



Chelsfield Volunteers Phone 07767 211891



Your local Covid19 Volunteer Group has continued to be very busy in May. Overall we have dealt with over 600 calls for help in the eight weeks since we set up. Many of those we support with shopping and prescription collection can still not go out despite the easing in the lockdown, so we still have plenty to do. We have also been collecting donations to support a small foodbank helping families in St Mary Cray,

and the NHS pop-up free shop in Crofton Road. The pop-up shop has been helping NHS staff with a free basket of groceries after a long shift, and has been very popular. Donations from our group and the Village have been a huge support to them (NB: the wine donations in the photo were for hampers to be auctioned!). Their cake auction made over £1100 and was well supported by our group - Kathryn made this fabulous NHS rainbow cake.



The Newsletter and "What's On" Guide for Residents & Friends of Chelsfield Village

The Newt	2
Mutterings from The Millers	4
HELP - Missing Cat	5
St Martins Times	6
Canadian Cousins - Part 2	7
Scam Update	10
Covid-19 Experience	11
In Memory of Lestrine	12
Young Photographer Returns	13
Lost at Chelsfield	14
Council Leader Message	18
Home for Royal Ephemera	19
Using "Lockdown" Time	20
Memory VE Day at Bo-Peep	20

We trust you have all been managing well through these difficult recent weeks

Please tell us how you have been faring and share your concerns, your experiences and thoughts

Please send anything you feel suitable for the July 2020 issue to:
chelsfieldvillagevoice@gmail.com
 or post to:

**Chelsfield Village Voice
 2 Bucks Cross Cottages
 Chelsfield Village BR6 7RN
 to arrive on or before
 Saturday 27th June
 2020**

The Newt

Friends of mine in Wales have just informed me that a garage they built about ten years ago with a nook made for nesting owls has at last found a lodger. It seems that a tawny owl has moved in and a local wildlife photographer who cannot work due to the lockdown has been attempting to take photographs of the parent's comings and goings. If he is successful then I will of course reproduce it here for you in the near future. Watch this space !

Back in 2016 I was moving a pile of flints that I had in my garden. Many of them are now incorporated into the flint wall at the front of the cottages but at the time I simply wanted them out of the garden and placed to the rear of my shed. In the process I found a number of newts were living there. It seems the flints created a haven and the newts seemed to like the cool shady rock with lots of crevasses to hide in. So I took a few photos with a view to writing about them in the future but for various reasons it has taken four years to



get around to the task!

There are three types of indigenous newt in Britain: the smooth newt (sometimes known as the common newt – (*Lissotriton vulgaris*), the palmate newt and the crested newt. All have a degree of protection in that they are not allowed to be sold or traded in any way but the crested newt (easy to distinguish because of – you guessed it, a crest on its back) has seen a large decline in numbers and so has wide ranging protection such that disturbing them or destroying their habitat is also an offence – so no digging out that pond! Inspecting the photos I've come to the conclusion that the newts I found were of the 'smooth' variety although to be honest it is difficult to tell the difference between the two more common species. The first thing I

noticed while moving the flints was the effort these newts made to appear dead! I left them for about 20 minutes and they stayed motionless for the entire time. Such dedication to the craft of survival!

So how did newts get their name? It seems that in old English they were called 'eft'. This name is now used to describe the newt's young tadpoles. Eft then evolved into 'ewt' in Middle English. Then the initial "n" was added from the indefinite article "an" leaving us with 'newt'.

Newts are a type of salamander. All newts are salamanders but not all salamanders are newts! Being amphibious, they breed in ponds during the spring but spend the rest of the year feeding on invertebrates such as earthworms, snails and insects in

woodland, hedgerows, marshes and rough grassland. In winter they hibernate underground among tree roots and in old walls. It takes two to three years for a newt to become mature and they can live to the ripe old age of 14 in the wild.

Newts have a long history of folklore association. Shakespeare used the following words spoken in his 'three witches' scene in Macbeth:



"Eye of newt, and toe of frog,

Wool of bat, and tongue of dog,

Adder's fork, and blind-worm's sting,

*Lizard's leg, and howlet's wing,--
For a charm of powerful trouble,*

Like a hell-broth boil and bubble."

The folklore began even before Shakespeare's time and salamanders and newts have a mysterious history of myths relating to fire – which itself may well have originated the stories of fire breathing dragons. It seems that in medieval times when logs were thrown on a fire, salamanders would often be seen rapidly leaving the rotting interiors where they had been hunkering down. The simple folk of those times assumed that the salamanders had literally been born within the fire and this led to the belief that salamanders could happily dwell within a fire or indeed feed on nothing but fire. Even Leonardo da Vinci, a wise and critical observer of the world around him, wrote . "[The salamander] has no digestive organs, and gets no food but from the fire, in which it constantly renews its scaly skin". Bizarrely, salamanders became associated with asbestos such that this material would sometimes be called 'salamander fur' and would be woven into garments. To clean the garment one would merely throw it on the fire causing it to become 'white as snow'. Such

was the salamander's reputation that the animals were often used as symbols by royalty and even unions related to fire or heat. A salamander was the icon that King Francis I of France chose for his own sign with the motto, 'Nutrisco et exstinguo (I nourish and I extinguish).

It may have helped the myths that amphibians such as newts, being cold blooded and hence cold to the touch, had the reputation of being able to put out a fire if they so wished. All this despite the fact that anybody who wished to experiment could find that that was not the case. There was also the belief that the salamander's breath was poisonous and to kill one you needed to lock it in a small container forcing it to breathe its own breath! These legends probably stem from the vividly coloured black and yellow European salamander which is poisonous, or at least an irritant to the touch.

*Steve Fuller
June 2020*

Mutterings From The Millers

Well, what weather we had in May, from one extreme to another. Unfortunately, the crops are starting to suffer due to the lack of rain and showing signs of distress. This is apparent by the leaves curling inward and the ears on the spring barley are already starting to poke through. The ears don't usually show this early. As you can see from the



picture, bare patches are showing and some of this is due to lime deficiency. The boys applied lime earlier on but due to the lack of rain,

this has not washed into the soil. Unless we have some rain, the spring barley, wheat and oats will be very short which means not a lot of straw and small grain.

We made some hay at the end of May, which is early for us but again this was

short and as you can see from the photo, Peter had to climb into the back of the baler to unblock a lump of hay that had got stuck between the belt and the roller.

Some of you may have noticed a purple tinge to the crops toward the railway line. This is due to Phacelia, which was in the cover crop, not dying when it should! Very pretty but not what we wanted. This is proving a very challenging year but that is farming for you.

Our annual farm inspection by Red Tractor will take place at the beginning of June remotely. Not sure how the day will pan out yet but all the paper work is ready to be shown or scanned. Peter is to walk around the buildings with a camera linked to the inspector





the beginning of April. This maybe the reason why we are low on numbers this year. Plenty of other birds here though and pleased to report that the robin, blue tits, sparrows and wren nesting in the garden have had young. Plenty of goldfinches around too.

A couple of weather sayings for June:-

Cut your thistles before St. John (24th June) and you will have two instead of one

If it rains on St. Peter's Day (29th June) the bakers will have to carry double flour and single water, if dry they will carry single flour and double water.

*Chris Miller
Court Lodge Farm*

showing him the spray store, sprayer etc and anything else he wishes to see. I will report back next month once it has taken place to let you know the outcome.

We are sorry to report that only one more swallow has

arrived this year making 3. Hopefully they are not all the same sex and they will have some young. We have read that thousands of migrating birds, mainly swallows and swifts, were found dead in Greece due to strong winds, low temperatures and rain at

Missing Cat "Sparkles"



Has Anybody Found My Missing Cat?

If you have Please call me, Emma, on 01959 533101

St Martin of Tours - We Are Here For You



ST MARTIN OF TOURS – YOUR LOCAL PARISH CHURCH

Rector: Rev John Tranter Tel: (01689) 825749

Email: rector@stmartinchelsfield.org.uk

As you will know by now, the church building has to stay closed while we're in the 'lock-down' scenario that is happening at the time of writing, but St Martin's is still alive and active for everyone, just in a different way. We now have a YouTube channel where you can catch a weekly service, as well as a presence on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. On the church's own website you'll find a weekly newsletter with prayers and readings, and we're also putting the monthly parish magazine on there so please do share your stories and messages with us. We're putting prayers, messages and other information on our social media pages, so please do check them out if you would like to stay in touch or know more.

Worship – Rev John will continue to pray daily on your behalf at the following times:

Sunday	10.00am	Holy Communion
Monday	9.30am	Morning Prayer
Tuesday	11.30am	Holy Communion
Wednesday	9.30am	Morning Prayer
Thursday	7.00pm	Evening Prayer
Friday	11.30am	Holy Communion
Saturday	9.30am	Morning Prayer

Prayer – if you have specific prayer requests or wish to have a candle lit in church for a suffering loved one, please provide Rev John with brief details (contact info above) and he will act on your behalf. For private prayer, there are many resources available on the Church of England and Diocese of Rochester websites, and our social media accounts are posting daily prayers.

You can call Rev John at any time for prayer or a chat using the contact details above. Keep safe, keep secure and keep in touch.

Church website www.stmartinchelsfield.org.uk

Search for 'Chelsfield St Martins' on these social media sites to find our pages:



Canadian Cousins - Part 2

Last month the piece on how I found my Canadian cousins had to be truncated due to a lack of space. To re-cap, I was talking about my 3rd Gt Grandfather Phillip Neal who lived just north of Norwich. In 1821 he had given evidence in a trial to decide who was responsible for the cost of repairing a road washed away in a storm.

Now to resume.

Now Phillip, between repairing roads and attending court cases managed to father a large family of twelve children, two of whom were Amy and Eliza. Cathie, the American cousin, was

able to supply me with a photo of Amy which is one of my favourites, see photo of lady in bonnet.



Fuller and that union led to my line. Eliza and Amy's respective children Richard and Sarah – who were therefore cousins of course then married (see photos of the two individuals). I guess Skeyton was, after all, a small village.... They moved to Plumstead where Richard worked the rest of his life in Woolwich arsenal as an engineer. Unfortunately Sarah died in a mental asylum in Dartford at the age of 37 and Richard then married my Great Grandmother Eliza Appleton. However, Richard and Sarah had had 3 children, one of whom was Richard Arthur. He left these shores for Canada prior to the start of World War I for reasons that are unclear even to his Canadian descendants. He returned with Canadian forces during WW1 and then appears to have returned to Canada with his new wife Grace Harris who was literally the 'girl next door' (see wedding photo taken in Woolwich during WW1). Census returns show that they lived just a few doors from each



Amy married into the Rice family who were farmers and this led to Cathie's family line while Eliza married Richard





grandfather. So Arthur would have had very few, if any family left in Norfolk and this may have sparked his desire to sell the family farm and make a clean break and move to the US. Interestingly he settled not far from where Richard Fuller would live thirty years later, albeit across the US/Canadian border on the other side of Lake Ontario.



other when they were children. They had a son called Richard Charles born in Niagara Falls Ontario during the last few months of WW1. We'll return to Richard Charles a little later.

Cathie (my distant American relative) was looking for information on the Rice family as her ancestor Arthur Elliot Rice – (Amy Neal's son) had left the family farm in Norfolk in 1889 and emigrated to the US and settled in upstate New York after a long series of deaths in the family. His sister Sarah had also moved to Plumstead with her new husband Richard, my Gt

So I booked into a B&B in the area from which the three different branches of the family (American, Canadian and British) had originated in Norfolk and started hiking around the villages of Skeyton, Buxton, Lamas and Little Hautbois visiting various historically significant sites to my family trying to match farmhouses to the photo that Cathie had supplied. Eventually I found the farmhouse I was looking for just north of Skeyton. The two photos of the farmhouse, one from the 1880s and one from 2015 have been reproduced here to show how the farmhouse has changed in the intervening years.

The main difference after 130 years is that the main

door has been removed and replaced with a window. The trees have gone but the drive is still in the same place and the house has been modernised with the removal of the thatch, installation of double glazing and the walls have now been pebble-dashed which detracts from the character of the place to my eye. The four chimneys, the slope of the land, the attached building and that building's door which is now the main entrance confirms that it is indeed the same property. I spoke to the owner who said that the property has been in the family since the 1930s and that they had wondered about the door being a more modern alteration. But I digress. So back to how I



found my Canadian relatives.

Back In March 2019 Cathie had been doing some 'needle in the haystack' type of internet based family history research using Richard Fuller as her search topic and found a reference to a book that mentioned members of the Fuller family with references to Woolwich and Plumstead where my family had previously lived. Cathie thought the coincidences were very strong and suggested to me that this may be relevant to my family history. So I ordered a copy. The book was called 'Kid Soldier' and written by Jennifer Maruno 'nee Fuller' and told the story of how the author's father Richard Charles Fuller (I said

we'd return to him) had signed up for military service while under-age and had been sent to Britain with Canadian forces to fight in WW2 (see photo of Richard in Italy where he served in the Canadian artillery). Richard, before seeing service in Italy was based in Surrey and amongst the many other story lines a couple of chapters in the book are dedicated to visiting relatives in Woolwich. He meets up with his Uncle William and Aunts Edith and Emma.

All of these names coincided with Aunts and Uncles but certain details did not. This left certain questions in my mind as to whether the author was indeed related to me and while I was discussing the subject with Cathie, she emailed the author Jennifer informing her of the possible family link. I quickly received an email from Jennifer's Brother Ken stating that he was interested in his own family history but knew little about the British side of the family. Now Jennifer tells me that she used a certain amount of literary license in her

book but that it was based on memoirs that her father had left when he died. There was an Uncle William but his actual name was James William while both Edith and Emily existed although the book depicts them as twins which they were not. Ken passed on what information he had regarding his grandfather and father as both had crossed the pond to fight respectively in world wars I and II.

He also sent a photo of his grandfather in uniform along with a number of other people of similar age (see group photo). He stated that he did not know who these people were and asked if I had any information on them. As has happened to me before while doing family history research, I also had a copy of this photo passed down through my family line. However, I knew all of the individuals except the centre character that Ken identified as his grandfather: Richard Arthur. The photo was clearly a record of the family siblings (Richard being a half brother to the others) taken during WW1 as they took

advantage of possibly the only opportunity they would ever have of getting all of the family siblings together in one place. The two standing men in uniform (left to right) were James and Robert Fuller. The left most woman was my grandmother Alice, then my Gt Aunt Li whose first husband died at the battle of Jutland while aboard HMS Elizabeth after just 6 months of marriage. She lived to be 100 yrs old. The others were Edith and Emma who were mentioned in Jennifer's book but I never knowingly met.

Interestingly my Canadian cousin Ken (2nd cousin to be accurate) has an interest in military history and identified the badges on James and Robert's uniforms as being from the East Lancashire Battalion which I found somewhat baffling as we as a family have no connection with that part of the country. I tried searching out the badge myself but could

not come up with a better solution. I can only assume this was an attempt to mix people from different parts of the country so that if heavy loss of life occurred within one unit then the effects would be diluted across the country.

So, by a sheer fluke, the Canadian and British branches of the Fuller family were reunited. If Cathie in Florida had not noticed the link to my family ancestor then the British and Canadian branches of the family would have drifted apart until any sort of re-union would have been impossible. So, thanks Cathie! I will finish this piece with photos from a reunion we, along with other extended members of the family had in



London in October 2019. The foregoing photo shows Ken Fuller, my brother Glen and a cousin Yvonne while the following photo shows Ken's wife Carol.



While writing this piece Ken sent me a link to a YouTube video. Ken is a member of a whisky tasting club in his hometown of Kingston Ontario and due to the Corvid 19 virus pandemic he has produced an on-line review of a whisky so as to maintain social isolation rather than risk a social gathering. If you would like to view his 10 minute production on 'YouTube' then follow the link: [Longrow Single Malt Whisky Nosing March 23, 2020.](#)

*Steve Fuller April 2020
(Socially isolating)*

Scam Update

A new scam has been reported where the victim is contacted by someone

purporting to be from Amazon, stating their Prime account is

changing from £7.99 a month to £79 each quarter. Amazon has

confirmed this is a scam.

A new HMRC-themed phishing scam has been reported. Recipients are sent fake e-mails claiming the government has introduced a new tax refund programme due to COVID-19 and they are entitled to £179.21.

Criminals are spoofing the e-mail address of a genuine UK government brand noreply@hmrevenue.gov.uk to trick recipients. The e-mail includes links to access the refund that have been confirmed as malicious – infecting devices with malware and stealing personal information.

A new phishing e-mail, claiming to be from a payroll department, asks staff to verify their e-mail for a new payroll directory and adjustments to their pay. These e-mails display the subject line header "COVID-19/ **MONTH**PAYROLL BENEFITS" and recipients are asked to click on a link to provide details. Don't be fooled; just delete the e-mail BROMLEY COUNCIL - GREEN GARDEN WASTE SACK COLLECTION SERVICE The Council chargeable collection service for bagged green garden waste was temporarily suspended but is now

back on-line.

If you have green garden waste sack stickers at home, bookings can be made again for future collections through free phone line or email. You will be able to purchase them from libraries or the Civic Centre when they re-open but, meanwhile, you can buy Stickers (£1.60 each) on-line and they will be mailed to you. Full details are available on the LBB website at:

https://www.bromley.gov.uk/info/524/household_waste_and_recycling/720/green_garden_waste/3

My Experience of Catching Covid-19

It's impossible to describe the true effect of contracting the Corona Virus. Some people may only experience mild symptoms or not even realise they have been infected. For others the effects are very serious.

I was lucky, although I felt very unwell I never had serious problems with my breathing. The thought of going to hospital is always on your mind in the early stages and of

course what that could involve.

The virus takes you down to some very bad places both physically and mentally. The mental effect was perhaps the worst aspect of it. Normal thoughts ceased. Nothing joined up and ideas which made no sense would pop up from nowhere.

For a lot of the time all I wanted to do was sleep.

Eating was out of the question. One day would blur in to the next.

After about a week and a half things began to ease off. It was a slow process. Some days were bad, some days felt as if the virus was passing. The ups and downs of the illness is something I have heard and read of many times. One thing which was always with me, and indeed still remains, is an enormous

feeling of exhaustion. Its taken a long time to get back to being able to cope with the "everyday".

Moreover, there have been some strange after effects. Amongst other things I lost my balance for a while. I cannot eat certain foods because they taste so awful and I do not see colours as I used to.

The next thing is to try and catch up with tasks which have gone undone for nearly a month. Due to tiredness this is a rather long process.

All I can say is, a rather obvious, don't catch it. It is serious. Keep your guard up. Look after yourself and look after your community.

Somehow we are all going to have to find a way of living with this virus for a long time.

Also, I wish to thank everyone who has asked after me and offered support. My fridge has never been so full of fishcakes. I want to particularly say thank you to Freda and Caroline.

Graham Stead

Lestrine Wishart - In Loving Memory

It was with great sadness that we heard last week of the death of Lestrine Wishart. As well as being Village Hall Booking Secretary for over 25 years. Lestrine, alongside husband Keith, was a mainstay of the Chelsfield Players for over 30 years. The following is adapted from an article for the Players Newsletter from March 2015

After the Wisharts moved into the area in 1968 from the North East, their primary concern for the next few years was to raise their children, Dawn and Mark, and for Keith to establish his career as a Chartered Engineer with the New South Wales Government.

Throughout the 70's and early 80's Keith was involved with the "in-house" theatre society at the NSW Government's London Office in Strand and inevitably Lestrine was drawn in too.

Lestrine's involvement with the Chelsfield Players began in the summer of 1980 when she played "The Wednesday Dinner" in their out-door production. She couldn't recall the name of the play or the other actors except that Ann Blatcher was "The Thursday Dinner". She then did 'props' for the spring 1981 production of Relative Values and then persuaded Keith to join her in the Players. Playing "Dr O'Shea" in their autumn production

of Pink String and Sealing Wax to her "Pearl Bond". That was it, The Wisharts were then an integral part of the Players. And both have past been Chairmen of the Society.

In November 2012 Lestrine suffered a stroke and for the last 7 years was in a care home in Bromley with Keith visiting daily. During lockdown this was inevitably curtailed but thankfully Keith was able to see her just before she died.

Besides her acting talents, (she performed close on 50 characters) Lestrine directed 18 plays and costumed 35 productions for the Players. Our store bears

testament to this with dozens of costumes crafted by her. During the same period she also

Mistress Quickly and Sir John Falstaff in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, 2008.

Hearing all of whom have stayed with the society to this day.

She always enjoyed playing, in her own words, "silly old bats". Her favourites being "Matron" in *Caught Napping*, "Madame Arcati" in *Blythe Spirit*, "Lady Windermere" in *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime*, "Mrs. Malaprop" in *The Rivals* and "Mistress Quickly" in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.

I remember my first meeting back in 2007 "My name's Lestrine, Not Listerine. Remember it once and you won't forget it" Taken from a shop name in her and Keith's home town it was unique.

As was she.



acted for the erstwhile Crofton Players and for 7 years was a very active member of Pratts Bottom Dramatic Society, acting, directing and costuming.

The photo shows Keith and Lestrine together as

(No, that is not all him. He is wearing a fat suit that Lestrine made)

Over the years Lestrine had a great knack for pulling in fresh talent into the players. Introducing Bernard West, Madeline McCubbin and Cynthia

Young Photographer Comeback

"Do you remember the young photographer a few years back.....well I'm back with a bang and I'm now 20"



Frazer Watson

Lost At Chelsfield

The Incredible Story of One of ‘The Few’

Chelsfield Green, a strip of elevated, sloping grassland running alongside Warren Road from Chelsfield Station to Court Road on the fringe of the Village, has become a popular spot for a ration of daily exercise since the coronavirus lockdown was imposed. No wonder. Not only is it a quiet haven hosting an abundance of meadow flowers, it also offers spectacular vistas out over the Cray Valley to a distant Canary Wharf and Shooters Hill with Epping Forest on the far horizon. Landmarks such as the BT Tower, the Crystal Palace transmitter and the Queen Elizabeth II Bridge at Dartford can be picked out on the skyline too with the help of a handy viewpoint board.

Bromley Council bought the land in the 1980s to forestall any developer with hungry eyes on this stretch bordering the Green Belt. Remembered

by older locals as nothing but part of a field of cabbages and once earmarked for part of the proposed route of the Ringway Three motorway, it is now designated a Site of Importance for Nature in the Council’s Biodiversity Plan while Bromley’s Local Plan regards the view from there as one “of local importance”.

But there is another feature of Chelsfield Green that captures the curiosity of many a stroller. At the edge of the open field abutting the Green, on the left by the bridle path as you head towards the Village and directly opposite the farmhouse of Court

Lodge Farm, is a large granite boulder, a memorial stone to a 21-year-old Battle of Britain pilot.

Placed there in May 2008 by the Shoreham Aircraft Museum as part of its Local RAF Memorials Project which pays tribute to those of Churchill’s “Few” who lost their lives within a 10-mile radius of the Museum, an inscription on the stone records that Sergeant John Hugh Mortimer Ellis of 85 Squadron was killed close by when his Hurricane fighter plane number P2673 hurtled to the ground on 1 September 1940.

What most people



stopping to inspect the memorial probably won't know is that behind those bare details lies an incredible story. It's not only the story of a brave young pilot but also a tragi-comic tale of wartime confusion, bureaucratic bungling and a mix-up that meant Sergeant Ellis's remains, entombed in his plane which had drilled deep into the Chelsfield soil, were not recovered for more than 50 years.



John Ellis was born on 2 April 1919, the only son of Frederick Ellis, a grocer's managing clerk, and his wife Ethel. He grew up in Newnham in Cambridgeshire, became a Post Office engineer and signed up for the RAF Volunteer Reserve in the autumn of 1938.

Always known as "Hugh", he appeared exactly as Britain's wartime pilots are portrayed in countless films: young, fit and strong, blondhaired, good-looking with a big smile, sparky personality and a wry sense of humour. Hugh had just completed his elementary flying training when war broke out and he was immediately called to full-time service. After further instruction at Bexhill, Brize Norton and Sutton Bridge, he was posted on 24 May 1940 to the Hurricane-equipped 85 Squadron at Debden in Essex. There, he was quickly dubbed "Cockney Sparrow" by his Squadron Leader, Peter Townsend (later widely known as a decorated air ace with the rank of Group Captain, an Equerry first to the King and then the present Queen, and deeply romantically involved with Princess Margaret).

His picture here is from a painting by Geoff Nutkins of the Shoreham Aircraft Museum

The young pilot's boyish, sardonic wit soon surfaced. On his "Mae West" inflatable life jacket

he painted the elongated stick-figure symbol of the fictional buccaneering-avenger character Simon Templar – The Saint – complete with its halo, then added a Nazi swastika dangling from its hand!

Hugh, RAF number 742068, found himself proudly piloting one of the classic fighters of all time, designed and built for war and at the forefront of our defences in 1940. Armed with eight wing mounted machine guns in two lots of four whose concentrated fire could literally saw a Luftwaffe machine in half, the single-seater Hawker Hurricane was capable of a maximum speed of just over 300 mph and could operate at a ceiling of 33,000 feet.

Nose-to-tail, the Hurricane Mk1 – the kind Hugh flew – measured 30 feet and three inches, had a wingspan of 40 feet and was powered by a single RollsRoyce Merlin piston engine. Loaded for battle and reinforced with 70lbs of armour plate to protect the pilot's head and back, its take-off weight was something over a couple of tons.

So successful was the Hurricane in its primary role as an attack aircraft that 60% of all Battle of Britain victories were credited to it – accounting for more enemy aircraft destroyed in that period of the hostilities than any other British weapon, including the Spitfire and ground-based cannon.

At Debden, with a small boomerang lucky mascot around his neck that had been sent from Australia by his favourite aunt to keep him safe and ensure he came back, Hugh soon scrambled into action. His handwritten Combat Reports sprinkled with RAF slang such as “Tally Ho!”, “Angels 10” and “Yellow Leader”, plus graphic descriptions of “climbing into the sun” before swooping at high speed on “E/A” (enemy aircraft) from astern, “raking” them with “bursts of gunfire” and sending them diving, trailing smoke and out of control, speak of a man in his element.

On 6 August he helped to destroy a Dornier Do17, the Luftwaffe’s “Flying Pencil” light bomber. On

the 18th he damaged a Messerschmitt 110 heavy fighter and shot down an Me-109. Next day, 85 Squadron was re-stationed to fly out of Croydon and, in a mid-afternoon engagement with the enemy on the 26th, Hugh downed a Do215 (a later version of the “Pencil”), over the Thames Estuary.

However, on the 29th his fortunes faltered: in combat over the Channel, his Hurricane was hit. Nevertheless, he managed to glide homewards and when the plane caught fire over land he baled out safely from 1,000 feet before his plane crashed in East Sussex – ironically, not far from the small town of Battle.

On that August afternoon, it’s likely that weighing on Hugh’s mind was a half-joking, half-fearful thought he had confided to Squadron Leader Townsend. One of his middle names was Mortimer – his mother’s maiden name – which he read as a corruption of the French “mort-in-mer” (dead in the sea). And, with the typical young WW2 airman’s fatalistic

outlook, knowing how the odds were stacked, he believed that was where his end would probably come.

From his first foray into battle with the Hun, Hugh had promised his childhood sweetheart and fiancée Peggy Owen that, just like his little boomerang, he would always come back. Now, granted a few hours’ leave after his lucky escape and somewhat miffed that he had to make his own way to Croydon by public transport, he discovered that his precious boomerang was broken.

On Sunday 1 September 1940, three days after that incident, Hugh was back in the air, piloting the brand new Hurricane Mk1 No. P2673 unexpectedly assigned to him as new machines generally went to older, more-experienced pilots. Most of the morning the skies were blotted with cloudy patches amid some sunny periods, but temperatures were a little higher than average so the cloud burnt off about midday, replaced by fine and sunny conditions. For RAF Fighter

Command, the pattern developed in much the same way as on preceding days: quiet early on, with radar pinging enemy aircraft arriving steadily over the south coast from mid-morning. Breaking up into smaller formations on reaching Kent, the raiders again focused on airfields, with Biggin Hill a prime target. Fourteen squadrons, including 85, were scrambled to intercept them and fierce dogfights raged over east Kent. Nevertheless, some bombers got through via the Thames Estuary to hit London's Docklands.

Barely had our fighters returned to base to re-arm and refuel after the morning's tough encounters than a second wave of German bombers and their escorts swept in. Hugh, standing by at Croydon with 85 Squadron after an hour of action right up to Noon, was ordered into the air again at 1.45pm as a force of 150-200 German planes advanced through Kent. The Hurricanes confronted the invaders over Lympne airfield, close to Folkestone on the coast, but failed to do much to

impede their progress, though 85 took out one bomber near Kenley on the far outskirts of Croydon.

Biggin Hill then came under attack for the sixth time in three days, precisely as a funeral service was being conducted at the village cemetery just outside the airfield for 40 or so personnel killed in the raids of previous days. Many of them had perished in a direct hit on a packed air raid shelter. Hurricanes now tore in to take on the foe, 85 Squadron damaging one Me-110 over Biggin Hill then chasing and shooting it down. But the airfield was again left strafed, the runway pitted, buildings demolished by four high-explosive bombs. Hangars, mess halls, workshops and the telecommunications system were hit.

Action then switched to the neighbouring Surrey sector as the bombers turned their attention to the important Kenley airfield. At around 2.15pm, a number of Me-109s of the higher-flying bomber escort jumped on

85's planes below, cutting the squadron to pieces. Three of Hugh's comrades went down in flames: two lost their lives, the third suffered severe burns. A fourth Hurricane from his Squadron was badly shot up and belly-flopped in a forced landing with a jammed undercarriage. Hugh, in P2673, never returned to base. He was last seen in combat with Me-109s. No one knew where he had come down. His family was informed that he was missing.

Twelve days later, Hugh's father, Frederick, wrote to the RAF Records Office at Ruislip, saying: "I rather expected that something more would have been discovered by this time as I understand the action from which he failed to return was over the Kenley area." He added: "I take it a machine and pilot could not remain undiscovered, coming down on the land in the middle of the day, for any length of time. I also trust that all possible measures are taken to trace missing airmen ..."

Squadron Leader Peter Townsend reported that it

was presumed Hugh was shot down before having time to engage the German bombers in the Biggin Hill/Kenley area where the fighter escort pounced. Kenley Station had carried out a search for Hugh's body and aircraft, he said, but nothing had been found.

Having heard no further news, Frederick Ellis wrote again in February 1941, asking whether this meant no trace had been found of Hugh's Hurricane – "which should have been possible to identify by registration number or something" – or whether

his son and his plane had simply vanished.

An internal letter from the officer in charge at the Records Office noted soon after: "It is felt hardly conceivable that no trace of aircraft or airman should have been found in the area referred to during a period of six months." Peter Townsend, newly promoted to Wing Commander, responded in April that neither Kenley nor any other Station had produced evidence of Hugh being shot down in their sectors so "we are now forced to the conclusion that he

was killed over the sea".

This was based on the fact that Hugh's 85 Squadron section leader had made a forced landing at Lympne "and had presumably been engaged [with the enemy] over the sea or near the coast". Tragically, it seemed Hugh's "mortimer" premonition had come true. Along with over 20,000 other airmen and women who were lost in the Second World War but have no known grave, his name was engraved on the RAF memorial unveiled at Runnymede in 1953.

Patrick Hellicar

A Message From The Leader of the Council

7th May 2020

The following open letter is the lead article in Bromley Council's Update e-newsletter.

Dear Residents,

It has been an incredibly busy month at the Civic Centre, despite the 'lockdown', as the Council shaped its recovery from the initial jolt of 'self-isolation'. A month we can all look back on with some pride as residents of our

Borough as well I feel.

With a remarkable 4274 people stepping forward to volunteer to assist those needing help, working in close partnership with Community Links Bromley we are now matching requests for assistance within 24 hours and I would like to thank every single one of them again for their selfless contributions. Though we have not needed to call on

everyone yet, we are hugely grateful for being able to have you on stand-by for when others need a break or go back to work as restrictions are lifted.

As a Council, we remain absolutely focused on harnessing this wave of goodwill moving to the future for the benefit of all.

On Monday of this week, we became the first Borough in London to re-open our Household

Waste and Recycling Centres by innovatively adapting a booking system to ensure social distancing could be maintained, a system which seems to be working well and to positive critical acclaim.

Looking forward, whilst it is really sad to have seen so many well laid plans for the VE Day commemorations scrapped by the wretched Covid-19 virus, I say we should all follow the Royal British Legion's advice and make the most of it in our own way anyway.

When you look back and consider the suffering and sacrifices made by that generation over a six year period, it perhaps puts into context the last six weeks or so, sad and difficult as they have been and remain for us all. We owe them everything and should never forget.

Tomorrow also sees the second visit of the Covid-19 Testing Centre for key workers at Norman Park. There is also further positive news that the Green Garden Waste Satellite sites will be reopening for the next three weekends, to take

pressure off of Churchfields and Waldo Road, so please use them if you are able to as well.

But above all else, there is now a genuine hope and real belief that we might be standing at the very edge of a partial lifting of the 'lockdown'.

Let's hope so, but also please be careful not to take any unnecessary risks until we are sure. It's been far too long and painful a journey to take any short cuts now, please stay safe and take care.

*Councillor Colin Smith
Bromley Council Leader*

Good Home Wanted for Royal Ephemera

I would like to find an appreciative home for a box of Royal ephemera. I collected a load over the years and am keeping but a small token of stuff, but still have a box of magazines, scrapbooks, special editions of Radio Times, and a mass of old newspapers going back years, some before WW2 (bit dry and brittle but still readable). Just give me a ring on 01323 391000 or 07860 720929.

The newspapers are still at Dad's house in Chelsfield, the other box

is down here in Seaford, but am up every week so can bring it with me. Like many children that watched the Coronation in 1953 on the first family TV (the whole family came up from Orpington to my front room at "Merton" Chelsfield Lane, curtains drawn, to stare at this little B/W screen for hours. I got a bit bored! I was given a special ER scrapbook and cut out photos from the papers to paste in. Not got any interest in this anymore.

Would hate to bin it all and the local museum is also trying to dispose of newspapers. Not hygienic enough to use for wrapping fish & chips!!

This reminds me of a parody song we sung at school...something like "They're changing to Guards at Buckingham Palace" (*a new cigarette*)," Christopher Robin went down with Alice" (*the contemporary equivalent of Corvid!!*)

Phil Lane

Using “Lockdown” Time

Having so much time on my hands is allowing time to sort out and index all the tons of stuff we have both kept, much before we were married or earlier. Back in my teenage years there was a stupid conversation starter that went “I have a large 12 inch black circle of plastic at home with a hole in the middle. Is this a record?” Not even a cracker joke standard and meaningless to many children in 2020.

We have kept a surprising number of LPs and singles, some of which are still playable. I used to buy mostly obscure singles before the Beatles came along and I joined that club, adding LPs later. My first actual record purchases were 78 rpm 10 inch. The Stargazers singing Hot Diggity Boom what you do to me. Not sure if it is still around. At school in 1957 I bought the Carousel Waltz/ You’ll Never Walk Alone not by Ray Martin but by Ray Bloch as this was all the shop had in stock. Much derision by my schoolmates at the time.

Actually he was pretty big in the USA and it was good recording. It is now a fruitbowl somewhere.

I will not elucidate further today save to tell you that I am sorting my singles, playing them to see if they don’t jump, and wondering at my curious and eclectic taste over a period from 1959 to early 70s. I have even found a photo of a record player I built from scratch for St Martins Guild of Young People using some very odd electronics.

I am hoping that it will not

just be the older generation that I have heard of in Chelsfield that will remember singles and the joy of choosing a heap to be played on the Auto changer!

So look out for next month and such names as Baytown Singers/The Mark Four/Paul Revere And the Raiders, and B.Bumble and the Stingers.....will be discussed with their various Hits and a photo or two of their respective sleeves.

Phil Lane

A VE Night at The Bo-Peep



One of our VE Nights at The Bo Peep, We were always banged out on this event *Jim Ellard*

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

ALL DIARY DATES ARE SUSPENDED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE