion of the general well-being of the people of Harpenden and its environs".

A new committee was elected in which were included representatives of a number of other local societies. The committee has held twelve meetings with an average attendance of thirteen. A wide range of matters have been discussed and representations have been put forward regarding riding on the Common, the parking of cars on the Common, the use and lay-out of Rothamsted Park, advertisements on cinemas, the reversion of the small public hall to its proper purpose, the inconvenience of long cul-de-sacs and long parallel roads without lateral communication and the pollution of the River Lee.

A lecture was arranged on the Government's New Towns proposals and also a lecture on windmills, which was supported by an exhibition of photographs. The school children of Harpenden were invited to take part in a competition in which a number of questions about Harpenden had to be answered. Prizes were provided by the Society and entries were received from one hundred and fifty children.

The membership of the Society is now 164. Most of these members joined the Society before the war and it is now considered that endeavours should be made to increase the membership, particularly among those who have come to live in Harpenden since the outbreak of the war. To assist members to spread knowledge of the existence of the Society and its aims a few circulars are enclosed for them to distribute to those of their friends who may be prospective members.

The Annual General Meeting of the Society will be held on Tuesday 20th January 1948 in the Small Public Hall, Southdown Road, at 8.15 p.m.

The rules of the Society have been under examination and as a result a proposal has been put forward that they should be amended to take the form set out on the enclosed paper. This proposal will be submitted to the Annual General Meeting.

The business of the meeting will also include the election of Officers and Committee. The following nominations have been received for election to the Committee:- Mrs. Crowther, Mr. E. Browning, Mr. S. V. Shadbolt, Col. G. B. M. Scutt, Mr. E. Flawn, Mr. A. Shoosmith, Mr. L. J. Searby, Dr. Walter Russell, Capt. K. H. Bond, Mr. G. H. Herring. Mr. A. H. J. Miller, Mr. N. A. C. Salvosen, Mr. R. Salaman and representatives of the National Council of Women, the British Legion, the Women's Institutes, the Workers' Educational Association, the Horticultural Society, the Rotary Club, the Youth Council and the Harpenden Branch of the British Drama League. Members are invited to make further nominations, but in each case it is important that the person nominated should have indicated his or her willingness to serve on the Committee if elected.

The financial statement for the period 1st June 1946 to 31st December 1947 will be submitted for adoption at the Annual General Meeting.

EUSTACE BROWNING.
Chairman.

ROTHAMSTED MANOR

~1950s? (post WWII & its de requisition)

The fine South front of Rothamsted Manor, lying back on the high ground about half a mile from the Laboratories, received its present form in the 17th century; but the building has a history several hundreds of years older than this.

The oldest portion is the present Hall, which was originally a simple timber-framed building resting on a flint foundation and probably open to the roof. Some of its oak beams may be seen today in the Hall and in the room immediately above it. Whether this structure was the Manor House in the early 13th century, when the Manor of Rothamsted first emerges in official records, is very doubtful; but it may well date from the 14th or early 15th century.

Under the ownership of the Bardolphs a typical Tudor country house took shape around the earlier building. They added, during the 16th century, a Parlour (now the Dining Room) and a Buttery (now the Morning Room), and, at some time before 1624, a single-storey room at the East end with a gabled roof. The brewhouse range of buildings on the North side of the courtyard (now converted into living quarters and kitchen accommodation) was put up by them. In the Dining Room they decorated the East wall with a fine painting, probably representing the siege of Edinburgh in 1573, in which it is thought that a Bardolph took part.

Early in the 17th century the Manor changed hands. Sir John Wittewronge took up residence there in the 1630s, and the house remained in the possession of his descendants for three centuries. Sir John himself shewed great enthusiasm in altering and expanding the building to suit his own tastes.

The main front was extended to its present length; curvilinear outlines in the Flemish style were placed upon the plain Tudor gables; and a clock turret was added, - since replaced by a sounder structure in which, however, the original bell, dated 1650, still hangs. Kitchens (now remoulded but still serving their original purpose) were erected between the main House and the Brewhouse, and the Little Drawing Room was joined on to the Dining

Room. Sir John put up oak panelling, both plain and linenfold, in several rooms, and constructed (in 1678) the main staircase as we see it today. No substantial alterations were made to the building during the next two hundred years.

Sir John Bennet Lawes, founder of Rothamsted Experimental Station and the father of agricultural science, was a descendant of the Wittewronges, and was born at Rothamsted House on 14th December 1814. Some of his early experiments were made in one of the bedrooms there, before he set up his first laboratory in a barn on the estate. In 1863, to celebrate the coming-of-age of his son Charles, he added the Great Drawing-room. Charles himself in 1900 built a single-storey library beyond it; this was his only structural addition, but he inserted some interesting armorial stained glass in the South front and elsewhere, and adorned the house with a fine collection of Elizabethan and Jacobean furniture.

In 1934, after a public appeal which met with a very generous response not only in this country but in many parts of the world, Rothamsted House and its estate of 527 acres were bought by the Lawes Agricultural Trust. The house remained a private residence until the Second World War, when it was taken over by the Army. Soon after its derequisition, work was begun on converting it into a Hall of Residence for members of the Rothamsted staff and visiting scientists. Six small flats have been constructed at the East end of the main house, in the Gatehouse and in the old Brewhouse, and about 20 single rooms on the upper storeys; but the chief rooms of the main house will be kept for general use. Barns and outhouses have been adapted to serve as a Sample House, a Museum, and garages. The amenities have been carefully preserved, and Rothamsted remains a fine house in a fine setting.

THE HARPENDEN SOCIETY

Telephone:
Harpenden 3449

59, Topstreet Way,
Harpenden.

May, 1952.

Dear Member,

Following the successes of the past two years your Committee has decided, after careful consideration, upon Ham House for the venue of this year's Spring Outing.

Ham House was given to the National Trust by Sir Lyonel Tollemache, Bart. and the Government purchased its valuable contents for nearly £60,000. The house was originally built in 1610, but was considerably enlarged and lavishly furnished by the Duke and Duchess of Lauderdale in the reign of Charles II. Most of this furniture and decoration has been carefully preserved in the house as it stands today.

This fine "restoration" mansion contains many beautiful paintings (several by Sir Joshua Reynolds and Sir Peter Lely) and a collection of Tapestries made by ex-Mortlake Weavers, together with many fine examples of Period furniture.

The coach will leave the "George" at 2 p.m. sharp on Saturday, 24th May, and after the party has visited the house tea has been arranged at the restaurant in the grounds. It is hoped that weather permitting, the return journey will be through Hampton Court and part of Buckinghamshire.

The fare, including entrance to House and tea, will be 10/6d. (Members of The National Trust 1/-d less if their membership ticket is presented at Ham House).

If you will fill in the form below and send same to me as soon as possible, stating the number of seats required, I shall be pleased to forward tickets. It will also help if remittance is sent at the same time.

Yours sincerely,

C. W. CURL,
Hon. Secretary