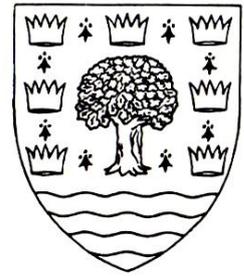


Iford Historical Society

Newsletter No.121 August 2016



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Our website can be found at: <http://ilfordhistoricalsociety.weebly.com/>



The Referendum

Our newsletter usually highlights events from the past and was ready to feature The Somme but this time our front page must be devoted to history in the making. The momentous decision taken on 23rd June to leave the European Union will have far-reaching effects for many years to come. Of those eligible, 71.7% cast their votes.

Nationally – **51.9%** (17,410,742) voted to leave with **48.1%** (16,141,241) voting to remain.

Leave: England 53.4%, Wales 52.5%, Northern Ireland 44.2%, Scotland 38.0%.

In Redbridge – Leave was **46.0%** with 59,020 votes; Remain **54.0%** with 69,213 votes.

(Source http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/politics/eu_referendum/results)

Andrew Marr speaking on the BBC on 26th June said this was “the most dramatic and important, democratic decision ever taken by the British people, leaving the country deeply divided.” He pointed out that while the posher, better-educated and richer parts of Britain voted to remain, there had been a rebellion by the struggling post-industrial communities, ex-miners, agricultural workers, fishermen and the like who felt ignored by the decision-makers.

The following week saw a collapse in political leadership, defeat by England in the European football tournament and then many moving ceremonies to commemorate those who gave their lives in the Battle of the Somme. We must hope and pray that history shows that on 23rd June we made the right decision for Britain and for Europe.

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Battle of the Somme: one of the bloodiest battles ever fought!

This was one of the largest and best known battles of the First World War, lasting from 1st July until 18th November 1916 on the banks of the River Somme in France. Sadly it is estimated that 1,000,000 men were killed or wounded in this battle, including about 485,000 British and French troops. Few of the men who died had an opportunity to be more than ‘canon-fodder’. What a terrible phrase! Almost 60,000 British soldiers were killed, wounded or taken prisoner on the first day of fighting. Among them was Horace Cowlin from Ilford, see opposite.



The Thiepval Memorial, the Memorial to the Missing of the Somme, bears the names of more than 72,000 officers and men of the United Kingdom and South African forces who died in the Somme sector before 20th March 1918 and have no known grave.

Over 90% of those commemorated died between July and November 1916.

(<http://www.cwgc.org>)

(Thiepval is between Arras and Amiens in Northern France.)

Local Heroes of the Somme: Seymour Taylor

Charles Taylor and Amy Barton were married in 1872 and lived at Barkingside, although Charles came from Suffolk and Amy from Kent. The 1891 census shows them living at Redbridge Cottages in Roding Lane, just north of the Red House pub (and the present Redbridge Station) with seven sons and a daughter. Seymour was the last shown, having been born in 1889, but another son was born a couple of years later. Their father was shown as an agricultural labourer and was probably employed at Fernhall Farm.

In 1910 Seymour married Frances Mary Elizabeth Holliday who was born in Canning Town, and they moved to ‘Lily Cottage’, New Road, Beehive Lane, Barkingside. (New Road was at the Redbridge Lane end of Inglehurst Gardens.)

Seymour was employed as a horse-drawn farm wagon driver and the next few years they had three daughters.



Sheet 65 1st edn. Ordnance Survey Map, 6 inch



Frances Mary Elizabeth Taylor in 1911
outside ‘Lily Cottage’, New Road

Seymour enlisted early on in the Great War, into the 3rd Battalion, The Prince Consort's Own, Rifle Brigade and after training, he landed in France on 1st May 1915. The following year his battalion took part in the Battle of the Somme in northern France. On 18th August 1916, thirty-nine men of the battalion died defending themselves from a German attack.

Seymour's wife later heard that Seymour was killed when a grenade detonated in his hand. He was 27 years old, just one of an estimated million casualties. His body was not recovered and so he is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial to the missing of the Somme. He was posthumously awarded the 1914-15 Star War medal and the Victory Medal.

In 1919 Frances remarried a British man who had served with the Australian army. She led a full life and died in Yorkshire in 1975, aged 84. In 2014 Frances and Seymour had 24 surviving great grandchildren.

© *Margaretha Pollitt Brown, November 2014*

This article was based on material from the *Our 15: Remembered Lives a First World War Archive* exhibition at Wanstead United Reformed Church, 23rd November – 5th December 2014.



*Private S/7525 Seymour Taylor
3rd Battalion Rifle Brigade
(Prince Consort's Own)*

Local Heroes of the Somme: Ashton Victor Taylor

Since preparing the article above, Margaretha has discovered that one of Seymour's older brothers died 18 days earlier. Ashton Victor Taylor was born in 1884 and in the 1911 census he was shown as a boarder at his brother Sidney's home, 1 East Road, New Wanstead. Ashton is described as a married farm labourer.

However he gave his place of residence as Barking when he enlisted at Stratford. His regiment was 23rd Division Ammunition Column, Royal Field Artillery. He served in France as a Driver from 24th August 1915 until he died of wounds on 1st August 1916 aged 32. This was probably inside one of the field ambulances which were concentrated in the area around the Albert Cemetery Extension in August/ September 1916.

Ashton is buried in Grave I.L.30 in Albert Communal Cemetery Extension. He was awarded the the British War and Victory Medals and the 1914-15 Star.

Local Heroes of the Somme: Horace Cowlin

Horace Cowlin was born in South Kensington, London, in 1884 to Frederick, a provisions merchant, and his wife Susannah. The Cowlins had nine children including Horace. By 1901, Horace's mother had died (her husband apparently never remarried), and the family were living in Mitcham, Surrey. Horace attended the Whitgift Grammar School in Croydon and by 1909 was living in Wimbledon.

In 1912, Horace married Mabel Metland Ayers. The couple soon had two children and the family must have lived above Horace's jewellery shop at 178 High Road, Ilford, next door to what was then the Premier Electric Cinema (the site is now occupied by a block of flats and Griggs Approach). Horace apparently was a keen sportsman and as a motor cyclist he won a gold medal on a reliability test run from Land's End to John o'Groats.

Horace Cowlin served with the 1st/5th Battalion, the London Regiment (London Rifle Brigade), arriving in France in June 1915. He was killed on the first day of the battle of the Somme, 1st July 1916, whilst saving the lives of his fellow comrades. His story was published just weeks later, in the *Ilford Guardian* and *Ilford Recorder*, where it was revealed in a letter from a comrade that: "He was in the act of throwing a bomb at the Germans when he was shot in the wrist and dropped the bomb, thus setting the fuse going, and as all his section were round him...there was nowhere he could get rid of the thing, so he laid on it. Poor old chap, he was a fine fellow."

In August 1916, Horace's fellow members of the Ilford Chamber of Commerce met to discuss proposals to erect a memorial in his honour. It was decided that a wooden shelter, something both ornamental and useful, would be gifted to Ilford Council. This shelter and a stone memorial tablet were unveiled on 6th December 1917 in Valentines Park, where they still stand today, near the Boating Lake. The shelter and plaque have recently been refurbished by Vision RCL/the London Borough of Redbridge and were rededicated on Friday 1st July by The Worshipful the Mayor of Redbridge Cllr Gurdial Bhamra.



Horace's name is featured at the Ilford War Memorial Hall where it is followed by the letters 'V.C.' Up until the time that the memorial was completed, it was hoped that Horace would be awarded the Victoria Cross. Unfortunately, this was never to materialise as actions meriting the award had to be corroborated by an officer and none were present at the time to witness Horace's heroic deed. The Cowlin family were to suffer further loss during the war when Horace's younger brother, Hugh, was also killed.

The details of this story were researched by Redbridge Museum staff who acknowledge thanks to Frances Speakman and the Whitgift School.

A similar article is in *Redbridge and the First World War* by Gerard Greene, page 96, by kind permission of Gerard Greene.

Redbridge Museum and the First World War

On 1st July Redbridge Museum launched a new website www.redbridgefirstworldwar.org.uk. This has photographs and information on all the 127 WWI memorials in the borough with details of 1324 individuals who feature on those local memorials with biographies for 222 of them. There is information about the impacts of the war on Redbridge and a forthcoming catalogue of the collections relating to the war held by the Museum / Information & Heritage.

This has been a major undertaking and follows on from the exhibition held in 2014-15 and the book launched in 2015. The museum also continues to offer education sessions for schools about the First World War. It is open 10am-5pm Tuesday to Friday and 10am-4pm Saturdays.

Iford and the Zeppelins

Introduction

A quarter of a century before the Blitz of 1940-41, the inhabitants of Iford faced another aerial menace – Zeppelins. For nearly three years, gigantic airships flew above their homes at night *en route* to bombing London. When the First World War broke out, no British anti-aircraft (AA) gun was capable of hitting a Zeppelin, and the country's military resources could provide no proper defence against aerial attack. However, as the war progressed, a co-ordinated defence system combining AA guns, searchlights, observation posts, barrage balloons and airfields was built up, much of it in south-west Essex.

Zeppelins

A Zeppelin¹ was a large German airship, built around a rigid skeleton of aluminium or wood. Within this were many cells containing nearly one million cubic feet of lighter-than-air, but highly flammable, hydrogen gas. Zeppelins were able to carry loads of around nine tons, reaching speeds of up to 50 mph. Crews numbered up to 22 men.

Flying a Zeppelin was more like sailing a ship than piloting an aeroplane. The captain stood with the watch officer and control-surface operators in the command gondola. There they maintained the airship's altitude and course with two nautical-style steering wheels. The captain gave orders through a speaker tube. With no real navigational instruments, crews found their way by using maps and recognizing landmarks on the ground. They relied on railway tracks, the lights of towns, or the sheen of rivers, lakes and reservoirs to guide them towards their targets.

Early raids

In January 1915, *The Essex County Telegraph* poured scorn on those who feared the threat of air raids with an editorial headlined 'Silly Zeppelin Scare in Essex'. However, this danger soon turned into a reality when Kaiser Wilhelm II approved the possibility of Zeppelin raids on Britain. The Kaiser initially excluded London as a target, but he soon yielded; during some of these raids the airships passed over Iford and bombs fell across a wide part of south-west Essex.

On the night of 31st May/1st June 1915, army airship LZ38 conducted the first air raid on London. The Metropolitan Police reported:

'An aircraft, supposed to be a Zeppelin, the engines of which were distinctly heard, passed over Chigwell Row, Essex, shortly before 11 pm on Monday, 31st ultimo, travelling in a westerly direction. It appears to have reached Dalston shortly after 11 pm, dropped bombs, and returned via Leytonstone - where more bombs were dropped - Wanstead, Barkingside, and Chigwell Row, between which two last points it seems to have left the Division at about 11.30 pm.

'Police at Wanstead and Barkingside also report having heard an aircraft, which they could not with certainty describe, passing overhead an hour later, i.e. at 12.30 am 1st instant. Whether this last aircraft was hostile or not is unknown'.

¹ There were several different types of German airship in use during the war, of which the Schütte-Lanz operated by the army and the Zeppelin by the navy were the most prevalent. All the types soon became known generically as 'Zeppelins'.

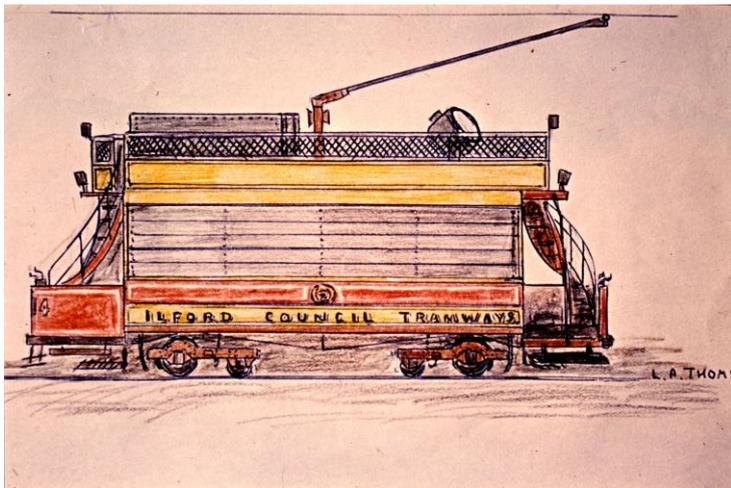
London's defences

In the war's early months, Britain had no defence against aerial attack. Most of the aircraft in Britain at that time belonged to the navy's Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS), as much of the army's Royal Flying Corps (RFC) had moved to France, so the navy was given charge of Britain's air defence. The Admiralty made the first organizational change in September 1915, when it recalled Admiral Sir Percy Scott from retirement to command London's air defences. This responsibility passed to the army in February 1916 and the War Office set about forming a new organization, Home Defence, under the command of Field Marshal Sir John French.

Anti-aircraft guns and searchlights

By September 1916, AA guns in south-west Essex were in place at Rainham, Romford, Chadwell Heath, Lambourne End, Kelvedon Hatch, Chingford, Theydon Bois, Epping, North Woolwich, Beckton, West Ham and Wanstead Flats. Some of the guns were mounted on timber towers or convenient existing buildings. Others were given purpose-built concrete emplacements. Accommodation for the gunners was in temporary corrugated iron and timber huts.

At the same time, London was defended to the north-east by searchlights at Higham Hill, Chingford (by the Jubilee Retreat), Buckhurst Hill, Loughton, Theydon Bois (in Coopersale Lane), Epping (Lindsey Street), North Weald (airfield), Stapleford Tawney, Stapleford Abbots, Chigwell Row, Lambourne End, Dog Kennel Hill (beside the 17th fairway of Hainault Forest golf course), Noak Hill, Chadwell Heath, Barkingside (these two on board converted tramcars), Harold Wood, Upminster, Becontree Heath, Wanstead, West Ham, Barking, North Woolwich and Beckton.



This sketch by the late Leonard Thomson shows one of two Ilford tramcars converted to carry a searchlight. These trams were positioned outside the police stations at Barkingside and Chadwell Heath each evening. (Courtesy of Redbridge Museum / Redbridge Information & Heritage. Ref p14945)

Observation posts

Observation posts were set up in suitable high places. At Claybury, there was one in the asylum's 170-foot high water tower, the top of which was nearly 400 feet above sea-level and gave a fine view of raiders approaching across the Thames. After one raid, the London County Council Claybury Asylum Sub-Committee reported:

'On the occasion of an air-raid on the night of 25th/26th April 1916 lights had been observed flashing dangerously from the Tower and the Special Constables on duty had been informed – the lights were stated to have been caused by the use of an electric torch to enable the Special Constables on duty to consult a chart'.

Following that raid, one of the asylum's employees was summonsed for building a bonfire. The man claimed that the fire had been burning for 15 years, but the magistrate fined him £5 and said that there seemed to be lunatics outside the asylum who should perhaps be in it. However, at a meeting of Ilford council later that month, it was reported that the steward at Claybury had written to the council stating that, since the opening of the asylum, they had invariably disposed of the domestic refuse by burning, but that lately the military authorities had ordered them to put out the fire. Perhaps the summonsed man's claim was not so far-fetched after all.

The work of the Hainault observation post kept 34 officers and men employed when Robert Stroud² made available a tower at his residence for observation work. This proved most useful as it was on a route often used by the enemy bound for London.

Barrage balloons

Barrage balloons were sausage-shaped with fins, made of rubberized cotton and filled with hydrogen. An apron consisted of three balloons 1,000 yards apart, anchored to the ground and linked by cables. Every 25 yards, 1,000-foot steel wires hung vertically from these cables. The balloons would hover 7,000—10,000 feet above the ground. Barrage balloons were most effective at forcing raiders to fly at predictable and uniform heights and AA guns could then concentrate fire above the balloons. Coinciding with the introduction of Gotha bombers, balloon aprons prevented these aircraft from inflicting as much damage as they would otherwise have done. Near Ilford these defences included No 2 Balloon Apron at Parsloes Park, Chadwell Heath and No 4 at 'Great Gearies', Barkingside. A few hired buildings and some huts and tents provided accommodation for the operators.

Airfields

Fairlop Plain was the site of two airfields during the First World War: Hainault Farm, used by the RFC; and Fairlop, an RNAS landing ground and training depot.

In October 1914, the RNAS identified land at Fairlop Plain, on the eastern side of Hainault Farm, as suitable for development as a day landing ground. It passed this site to the RFC in February 1915, but the RFC was short of resources and unable to move in until October. Portable hangars were then erected and the farmhouse on the opposite side of the road was made ready to billet pilots. More permanent buildings were added and, on 15th April 1916, Hainault Farm airfield became home to 'C' Flight of RFC No 39 Squadron ('A' Flight was at North Weald and 'B' Flight at Suttons Farm, Hornchurch; the squadron's headquarters were at Salway Lodge, Woodford Green).

In July 1917, the officers and men at Hainault Farm became an independent unit, No 44 Squadron, the first of three additional Home Defence squadrons created to defend London from attacks by Gotha and Giant aircraft approaching over south-west Essex. No 44 Squadron was to remain at Hainault Farm for the duration of the war until it moved to North Weald in June 1919, at which time flying from the airfield ceased.

² Robert Stroud (1856—1925) lived at Barley Hall, Goodmayes, in Ilford's Hainault South ward. Stroud was Archibald Cameron Corbett's major house-building contractor; he was also a JP and Essex County Councillor.



This is a view of the Royal Flying Corps' early days at Hainault Farm, in late 1915 or early 1916. At that time, the airfield lacked any permanent buildings – the barn-like structures in the centre are possibly temporary canvas hangars. Tents provided accommodation for the ground crews, with the pilots billeted in the farmhouse at the extreme left. (Courtesy of the Fleet Air Arm Museum. Ref JMBGSL07692)

In the spring of 1916, the RNAS selected the playing fields of Fairlop and Hainault Recreation Ground as the site for a sub-station to its flying school at Chingford. Opened in 1916, Fairlop airfield was just 400 yards from the RFC airfield at Hainault Farm. April 1918 saw Fairlop designated as No 207 Training Depot Station (TDS) and in July it was re-designated as No 54 TDS; TDS were formed to train fighter squadrons up to front line service standards. Despite its status, Fairlop was never more than a temporary airfield. In July 1919, No 54 TDS at Fairlop was disbanded and the airfield closed.

Air raid warnings

Air raid warnings in the early years of the war were variable, and people questioned whether it was advisable to give warnings at all, since they could lead to unnecessary anxiety. In some areas it was possible not to know there was an air raid alert on at all, particularly if residents were already asleep. In Ilford, notice of an approaching air raid was given to those in the Ley Street area by extinguishing the red lantern outside the fire station there. At Fairlop, when a raid was expected, residents in the railway cottages in Forest Road would go over to the nearby station and shelter in the subway between the platforms.

In places where no public warnings were given, residents sometimes took matters into their own hands. In August 1915, *The Ilford Recorder* carried letters about the Cranbrook Zeppelin Patrol. In Wanstead Park Road were 1,500 residents in 340 houses and from these a list of about 60 people had been established to make four patrols each night from 10.30pm to 2.00am. One correspondent objected to a house-to-house collection to cover the expenses as he considered the sum raised would exceed anything likely to be incurred on 'printed matter and a few badges'.

In July 1917, an official warning system was instituted. For daytime raids policemen patrolled the streets, blowing whistles or ringing bells, and sometimes carrying billboards bearing the notice 'Air raid - take cover'. Warning of an impending night-time air raid was given by the firing of maroons. The 'All clear' was often given by Boy Scout buglers driven around in police cars.

Lighting restrictions

Lighting restrictions had been introduced on 11th September 1914, but regulations made under the Defence of the Realm Act meant that local authorities decided individually what to do. On 21st May 1915, under the heading 'The Zeppelin Raids. Grave Warning to Ilford Residents', *The Ilford Recorder* carried the following notice:

'We are officially requested to warn the public of Ilford that the exhibition of lights during the night is highly dangerous, and especially after midnight. It is known that in the recent air raid on Southend the Zeppelins were directly guided by a strong light on the sea front. Ilford is on the direct route from the North Sea to the City. If all lights are extinguished throughout the town, the danger from explosive and incendiary bombs will be considerably minimised. But if lights are displayed - even a solitary beacon here and there would be sufficient - Ilford will almost certainly be raided ...'

Ilford's residents took little heed of the warning, however, for, on 4th June, four days after the first air raid on London, an article entitled 'The Lesson of the Zeppelin Raid' appeared admonishing the borough's negligent population:

'The chief topic in Ilford this week is the air raid that is officially reported to have been made on certain parts of London during Monday night ... Suffice it that Ilford probably narrowly escaped serious mischief, and that the town may be far less immune when the bomb-droppers come this way again. The lesson for all of us is to exercise a rigid supervision over our lights ... Unfortunately there are many private people in Ilford who appeared to be quite unconscious of the aerial menace, for, with the vanishment of the public lights, numberless beacons become clearly visible in all parts of the town, some of them shining on into the morning hours. These would guide an approaching enemy as surely as the public lamps ...'

Air raid damage

Wherever bombs fell, amongst the first on the scene were the Special Constables. These recruits came from local men and public response was good: Ilford could muster 225 special constables by November 1914; Goodmayes and Chadwell Heath supplied a further 40. They were empowered to stop and challenge anyone of whom they were suspicious. At Ilford, Special Constables enforced the blackout with such vigour that residents complained that the severe lighting restrictions increased burglary in the town.

The majority of bombs dropped by Zeppelins were incendiaries, but although these caused material damage, loss of life was comparatively light from fires. Firemen's responsibilities included rescuing survivors following a bombing attack and their efforts were instrumental in restricting fire damage and casualties.

Later raids

On the night of 25th /26th April 1916, Zeppelin LZ97 appeared over the Essex coast. Reaching West Mersea at about 10 pm, the Zeppelin followed the course of the River Blackwater. Passing Chelmsford, it headed west until, at about 10.45 pm, it dropped 47 incendiary bombs in a line from Fyfield to Ongar. Fifteen minutes later, after steering a south-westerly course and with the crew believing they were over London, LZ97 began bombing again. The airship's second-in-command later recalled:

'[The commander's] hand is on the buttons and levers. 'Let go!' he cries. The first bomb has fallen on London! We lean over the side. What accursed long time it takes between release and impact while the bomb travels those thousands of feet! We fear that it has proved a 'dud' - until

the explosion reassures us. Already we have frightened them; away goes the second, an incendiary bomb. It blazes up underneath and sets fire to something, thereby giving us a point by which to calculate our drift and ground speed'.

But the crew had miscalculated. The bombs fell over Fairlop Plain, between Forest Farm and Aldborough Hatch. Caught in the beams of the searchlight on the tramcar at Barkingside and fired on by an AA gun, one of its bombs narrowly missed the airfield and railway station at Fairlop, falling close by in Forest Road, causing a large crater and damaging some of the station cottages, but injuring no-one. The Zeppelin then followed the railway line southwards towards Newbury Park as searchlights flicked to and fro across the sky. LZ97 circled over Seven Kings before making its escape back towards the east, dropping two small bombs between Goodmayes and Chadwell Heath, destroying a cottage, but causing no casualties.

The airship was not yet out of danger. The airfields at Hainault Farm and Suttons Farm were not far away and two aircraft from No 39 Squadron took off from each in pursuit. Captain Arthur Harris ³, then commanding 'B' Flight, was first up and he saw the airship turning and climbing over Seven Kings at a height of about 14,000 feet. Harris climbed and attacked, but his gun jammed and LZ97 slipped away.

Zeppelins shot down

Iford residents were witness to the destruction of the first airship shot down over British soil. This was Shütte-Lanz SL11, destroyed on the night of 2nd /3rd September 1916 by 2nd Lieutenant William Leefe Robinson flying from Suttons Farm airfield; Robinson was awarded the Victoria Cross for his bravery. The airship crashed at Cuffley, Hertfordshire and reports suggest that when SL11 exploded, the light was so bright it could be seen over a radius of 60 miles.



This postcard commemorates William Leefe Robinson's destruction of Shütte-Lanz SL11 on the night of 2/3 September 1916. The airship was originally claimed to be Zeppelin L21, possibly because a Shütte-Lanz was considered by some to be a lesser form of airship. Robinson had no connection with Ilford, having flown from Suttons Farm airfield at Hornchurch, but this card is one of many published to celebrate the airman's achievement. (Author's collection)

³ In the Second World War, Arthur Travers Harris, 1st Baronet, (1892—1984) served as head of RAF Bomber Command.

Gothas and Giants

Aeroplane raiders are the final part in this story for, in 1917, Gothas and Giants began to appear in the skies over south-west Essex. These aircraft came by day and night, and could bomb with greater accuracy than the Zeppelins.

It was a fine day on 13th June 1917 when 14 Gothas flew over south-west Essex. The aircraft began dropping their bombs just before noon - at Barking, East Ham, the Royal Albert Dock, Canning Town and Poplar, eventually reaching Liverpool Street station. Two days later, *The Ilford Recorder* reported:

'Ilford was startled by the great air raid over the Metropolis on Wednesday morning. The first intimation was a loud droning apparently overhead, unlike that of our own aircraft but exactly resembling the noise of approaching Zeppelins. Many people rushed into the streets and gazed skyward, but nothing could be discerned through the haze. While the aerial roar was still clearly audible, a bomb exploded with a deafening, nerve-shaking bang, causing most people to run for cover. Other reports came in quick succession, one from a detonation much closer than the others, and thereafter the muffled dispoisions of the deadly enemy missiles alternated with the peppering of our own gun-fire. The bursting shrapnel was plainly seen in the distance, and fragments dropped in the neighbourhood ...

'The raid caused a great sensation, which was increased when news of the damage in east London and elsewhere began to filter through ...

'It was persistently rumoured that two bombs fell at Seven Kings, but this is said to be untrue. It is believed that not a single bomb exploded within the Ilford area, though numerous fragments of shrapnel have been picked up ... '.

Despite no casualties occurring in Ilford, many of its residents travelled into the City for their employment and several were victims of falling bombs there. The town itself had a narrow escape when the departing raiders were attacked over Loxford. An RFC fighter caught up with three straggling Gothas and a machine-gun fight went on across Ilford Broadway and Cranbrook Road. Combat continued for more than 30 miles.



This photograph shows Gotha bombers at a Belgian airfield before taking off to attack London. (Courtesy of the Imperial War Museum. Ref Q 108845)

School attendance

Children's attendance at school was significantly affected by air raids. On 18th June 1917, the Ilford Education Committee met and considered what lessons could be learnt from the raid of 13th June:

'The secretary presented the following report:- As members are aware, a flotilla of hostile aircraft passed over the town on Wednesday morning last, and during the end of the morning school session. The enemy presumably passed either immediately over or in close proximity to all the large public elementary schools of the town. No warning was received of their on-coming; and the air battle was in actual progress when the problem was realised. Pre-arranged air raid precautions were thereupon immediately adopted in the whole of the schools. The committee will doubtless remember that the possibility of daylight air raids was fully realised in the early stages of the war, with the result that the best possible arrangements were brought into practice on Wednesday last, and depend on the basic principle that, in the event of daylight air raids during school time, and occurring without warning, the children should, generally speaking, remain in school under cover in extended order in the class-rooms, and as far removed as possible from outer walls and windows ...'

'I beg to take this opportunity of reporting, with pleasure, the total absence of anything approaching panic in the schools, during the actual time of the raid. The children were quite bright and cheerful, the staff cool and collected. This fact, coupled with the circumstance that the schools are now principally staffed with ladies, will no doubt be particularly gratifying to the Committee. I was personally in touch with many hundreds of the children at the time, and have since received full reports from all departments; and I find that the calmness of the children and the control of the teaching staff was magnificent. The same remark applies to the working of the schools on the following day (Thursday), when air raid action was again taken: and the orderliness and effectiveness of the arrangements was then commented upon by one of His Majesty's Inspectors (a lady) who happened to be upon certain school premises at the time and saw the children concerned respond smartly to pre-arranged plans under adverse circumstances. A number of mothers came to the school gates for individual children both on Wednesday and Thursday. The number was relatively small, but was more marked on Thursday. Every sympathy was extended to the callers, and their wishes were met as far as possible without disturbing the effectiveness of the general arrangements.'

More night-time raids

In August 1917, daylight bombing raids on London came to an end, but on 4th /5th September night attacks began. In early October, *The Ilford Recorder* published a report of damage to the town caused by 'friendly' gunfire during a raid on London on 29th September:

'At 2 Argyle Road, the home of Capt Alexander Christal, an unexploded shell crashed through the roof and two floors, smashing a marble mantelpiece, damaging the drawing room before burying itself beneath the kitchen floor. Another unexploded shell ploughed into the playground of Downsall School. At 41 Grange Road a nose cap from a spent shell damaged the front door of the home of Mr C J Lewis.'

'Having stayed at her parents' house in Seven Kings for the weekend, Mrs Amey and her child returned home to 24 Grange Road on Monday morning to discover that a shell had fallen through the roof, front bedroom and into the parlour below, doing much damage. In the next road, Windsor, an unexploded shell also crashed through the roof of no 94, missing the bed by inches and knocking the corner off a table in the lounge below, before passing through a wall to bury itself several feet in the back garden. Luckily Mr Berry and his family were in the front room and escaped injury. 24 and 26 Clarendon Road, Seven Kings, were also damaged by a

shell that fell in the road opposite. A house in Auckland Road also suffered damage when a shell fragment ricocheted through a kitchen window’.

A large raid took place on during the night of 28th /29th January 1918. One aircraft was heard over Romford at 8.30pm and two more at Brentwood at 8.54pm. These two proceeded to Romford and Ilford where they separated, one flying on to Barking and then London; the other aircraft reached London and returned over East Ham at 9.33pm. On 29th January, heading for London, a damaged Giant was intercepted near Hainault by Major G W Murlis Green of No 44 Squadron. Just after midnight, with the Woodford balloon apron looming up, the bomber dropped its entire load of 20 high-explosive bombs on open fields around Wanstead before escaping back over Rayleigh and the Essex coast.

Another Giant was reported on the night of 7th /8th March, appearing over Rainham at 11.40pm and later to the south of Ilford. The last air raid on London took place on 19th /20th May; on that occasion bombs fell near Ilford at Manor Park and Forest Gate, and a Gotha was shot down at East Ham.

Conclusions

In military terms, Zeppelins were a costly experiment, incapable of targeting positions accurately. Even when airships were able to find London, it was impossible for them to aim at specific buildings. Consequently, many of their bombs were wasted, falling at random across south-west Essex.

As the war progressed, the Zeppelins faced increasing losses for diminishing returns. In 54 raids on Britain, Zeppelins dropped less than 200 tons of bombs ⁴, injuring 1,358 people, and killing 577. Only nine of these raids reached London, killing 181 people and injuring 504. This ‘First Blitz’ was neither as potent nor as destructive as contemporary accounts proclaimed – the raiders inflicted only £1.5 million of damage on Britain; over the same period, rats destroyed crops and other material worth nearly 50 times as much. Where the raiders did succeed was in disrupting war production and diverting personnel, arms and aircraft from the Western Front: in January 1917, 17,341 officers and men and 110 aircraft were retained in Britain exclusively for defence against Zeppelins.

Gothas and Giants proved to be weapons of greater precision than the Zeppelins. They carried out 27 raids on Britain, dropping 74 tons of bombs which killed 835 people and injured 1,973; damage caused was estimated at £1.4 million. Of these raids, 17 were on London, two in the daytime and 15 at night, where they inflicted more casualties than the Zeppelins - 486 people were killed and 1,432 injured. But these raids also failed to crush British morale and ultimately the end of major aeroplane raids owed more to the needs of the German army in France than to anything else.

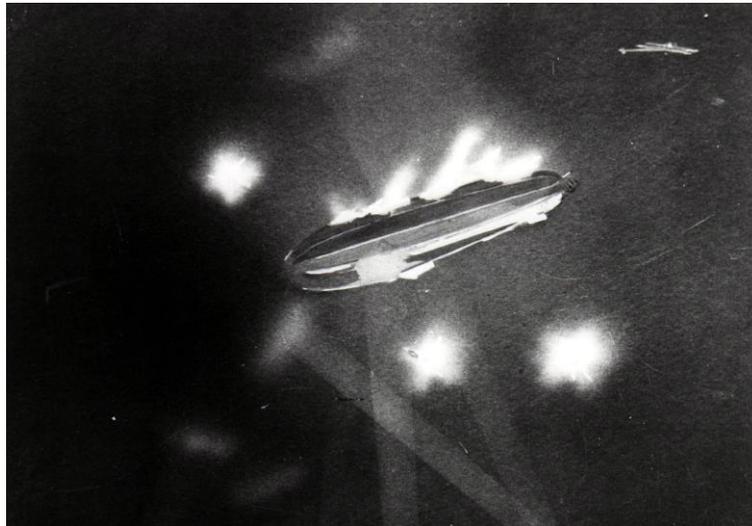
Conversely, throughout the whole of the war, of the 654 sorties by German airships and aircraft across the English coast on raids, only 32 raiders were destroyed by Britain’s defences: 15 by AA guns, and 17 by fighters. It is easy to see how the most enduring consequence was a psychological one, for the raids changed the face of warfare forever by bringing the whole nation into the front line. They made an indelible impression in the collective mind, according to historian Basil Liddell Hart: ‘The tendency, whenever they

⁴ In the 1940—41 Blitz, the Luftwaffe dropped 13,000 tons of bombs on London alone.

think of war, is for the thought to be associated with the idea of being bombed from the air'. Such impressions ultimately spawned the slogan 'The bomber will always get through', which remained firmly fixed in the mind of some British military men and politicians for many years after the war.

© *Alan Simpson, March 2016*

Alan is a member of our Society and we would like to thank him for this major contribution. He is also the author of *Air Raids on South-West Essex in the Great War : Looking for Zeppelins at Leyton* Published by Pen & Sword, price £19.99.



Zeppelin in flames at Great Burstead "This is a real photograph from a sketch by our special artist"
Postcard sold at the time (Georgina Green)

First World War names

Jessamy Carlson recently published a post on the National Archives' blog about the First World War phenomenon of giving babies war-related names. She found 1,634 babies with such names, with 1,229 babies named after battles. The most popular battle to name children after was Verdun, with 901 babies given this name in 1914-1919. Verdun was one of the longest battles in human history, fought over 303 days from February to December 1916. Recent estimates put casualty figures at 976,000. A baby born in 1916, named Nancy Verdun, was christened in Goodmayes in 1917. She was the daughter of bus driver Harry Miles and his wife Anna Louise Miles, who lived at 17 Percy Road.

One wartime name which seems to be unique to Essex is Zeppelina. Zeppelina Clarke was born in the early hours of the morning of 24th September 1916, the night that two Zeppelins crash-landed in Essex. Zeppelin L32 crashed in Great Burstead, with no survivors, and L33 crashed in Little Wigborough, narrowly missing some farm cottages. The crew of L33 walked away largely unharmed. In nearby Great Wigborough, Mr and Mrs Clarke welcomed a baby girl, and their doctor suggested naming her Zeppelina, to mark the extraordinary circumstances of the night of her birth.

With thanks to the Essex Record Office for permission to quote from their website

<http://www.essexrecordofficeblog.co.uk/the-battle-babies-of-essex/>

which also has more about Zeppelina from some people who knew her.

950th anniversary of The Battle of Hastings

In September 1066 the Viking King Harald Hardrada, one of the two challengers to the English throne, landed in Yorkshire. King Harold decided to march north and his army confronted the Vikings on the morning of 25th September at the Battle of Stamford Bridge. This was a decisive victory for the English King. It proved him to be an able commander and the English troops to be well trained, highly skilled and capable of great endurance.

Harold now returned south in time to confront the other claimant, William of Normandy, who maintained the English throne had been promised him by Edward the Confessor. Aware of the Viking threat William had been content to delay his own invasion until Harold was at his most vulnerable after dealing with Hardrada in the North.*

Thirty-six years earlier a miraculous crucifix (the Holy Cross) had been taken to the small estate of Waltham where a church had been built to protect it. The estate was owned by Tovi who was a standard-bearer to King Canute and a powerful man with many estates. One of them was in Somerset and legend tells that here a carpenter was told in a dream that the villagers must dig deep into a nearby hilltop. When they did so a marvellous black stone crucifix was found. Tovi decided to take this to a religious centre, but it seems that by divine intervention the oxen pulling the cart carrying the crucifix brought it to Waltham.

Harold is said to have been cured of a form of paralysis by praying before the cross. Edward the Confessor had given Harold the estate providing he founded a monastery there, which he did in 1060, so on his way south Harold stopped to pray before the miracle-working Cross. Legend tells that as Harold prayed the figure of Christ bowed his head and from then on looked down instead of up to heaven.

After Harold's defeat at the Battle of Hastings, which took place less than three weeks later on 14th October 1066, Edith Swan-Neck (his wife or mistress?) is said to have brought his body back to Waltham where he was buried under the high altar. A stone marks this spot today ★ although since the dissolution of the monastery this is outside the church.



© Georgina Green, 10 June 2016

NB The town of Waltham Abbey in Essex should not be confused with Waltham Cross on the west bank of the River Lea where a cross marks the resting place in 1290 of the body of Eleanor of Castile, wife of King Edward I, as at Charing Cross.

*<http://www.battlefieldstrust.com/resource-centre/viking/battleview.asp?BattleFieldId=41>

Trust Me, I'm a Doctor

Medical Health Care in Ilford 1800 – 1900

Part 2: In Good Health: Ilford's Medical Officer of Health's Report, 1900

In Part 1 (IHS newsletter no.120, April 2016, pages 10-14) I looked at infectious diseases and it's clear that local isolation hospitals were more prevalent than I thought in the 19th century (no maternity or general hospital yet). Clearly contagions were felt to be a big danger. Another hospital has just popped up: Chadwell Heath Isolation Hospital in Grove Road, Chadwell Heath which was beside the South Essex Waterworks and Pumping Station, opposite Gresham Drive.

The Hospital opened in 1898, an impressive looking building, to deal with smallpox and scarlet fever etc and comprised three ward blocks for only 20 beds and a house for administration staff and nurses to live in. It was extended in 1901, 1904, 1909, and 1915 for TB sufferers- clearly it wasn't big enough and eventually it became Chadwell Heath Hospital and then a convalescent home.

Rules were strict: two visitors were only allowed to stay for just 15 minutes and patients had to be over 16. You could only bring in eggs, fruit, jam, or chocolate for the patients (seems a bit restrictive- no flowers?) and they "must be handed to the sister-in-charge": presumably for checking first as to their quality or share them out equally?

Nurse duties. 8am-9pm: a mere 13 hour day! The Hospital was run by Ilford Urban District Council and the salary for a staff nurse was just £36 per annum with board and lodging, washing and uniform cost £2 'in lieu of beer'. A probationer nurse earned just £16pa. The Matron was Mrs Thornton but I'm unsure of the date. Councillor HM Thornton was Chairman of the Public Health Committee though this maybe in 1915. The hospital closed in 1999.

In 1900 Ilford Medical Officer of Health Dr Shimeld wrote his report to the Urban District Council on the health of Ilford. He noted that in March the National Schools along Mossford Green beside Trinity church Barkingside were closed again due to an outbreak of scarlet fever. 'Bee Hive' school was closed in November and not opened again till the Christmas holidays on account of many children having whooping cough and some scarlet fever. Clearly these scary and dangerous infectious diseases were spreading and two other schools had to be closed. In the summer, diarrhoea had been a problem (5) but fortunately it didn't develop into anything nastier- yuk!

In 1900 there were a number of notifiable, sadly common and infectious diseases: smallpox (12 infected), cholera 1, diphtheria 70, scarlet fever 190, enteric fever 22, measles 326, and typhoid. Because of the problems it caused amongst young children measles became notifiable (there are now 30 notifiable diseases). Smallpox, more dangerous during the coldest months, was prevalent through March in Ilford as it spread through the country whilst typhoid was also more dangerous in the winter months. Whooping cough wasn't notifiable, but vaccination against smallpox was carried out and Shimeld thought the outbreak was mild though the patients were all removed to the Smallpox Hospital at Dagenham managed by West Ham. Ilford paid £1 per 1,000 inhabitants and £2 2s. for each patient they looked after. The agreement was for seven years of which five had elapsed and he makes it clear in his report that "communication was by telephone". To combat diphtheria the 'antitoxin' was kept at the Council offices and at his house for any doctor to use and he hoped that any 'Medical

man' would take advantage of this. He mentioned that measles had a low death rate whilst for whooping cough it was high but it isn't clear how many died.

By 1900, checking how infections spread meant that the 'miasma' theory- that bad smell and air was the killer, had lost ground and that cleaning up the environment and sanitation was a far better way of saving lives.

In 1902 at Stratford Magistrates Court six Ilford fathers were each fined for failing to comply with magistrates orders to have their children inoculated against smallpox. As I have written before about Emma Cook, aged 6½ when she arrived at Dr Barnardos in 1887, she had been inoculated. Against what isn't known but I think it was smallpox.

The causes of distress were obvious and are listed in the report: infectious diseases, overcrowding, poor sewers and toilets, old ditches that couldn't cope and infected wells some of which were closed down after inspections. Gypsies and tent dwellers caused trouble in the forest and the police were often called out; lack of rubbish collections and only few staff to collect it- only a foreman and six staff to do the job and in "the outlying districts removal of rubbish was fortnightly". Overflowing cesspits were a continual stinking nuisance or worse but sometimes Ilford council weren't always helpful.

In the summer of 1880 the forest character 'Dido' came to Chigwell Row. Well known for his knowledge and application of forest cures and herbal remedies, he helped many locals. He lived a gypsy existence and his real name, William Bell, only came to light after his death. A docker, he came to live in the forest and it's thought he chose the name 'Dido' because he had been thwarted in love- as the mythical character was. His photograph is in *From Ilford to Hainault* by D Hewson, page 94.



In 1892 Heavywaters Farm near Goodmayes was refused permission by Ilford council to extend their farmhouse and improve their family's sanitation as their cesspit couldn't cope. Why the council refused we'll never know as it seems an eminently sensible idea. Shops, butchers, slaughter houses and dairies were inspected and were generally thought to be in good order though one slaughter house was closed down after refusing to clean up. Drainage and sewers were thought to be

generally sufficient, and the ditch serving Bennets Castle Lane had been put in order whilst along Green Lane there were problems for the cottages as they needed better drainage and their cesspools weren't coping. The ratepayers in the burgeoning new suburb of Seven Kings would have agreed as the area became known as the 'Klondyke' for it's quick, gold-rush like development but lack of council services i.e. rubbish collections. Shimeld comes across as a conscientious, hard-working doctor and Ilford was lucky to have him. In 1900 he registered 655 deaths but 1,037 births- far happier news. But in 1901 and 1902 G F Stovin is listed as the Acting MOH (no mention is made of Shimeld) and he was assisted by Sanitary Inspector FW King who no doubt was kept very busy. Stovin pointed out that "Power to enforce re-vaccination of contacts would be a great help to the Sanitary Authorities in dealing with Small-pox". One estate that could aggravate this problem was the Birkbeck Estate.

It was created and built at first without any services c.1870. It was off Horns Road (Newbury Park) and encompassed Perryman's Farm Road, Birkbeck and Abbey Roads etc. In mid-century the estate had belonged to the Lee family and was a 27 acre farm. When built the

roads were laid out on a simple grid system but the houses had no main drainage, no mains water, gas or electricity: householders were expected to lay them in themselves.

Excellent research by Roger Backhouse in the *Ilford Recorder* (12th January 1906) shows Dr and Mrs Summerskill living in Seven Kings, address unknown. A masked ball was held in the Central Hall at Seven Kings to raise funds for a new Ilford hospital and clearly he was prominent and the event was a success. Perhaps 120 attended and decorations were laid on by John Bodger. There was singing, ventriloquism and the fun went on till 1.30am after which the party went on back at their house, the guests being entertained till the first train left town in the morning. This was one of numerous fund raising events that went towards the funding and opening of Ilford Emergency Hospital at Newbury Park in 1912.

A patient we know something about was 55 years old William Pallant, Ilford's well known and popular stationmaster from 1876 for nearly 30 years who died of throat or mouth cancer in March 1906. The symptoms first appeared in 1905 and he was operated on in his home, probably in his own bed, attended by Drs Best and Jobson: "part of his tongue being cut away". This was typical as hospitals were generally for the poor as most people who could afford it were treated privately at home by their own personal physician. Transferred finally to the London Hospital for two more serious operations as the cancer returned and spread, more of Pallant's tongue was cut out but it was too late and severe to save him.

Throughout 1905 Summerskill had tried to get elected as a local councillor for Seven Kings but he came bottom of a three-way election. He campaigned on issues such as public health, "the plague of flies" and rotten smells that were growing and make life unpleasant and not dealt with, and the lack of a dust destructor to destroy the rubbish, particularly in hot summer months.

Photos or information on Ilford's doctors or patients, illness or injuries, that were treated in the 19th century would be gratefully appreciated.

Great thanks to: Roger Backhouse; Sue Page- Redbridge Information & Heritage Services, Val Bryant (IHS) & staff, Martine King, Ms Lizzie Mold Local Studies Assistant- Croydon, Richard Meunier Deputy Archivist- Royal London Hospital; Linda Rhodes- Local Studies Librarian, & Clare Sexton Archivist, of Valence House, London Borough of Barking & Dagenham.

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Editor's Note: While researching the life of Sir Charles Raymond I came across a newspaper cutting about The Dispensary for General Inoculation in Old Street. This was a charity set up to give inoculation against smallpox to the poor of London, 'founded in 1775 by a few men of benevolent minds'. The London *Gazetteer & New Daily Advertiser* of 14th October 1777 listed five Vice-Presidents starting with Sir Charles Raymond.

This was 20 years before Edward Jenner's famous experiment which proved the enormous potential of cowpox vaccination. However, it was not until 1959 that The World Health Assembly passed a resolution to undertake the global eradication of smallpox.

Tim Peake (2016) and Sir Isaac Newton (1666)

On Saturday 18th June 2016 astronaut Tim Peake touched down on earth after 6 months living and working onboard the International Space Station. Tim selected the name 'Principia' for his mission, to celebrate Isaac Newton's ground-breaking text on physics, *Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica* (Latin for "Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy"), which described the principal laws of motion and gravity on which all space travel depends.



350 years ago, with the serious outbreak of plague in London in 1665 spreading, Cambridge University was closed and the students and academics were sent away. Isaac Newton returned to his childhood home, Woolsthorpe Manor near Grantham, and it was here that he made many of his most important discoveries about light and gravity in the next few months, his 'Year of Wonders'. In later life he told a biographer how he was sitting in the orchard studying when an apple fell from the tree and landed beside him. This caused him to wonder why it fell down and not up, or sideways, and led to his theory of gravity. That tree can still be seen as although the original tree fell down in a storm in around 1816 some of the roots remained in the ground and new branches grew up which are still producing apples in the garden today.

Woolsthorpe Manor is a National Trust property open all the year round. The house is well worth a visit but so too is the Science Discovery Centre in the barn where experiments can be tried to explore Newton's theories for yourself - such as using prisms to prove that light is all the colours of the rainbow joined together. Woolsthorpe Manor is not far off the A1 and is a good place to break a journey north.

© **Georgina Green, 22 June 2016**

Redbridge Museum's summer exhibition 'Ship Ahoy!' runs from 23rd July – 3rd September. This provides educational activities and family fun about rivers, ship and seas with a varied programme of activities throughout August.

For more details of events and activities visit www.redbridge.gov.uk/museum

Two Citizens of Ilford – a Celebration of the lives of Peter Wright & Sadie Gomm



On Thursday 9th June Jef Page gave a talk about ‘Ilford since 1945’ and we were delighted that members of the families of Peter and Sadie could join us for what was both an interesting and sociable evening. We are particularly grateful to the Gomm family for another generous donation to Society funds.

Jef Page with David Gomm and Nick Wright

IHS PROGRAMME 2016-2017

Our regular monthly meetings are held at Ilford Hospital Chapel, The Broadway, Ilford Hill, Ilford, IG1 2AT from 7.30 - 9.30 pm. Visitors welcome, £2 per meeting, with free refreshments. Limited parking is available at the rear of the chapel and many buses stop nearby at Ilford Station. (Wheelchair access via the rear entrance)

12th September 2016 *William Shakespeare: yesterday, today & tomorrow. 1564-1616 to 2016 and beyond* by Janet Seward, IHS Secretary.

10th October 2016 *Mary Austin: a True Woman of Substance* by Eric Feasey.

14th November 2016 *London: A Bigger Picture* Louise Pankhurst of London’s Screen Archive will show film clips exploring Redbridge’s history. The project runs for 3 years, covers 15 boroughs and is supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

12th December 2016 *Christmas Social evening, Quiz & two short talks:*

- (1) Crested China of Redbridge & Barking and its history by Pam Williams
- (2) A Walk in the Park: South Park, Ilford by Tony Hoad.

9th January 2017 *Stepney in the 18th Century* by Derek Morris, author.

13th February 2017 *Folklore & Traditions: particularly related to Essex* by Mark Lewis, author.

13th March 2017 International Women’s Month *Elizabeth I – the last of the Tudors*: the sun around which her courtiers warily orbited: Burghley, Drake, Essex, Hatton, Leicester, & Walsingham by Jef Page, IHS President.

10th April 2017 at 7pm AGM

followed by *The Solace and Inspiration of Nature* including John Clare, Edward Thomas and other poets connected with Epping Forest. by Georgina Green, IHS Vice-President.

8th May 2017 *The First Day of the Battle of the Somme: 1st July 1916* by Jef Page, IHS President.

Membership of the society costs £12 per year which includes 3 newsletters

The next newsletter will be available at our December meeting, or from the editor (details on page 1) after 12th December.