The Four Last things are the traditional themes of Advent. The phrase comes from Ecclesiasticus, who advises us to ‘remember the Last Things, that you may not sin’ (7.36). The medieval Church identified the Last Things as Death, Judgment, Hell and Heaven, and assigned each to one of the four weeks of Advent for meditation.

**Death** is the most obvious ‘last thing’ in life. According to Genesis 3, human beings were created to be immortal, but death came into the world through Adam’s sin. Classical Hebrew religion had no real hope in the afterlife; there was only the concept of Sheol (literally the ‘pit’, or ‘grave’) which is usually used as no more than a metaphor for death itself, or is at most regarded as a place of lingering half-life, memory or shadow. At best one might hope for the immortality of a good name. The earliest substantial belief in resurrection and the afterlife appears in the book of Daniel, 168 BC, and remained a minority view in Judaism; but through Jesus’ resurrection it became the foundation of Christian faith.

**Judgement.** Matthew 25. 31-46 gives us the classical picture of judgement: God separating the ‘sheep’ and the ‘goats’ according to their deeds while on earth. This is also the picture that appears in Judaism after Daniel. Most of the New Testament however has a more subtle doctrine of judgement. For both John and Paul ‘judgment’ depends not simply on one’s deeds in this life, but on one’s relationship to God in Jesus. In John’s Gospel Jesus says: ‘This is judgment, that the light has come into the world, but people turn away... those who are of the light, come to the light’. On this understanding, our judgement is continuous, and starts now: it is determined by our own response to the light and love of God, whether in this world or in the next. If we choose to accept God’s offer of a relationship with him now, and start learning how to repent and how to let go our ego and our pride of self in the love of God and others, then the more likely we are to become people who are capable of eternal union with him beyond this life.

**Hell** too is better understood as a choice we make for ourselves, rather than as a place to which we are sent. By the end of our life will we have learned enough faith and love for God to be ready to face his light and love – and the pain of exposure which it implies - or will shame, fear, or pride make us prefer to turn away into the dark? None of us is perfect when we die, or fit for complete union with God - which of course is what heaven is. There may need to be a period of perfecting before we have learned perfect love (see 1 Corinthians 3.11-15 and Matthew 5.25,6). And because we are persons, made in God’s image, with free will to choose Him or not, the possibility of our choosing hell must remain. As CS Lewis puts it: ‘In the end, there can be only two kinds of people: those who say to God, ‘Thy will will be done’, and those to whom God must say, ‘Thy will will be done’.

**Heaven** is eternal union with God, and God is love. The more we learn real love, the more we will be compatible with God who exists as a Communion of Persons in Love. Probably the nearest we can get to an experience of heaven in this life is loving someone so much that we literally lose ourselves, and find a new self in union with him or her. As Jesus says, ‘You must lose yourself to find your eternal self’. It is the same with us and God. We lose our selfish self to find a new self in union with Him. In the description of heaven in Revelation, this mystery is at the heart of all the imagery. God is the Source: the River of life and of all being, in whom all richness and diversity will be harmonised and perfected, when not only we but the whole of creation will be summed up in him. God is the Light: we need no lamp or sun, because his light is reflected perfectly from him to us and us to him. God is Love itself, the origin and goal of all that is, endlessly ebbing and flowing, endlessly creative, endlessly new.

This is the serious stuff that we are supposed to be thinking about in Advent. Have a go – it is much more rewarding than planning for Christmas.
St Etheldreda’s Church

Sunday
8am Holy Communion
9.30am Holy Communion with Sunday School
3rd Sunday of month 9.30am All age Eucharist
Wednesday 9.15am Holy Communion
Sunday School 9.20am for 9.30 start in Parish Hall

St Luke’s Church

Sunday 12 noon
Holy Communion

What’s on this month at St Eth’s unless stated otherwise

Saturday 3 December 8am
Men’s breakfast St Michaels

Sunday 11 December 2016 4pm
Nativity Play at Hatfield Park Farm
See details inside on page 4

Sunday 18 December 6pm
Nine Lessons and Carols, with Mulled wine and mince pies afterwards

Baptisms and Weddings

10th December—Gemma Price & Michael Swainsbury
28th January—Christopher Newport & Deborah Opoczynska
Please remember these two couples in your prayers
Please contact Fr. Darren 01707 256638 frdarren@yahoo.co.uk to arrange weddings or baptisms

Who’s who in the Parish

Team Rector of Bishops Hatfield
Fr. Darren Collins—01707 256638
frdarren@yahoo.co.uk

Reader John Barnard—01707 335074
john209barnard@btinternet.com

Churchwardens
Malcolm Caie - 07817 053868
malcolm.caie@gmail.com
Richard Morton - 07979 906330
richard@rm-architects.com

Deputy Churchwardens
Eve Lloyd—01707 884981—St Luke’s Church
Mark Jackson—07708 199591
Nicky Jackson—07745 630176

Bell Steeple Keeper—Rob Goss 01438-718038

Choir Director & Organist Jill Knight—01707 894949
jill.jkmusic@gmail.com

Church Hall Bookings—Clair Pike—07983 960450
e: hatfieldchurchhall@gmail.com

Creative Corner ruth.letton@googlemail.com

Communications Officer Linda Barnard
linda.barnard3@btinternet.com

Sunday school/children’s leader
Nicky Jackson—07745 630176

Flower Team
Carrie Shannon—carrieshannonuk@gmail.com

Mother and Toddler Group
Charlie Pisanski—queenbeemum@yahoo.co.uk

Parish Team Office
12 Fore Street—01707 260800
Vestry hour Saturdays 9am—10am
bhteamoffice@gmail.com

Refocused Editor—maryrathbone@icloud.com

Refocused Advertising—jo.roscoe@hotmail.co.uk

Refocused by email—linda.barnard3@btinternet.com

Safeguarding Officer—Nicky Jackson—07745 630176

St Etheldreda’s Printing Service (STEPS)
mikeberwick@ntlworld.com

Treasurer Mark Knight—01707 894949
knightmark2@gmail.com
What’s On at Hatfield House in December

24 Nov—18 December

What could make Christmas more magical than an encounter with Father Christmas himself? If you are looking around for where to meet the man in red this winter then look no further!

The historic setting of the Stable Yard at Hatfield House is the perfect place for children to come and share their Christmas wishes with Father Christmas. Unlike many grottoes we promise to keep this experience simple, stress free and most importantly fun.

4 December 11am
Santa Run
A great fun event will take place this Autumn. The industrious bunch at Hatfield Rotary Club are holding a Santa Run, open to all, by kind permission of the Marquess of Salisbury, at Hatfield House on Sunday December 4th starting at 11 a.m.

11 December 7:00pm
Music for Christmas
Join us for another memorable evening as once again, the Old Palace will be filled with the joyful and uplifting sound of Hertfordshire Chorus. Get the Festive season going with a wonderful mix of Christmas carols and songs old and new, including a chance to join the choir in singing some familiar favourites. And don’t forget to enjoy seasonal refreshments before the start of the concert.

17 December 10am-5pm
Vintage, Antiques & Collectors’ Market

18 December 10am-2pm
Farmers’ Market

Old Hatfield Residents Association news

OHRA Christmas Songs and Carols  Put Saturday 4th Dec. 5pm in your diaries when everyone is invited to gather at the tree in Salisbury Square (opposite the 8 Bells) for the fourth OHRA Christmas Songs and Carols event. There will be musicians and singing (Santa will make a brief appearance) before we move on into Checkers House for mince pies, mulled wine and more songs. We would like to extend our sincere thanks to RSA for allowing us to use Checkers again this year and for providing mulled wine, and to Simmons for once again providing the delicious mince pies and ginger bread men. The chosen charity for this year’s event are St Etheldreda’s Church and Mary Church.

OHRA General Meeting  There will be an OHRA general meeting on Thursday December 8th at 8pm at the Social Club (on the A1000 opposite the Station). We will be giving the latest information on when the Station Retail units will open, when the York House refurbishment starts, and best estimates on the planned dates for the general redevelopment. This is your chance to meet neighbours and share your views. For those who have been to previous meetings, the Social Club is more comfortable, has good acoustics and a bar.

Parking  Many of you have been complaining to OHRA about parking problems in Old Hatfield. We are keen to know of your problems, but it would help if you could also email your issues to Vikki Hatfield, who is the person responsible in the council, via the general email address which is contact-whc@welhat.gov.uk or by phone on 01707 357000.

Platform 3  We have been chasing Great Northern / Govia Trains since 2008 for a resolution of the long trek problem, which results in station users walking an extra 16,000 miles per year. Govia Trains should be very embarrassed by a reply received in the last couple of days from the Office of the Rail Regulator in reply to a request under the Freedom of Information Act. More on this on December 8th.

UoH Students  We are trying to build bridges between Old Hatfield and the University. One of the consequences is that there are a few more students around, notably first year architecture students. Where they are on projects that involve detailed observation they have been asked to give advance notice, to carry some form of ID, and to respect residents’ privacy.

Hatfield House Events  The English Electric Event that has been problematic for some over the last 3 years has been discontinued. Next year will be the first Game Fair, which is expected to attract perhaps 40,000 people a day on each of the three days 28-30 July 2017 (the old Country Show used to have fewer than 10,000 on a good day).

Blooming Old Hatfield  We are tidying up for the winter, and planning to set up an ad hoc working group which will meet up for a couple of hours on Saturday mornings perhaps half a dozen times per year to look after the flowers and maybe pick litter and do some of the other things that need doing around Old Hatfield.

More Info: www.hatfield-house.co.uk
01707 287010 visitors@hatfield-house.co.uk
Come to the Stable
at Hatfield Park Farm on Sunday 11th December and afterwards for tea, or mulled wine and mince pies in St Eth’s Church Hall

Gather 4pm at Shepherds Hut, Georges Gate carpark

A moving play that focuses on the physical journey of the Holy family from Nazareth to Bethlehem. We hope that this unique event, in dream like setting, will give the children a never to be forgotten experience.

Set in the heart of the Hatfield Park Farm, the farm animals add real authenticity to the play. Scenes will be performed in various barns on the farm, representing different biblical locations. The choir will lead the singing as we go, from place to place. With an all adult cast it is suitable for children of all ages, who are welcome to come dressed as shepherds.

The audience should park cars in Georges Car Park and enter the play via the Shepherds Hut, at the entrance to the farm. Everyone is invited to join us at a party afterwards in the Church Hall. There is no charge to attend the events, but a retiring collection will be made in aid of a Donkey Sanctuary and St Eths -50/50.

More information, John Barnard - 01707 335074
john209barnard@btinternet.com

Bring a torch and sturdy footwear
Please do not feed the animals

Christmas and St Luke’s Gospel
It is to St Luke’s wonderful gospel that many Christians turn as the year draws to a close and Christmas approaches, for it is to St Luke that we owe the fullest account of the nativity.

Luke alone tells us the story of Mary and the angel’s visit to her, and has thus given the Church the wonderful Magnificat of Mary.

Luke alone tells us the story of Simeon’s hymn of praise, thus giving us the wonderful Nunc Dimittis.

Luke alone tells us the story of how the angels appeared to the shepherds and how the shepherds then visited the infant Jesus. So – imagine Christmas cards and nativity scenes every year without the shepherds arriving to visit baby Jesus. Imagine school nativity plays without our children dressed as shepherds or sheep. So – thank you, Luke!

What makes it so amazing is that Luke was not Jewish! The man who wrote the fullest nativity story, and indeed more of the New Testament than any other single person, was a Gentile! (Source Parish Pump)

Our very own St Luke’s Church—the church on the roundabout—has a warm and friendly congregation—why not visit them for their Christmas Day Service starting at 11am? Mary Rathbone

The Service of Nine Lessons & Carols
Sunday 18 December 6pm

A service of Christian worship celebrating the birth of Jesus that is traditionally followed at Christmas.

The story of the fall of humanity, the promise of the Messiah, and the birth of Jesus is told in nine short Bible readings from Genesis, the prophetic books and the Gospels. It is interspersed with the singing of Christmas carols, hymns and choir music.

The format was based on an Order drawn up by Edward White Benson, later Archbishop of Canterbury, but at that time Bishop of Truro in Cornwall, for use on Christmas Eve (24 December) 1880.

Tradition says that he organized a 10pm service on Christmas Eve in a temporary wooden shed, serving as his cathedral, and that a key purpose of the service was to keep men out of pubs on Christmas Eve. The original liturgy has since been adapted and used by other churches all over the world.
Friends of Hatfield Care Homes
Friends of Hatfield Care Homes is a developing initiative to support the elderly living in Care Homes in Hatfield. This is a voluntary drive that seeks to bring the 'community' into the Care Homes by building friendly links between volunteers and the residents and staff in them. We aim to offer residents companionship, friendship and laughter!

The first Steering Group meeting for the Friends of Hatfield Care Homes was held at the beginning of November. We were delighted that there were fourteen of us at the meeting, certainly enough of us to take this initiative forward in particular to offer support to the Care Homes locally, recruit and train volunteers and match their gifts and skills with the needs in the Homes.

If you'd like more information about FHCH or would like to offer to be a volunteer, please feel free to contact Sue Stilwell at susan.stilwell@clara.co.uk or Pauline Hayes at paulinedayes@gmail.com. We would be delighted to hear from you. Watch this space for more developments in the New Year...

Sue Stilwell
Pauline Hayes

The Bishops Hatfield pilgrimage to The Holy Land with Father Darren Collins
4-13 June 2018

Travel with us to the Holy Land and let the Bible come alive as we meet the people and see the places of the gospel stories. The Holy Land is unique in offering so many highlights and contrasts in such a compact area. On our journey, we will visit places of pilgrimage and also meet the local Christian community, offering them our encouragement as we hear of the challenges they face. Our pilgrimage is planned for June when the weather is warm and sunny. Visits include Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Bethany, Nazareth and Capernaum, with a chance to float in the Dead Sea. We will walk along the Via Dolorosa, drive into the desert and sail on the Galilee.

As with any pilgrimage there will be a reasonable amount of walking involved. If you are worried about this aspect, please contact Fr Darren and discuss your concerns. We are confident that this pilgrimage will be an enjoyable and spiritually enriching experience.

To Hatfield with Love
Hatfield Community
Christmas Meal
£5 per head
Saturday December 3rd from 5.30-8pm


More information:
Rev Nina Johnson UH Chaplaincy (01707 284456/265949);
Margaret or John Eames-Petersen (01707-884502)
eames.ph@btinternet.com;
Rev Sue Stilwell -sue.stilwell@clara.co.uk (or at Saturday Family Club, 10am -12 noon in Howe Dell Hall);
Hatfield Community events
Town Council Birchwood (01707-270772)

Christian Unity in Hatfield

There will be a Service for the National Week of Prayer for Christian Unity on Jan 22nd 2017 at 3.30pm in St Michael's church in Birchwood. With refreshments afterwards. All Christians and all churches in Hatfield are invited.

Prayer for Hatfield (with all Christians living in Hatfield invited) is scheduled for Dec 20th and Jan 24th at 7.30pm for 8am start at:

Open Heavens Christian Centre, 5A Town Centre, Hatfield AL10 0IZ

This is in an upper room next to de Faith hairdressers, close to the pillar box outside Martins the newsagent.
Tell Me The Old, Old Story by Jo Roscoe

This well-loved hymn is often associated with the Salvation Army, but in fact it was written in 1806 by a Church of England evangelist. It serves my purpose as a title, because, linking with my words to the left, I have been thinking about the telling of our Christian story to the current and coming generations of children in our parish.

The Dean of St Albans in his front page letter has given us some deep thoughts about Advent – a time when the Church prepares for the coming of Christ in the birth of Jesus. And for us at St Etheldrea’s it has a special significance this year because it heralds the relaunch of our Sunday School (see bottom of page).

Last Sunday I went to Sunday School! I smiled at the chattering children and I settled down with them to listen to a little story about Remembrance; sang a little chorus; said the Lord’s Prayer and then joined in at the craft table and made (well, I think so) a beautiful paper poppy wreath. I loved it. It was worth resisting the Sunday morning pull of my warm bed.

It isn’t easy getting yourself and your children up and ready for a 9.20am drop off. Years ago I did it for my children because, living far away from grandparents, aunts and cousins, I wanted them to feel part of their community. In doing so I became part of the community myself.

I truly believe that there is no greater gift you can give your child than membership of a congregational family, with a bedrock of Christian values, providing a firm foundation for life and its challenges.

My thanks to Sunday School teachers everywhere, but especially thanks to our St Eth’s team.

Silent, Silent Night by Jo Roscoe

From my bedroom window I look out onto the back of Fore Street, with its higgledy piggedly collection of roofs and windows. One of the houses is smaller than the others and has an apex slate roof, so that on a dark but moonlit night, it looks like a magical cottage – and my imagination adds a tall chimney with a thin plume of smoke rising to the sky.

I cannot tell you what pleasure this gives me. It sends me straight back to childhood and Christmas Eve; peeping through the curtains at the starlit night filled with the wonder and awe of the Christmas story and the wonderful words of our Christmas carols: ‘Silent Night, Holy Night and ‘O Little Town of Bethlehem – how still we see thee lie’. And I wonder if we are doing enough to give our children and grandchildren that sense of awe and wonder. Our modern towns and cities blot out the stars, our modern TV advertising and super shops drown out the silence. Excitement and good things are a plenty - but awe and wonder are sometimes in short supply.

The little town of Bethlehem isn’t now so little and doesn’t always lie still; there aren’t any shepherds minding their flocks; but on Christmas Eve, the Shepherds’ Field outside Bethlehem will be filled with hundreds of Christian pilgrims from Israel, Palestine and all over the world. The dark stillness of the night will be pierced by voices raised in praise and Glory Will Shine Around.

St Etheldreda’s Church has a new Children’s Sunday School

Every Sunday at 9.20am in our Parish Hall at the top of Church Street (Next door to Hatfield House). It will be a time of fun, craft, singing and laughter.

All are welcome!

If you would like to find out more, come along, or call or text:

Fr Darren on 07453 624061

www.stetheldreda.org

Refocused, December 2016—Page 6
Can you give a home to our cheese plant and raise funds for the Church?

The plant was bought in Paris in the early 1980s and is well travelled having lived in Birmingham, Leicester and London before settling in Hatfield. It is quite large (approx. 6’ tall) and constantly outgrows our small space (despite occasional haircuts!). It does need to be re-potted, but is healthy and grows well.

Please send your bid to Liz Fisher by 31st December 2016 - lizfisher5522@gmail.com or 01707 264377. The entire payment will go to the St Eth’s Restoration Fund.

Would you like to give your local churches, St Eth’s & St Luke’s, a Christmas present?

With Christmas approaching, we are inviting our readers to ‘Give your Church a Christmas Present’. Gifts such as funding a day’s heating; the Paschal candle or altar candles; a supply of communion bread or communion wine; an organist for a service would be very gratefully received and offered in thanksgiving at the Christmas Day services. For more information please call or email Fr Darren —01707 256638—frdarren@yahoo.co.uk

A weeks supply of communion wine and bread
High Altar candles £ 18
The Easter Paschal candle £ 24 each
Nave Altar candles £ 35 each
Heat and light for the church £ 10 each
Organist for a service £ 20 for one day
A set of service booklets £ 50
Insurance for the church £ 40
Supply of gift aid envelopes £ 10 for one day
A set of service booklets £ 45 per pack
Annual fire extinguisher maintenance £ 50
One day’s Parish Share for 2017 £ 155

How to Donate
Cheques should be made payable to ‘St Etheldreda’s Church’ and can be posted to the Parish Office (by hand or Royal Mail) at 12 Fore Street, Old Hatfield, Hertfordshire AL9 5AN

Happy Christmas St Eth’s and St Luke’s - my Christmas gift to you is...

J J Burgess & Sons
are holding their annual Christmas Remembrance Service at Christ Church, St Albans Road East
7.00pm on Wednesday 7th December
The service will include the launching of the Christmas Tree of Remembrance Appeal. Cards will be available in the church or from their offices during the month of December, and they are asking for a minimum donation of £1 for each one. All donations go to Just One Click Away (JOCA) a mental welfare and wellbeing charity based in Welwyn Garden.

www.stetheldreda.org
I heard the bells on Christmas day
By Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

I heard the bells on Christmas day
Their old familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet the words repeat
Of peace on earth, good will to men.

I thought how, as the day had come,
The belfries of all Christendom
Had rolled along th'unbroken song
Of peace on earth, good will to men.

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
'There is no peace on earth,' I said
'For hate is strong, and mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good will to men.'

'Till, ringing, singing on its way,
The world revolved from night to day
A voice, a chime, a chant sublime,
Of peace on earth, good will to men.

Ring out, wild Bells
by Alfred, Lord Tennyson

Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,
The flying cloud, the frosty light
The year is dying in the night;
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Ring out the old, ring in the new,
Ring, happy bells, across the snow:
The year is going, let him go;
Ring out the false, ring in the true.

Ring out the grief that saps the mind,
For those that here we see no more,
Ring out the feuds of rich and poor,
Ring in redress to all mankind.

Ring out a slowly dying cause,
And ancient forms of party strife;
Ring in the nobler modes of life,
With sweeter manners, purer laws.

Ring out the want, the care, the sin,
The faithless coldness of the times;
Ring out the feud of rich and poor,
Ring in redress to all mankind.

Ring out old shapes of foul disease,
Ring out the narrowing lust of gold;
Ring out the thousand wars of old,
Ring in the thousand years of peace.

Ring in the valiant man and free,
The larger heart the kindlier hand;
Ring out the darkness of the land,
Ring in the Christ that is to be.

Tail End – News from our Bellringers

I know I’ve written this before in these columns but we’re short of ringers!

You may (hopefully) have noticed that we have not been ringing regularly on Sunday mornings for the 9.30 service? Russel, Dorothy, Odette and Virginia have all had to give up ringing for various reasons and so on quite a number of Sundays in the past few weeks we’ve only had one or two ringers available and so we’ve not been able to ring.

At the time of writing, I’m still not sure yet whether we will have sufficient numbers for Remembrance Sunday when we ring both for the 9.30 service and from 11.02 to about 11.30 with the bells half-muffled.

Any volunteers willing to learn this ancient art?

Rob Goss e-mail mary.rob.goss@gmail.com

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www.stetheldreda.org Refocused, December 2016—Page 8
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Learn to play ukulele!
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www.jillknightmusic.co.uk/ukulele-courses

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Tel. 01707 894949/ 07882 373805

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Call Martin Tiplady on 07990 773 398 or email MartinTiplady@Prudential.co.uk

Prudential Financial Planning advisers are qualified and experienced in financial planning and can advise on a range of carefully selected products from Prudential and other providers. This is known as a restricted advice service.

If you have a financial adviser, please talk to them. If you don't, call me today to book a no-obligation chat.

PRUDENTIAL

We are a local Almshouse Charity with 14 properties in Turmore Dale and Hyde Valley Welwyn Garden City

If you are over 60 and looking for accommodation, please contact our Managing Agents:

Welwyn Garden City Housing Association on:
01707 390044
We may be able to help

www.stetheldreda.org

Refocused, December 2016—Page 9
Hatfield Social Club

Need a venue for a special occasion?

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We are looking for fruit and/or vegetable vendors for our market in Stable Yard. If you grow your own and would like to sell your seasonal produce at our monthly farmers’ market please get in touch with Jon at: 017072 64868 or stableyardmarkets@gmail.com

Andrew Watt
0777 186 1135
01707 881334
andycwatt@sky.com

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12 Fore Street — 01707 260800 — bhteamoffice@gmail.com—Vestry hour Saturdays 9am—10am
Receive Refocused by email from linda.barnard3@btinternet.com

www.stetheldreda.org

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Hatfield Park War Cemetery dates back to when Hatfield House was used as a hospital during World War II. The site, on the side of the A1000 Great North Road, is a formal war grave and maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

The cemetery contains the graves of 20 serviceman and a de Havilland flight test observer killed along with John de Havilland (buried in Tewin Churchyard) on a test flight. There is also a memorial headstone for a serviceman buried in a 'redundant' churchyard in Digswell.

The memorial cross can be seen, on a good day, from windows of trains leaving and arriving at Hatfield Station.