

ASKES WILL BE 125 YEARS OLD THIS YEAR.

The 6th of November this year will see the 125th anniversary of the opening of the Hatcham Schools.

To celebrate this event we are republishing a number of items which originally appeared in either "The Hatcham Tercentenary Review" edited by the late Dick Hills O.A., or gleaned from "The Short History of the Hatcham Schools" written by the late Leslie Ingarfield O.A. and Maurice Alexander O.A. with further information added by Owen Swingland Q.C., O.A. and John Grant.

From Hachesham to Hatcham via the New Cross Turnpike (*Taken from "Hatcham and Telegraph Hill" by Raymond Thatcher. J.P., M. A. Thatcher was a past Chairman of the Telegraph Hill Conservation Society and Vice Chairman of the Lewisham Local History Society and he was a Governor of both the Hatcham Schools in the 1980's.*

The first written description of Hatcham is found in the Domesday Book of 1086. It is described as a manor containing land for three ploughs, nine villagers and two smallholders, six acres of meadowland and woodland for three pigs. From this description, together with the old name for Deptford, 'Meretone', or town in the marshes, we can assume that the district was well wooded and that the tiny population had brought sufficient land under cultivation for their needs.

The manor was one of many conferred by William the Conqueror on his half brother, Odo, Bishop of Bayeux. The manor had a number of other owners after Odo's death until it came into the possession of the Haberdashers' Company in the early 17th century.

In the reign of Henry II (1154-89) it was granted to Gilbert de Hachesham, who made it his place of residence and took his name from it. It was perhaps during his lifetime that a moated manor house was built on the site of the present Egmont Street (north of

New Cross Gate) where it remained until 1869.

The manor was bought by the Haberdashers' Company in 1614 for £7,180 to provide an endowment for the William Jones School and almshouse in Monmouth. A successful haberdasher, Jones left a fortune in trust to the company for the maintenance of his foundation. The Haberdashers took a great interest in the Hatcham estate. Their records show that in 1651 the manor included a manor house, orchard, dove house and stables, brick barn, winter pasture as well as other lands.

After the restoration of Charles II in the 17th century Hatcham was leased to Thomas Pepys, the cousin of the more famous diarist Samuel.

The 18th century saw significant changes at Hatcham: the growth in the population of London encouraged the development of market gardening and improvements in road travel, marked locally by the establishment of the New Cross Turnpike Trust which made the hamlet a pleasant place of residence for "gentlemen and worthy merchants".

Under the Turnpike Acts 'local worthies' took responsibility for the upkeep of designated lengths of highway, for which they could levy tolls. The New Cross Trust, formed in 1718, was first concerned only with the road from Stone's End in Southwark to the Lime Kilns at Blackheath. However, by the end of the century it had taken on some 40 miles of road extending to Woolwich, Dartford and Croydon.

Hatcham became an important junction, where many of the Trust's roads converged approaching London and a turnpike gate was erected in 1718 in the vicinity of Clifton Rise. The fame of the New Cross Trust

probably caused the name of Hatcham to become less well known; the district becoming known as New Cross Gate, an important place of refreshment for both man and beast at the Marquis of Granby, the New Cross House, the Jolly Post Boys and the Five Bells.

The steady increase in road traffic and urbanisation made the turnpike trust with its toll bars and gates a hindrance to traffic, and in October 1865 the New Cross tollgate was taken down in the presence of a riotous crowd who were "only dispersed by a welcome downpour of rain".

The tollgate had earlier been mentioned in correspondence of the poet Robert Browning, who lived with his parents in a little cottage which stood on the site of the present Girls' School in the 1830's and 1840's. Browning wrote to a friend: "If you can conquer the interminable Kent Road and, on passing the turnpike at New Cross, take the first lane with a quickset hedge on the right you will descry Telegraph Cottage, a house resembling a goose pie... We have a garden and trees and little hills of a sort to go out on".

But this rural charm was soon to be lost. The development of the railways in the neighbourhood in the mid 19th century brought about a rapid increase in the population of Hatcham: it had 734 people in 1801, 1,555 by 1831 and no less than 17,158 by 1871. The market gardens were sold and Hatcham became covered with bricks and mortar. Telegraph Hill was developed on a grander scale than neighbouring areas. The Haberdashers' Company, realising the changed potential of the land, instructed its surveyor William Snooke to survey it with a view to house building. His 1859 report recommended the laying out of wide tree lined roads for the erection of "dwelling houses of a high standard".

Associated with this development was the reconstruction and removal of another of the

Haberdashers' charities, Aske's Hoxton Hospital, to the Jones estate at Hatcham. The Hoxton hospital had been founded in 1690 by Robert Aske, Master of the Company, and he had endowed it with £20,000 as an almshouse and school for 20 poor men and 20 poor boys respectively. Hoxton received its income from land owned by the Haberdashers' Company at Shoreditch and at Ashford in Kent.

An increase in the income from this land prompted government action, compelling the charity to be reorganised. This the Haberdashers did by building two new schools at Hatcham one for boys and one for girls on the same site, financed from funds from the trust, on land purchased from what was the Jones Trust. (the hope was that these "middle class schools" would make the estate more attractive to potential house buyers on Telegraph Hill). The schools were established in 1875 as the plans for the development of the estate were completed. The *Architect* magazine reported in the same year: "The Hatcham Manor Estate, which exceeds 200 acres in extent is now being laid out for building purposes. The Haberdashers' Company will permit nothing but buildings of a superior class, including mansions and high class villas....".

By 1900 the development was largely complete and Telegraph Hill had become a middle class suburb of south London. Telegraph Hill Park had been bought and laid out at a cost of £15,000 and had been opened in 1895. The name served as a reminder of the Admiralty semaphore station, established on the hilltop a hundred years earlier. Before this time the hill was known as Plough Garlic Hill.

St. Catherine's Church, opposite the new school was built and endowed by the Haberdashers' Company in 1894 at a cost of some £22,000. In 1913 it suffered a severe fire, thought at the time to have been the work of the Suffragettes.