

LATE HITCH — BUT ACTION GROUP SEE DREAM REALISED

The Community Centre Action Committee was born five years ago out of a public meeting in the Village Hall, when a positive decision was taken to go ahead with plans for a Hathern Community Centre in Pasture Lane.

Chairman Tom Dennis, his lifetime spent as a resident of Hathern, praised all those who had been involved with its development. People like Dr. Andre Bagley and her husband, John, who each year allowed their home to be used for a gigantic bonfire night party, Ron and Val Carter, whose model railway exhibition at the school raised valuable funds, Rosemary and John Worsfold, treasurer Gordon Lennox, Joyce McIntosh, Stan and Joan Goodacre and 200 Club organiser Derek Baxter.

Enthusiasm

This hard-working group have, in five years, raised all of the cash to enable the community project to go ahead and now only £1,500 remains to be found, a tribute to their diligence and enthusiasm, says Mr. Dennis.

With the infusion of newcomers, he commented, it was realised that no adequate facilities existed in Hathern for community activities, except the Village Hall — a disused Wesleyan Chapel — which is right in the centre of things but restricted and inadequate.

A 98 per cent "Yes" vote from a public referendum encouraged the

committee to go ahead, and in those five years between the idea being hatched and the present — which almost sees the realisation of their dream — over £20,000 has been raised.

Ingenious

Most ingenious of their money-raising schemes are the certificates, sold for 50p each which certify that a purchaser has bought a brick to help build the centre. So far, £260 has been raised by this method, which proves, as Tom Dennis says, that "Hathern people will support anything if its worthwhile."

Now, although the building contractors have gone into liquidation and construction has stopped — hopefully only temporarily — the Centre is officially in being and the action committee can, in theory anyway, take a back seat, their part of the work completed. Now it is up to the people of Hathern to use their Centre to the full.

Brainchild

But they will always owe a tremendous debt to the small group of people whose brainchild it is and who despite difficulties and problems, have seen their

project almost through to the end.

"No words of mine can fully do justice to the work they've done," smiled Tom.



Hathern Village Hall, formerly the Methodist Chapel.

MOST LEISURE ACTIVITIES CATERED FOR LOCALLY

ALL TASTES and interests are catered for in Hathern, and it is a proud boast of villagers that residents don't have to go out of its limits for their leisure time activities and pastimes.

As in most rural settlements, Hathern is fortunate in having a lively Women's Institute, presided over by Mrs. Sheila Swift and containing two original members in Mrs. Grace Miller and Mrs. Vina Spencer.

The Institute was started in the 1920s, and met in the Charity Rooms. It was disbanded during the War, when the rooms were needed for war-work, but was revived in 1946 and now has about 47 members, mostly from Hathern, who enjoy a wide range of activities and social functions.

Though it has no political affiliation, the Institute is now permitted to have political discussions in its programme and has an assorted list of activities including cookery and travel, as well as educational and general talks given by invited speakers.

Mrs. Barbara Benton, who lives at 'Hollydene', one of a row of large houses on the Loughborough Road, is the former President of the Institute and now serves as a voluntary County Organiser. She is also chairman of the Hathern School managers, who meet three times a year to discuss staffing and other matters in relation to the school.

When she first moved to Hathern 24 years ago, it fascinated her that everybody knew her name, and whom she had married. But she says it was the best move she ever made, though, to join the Women's Institute and to go to live in Hathern, at the same house in which her husband, Richard, was born.

The Hathern Drama Society — born out of the post-war euphoria of 1947 — is now, unfortunately, almost defunct after a 32-year history in which it has become one of the most pleasurable parts of village life to its organiser, Mrs. Vera Crocker. They last met in August, with only eight members present and, unless things drastically improve, the society soon will be no more.

That would be a great pity, for the drama group has become a part of Hathern life, entertaining villagers in the Village Hall with such productions as 'Pink String and Sealing Wax', 'Wishing Well' and J. B. Priestley's 'When we are Married'. Each year, Mrs. Crocker and her associates — among them secretary John Worsfold and actor/producer John Randon — have put on two 2-act plays but have faced recurring problems. Royalties for a show at the Village Hall are exactly the same as at Stanford Hall — and fewer seats mean a smaller financial return. Now, with a shortage of willing activists and a dearth of acting talent, the society faces closure, which immensely saddens Mrs. Crocker, who has lived in Hathern for 51 years.

She and Mr. Randon, plus Mrs. Sue Stringfellow, are three survivors from the original society and she has sweet memories of the seaside outings and social activities that were such an integral part of the society during the Fifties. But, she says, rehearsal nights have become a slog, and although there is plenty of support for dinner-dances and social functions, it appears that nobody wants to act anymore. So if there is no reprieve in the shape of volunteer help, the society will die a quiet death. Which, as I said, would be a shame for an organisation which has obviously given so much to Hathern life and which has still so much to offer. So come on you Hathern folk — the ball's in your court now.

As well as running their hosiery factory at The Green, Ivor and Tony Swift are also leading lights in the Hathern Old Cricket Club, which plays on Pasture Lane just across from their premises. The origins of the club and its curious name are uncertain, but it is likely that the foundation dates back to the beginning of the 19th century when

the name was adopted to avoid confusion with another Hathern Club — now defunct — which was started in competition with the original.

E. L. Snow, in his 'History of Leicestershire Cricket' refers to a match between Hathern and Shepshed in 1814 and since then a number of Hathern players have written their names into the record books.

Perhaps the most renowned is the Randon family, five of whom played in the Loughborough side which beat an All-England team at Tylers Ground in 1868.

The club has always prided itself on its genuine connections with Hathern, recruiting players primarily from the village. In 1967, a new pavilion was built at a cost of £800, raised through whist drives, dances and donations, and built in just two-and-a-half months.

They have two sides in the North Leicestershire League — which they joined in 1958 — play friendlies on Sundays and enjoy, says Tony Swift, all the atmosphere of village cricket just three miles from the centre of Loughborough.



Mrs. Barbara Benton, chairman of the school managers
former president of the Women's Institute.



Hathern Junior School and, to the left, the partially built Community Centre.

Community centre will widen school's scope

MR. ROBERT SHORE is headmaster of the village school, the Hathern Church of England Primary, which caters for 140 children, from five to 11 years old.

The children come mostly from the village, and Mr. Shore, whose home is in Bedfordshire at present, thinks that village schools such as his have more character than urban schools. He has a staff of five and is worried that the current cuts in education spending might affect the level of in-service training among teachers.

Difficult

"There is a lack of materials," he says, "but we manage to budget well on small amounts." He emphasises "We are not paupers" — and says that the school manages its affairs well, but has little extra cash to play with and finds the acquisition of particular pieces of equipment difficult.

To buy equipment, he points out, it costs £6.39 a year for each child under eight years old, while for those 9-11, the annual cost per child is £7.53. "Schools are expected to do more and more with less," says Mr. Shore. "I honestly don't

think that people realise the problems and realities."

Mr. Shore has been at Hathern for 18 months, and enjoys the atmosphere of village life. "The spirit is wonderful," he says, "and the old and new factions of the village are gradually getting together."

One of the main reasons for his optimism is the construction of a new Community Centre, master-minded by a specially-formed action committee, and which, when completed, will lead directly into the school hall. Mr. Shore will be the warden of the community complex and is enthusiastic about the plan, which will mean that all age groups and interests in the village will be in regular contact with one another — and with the children.

United

The school has been housed in its present premises for five years. Some classes still meet in traditional buildings which are over 100 years old and

which face the Cross, but Mr. Shore hopes that when the complex is completed, the school will be united under one roof.

Exploring

Out of school hours, the children enjoy country dancing and gymnastics facilities and their choir has performed in the Mayor's charity concert in Loughborough Town Hall. They have also been away canoeing in Yorkshire and, says Mr. Shore, were particularly excited by an afternoon spent exploring their own back yard — the Soar, from Quorn to Hathern.

There is a lively Parent Teacher Association which has raised almost £1,000 for a new stage and video recorder and sufficient reading books for the school. Their annual carnival is their biggest cash-spinner and the association holds occasional Friday coffee afternoons to raise funds and encourage parents to visit the premises. The association also arranges jumble sales and film shows and organises dances and discos for the children.

The Youth Club, recently reopened after a brief period of closure, was formed four years ago in the Village Hall under the leadership of Mrs. Kath Forey and Mrs. Felicity Hayles to cater for the youngsters of the village. After moving into the old Schoolhouse, the club encountered problems with rowdiness outside and complaints from neighbours which led to the club being closed and the resignations of chairman John Worsfold and his deputy Stan Goodacre.

"I won't be responsible for these youngsters 24 hours a day, seven days a week," commented Mr. Goodacre. "If their parents can't control them, why should we?"

Annoyance

Unfortunately, says Mrs. Hayles, the Schoolhouse is in the centre of the village, with houses all around, and much of the disturbance is caused by youths from neighbouring villages who gather outside on the Cross or rev up their motorbikes, causing annoyance to residents. There is, she says, no problem that cannot be solved and stresses that the rowdies causing trouble are not members of the club.

WHEN 'W.G.' WAS BOWLED FOR A DUCK

TOM DENNIS lives next door to Hathern's new automatic telephone exchange, but in addition to being rooted in the present and future as one of the leading lights behind the Community Action Committee, his are the richest of memories as one who has lived in Hathern all his life.

He remembers travelling over to Rempstone on Goodacres' Primrose bus, when overhanging branches whipped off the tarpaulin that was being used as a cover and tossed it into the air. He also has the fondest memories of his cornet days with the Hathern Prize Band.

They used to parade, says Tom, on Whit Monday down to the Liberal Club for a dinner of beef, mashed potatoes and beer and in the afternoon would take part in a cricket match.

The day would be rounded off nicely with dancing on the Liberal Club lawn — with music supplied, of course, by the Prize Band, which was a blend of bands owned by two families, the Millers and the Kelhams, around the turn of the century. Tom played solo cornet for many years, and also performed in the National Championships at the Crystal Palace with Sibley in the mid-30s. Their train from London arrived in Loughborough at three in the morning — and a sleepy Tom fell asleep on his bike as he cycled home to Hathern!

Characters

One of the best-known characters of Hathern right up until his death in 1968, aged 85, was Stan Goodacre's father, John Pepper Samuel Goodacre, who owned the Stone House and garden on Wide Street. Nowadays, it is a private dwelling, but in his time it formed part of the Goodacre property and was spared from demolition in the 1950s when other cottages in Dovecote Street were pulled down.

John Goodacre was a familiar sight in Hathern with his favourite horse Turpin and dog Togo and was deeply involved in the community life of the village, providing and dressing vehicles for Hathern Wakes Galas, working

In Dormer Court, new flatlets have been built on what was once the stackyard belonging to Stints Farm. At No. 6, John and Gladys Stokoe can remember the Primrose buses too, as well as village characters like Jim Fisher, who had a mellow tenor voice, and Arthur Widdowson, who has almost achieved his century and was connected with the Hathern Band for many years.

Squabbles

Gladys also remembers the bringing of electricity into the village, the trenches, the mess and the nightwatchmen's nocturnal squabbles — and she also has the clearest memories of her grandfather, Frederick John Randon, who once bowled out the famous W. G. Grace for a duck!

It happened in a match at Victoria Park, Leicester, when in the first innings the great man was out for a duck — a process that was repeated in the second knock after the doctor had scored eight. As the legendary batsman passed the bowler, he muttered "Damn you Randon" — and Gladys's grandfather never played in that fixture again for fear of adding to the doctor's discomfiture. He died in 1883 of injuries received when struck on the head by a cricket ball at Lords two years earlier, and a benefit match was held at cricket's headquarters, the then Rector of Hathern, the Rev. Edward Smythies, having been made trustee of the money raised from the match.

His son, suitably also named Frederick John, was another fine cricketer to grace the family, for he was a professional on the county staff during the 1890s and also undertook coaching appointments, including one at Rugby School and another at Dalkeith Palace,

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Farms have to make way for new homes

TO THE TEARAWAY TRAFFIC that hurtles by, Hathern is no more than a blur, a patchwork of factories and petrol stations astride the A6, gone and forgotten in the blinking of an eye.

They see the spindly Jubilee Tree and a nearby seat commemorating the Jubilee over two years ago, a couple of wayside inns and housing estates, and think that this is Hathern. But the real Hathern lies away from the main road down the narrow, winding lanes that lead to the centre of this village, which certainly dates from Saxon times.

Medieval cross

At one time Hathern proudly possessed 12 operational farms, but they are now things of the past as farming land has been used for building and a cluster of new estates have sprung up since the war to provide homes for hundreds of newcomers. The old village huddles round a weathered medieval cross, where markets were once held and which, during the hungry thirties, was used as a rostrum for political speeches and rallies. The Cross has always played a prominent part in Hathern life, and today, even with all the new development taking place around, it is still a focal point of the village.

The parish church dates from the 10th century, and village records show that the local squire was requested to provide ten men to fight against the Norman invasion (he only managed to find eight!) It was once the principal market centre for the surrounding area, and was famous for its hand-made hosiery, knitted by stockingers who occupied houses which even now can be identified by their large windows, provided to give sufficient daylight for their fine and intricate work. The stockingers took an active part in the Industrial Revolution — and also in the dispute over the introduction of mechanised knitting which became known as the Luddite Riots.

Made welcome

Its much-vaunted Prize Bands, slaughterhouse and blacksmith's shop in Wide Street — a building which still remains — are all vestiges of a dead past for Hathern, but in the growth of a brand-new Community Centre, its smattering of small industries and a revival of community spirit that has embraced the newcomers and made them feel welcome, Hathern has turned to face the future. It has a population of 1,800 and while, in part, a dormitory village — supplying the needs of workers from nearby towns — it has still a genuine atmosphere of 'belonging', fostered by the many organisations which find their home within its cloistered streets and expansive new estates.



Newsagent's love of antiques helps the village

Being such a sprawling, widespread community — partially on the main route, the rest in the village — Hathern's shops are, of necessity, wide-ranging and geographically spreadeagled.

Muriel and David Bennett run a general grocery store on the A6 and have done for the past five years, since moving from Leicester, while the recipe is repeated down on Cross Street in the old village, where Norman Bryan-Peach and his wife, Shirley, operate a general stores and off-licence.

Mr. Bryan-Peach, who also owns a shop selling antique furniture and grandfather clocks in Loughborough, began his Hathern enterprise over eight years ago when he took over the newsagency on Billy Fuller's retirement.

Got into stride

Mr. Fuller had been Hathern newsagent for years, and, at first, guided his successor through the routine of getting up early, marking up and delivering. But Mr. Bryan-Peach quickly got into his stride, building up the grocery side of his business and adding the off-licence six years ago.

He is, in his own words, "very community minded", helping with catering and raffle prizes for almost all the village organisations, and has also organised successful antique fairs to raise funds for the Community Centre Action Committee. The first two fairs — which attracted dealers and buyers from far and wide — were held at Lord Crawshaw's Whatton House, but the third, at Loughborough Town Hall, made little profit.

Mr. Bryan-Peach has lived in Leicester, and finds Hathern's quieter atmosphere far more pleasant, and the job far less mundane than in a city environment. "When you've been here long enough and decide that you like it, competition and what someone else is doing do not matter, you just enjoy doing the job to the best of your ability," he says.

Time for chat

He is also pleased with his acceptance by and involvement with the Hathern community. "After a time you get involved in everything, and you only get out what you put in," he added.

Opposite is Jack Monk's Post Office, which was established by his father-in-law, John Screamon, in 1925, before Jack's wife, Elsie, took it over in 1965. As a Hathern man, born and bred, Jack sees lots of people come and go and knows almost everyone in the village as they come in for their pensions and stamps, and has time for a chat with everyone.



Norman Bryan-Peach and his wife, Shirley, run a general store and off-licence in the village.

INDUSTRY GIVES THAT 'LIVED IN' FEELING

ONE OF THE MAJOR factors preventing Hathern from becoming a sleepy dormitory village like hundreds of others is the industry that operates within its boundaries.

That is the opinion of Mr. Ivor Swift, with his brother Tony a third generation descendant of Henry Harriman J.P. who, together with his brother, started a hosiery manufacturing business in Hathern in 1890. The brother's half of the business was passed on to Ivor's grandfather and has since become J. Alex Swift Ltd., makers of men's quality hosiery, who employ about 30 people, mostly local, in the factory on The Green.

The Swifts still have an illuminated scroll, dated 1905, describing founder Mr. Henry Harriman as a "Guardian of the Poor, Trustee of the Hathern Charity Estate, Day School manager and Sunday School teacher". He was a bachelor and, added Mr. Swift with a smile, left all his money to the widows or unmarried ladies of Hathern!

Women's work

Nowadays, the company concentrate on the manufacture of men's and children's hose and on the 'better' end of the trade. They export 30 per cent of their wares to Hong Kong, Japan, America, Canada, France and the Scandinavian countries and, before the Portuguese revolution, did a substantial part of their business in that country.

They are solidly of the opinion that industry within the village has resulted in its feeling 'lived in' during the day. Hathern is unique for a village of its size and horizons in having so much industry, albeit on a modest scale, says Tony Swift, who estimates that more women work in the village — at factories like his own or that belonging to Fuller and Hambly — than go out of the village to work during the day.

He hopes that Hathern can remain a separate entity, resisting the encroachment of Loughborough, and considers the introductions of new blood a good thing.

"The village has doubled in size," he said, "and new ideas have improved it, but newcomers who want to keep the village as it is don't realise the part that industry has to play."

Hathern's relationship throughout the years with knitters and stocking manufacturers also lent Hathern a backstage role in the infamous Luddite saga, for in 1816 came the worst incident in the troubles, the attack on Heathcote, Lacy and Boden's Loughborough factories.

Heathcote, a Hathern man, was the inventor of various technical improvements to the bobbin-net machines. His rivals infringed his patent rights and he cut the workers' wages to reduce prices, but on June 28 1816, men with blackened faces smashed 53 machines to the value of £8,000 at his factory and, during the raid, shot and wounded a nightwatchman, John Asher.

Six men were hanged at Leicester Jail, three others suffered transportation — and Heathcote removed his business to Devon.

The bakery firm of F.E., C.E. and R.G. Spencer started in 1952 and, using old-fashioned and traditional processes and recipes, have established a thriving business on Loughborough Road. They supply the neighbourhood with rolls, bread and cakes, and their red vans can be seen at outlying villages like Normanton, Sutton Bonington and Kegworth.

Goodacre's Primrose buses were a common sight on the main road between Hathern and Loughborough during the 1920s, but what people who were not in the know perhaps did not appreciate was that, while they were buses by night and at weekends, these vehicles were haulage lorries during the day. After the day's toil, the "T"-type Fords were soon converted by lifting on 'bus tops', and equipped with wooden seats, made by craftsmen like Jack Cooper and Bill Watts, both of whom still live in Hathern.

The Goodacre haulage business was started at Zouch, with horse-drawn carts and barges before moving to Hathern 75 years ago.

In the Thirties the firm was laying water pipes from Cropston to Lockington, and also constructed part of the A6 north and south of the village. Nowadays, brothers Dennis and Stan Goodacre operate a general haulage business with 18 vehicles. Stan's grandfather formerly owned mills in Gotham, Zouch, East Leake and Barrow which were taken over, after the Second World War by British Gypsum.

Stan and his wife Joan are both natives of Hathern and are both heavily involved in village life.

Leading role

Stan is President of Hathern Old Cricket Club, on the committee of the Community Centre Action group, and takes a leading role in the Recreation Association, which bought the Village Hall after the Second War for the use of the village. Joan helps out at the Community Centre and at the Darby and Joan Club, which meets in the Village Hall on Thursday afternoons. On average about 30 senior citizens enjoy a variety of activities, including whist, bingo and dominoes, and the afternoon is invariably rounded off by tea before they all go home.

Both have done some 'globetrotting' in their time, but however far they roam, they always anticipate, with pleasure, returning to Hathern. "We feel," says Stan, "that it is a village, not a dormitory, and has just the right balance for us."

Their friends from Louisiana have also been smitten by the Hathern bug, for after a visit to the village they returned to the States and had a large road on a new estate out there called "Hathern Drive". "Now that," comments Stan, "is genuine affection for the many kind people they met during their stay in Hathern."

Curious history of bells in a pub

There are four hostleries in Hathern, but only one in the lower part of the village, the 'Three Crowns'. The others, the 'Anchor', the 'Dewdrop' and the 'Kings Arms' are all up on the A6, out of range of the old village and patronised by a mixture of Hathern folk and those travelling through.

The licensee of the 'Dewdrop' is Mr. Ernest Wardle, while Austin Webb has been publican at the 'Anchor' for the past 24 years.

Busy trade

He came from Loughborough's Jack O'Lantern, then the Clarence, and describes Hathern folk as "marvellous". He has a busy snacks and bar trade — and a set of bells, used to call 'time', which have a curious history.

Mr. Webb recalled with a chuckle that the bells were the property of a late resident of the village, Ivor Hudson, who would never sell them, come what may. He agreed, however, to lend them to Mr. Webb who, three years later, similarly arranged to 'loan' a budgies' cage to Ivor in exchange for his bells, which have, ever since, proudly hung in the bar of the 'Anchor'.

Famous

The 'Kings Arms' boasts of a famous former landlady in the late Mrs. Gladys Mills, stage and television personality, who was licensee for four years. Locals didn't often see her, for she was frequently away fulfilling stage engagements, and she rarely played the piano in the pub.

'Hathern Turn', as the pub is known to many, now has a busy restaurant trade. Serving villagers and through traffic, it has been in the care of Mr. Derek Gowlett since April 1977.

Tenants

The 'Three Crowns', where Don Dodge and his wife Hilary have been tenant landlords since 1975, was built in 1937 on the site of the former 'Three Crowns', and Don has a framed, 60-year-old photograph of Sally Randon — the Randons held the licence for 99 years — and village character 'Starchy' Gamble, standing outside the old pub.

The 'Crowns' has four darts and a skittles team, but Don is especially proud of its involvement with local Multiple Sclerosis groups. Pub raffles, over the years, paid for a specially converted minibus, and each Christmas the vehicle is used to bring residents of Roelcliffe Manor to the pub for a party and singsong.