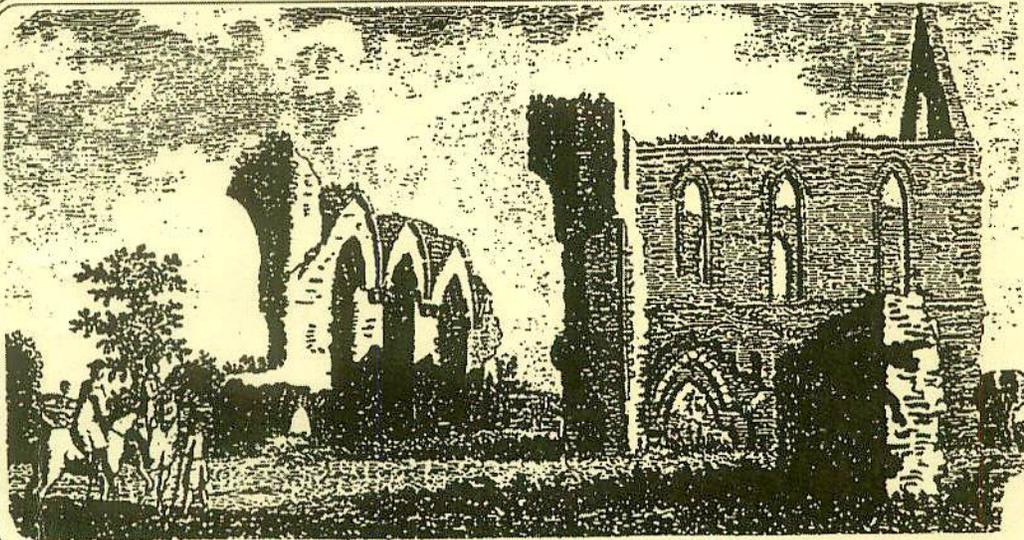


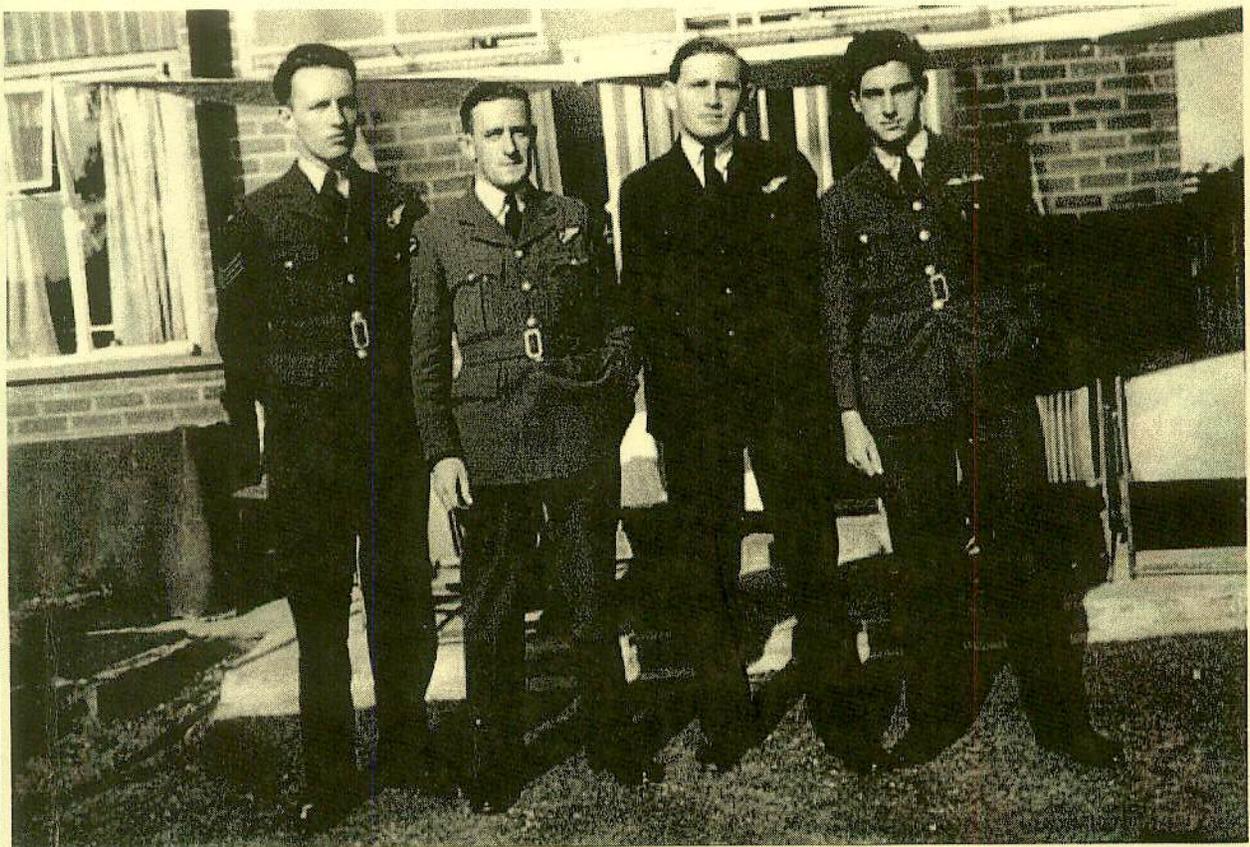
Send & Ripley History Society

FOUNDED 1975 AS SEND HISTORY SOCIETY
Registered Charity No. 296324



NEWARK PRIORY

Journal Volume 5 No.164 May/June 2002



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Cover Illustration: August 1943, Oakhurst, Potters Lane, Send. Alex Wood on right and three Commonwealth members of his crew (from the right), Bill Highland, Rear Gunner, Jack Curtis, Navigator and Gordon Wright, Bomb Aimer. (see page 9)

Editor's Comment

Editor's Comments This is the first edition of the journal to be produced on a disk complete with photographs on MS-Word converted to Adobe Acrobat in 'preferred document format' (pdf). If you are familiar with this terminology you will know it is the format required by most printers. I can say that it has taken a great deal of time and energy by the editor, with much help, to reach this stage, but it should result in a less trouble-free publication process and will improve the quality of photographic images. There have been difficulties with importing non-word text though, but not with different fonts, provided it is in ms-word. So just a reminder, **the preferred format for text submissions is ms-word in Times New Roman 12 point, with headings in 14 point** Hand written or other typed formats are still of course welcome by post but require transposing to the above form, which just takes longer. Good inkjet copies of photographs rather than originals should be included with your submissions if available. These can be sent to the editor as e-mail attachments to text or through the post in the usual way.

Wrought Iron Seat

This wrought iron seat stood for some 60 years beside the road (initially a track) near the far end of Send Hill. It is believed to have been made in the 1920's by C H Sex & Sons, Blacksmiths & Wrought-Iron specialists, who had their smithy to the right of what is now the Chemists. It was probably intended to provide an opportunity to sit for a few moments rest to those people who had just walked up the hill on their way home from church.

The trunk of the mature oak tree against which it stood grew substantially over the back of the seat. By the 1980's the seat was very dilapidated, especially after being hit by a lorry. It was rescued by Bill Nicoll with the back still embedded in a sizable portion of oak. The seat has been restored for SRHS by Ted Goldup who used parts of a similar seat which formerly stood opposite Sendholme. The original seat was two feet longer



Old Church Path

The diamond-shaped pattern of pebbles in front of the seat is all that remains of the path which led from the street to the door of St Mary Magdalen Church, Ripley. Sadly, the date of 1889, also formed from pebbles in the path, disintegrated as the path was lifted in 2001, when replaced by the present path of York stone. The 1889 path was laid by John Pullen (grandfather of the late Ivy Sopp) a builder and some-time landlord of the Ship and later the White Hart.

Les Bowerman

Our Worsfold Story

My father, Albert William Worsfold, was the sixth child of twelve born to George Worsfold and Louisa Emily (formerly Lee). George and Louisa were married at Stoke-next-Guildford on December 23rd 1912. At the time of their marriage they were living at Rushetts Farm Cottages that lay to the south of Bramley within a few miles of where Louisa was born in the village of Dunsfold on the 30th December 1888.

Their first child was born on the 28th September 1912, but she did not survive more than a few minutes and was not named. At that time they were at Burchatts Farm that lay at the eastern end of Stoke Park, Guildford. Two further children were born at Burchatts, Ernest George on 23rd March 1914 and Frederick John on the 28th March 1915. The next two children, Dorothy Kathleen on 1st July 1916 and Robert Victor on 9th November 1918, were born at Bowers Cottage, which is next to the old mill and lock-gates by the River Wey at Burpham. From there they moved back to within a few hundred yards of Burchatts Farm to Stoke Park Farm further along the London Road. Here they had another three children, Albert William on 26th February 1920, Edward James on 14th October 1921 and Lily on 13th April 1923. When Leslie was born on the 13 October 1924 the family were living at 2, Stoughton Cottages in West Clandon but they appear to have moved back again to the London Road area again by 1926 when Ronald is born on the 18th June of that year at Marlins Lodge. Joyce Margaret was also born there on 11th May 1928 along with their last child David on 1st March 1930.

The family were living at Southway Avenue, Guildford by 1940. This was also the case when Louisa died on the 23rd October 1950. George's occupation is given as a domestic gardener, a more leisurely job as he had now reached retirement age. It seems that he did not retire completely as when he passed away on the 12th May 1962 aged 77 his occupation was still given as gardener of 152, Southway Avenue. It appears that George may have worked for Lord Onslow as Burchatts Farm, Stoke Park Farm and Marlins Lodge are all listed as being his properties in records held at the Surrey History Centre. Lord Onslow also held land at Send and Ripley including Grove Heath where George's father John and Grandfather William were born so perhaps George was not the first generation of Worsfolds working for him. Like his father his occupation is given as a carter.

George was one of seven children. He was born on the 14th January 1885 at Ripley to John and Ann (Collyer). By trade John was an agricultural carter and had married Ann at Ripley on the 8th September 1883. She was by then already pregnant with their first child John William who was christened at Ripley on the 25th November of that year. George was their second child. Their third, Annie Elizabeth, was not to survive a year, being baptised on 31st July 1886 and buried at Ripley on 15th May 1887. The next child Fanny was baptised at Send church on the 26th February 1888. It was then that the move to Merrow must have taken place as William was born there in 1889 along with further sons, Henry J (1890) and Ernest (1894).

Like his father, George became a carter. Many generations of Worsfolds had been working the land in one way or the other. George's Grandfather, William, who had been an agricultural labourer, now aged 55, was also living with them at Merrow when the 1891 census was taken. George's father, John, was born to William and Emma (Tickner) and baptised at Ripley on the 29th January 1861, He was their second child after an elder brother William who was baptised at Ripley on the 29th October 1858 just a few months after his parents wedding there on the 7th

August. William was to die mysteriously, being found drowned at Bowers Mill, Burpham on the 28th June 1890. His clothes were found on the bank and it seems he went in for a swim and perished. The inquest into his death was carried out on July the 5th. Over the next six years after John's birth the family would increase to five children, Annie (1862), George (1865) and Fanny (1867).

The family were living at Grove Heath, a small hamlet that lies to the south of Ripley. It is a group of mainly farm workers cottages of 17th and 18th century origins. (See SRHS publication *The Hamlet of Grove Heath, Ripley, Surrey*.) William appears there in the 1861 census, but Emma's family (Tickner) were already a well established family in the area as at least six generations of John Tickners, yeomen of Horsell and Woking owned "All that messuage called Grove Heath" during the 16th and 17th century.

Before his marriage to Emma, William lived with his parents at Grove Heath being baptised on the 30th April 1836 at Ripley. He had a younger brother John born in 1839 who went on to become an apprentice wheelwright and Smith to George Carpenter at Stoke-Next-Guildford in 1855. Their father also named William was married on the 4th July in Ripley to Hannah (Lawrence) who came from Hambledon, William was a haybuilder also born and christened at Ripley on the 9th November 1811. He passed away in 1872. The census taken a year before shows he was living at Rawridge Cottage in Ripley, a widower as Hannah had died in 1841. He was the sixth child of John and Sarah (Hook) and one of only four to survive from the family of nine children. It seems they could have been struck down by smallpox which was rife at these times. There could have also been a chance of some hereditary problem as their deaths spanned eighteen years and their ages between nineteen and twenty-four. Whatever befell them may never be known.

John, despite being a baseborn child, seems to have made a success of his life. He married Sarah who came from Hascombe at the parish church there on the 24 February 1794. They had nine children, John (1796-1816), Jane (1798-1820), Sarah (1800-?), Ann (1802-1822), Hannah (1805-1830) George (1807-1882), Maria (1809-?) William and Elizabeth (1814-1834).

In the Send and Ripley enclosure award of 1815 there is reference to "A certain other copyhold cottage, messuage or tenement and garden about 10 Rods (165 foot) of land now or lately in the occupation of John Worsfold".

John's will was written on the 11th September 1834 and he died three days later aged 66. He instructs his trustee Richard Bonsey, shoemaker of Ripley, "to sell and dispose in the best manner and for the most money my house or tenement I now live in, also the house or tenement belonging to me which now in the occupation of Frances Norman with all their appurtenances and garden belonging thereto together with all my household furniture as soon as can be and the produce thereof to be equally divided share and share alike between my sons George Worsfold, William Worsfold and my daughter Maria Stedman the wife of James Stedman." Later, in a deed of 1835, when the two cottages were sold to John Palmer of Guildford for £170 from the trustees of John Worsfold, they were known as 1 & 2 Rawridge Cottages and are now called "Lilac Cottage" and "Suncot". His will was finally proved on 11th April 1835 before Henry Parr Beloe who was Rector of Guildford, Surrey.

By trade John was a thatcher but this reference is to another agricultural occupation where a "roof" is put on a hayrick in order to keep the inner part dry. As we know, William carried this on from his father.

John had been baptised at Send on the 8th May 1768. He was the baseborn child of Susannah Worsfold and given the family name by her. She was married five years later at Dorking on the 3rd August 1773 to a Henry Stevens of Send, her witness being a John Worsfold who is possibly her brother. Whether Henry is the father of John is yet to be found. Henry and Susannah had a further son, Thomas Stevens, who was baptised at Send on the 12 January 1777.

Susannah herself was the youngest of seven children of Edward and Sarah (?). She was baptised at Send on the 11th October 1744 and named after her Grandmother. She died in 1787. Her brothers and sisters carried the usual family forenames, Jane (1728), Mary (1730), John (1732-1790) James (1734 -1807), Edward (1737-1793) and Sarah (1742). Susannah's father, Edward, was likewise baptised at Send on the 22nd June 1705 and also buried there on the 27th April 1760. As records are scarce, his marriage to Sarah and her maiden name are not yet known, but it is known from the parish records that they had these children. Perhaps they married in Sarah's parish, which has not yet been identified along with his occupation, which is likely to be associated with farming like his father John.

Despite the lack of information from the parish records of Send at this time due to their non-commencement until 1653 for burials and baptisms and 1654 for marriages, a gap between 1659 and 1666 of all three and further gaps means looking at other documentary sources to trace our family activities. We do know that Edward's father, John, married Susannah (Whitmore) at Send on the 25th January 1692 and they had four children, Hannah was buried 5th March 1697, James was baptised on the 12th May 1702, and Anne was buried on the 18th May 1716. Susannah herself was buried on the 11th April 1707 and John on the 17th May 1712 all at Send, so perhaps the young children were brought up by John or Susannah's parents.

John also had a brother George, who was baptised on the 8th September 1654 at Send. He appears to settle in Walton-on-Thames as a bond dated 29 April 1678 mentions his father John Worsfold of Send, Yeoman, and George Bish of Walton-on-Thames in regard to George Worsfold his wife and child or children, the value of the settlement bond being £40. Although no baptism has been found in Send for John it is possible that one for West Clandon on the 12 March 1652 could be his, as the Manor of Dedswell extended as far as that parish. John's name appears on the Oath Rolls for Surrey of 1695. These are names of people who gave an oath of loyalty to William and Mary and would take revenge on the Jacobites should William be assassinated.

Their father also named John was buried at Send on the 25 October 1691 and his will was proved on the 3rd December 1691. He was a yeoman farmer and we know from records that he held freehold land called "Millditch" from William Attride of West Horsley being five acres in size. In the same indenture of the 15th October 1663 he also holds a meadow of one acre of Woking Broadmead in Send, passing both on to his son John who held them until 1701. The earliest evidence of John's residence in Send appears in the feet of fines records in 1650. These records are to obtain secure transfers of land. It appears he was a part owner or was due to inherit "one messuage, one barn, one garden, one orchard and two acres of land with the appurtenances in Send" from George Massey and his wife Agnes. To acknowledge this agreement John gave them Forty pounds. A further document in the same vein is dated 1656 with John again giving Forty pounds, and as with the first he mentions "George and Agnes and the heirs of the said Agnes forever". Why only Agnes's heirs? It is usually the heirs of the male partner who are mentioned in such documents. It is possible that Agnes is the widow of Edward Worsfold and that she has remarried George Massey. John is therefore her son and the property mentioned is willed to him as inheritance through his mother.

We also find John's name appearing as a Juror in the Court Rolls for the Manor of Ripley and Send in 1658. Although he appears not to hold land from this particular Manor, he seems to be a respected person. He does, however, hold land from the Manor of Dedswell at a rent of four shillings a year in 1661. Also, on the 2nd November of that year he makes a contribution of one shilling, a free and voluntary present to King Charles the 2nd who was restored to the throne in 1660 with large debts incurred during his exile to which the nation was called upon to make a contribution.

In the Hearth Tax returns collected on Lady Day (25th March) in 1664 John is charged for one hearth at one shilling per hearth. Perhaps like many people at that time he had bricked some up in order to avoid the unpopular tax collected twice a year, an obvious forerunner of our own poll tax. In his will written in 1688 he mentions his wife Avice who appears to be his second wife. They

married at St Nicholas Guildford on the 18th August 1673, the register showing them both as being from Send. He also leaves his land and buildings to his eldest son John. "I give and devise all that my freehold messuage or tenement lands, meadow grounds, and hereditaments, and all my copyhold lands and tenements whatsoever situate, lying and being in Send aforesaid in the county of Surrey unto my eldest son John Worsfold for and during the term of his natural life". It appears that he is renting a messuage and land to William Bowell and his son John, which he wills to go to his Grandson John Worsfold who is the son of George.

The will gives an interesting insight to the contents of the house with possible new rooms, "I give and bequeath unto my said wife Avice Worsfold the use and wearing only of one feather bed and bolster, with the bedstead and all the furniture thereto belonging, standing in the new chamber of my now dwelling house, two pairs of sheets whereof one to be Flaxen sheets, one joined table, two joined forms, my best brass kettle, one iron pot with pothooks and pot hangers and one brass skillet, three pewter dishes, three pewter porringers, six rush bottomed chairs, one pair of andirons and one pair of creepers standing and being in the lower new room of the messuage wherein I now dwell, one fire shovel, one pair of tongs, one pair of bellows, one smoothing iron with heaters, two of my best drink tubs, one joined chest and one plain chest, one trunk which was her own before her marriage, six napkins and three hand towels; for and during the term of the natural life of my said wife Avice Worsfold".

Avice was from Elstead in Surrey where she was christened on the 12th October 1628, her father's name being Thomas. In her own will proved in October 1710 she had returned to Elstead. Her "Grandson", John Worsfold, (son of George) who, as mentioned before, had settled in Walton-on-Thames in 1678, re-settled in Elstead in 1700, and is named as executor.

The area known as Worsfold Farm until sometime around 1861 and 1871 is now Pembroke House in Potters Lane. The flood gates on the Wey Navigation still retain the name Worsfold Gates. The Navigation opened in 1653. (See most recently the notes on Worsfold Gates by Janet Hilderly in Journal 162). References to the family in this area are found on documents relating to claims made on the Wey Navigation and dated around 1671. One makes reference to various claims made on behalf of many people by William Dickenson and mentions the following:-

"From Triggs Lock to John Worsfolds Lock, the passage for boats with a towing path purchased through the lands of Mr Zouch, in length one mile.

From thence to Worsfolds Bridge at Send Heath being new cut, purchased with the land thereof John Worsfold and John Jolly in length 40 Rods" (660 feet).

John also makes his own claim for work done in 1671 to the same hearing:-

"The humble petition of John Worsfold of Send in the county of Surrey, husbandman, your petitioner saving and reserving to himself liberty of making any other or further claim, or adding hereto or amending his claim.

Showeth that your petitioner is and for a long time been a labourer upon the said river of Wey, by the order of the pretended owners of the said river and looking after the breaches thereof.

And doth hereby certify your Lordships that there is now due to your said petitioner for his salary from the pretended owners of the said river, after the rate of five shillings a week for looking after the breaches of the said river and mending the same.

And for work done elsewhere in the said river where your petitioner receives no salary, the full sum of sixty pounds.

Therefore your petitioner doth hereby claim such satisfaction out of the profits of the navigation of the said river as aforesaid to your Lordships shall seem meet."

John signs this with his mark W which resembles two V's crossed. This is very similar to the way that the earliest documents found so far are signed, believed to be John's father but not yet proved. They come from the poor law records of Send. Dated 1638 and 1639 they relate to Edward Worsfold. In John's will he mentions hereditaments in relation to land. Perhaps this also comes from Edward.

The first document has his mark in the form of his initials EW and reads as follows:-

"May all men know by these presents that I Edward Worsfold of Send in the county of Surrey, husbandman, am held and firmly bounden unto Henry Ritchbell, Henry Boughton, and John

Cattringham of Send aforesaid yeoman, overseers of the poor of the parish aforesaid, in the sum of twenty pounds of lawful money of England, to be paid to the same Henry Ritchbell, Henry Boughton, and John Cattringham or either of them, their true attorneys, executors or administrators.

For which payment indeed well and faithfully to be made I do firmly bind myself, my heirs, my executors and my administrators.

Sealed with my seal and dated the twenty third day of June in the fourteenth year of the reign of our Lord Charles, by the grace of God, King of England, Scotland, France and Ireland defender of the faith etc, in the year of our Lord 1638". EW

The second document is in a similar vein to the first and is translated from Latin, unlike the first, which is in old English. It has an interesting reference to where the money is to be left!

"The condition of this obligation is such;

That if the within bounden Edward Worsfold, his heirs, executors, administrators or assigns or any of them,

Shall and do well and truly satisfy, content and pay, or cause to be well and truly satisfied or payed unto them the within named Henry Ritchbell, Henry Boughton and John Cattringham or either of them.

The full, whole and just sum of ten pounds and sixteen shillings of lawful English money, at or upon the four and twentieth day of June which shall be in the year of our Lord one thousand six hundred nine and thirty, at or in the church porch of the parish church of Send aforesaid at one entire payment without fraud or guile.

That then this obligation to be void and of no effect, or else to remain in full force and virtue".

There appear to be possible earlier connections to Abinger where some of the very early Worsfold records occur. In some early wills a possible connection between the villages is evident The will of Thomas Gyles of Send, dated 5th February 1559, has Robert Worsfold of Abinger as its witness. In his will of 1608 Edmund Tidy of Ockham has David Worsfold as witness. The only David on record to fit that period also comes from Abinger.

Another will that makes a reference that could also make a connection reads as follows,

"John Didleston of Pirford, Yeoman 12 September 1595 two-thirds of land in Pirford and Send, part holden to her majesty in chief, part in free soccage to my wife Anne. One third to my heir son John Didleston, children of Thomas Worsfold of Kingston-on-Thames, shoemaker and his late wife Johan Worsfold my sister. Children of Lawrence Goddard of Send, husbandman and his now late wife Alice Goddard my sister, residue to wife Anne."

So this is not the final part of our family story, but the work becomes more difficult due to the lack of material available. It becomes more interesting not knowing what may be found.

Mick Worsfold

Terminology

Andiron = Metal log support on a hearth.

Appurtenances = Belongings.

Assigns = Transfer formerly

Copyhold = Tenure in accordance with Manorial records.

Creepers = Small low andirons.

Flaxen = Plant grown for textile fibre, pale yellow.

Freehold = Possessed as one's own.

Hereditaments = Property inheritance.

Messuage = Dwelling house with outbuildings and land.

Porringer = Bowl for soup or porridge.

Skillett = Cooking vessel with three legs and long handle.

Tenement = Set of rooms held separate from house

Membership Report

New Members – We welcome the following new members to the Society;

Mr L Webb, 16 South Eastern Row, Ramsgate, Kent. CT11 9TR
 Mr & Mrs D Henery, Grenville Cottage, Boughton Hall Ave., Send. GU23 7DF.
 Mr & Mrs Alex Woods, 18 Bloomfield Rd., Harpenden, Herts. AL5 4DB
 Mr A J Mallender, 13 St Cuthberts Ave., Great Glen, Leicester, LE8 9EJ
 Mr & Mrs Carole & Roy Millea, 76 New Brighton Rd., Emsworth, Hants. PO10 7OS

12 of last year's members did not renew. Membership now stands at 97 doubles and 87 singles, making a total of 281 people. 16 complimentaries are sent. In all 40 Journals are sent by post, the rest being delivered by hand by our local distributors.

Les Bowerman (Acting Membership Secretary).

Acquisitions by the Society

On 17th March I bought on behalf of the Society at the Ripley Antiques Fair a glass Stansfields of Ripley & Guildford mineral water bottle complete with Stansfields own screw stopper. It is unusual for the stopper to survive. The fact that Guildford is included in the address means that the bottle was made some time between about 1910 and 1920.

Les Bowerman, (Archivist)

Letters to the Editor

Alex Wood Memoirs Part 2

Referring to the above article in Journal 163; I too was accepted at Oxford for Aircrew, subsequently being called up on 30th June, 1941, when, like Alex I 'enjoyed' basic accommodation in a flat in St. Johns Wood with feeding at Regents Park Zoo. As a potential Navigator my training was somewhat different, but I also ended up at A.C.D.C. Heaton Park, Manchester (yes it did rain!) before embarking on 'Chateau Thierry' on same voyage to Canada as Alex.

I have written this, because since my demobilisation from the R.A.F. in June 1946, after operational service as a Navigator with Bomber Command, this is the first time I have ever heard or read any mention of what, to me at least, has always been a somewhat memorable journey across the Atlantic!

Peter Spindler

Broadmead WW2

Just a small comment on Sid Stanley's article in Journal 163; He is right in remembering a Count lived at Send Grove – he was Count Munster (of Austrian origin), and the Duke of Windsor (when Prince of Wales) stayed there frequently with his former mistresses – before Mrs Simpson.

Mrs Burns, who used to live at Holly Cottage, worked there and she could tell some tales about the happenings there!!

Pat Clack

Societies Visit to Bath (Roman - *Aqua Sulis*) Sunday 21st July 2002



Pulteney Bridge and Weir Bath

Photo by K H Bourne

8am - All day visit to this beautiful city **departing promptly from The Manor House, Send Marsh Green.** Contact Les Bowerman 01483 224876 if require a lift or are able to provide others with a lift in your car.

10.45am – Assemble outside the West end of Bath Abbey near The Pump Room entrance. The tour of the Roman Baths commences at **10.50am** (*Audio Guides are provided*) and it can be taken at your own pace with many places to sit and take in the history of this Roman bath complex built between the 1st and 4th centuries AD and now about 5 metres below the present street level. You should allow just over an hour for this.

12.15 - Plenty of time for lunch. You may wish to bring a picnic and weather permitting, enjoy it in the park near Pulteney Weir (see above) or in Parade Gardens opposite. There are also many restaurants and cafés to suit all tastes and there may be time, briefly, to explore the shops, the Abbey or just relax.

2.15pm - Meet again outside the Abbey's west end, to start a personally guided tour of Georgian Bath including some intriguing glimpses of the medieval town upon which it is built. This again will take about an hour or longer subject to interest and stamina.

3.45pm – The tour ends with a visit to a 17th cent. Tea House for refreshment, and to see the original medieval kitchen, which is now some 3 metres below the present street level.

In order to obtain group rates (min: number 20 in group) the two tours have to be pre-booked and provided this number attend, the cost just for the tours will be £8.50 per person. There have been more than this on previous such outings, but in the event that the numbers are less, then the cost will rise to £10.50; the balance will be collected on the day. Please advise if you would like to come, **to Ken Bourne by not later than 30th June, enclosing a cheque for £8.50 made payable to K. H. Bourne and send it to 30, Brunel Way, Frome, Somerset, BA11 2XU. Don't forget to enclose your name and address with your payment.** A map of Bath will be distributed at Send Marsh before departure, or on arrival, plus any other relevant information. The cost assumes you will make your own, travel and eating arrangements. The cost of car parking in Bath at most of the car parks, is at present £2 all day, on Sunday. Look forward to seeing you

Alex Wood Memoirs Part 3 – Flight Operations

After a short spell at Harrogate Reception Centre I was posted to No. 11 AFU Shawbury, Shropshire, for conversion training to twin engine aircraft as I had been earmarked for night fighter training. At Shawbury I flew Airspeed Oxfords and also took a beam approach training course there from the 14th to the 20th February 1943 in weather conditions which did not require the use of the hood more than twice because there was an almost permanent fog and without the beam approach system landing would have been impossible. The Airspeed Oxford was a twin engined (two Armstrong Siddeley Cheetah radial engines) machine built for pilot training and passenger carrying and could be equipped with a gun turret for training air gunners.

By the time I had finished my course on 15th March 1943 all twin engined trained pilots were being diverted to Bomber Command and I went from there to No. 26 OTU at Wing, Bucks, where I converted to Wellington III's. There I selected my crew except for the mid upper gunner and engineer and retained the same crew throughout. We and other crews were later transferred to 11 OTU at Westcott near Aylesbury, Bucks, which was equipped with Wellington Ic's which, compared with the Mk III were grossly underpowered. The Ic was fitted with two Bristol Pegasus engines of 950 hp each whereas the Mk. III had two Bristol Hercules XI engines of 1400 hp each and the former was much less reliable than the Mk III and would not maintain height on one engine.

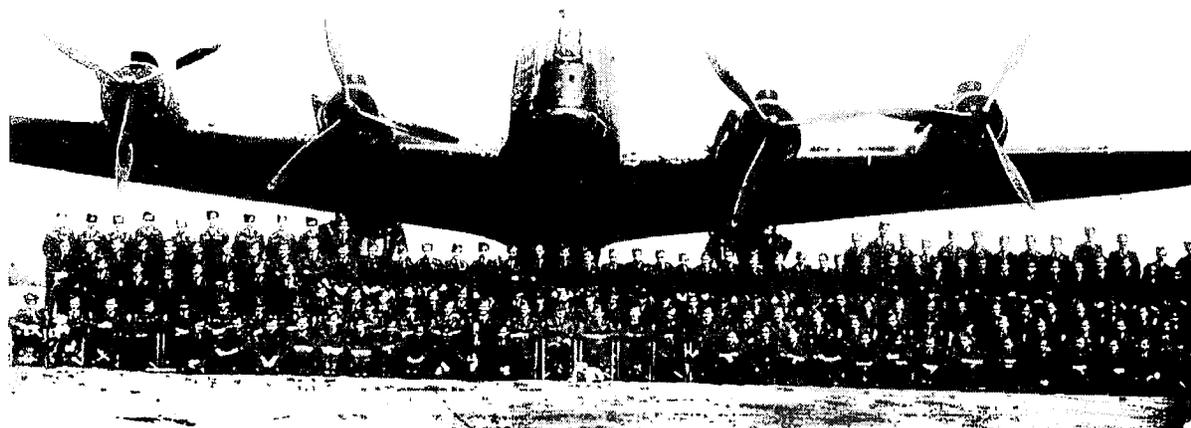
On 3rd June 1943 we set out on a cross country flight to South Wales-Anglesey-Hull and base but whilst over South Wales the port engine began mis-firing severely and I decided to abort the operation and force land. There was 7/8ths cloud cover below and the bomb aimer saw an aerodrome through a gap so we descended. The aerodrome turned out to be RAF Aberporth on the south of Cardigan Bay, an all grass field equipped with Hawker Henley target towing aircraft. I managed to land the Wellington at the second attempt by almost ground looping it at the end of the landing run and on examination the fitter stated that both sparking plugs in 4 of the 9 cylinders of the port engine were not functioning and he would have to renew them all. As they had not got the right type of plug at Aberporth my crew and I stayed there two days. On the second night there was a very memorable station party during which I discovered one of the station ground crew giving guided tours of our Wellington to some of the local girls who came to the dance, claiming that it had just returned from an operation over Germany! A few small items were subsequently found to be missing but no serious damage resulted. The take-off to return to Westcott was hairy but we managed to get airborne.

From there I was posted to No. 1657 Heavy Conversion Unit Stradishall, Suffolk, where the mid-upper gunner, Robert Blanchard, and the engineer, Les Graham, joined the crew and we were introduced to the Short Stirling, the largest bomber used by the RAF in World War II which stood 25 feet high at the top of the flight deck, 89 feet long with a 99 feet wingspan. The engines in the Mk III were Bristol Hercules VI 14 cylinder radials each of 1600 hp. The crew now consisted of Flight Sergeant Jack Curtis from Christchurch, New Zealand (navigator), Flight Sergeant Bill Highland from Sydney, Australia (rear gunner), Sergeant Gordon Wright from Bracebridge near Toronto, Canada (bomb aimer), Sergeant Ron Arrowsmith from Liverpool (wireless operator), Sergeant Les Graham from Maryport, Cumberland (engineer) and Sergeant Robert Blanchard from Ilford, Essex (mid-upper gunner). We stayed together as a crew for the whole of our operational career and the aircraft never flew on operations without the whole of the crew being present.

At Stradishall I learned the idiosyncrasies of the Stirling aircraft including its high stalling speed of 11 mph and tendency to swing severely in the slightest crosswind on take off and landing. Once airborne, however, it was a delightful machine to fly being highly maneuverable and generally light on the controls except with the undercarriage and the flaps down. It was here too that I was introduced to the fast climb at 185 mph, reducing speed to a cruising speed of 175 mph

on attaining altitude. I later discovered that the aircraft cruised much better at 230 mph but was held at 175 mph to match the Lancaster and Halifax bombers

On completion of the Conversion Course the crew was posted to XV Squadron, Mildenhall, Suffolk, although I flew one operation as Second Pilot to gain operational experience with Pilot Officer Appleby with 90 Squadron at West Wickham, Suffolk, which was to Hamburg on the third of the Hamburg raids on 29th July, the first time that the RAF used "window" to confuse the enemy radar.



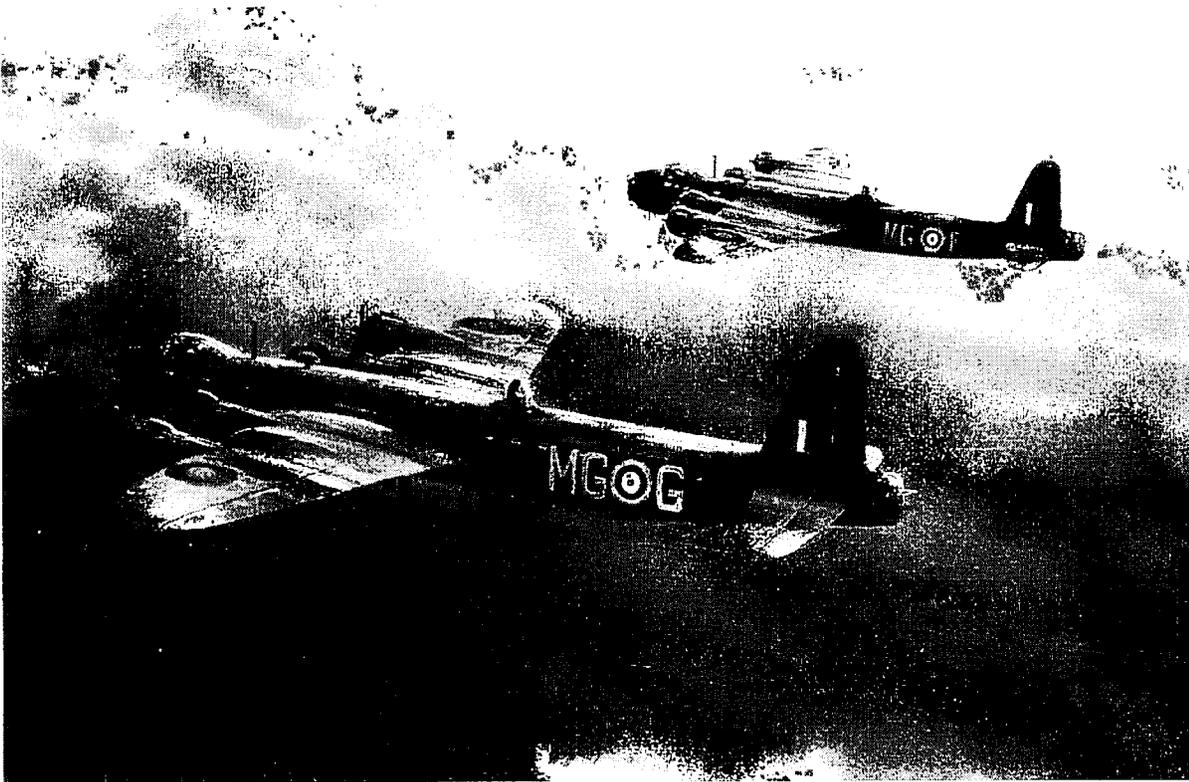
15 Squadron , RAF Mildenhall, Suffolk , photo taken 1943.

Alex Wood flight crew, back row left, first seven men, Alex second from left.

"Window" was devised to confuse the German Radar operators and consisted of bundles of aluminium foil about 2" wide and the exact length of the frequency of German radar. These bundles, each containing 100 strips, were ejected from the aircraft every three minutes when approaching and flying over the target and gave the impression on the radar screens of each aircraft, represented by a "blip" on the screen, suddenly dividing into 100 blips so that it became impossible to identify which one represented the bomber. It was very effective when first introduced and it was extraordinary to see hundreds of searchlights standing almost straight up and stationary and the flak being haphazard and clearly without direction

The bombers of the main bomber force were not equipped with any form of radar navigation aids, the only machines so equipped being those of the Pathfinder Squadrons which had "H2S", a ground scanning radar. The only navigational aid fitted to Stirlings was "GEE". This was a system relying on transmissions from a number of radio stations which enabled the position of the aircraft to be fixed within a few hundred yards. Theoretically the system extended over Europe as far as the Rhur valley and Paris but jamming by the Germans rendered it unreliable and valueless once the coast of Europe had been crossed although it could be used to within a few miles of the Friesian Isles.

The first flying we did as a crew at XV Squadron was on 6th August 1943 when we were assigned the only Stirling I on the squadron, EF351 L, and after an air test we took part in a bullseye exercise (a simulated night bombing raid) which was not completed as we had to break off over the Channel with engine failure of the port inner. I had as passengers an officer and sergeant of the Anti-Aircraft Regiment as observers. The following day we were introduced as a crew to fighter affiliation going up with F/O Waugh and his crew in his aircraft. We met up with a Hurricane and carried out violent evasive action for about an hour. At the end my arms were nearly falling out of the sockets and most of both crews felt rather queasy.



Stirling Bombers in Flight from a painting, artist unknown.

Some statistics of the Stirling Bomber;

Wing span - 99feet.

Length - 89 feet

Height to cockpit - 22 feet.

All up weight, fuelled and armed 73,000 lbs

Some operational details

Flight crew - 7

Cruising speed to target usually 175mph

Normal bombing altitude 14,000 ft.

4 - Engines, Hercules Mark 16 each producing.
1600 hp.

11.0 ft. dia. Propellers.

6.0 ft. dia. Landing wheels.

On 9th August we were assigned Stirling III EE907 C for night operations and following a night flying test in the afternoon we were briefed for a take off at 22:15 on a "gardening" (i.e. mine laying) flight to the Fresian Isles, off the Dutch coast. The load was 4 sea mines which were dropped at a "GEE" fix and there were no incidents. The same day I had done an hours Link trainer practice measuring the beam as continuation training for beam approach landings.

On the following day I was assigned as second pilot to the Squadron Commanding Officer, W/C Stephens, on a night operation to Nuremburg in aircraft EE954 J. The flight out was comparatively free of incidents but over the target there was cloud cover at between 7 and 10,000 ft. and the ground was not visible from the designated bombing height of 14,000 ft. estuary of the Gironde off Bordeaux in Western France. We flew over France at 7,000 ft. without incident and were required to lay the mines at pre-determined points in the estuary not higher than from 6,000 ft. The points at which the mines were to be laid were well inland only a few miles from Bordeaux. The flak was heavy from both sides during the approach to and the actual mine laying run at 5,850 ft. which we had to make twice because after dropping two mines it was necessary to take evasive action. The aircraft was not seriously damaged and there were no incidents on the return flight.

The next night we were briefed for a bombing raid with the main force on Turin. The Stirlings of Group 3 were the only aircraft attacking Turin, all other main force squadrons being routed to Milan. The bomb load for Stirlings was one 1,000 lb. high explosive bomb and 5,000 lbs. of incendiary bombs. There was a full moon and the flight across France, which I did at 7,000 ft. again was uneventful. We climbed for crossing the Alps and flew within about a mile of the summit of Mt. Blanc at 14,000 ft., the same level as the mountain. On the south side of the Alps I decided to make my attack from a lower altitude and I reduced to 6,000 ft. over Turin. On the approach to the target there was a large amount of flak and searchlights probing the sky ahead, but as we approached the city the searchlights were extinguished and the flak died away so that over the target there was no opposition whatsoever. After the force had left the target the searchlights came on again and the flak re-started behind us. The target was the Fiat factory.

Whilst climbing towards the Alps on the return journey the rear gunner saw an Italian fighter, a Fiat G50, approaching from the port quarter. He fired a warning burst and the fighter flew alongside out of range and gave a beautiful demonstration of aerobatics. I decided to chase it so I turned port, sent the bomb aimer to the front turret, and dived after the fighter as it swung away. We caught up with it and the front gunner fired a number of bursts at it in the foothills of the Alps but we did not know if it was destroyed. There were no other incidents on the return flight over France, also at 7,000 ft., but we received a W/T message to divert to Tangmere as there was low stratus cloud over East Anglia - the notorious North Sea stratus. It transpired that the whole of 3 Group and part of 5 Group were similarly diverted to the fighter aerodromes along the south coast. Whilst crossing Portsmouth we were fired at by our own flak and it was obvious that there was a small German raid in progress.

On arrival at Tangmere we joined the queue at about 5,000 ft. and when we were turn three to land an aircraft called up asking for priority as they had only two engines. It transpired that the aircraft concerned was a Wellington twin-engined bomber almost out of fuel and the pilot devised that method of getting priority to land! On approaching to land I found it impossible to hold the aircraft in the glidepath indicated by the glidepath indicators and realised that they were adjusted to an angle of 30° to the ground for fighters whereas the glidepath for bombers should have been 15° - we were not warned of that. Glide path indicators had three aspects - amber indicating that the approach was too high; green indicating a correct approach and red; indicating that the approach was too low. The green aspect was set at the appropriate angle for the type of aircraft based at the aerodrome. I overshot and on the second approach ignored the glidepath indicators and managed to land but only just stopped within the length of the runway which I later learned was only 1200 yards. The next morning when I went to the aerodrome there were 3 Halifaxes, 2 Stirlings and one Lancaster in the farmer's cabbage field at the end of the runway.

On the return flight to Mildenhall later the same morning we took the crew of one of the stranded Stirlings as passengers and as we flew over the village of **Send** I decided to shoot up the village so we made three passes at less than 100 ft over my parents' house "Oakhurst", where my grandmother was picking raspberries while my father was having lunch. They all saw us, as did almost everyone else in the village, and it was a talking point for years.

During the next three days we flew on fighter affiliation with Hurricanes, Spitfires and USA ACP-47 Thunderbolts and air-to-air firing and on 22nd August 1943 carried out a special mining operation off the Friesian Isles, laying a new type of mine.

The following night we were briefed to raid Berlin as part of a force of 600 bombers when we carried only incendiary bombs. The route was straight in from the west and return via Rostock (on the Baltic Sea), Denmark and the North Sea. Whilst crossing Northern Germany flying

towards Berlin we entered a cloud at 13,000 feet and shortly afterwards suffered severe icing. I tried to climb above the cloud but although I could see patches of sky the machine was too or heavy with ice to make it so I had to descend below cloud to 6,000 feet until the ice melted and we were past the cloud. Fortunately either we were not detected there were no defences at that point. Opposition over the target was heavy and there were large numbers of night fighters in evidence as well as very concentrated flak.

The whole of the crew went on six days leave immediately after landing from Berlin and returned on 31st August to find that we had been assigned another raid on Berlin that night once again carrying only incendiary bombs. This time the route was south to Kassel and then east to a position south of Berlin, turning north and then west for the bombing run.

It was a dark moonless night and it had not been possible to obtain a clear fix of our position when crossing the Dutch coast, near Texel. The navigator decided to obtain an astro fix when he calculated we were approaching Kassel to turn east and the fix he obtained placed us 2 minutes away from the turning point, much closer than expected. He assumed the wind had changed and re-calculated the heading to take us to the position south of Berlin. We accordingly altered course and after an hour and a half I could see large numbers of searchlights away to the right (i.e. south of our position) which I correctly assessed was the target area in the centre of Berlin and I realised that we were not on the correct track. There was a lot of anti-aircraft fire over a large area to the south east of us and we realised that we must have approached Berlin from the north. We accordingly turned south, flew down to the centre of the city and joined the bombing run westward.

The path of the bombers was very clearly marked by a large number of flares dropped by fighters as well as by the fires on the ground. The fighters were very active at around 14,000 to 15,000 ft. which was the height from which the Stirlings were bombing and most of the flak was exploding at about 20,000 ft. so it was obvious that the Germans had decided to switch the fighters to the Stirling force from the higher flying machines. The result was that there were very high losses from 3 Group that night. Our aircraft was not attacked and we returned without incident.

Bombing Berlin was much more hazardous than most other targets because the area of high concentration of searchlights and flak was much larger and a bomber was exposed to it for some 15 minutes instead of a maximum of 5 minutes over a smaller town.

On 3rd September we were briefed to lay some new type mines (later found to be acoustic mines) in the Kattegatt between Denmark and Sweden. Six aircraft were briefed for this raid, all from 3 Group, and mine was the first to arrive off the west coast of Denmark. Crossing the North Sea we had flown at a few hundred feet beneath a warm front with the result that the wind had changed and had carried us further south than we had intended so that we approached Denmark in the curve at the south west.

When about half a mile from the coast at about 4,000 feet our aircraft was caught in a searchlight and we were coned. I immediately turned steeply out to sea and dived to 200 feet. Despite heavy flak we escaped severe damage. The following aircraft however, which was also from

XV Squadron, took the same course and we saw it shot down. We laid our mines in the correct position from 600 ft. with the lights of Gothenburg, Sweden, to the east of us about 6 miles away. The return flight was entirely uneventful as we were able to cross Denmark without opposition.

On 8th September the whole group was briefed on a short raid to a point just north east of Boulogne. All aircraft were loaded with 1000 lb high explosive bombs, nine to each machine. The target was accurately bombed, the target indicators having been laid by Mosquitos using "oboe", which was a system of intersecting radar beams. All aircraft returned safely and it was not until some years later that we learned that the raid had been part of a feint invasion in the Pas de Calais.

On 13th September we were on a night flying test and had in the aircraft three members of the ground staff who had been carrying out an engine change during the previous two days. A message was received by wireless that there was a drifting barrage balloon which had broken away from the London barrage and it was approximately over Bury St Edmunds. The balloon was spotted by our rear gunner and we climbed to intercept it, shooting it down in flames.

Our aircraft had flown 32 operations when we took it over and every time we returned from a raid the ground staff painted another bomb on the nose. Following the shooting down of the balloon they painted a barrage balloon and I suspect it was the only aircraft in the RAF to have a balloon painted on its nose.

On 15th September we formed part of a force to raid the Dunlop Rubber factory at Montlucon in Central France. We were informed at briefing that there were three B-17 Flying Fortress bombers of the US Army Air Corps joining this raid with RAF navigators and we were warned to keep a watch for them. It was an experiment in using these machines in night bombing. Our bomb load was one 1000 lb high explosive bomb and 6,000 lbs incendiary bombs. There was little opposition on the way to the target at 7000 feet and the target itself was obscured by clouds with the base at about 3000 ft.

In order to ensure accurate bombing I went down to 2000 ft. and the bomb aimer succeeded in hitting the target fair and square as it could be clearly seen in the moonlight. Opposition was light, mainly light flak which was very quickly silenced and the biggest risk was from exploding photo-flash bombs from aircraft above. On the return flight the only incident was a light spotted by the rear gunner approaching from astern which turned out to be another Stirling with its taxiing light switched on in the nose. We sheered off quickly. We saw no sign of the B-17's but learned the next day that the pilots had reported 'target accurately bombed from 33,000 feet'.

The following night we were briefed to raid the railway marshalling yards at Modane, at the Northern entrance to the Mont Cenis tunnel through the Alps with the same bomb load. Bombing was difficult and dangerous because the bombing run was between two high mountains along a valley no more than one mile wide at the peaks of the mountains and all the aircraft were trying to concentrate their bombs on the centre of the valley. There were a number of near collisions and I suspect that the bombing was generally inaccurate for that reason. There were no incidents either on the way out or back.

On 22nd September we were briefed to raid Hanover and learned the next day that most of the bombs dropped by the main force of about 400 bombers had fallen 3 miles south of Hanover where an artificial lake had been made to look like that in the centre of the town, the latter having been filled with barges so that it was almost invisible from the air. The pathfinders had therefore been misled and had laid their target indicators over the diversionary lake.

On this raid I tried out a theory I had discussed with Gordon Wright, my bomb-aimer, that we could reduce our exposure to attack over the target by climbing as high as possible on the approach and bombing at a higher speed thus cutting down the time over the target area. I

therefore climbed to over 18,000 feet and increased speed to 230 mph in a shallow dive. The bombs were dropped from 16,000 feet and that speed maintained until we left the target area at about 14,000 feet. This tactic reduced the time over the target area from 5 minutes to 3¹/₂ minutes. It also seemed to help in keeping clear of trouble because we were flying considerably faster than most of the other bombers. I adopted this method on all subsequent operations.

On the return flight we saw a light approaching from behind. It was not constant but becoming bright, then dimming. We had no idea what it could be until it caught us up when it proved to be the front gunner/bomb aimer of a Halifax smoking in the front turret. If any evidence was required as to how dangerous it was to smoke whilst over enemy territory that was sufficient - to be continued ...

Forthcoming Events

Tuesday 21st May – 2pm Afternoon visit to Chatley Heath Semaphore Tower and nearby Samuelson Mausoleum. Depart from The Manor House Send Marsh.

Saturday 25th May – 10am SRHS Museum – New exhibition to commemorate The Queens Jubilee with memorabilia from 1952. This coincides with a Jubilee Lunch at 12 noon arranged by the Ripley Guides and Brownies Supporters Committee, to raise funds for the Guide Hut. There will also be a dancing display by the Pilgrim Morris Men. (*contact Clare McCann 01483 728546 for details of these events*).

Wednesday 26th June – Evening walk around Shepperton with Nick Pollard. Depart 7pm from The Manor House, Send Marsh, finish at The Anchor Shepperton.

Sunday 21st July – All day outing to Bath – 8am prompt departure, from The Manor House, Send Marsh. A visit arranged by Ken Bourne to the Roman Baths and a tour by a local guide of this beautiful Georgian City with glimpses of its medieval past. { *See page 8* }

Wednesday 25th September – 8pm Send Church Rooms
‘Secrets of a Victorian Boudoir’. A talk by Marion May with a display of Victorian underwear!

Wednesday 16th October – 8pm Ripley Village Hall
The History of Squire’s Garden Centres. An illustrated talk by Charles Squire.

Saturday 9th November – Symposium - all day starting at 10am at Chertsey Hall
The Surrey Local History Symposium, which, this year takes the theme of ‘Surrey in the 1950’s’.

Wednesday 20th November – 8pm Send Church Rooms
The Ritual Use of Plants in Old Houses. A talk by Chris Howkins

Wednesday 18th December – Ripley Village Hall
Christmas Social.

Unless stated otherwise, for further details of the above events, contact Programme Organiser, Anne Bowerman; tel. 01483 224876.



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Other times for school groups and small parties
by arrangement.

Please contact Les Bowerman on 01483 224876 if you
require information or wish to help in the museum.

HISTORY SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS

"Ripley & Send Then and Now, the Changing Scene of Surrey Village Life"	£10 Reprint 1998
"Guide to Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin, Send"	£1.25
"Then and Now, A Victorian Walk around Ripley"	Reference copy only
"The Straight Furrow", by Fred Dixon	£1.50
"Ripley and Send - Looking Back"	£4.95
"A Walk about Ripley Village in Surrey"	£2.00
"Newark Mill, Ripley, Surrey"	£2.95
"The Hamlet of Grove Heath, Ripley, Surrey"	£4.00
"Ripley and Send - an Historical Pub Crawl in Words and Pictures"	£6.00

The reference copy is available at the Museum. All the others are available from the Museum on Saturday mornings, or from Ripley Post Office. The reprinted copy of "Ripley & Send Then and Now" is additionally available at Send Post Office.

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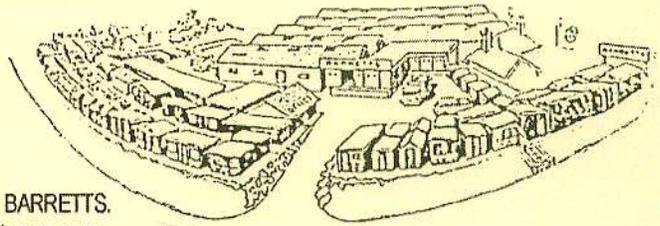


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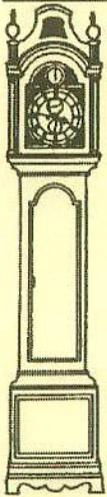


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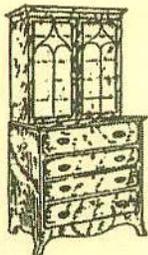
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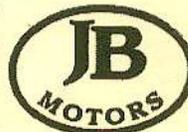
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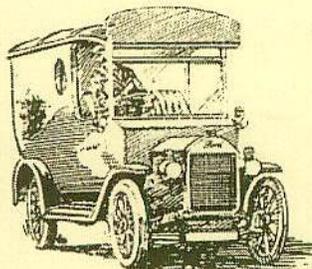
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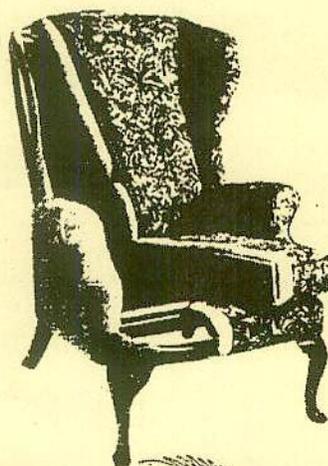
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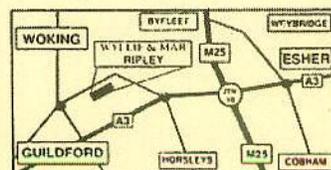
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