



Wheathampstead History Society

Bulletin no. 4, 18 October 2017

URGENT REMINDER: Mavis Soane retires as the Society's Treasurer in April 2018. **The Society cannot function without a Treasurer.** Please contact us to ask about this important role.

Latest news

- The archaeologists excavating the proposed site for a new secondary school at Batford have found artefacts and other evidence dating from the Mesolithic, Neolithic, Bronze and Iron Ages, through to Roman and medieval. The major find, however, is an Anglo-Saxon cemetery with up to fourteen graves, and the possibility of an Anglo-Saxon settlement. This is a rare find for Hertfordshire and tends to support Mike Smith's theory that this was Throppefeld in medieval times. The final report is not yet published but will be added to our website when it is available.
- **Next meeting:** Wednesday 15 November. This is your chance to share your own research, or just to put forward some ideas, in a 10-minute slot. Please let us know if you would like to contribute.

Notes and Queries

My dad Bert Cobb was born at Back Cottage, Gustard Wood. He was a garden boy then gardener at the Delaport Estate. In his 'teens he went to the James Marshall Charity for financial help to go to St Albans Art School in the evenings but was turned down as 'art is not education'. A few weeks later, a kind unknown benefactor (probably Frank Chennells) paid for him to go. So for two evenings a week he learned figure drawing and anatomy.

He married my mother Doris in 1933. In the same year he started the 'Serenaders' concert party. After the War he started the party up again with several of the old Serenaders, his children and quite a few young people. Young people would come up to him in the street and ask to join. He refused no one. My sisters were given the task of asking girls in their class if they were interested in dancing. Pat showed them the tap steps. Dad made up the dances. First they were the Serenadettes; a later group were named Sunrays. He continued with his drawing and doing comic pictures on the stage. Several of the girls in the concert party were asked to pose for him for figure drawing.



Crawmying



Old Tramp's Tales

The concert party was disbanded but Dad continued with a new dancing group called The Bluebirds. There are ladies in the village that learned tap dancing from him. He took them around old peoples' homes and hospitals.

In the early Eighties, he started drawing memories of his childhood at Gustard Wood. This came to be his great project – 'Life in the Twenties' – drawings from memory of characters, people working, and the different seasonal games. I have a collection of these drawings.

Rita Cobb