

# Curious Hertfordshire Beliefs and Customs

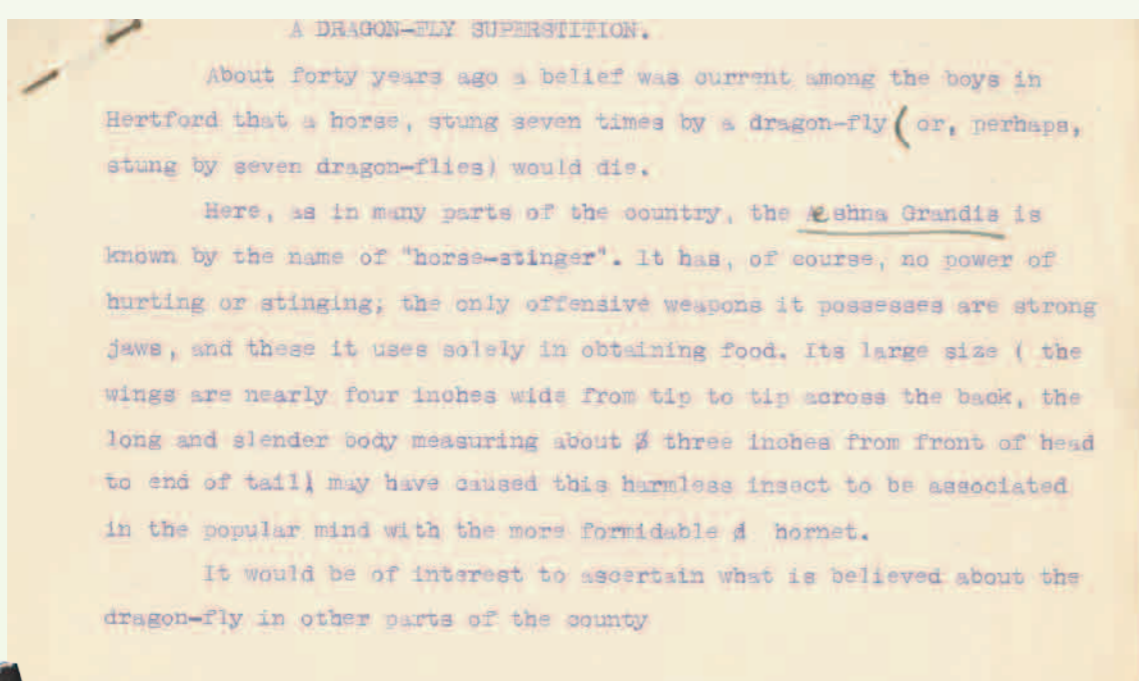


It was believed that a harvest mouse would die if it tried to cross a path trodden by man. This was said to account for the number found on summer evenings on grass verges without any obvious cause of death.

The plant *Anemone pulsatilla*, which grows at Ashwell, was said only to grow in places where Danish blood had been shed.



In Hertford, in 1916, it was said to be unlucky to accept the gift of knives or scissors- without paying a small coin for them, otherwise the friendship would be severed.



In the 19th century, Hertford boys believed that a horse stung seven times by a dragon fly would die.



Some Hertfordshire families would put a large dish of salt on the breast of a deceased loved one, immediately after death. It was said to make their death easier.



Stewed earthworms were believed to cure jaundice.

A snail kept in a pillbox was thought to cure toothache.

A fried mouse or hair from a donkey's shoulder was said to cure whooping cough.

A cure for the ague fever sufferer was to go to Cross Oak near Berkhamstead, to bore a small hole in it and place a lock of their hair (still attached to their head) into this hole and fasten it with a peg. The patient then had to tear themselves from the tree in the hope that the disease would disappear.



A young girl from Little Gaddesden had 'the evil' in her feet from infancy, and had lost one of her toes and could hardly walk. A beggar woman advised her family to get a toad and cut off one back leg and the opposite front leg. The girl should then wear these in a silken bag around her neck. The theory was that as the poor toad died, so should the pain or illness in the patient. In this case, the young girl was recorded as being cured.

