

**Friends of the  
Windsor & Royal Borough  
Museum  
Newsletter 106  
Winter 2023**



# **Chairs' Report**

**Len Nash**

Hello everyone. As the year draws to a close may I, on behalf of the Committee, wish you all a very happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

As you will see from Steph's report the museum has been hit by a major crisis. A burst under-floor pipe has resulted in flooding at the store. It's been 'all hands to the pumps', (pardon the pun), by staff and volunteers to clear up the mess and at the same time run the museum. Drying out is still ongoing and is likely to take some time.

Both our card designs are now available at the Tourist Information Centre so go along and buy some! They seem to be selling well.

As reported in the last issue we had a stall, kindly run by The Windsor and Eton Local History Group, at the Eton Action Fair, which did rather well. Again under the auspices of the L.H.G. we were also represented at their recent open day. So the Friends are extremely grateful to them for looking after our interests and we would very much like to reciprocate their kindness in the future.

Finally; an appeal to all the knitters who read this. The museum needs replacement woolly fruit and veg. for the pillory so if you have some spare time, (and spare wool), please get those needles clicking!

Have a great Christmas!

Len

## **Museum Encounter**

**Richard Snailham**

Probably the most distinguished member of any group that I have guided round the Guildhall turned up just before the pandemic. He was a well-dressed gentleman in his fifties and asked me several questions in a distinctive accent.....

As we were going downstairs at the end I asked him where he was from. “I am from Germany,” he said. “I am Prince Donatus, Landgrave of Hesse.” Germany’s nobility, of course, lost all power at the end of the First World War with the setting up of the Weimar Republic, but many of its members, like those of other former noble families in Europe, hold on to their honorific titles to this day. Prince Donatus is a descendant of Queen Victoria and a relative of Prince Philip, whose funeral he attended. He was also present at the funeral of Queen Elizabeth and the coronation of King Charles. As he left the Guildhall I said I hoped he would enjoy the rest of his visit to Britain. “No,” he said, “I live in Uxbridge.”

In last month’s newsletter I suggested that I had an encounter that I’d like to share, and that it would be hard to beat. Well Done Richard - I’ve had to step aside! Maybe I’ll squeeze mine in next month....unless you have a better story!

Gerald



## Windsor Commonwealth Walkway

I recently spotted a Commonwealth Walkway in Valletta, Malta (see above.) Has anybody noticed that the Windsor information plaque has been removed from outside the Burberry shop? It is going to be re-sited on Castle Hill on completion of the works.



## **Leslie's Piece**

### **Eaten By A Lion - Leslie Grout**

Harold Francis Davidson was torn between two professions, the church and the theatre. In the event he chose the former, but the latter extended a greater influence.

In 1906 he became Rector of Stiffkey in Norfolk. Now he had full parochial responsibilities, but the call of the theatre was so strong that he would take the first train to London on Mondays, returning by the last train on Saturdays. He became chaplain to several West End theatres, ministering to the needs of actors and backstage staff in general and chorus girls in particular.

Out-of-work chorus girls would be brought back to Stiffkey, where pyjama parties took place, much to the astonishment of his parishioners. What his wife made of it can only be imagined. Besides chorus girls he tried ministering to young waitresses and was consequently banned from a number of cafes.

All these goings-on meant that Davidson was frequently late for his Sunday services. Sometimes he didn't turn up at all, or else the congregation got tired of waiting and went home. Matters came to a head when in 1932 when the churchwardens decided that enough was enough and complained to the Bishop of Norwich who summoned Davidson to appear before Norwich Consistory Court on a charge of Conduct unbecoming a Clerk in Holy Orders.

Davidson's name and reputation were well-known by this time and the press had a field day with reporters by the dozen eager to see what would happen next. Several actresses and chorus girls travelled to Norwich to testify on his behalf, but eventually it all turned on a photograph of Davidson with a naked chorus girl (possibly staged), the case against him was proved and he was unfrocked.

Davidson was down but not out; with no job and no stipend he returned to his first love and appeared in several music halls then sitting in a barrel on the front in Blackpool delivering sermons. In the same year he was unfrocked he announced his intention of returning to Stiffkey to take a service.



Holy Trinity Church, Windsor

Vast numbers descended on the village to await the outcome. Not surprisingly he was physically booted out of the church whereupon he preached to the assembled multitude.

After more music hall appearances and another spell in the barrel he went to Skegness in 1937 (he considered it less vulgar than Blackpool) and performed in a cage with a couple of lions called Freddy and Toto, together with a 16-year-old female assistant who knew as much about lion taming as Davidson did, and where he was photographed wearing his clerical collar. From these bizarre surroundings he denounced the Church of England, the Bishop of Norwich and the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Eventually Freddy had enough of these tirades and soon after the photo was taken went for the hapless Davidson who died of his injuries two days later. He was buried at Stiffkey, and his grave is still looked after.

What has all this to do with Windsor?

Well, from 1903 to 1905 Davidson was a curate at Holy Trinity.



The film about the life story of Sir Nicholas Winton - 'One Life' - starring Sir Anthony Hopkins, Helena Bonham Carter and Jonathan Pryce - is set for a January 2024 release in the UK.

# Mind The Gate!

Len Nash

When people learn that I used to fly little aeroplanes almost inevitably the question “Did you ever crash?” crops up in the conversation. I'm glad to say that I didn't but I did have one incident that made me concentrate more than normal!

I hadn't flown for a few weeks and as the weather was good for a change I decided to have an hour or two in our little aeroplane. This was a two-seat, high wing Aeronca Champ with the registration G-LEVI, (because it was owned by Jean -gettitt?). Levi had a fixed undercarriage and a tail wheel, (hence known as a tail-dragger). Like me she was born in 1946 and imported to White Waltham from Florida in 1989 by Jean Pumphrey. A delight to fly Levi did nothing in a hurry but was excellent, to use a technical term, for 'poodling about'.

Having extracted her from the hangar and after completing all the routine checks we taxied out to the end of the runway but as we did so I felt an unusual slight vibration through the control column. I put it down to the airfield's rough surface besides which my instruments were telling me everything was normal. I lined up, got take-off clearance and set the throttle for full power. As we climbed away the vibration suddenly got worse and there was a loud bang which left me staring at two stationery propeller blades and no engine noise!

Despite popular belief an aircraft will not fall out of the sky as soon as it's engine stops. Depending upon conditions such as height, speed and wind an aircraft can glide some distance although, of course, you need to land as soon as possible. Unlike T.V. And Hollywood the thing that you don't do is immediately scream into the radio “Mayday! Mayday! I'm going down!” There are three essential stages to an emergency landing;-

- 1/. Fly the aircraft.
- 2/. Navigate.
- 3/.Get help.

**And each needs to be completed before the next!**

I was lucky with the local geography in that at the airfield boundary there was a sunken lane across from which was a field of newly harvested barley so I immediately elected to carry straight on and land in the field. So that took care of stages one and two. Sadly many pilots in a similar situation decide to try and turn back to the airfield often with fatal consequences as the turn will drastically cut speed and height and the aircraft will stall and crash.

Having gently rolled to a halt in the stubble I exited Levi and, taking the radio with me, went and sat under a nearby tree as by now my legs and hands were shaking as I reacted to what had happened. I lit a cigarette and radioed 'ops.' to let them know where I was and that neither me or Levi were damaged so there was no cause for panic.



But even as I was calling I heard the crash siren begin it's wailing which meant that the crash crew were being scrambled. Now these normally sensible and friendly members of the ground crew seemed to morph into Gung-Ho idiots as soon as they heard the siren.

Luckily a gate on the edge of the airfield was open but not the one into the field where I was. Hearing the truck coming and fearing the worst I rushed towards the gate waving and shouting "Mind the gate! Stop!" Too late! With a crash and a shower of splintered wood they arrived. "Sorry", one said, "We couldn't stop".

"Why the rush?" I asked. "All I wanted was a lift back"

We picked up the remnants of the gate and with me sitting in the back of the truck holding on to Levi's tailwheel we slowly towed her back across the lane onto the airfield.

Any such emergency has to be reported to the accident branch of the Civil Aviation Authority although as there were no injuries or damage a full written report from me was all that was necessary. A few days later I received a phone call from someone at the C.A.A. who asked a few pertinent questions and then congratulated me on the handling of the situation!

The cause of the problem was a broken valve spring which allowed a valve to drop into a cylinder and jam the piston. It proved to be a rather expensive repair but Levi was flying again in a couple of months and she still is! She even became an extra in an episode of 'Midsomer Murders'.

The farmer received a new gate courtesy of the West London Aero Club.

## **The Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company of Massachusetts**

**Gerald Hyder**

Many visitors and residents will have been surprised to see roads closed for an hour or so on Sunday 1st October. The Changing of the Guard? No, it was a visit by 90 or so friends and members of The Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company of Massachusetts, who visit Windsor periodically. They were marching to a parade in Windsor Castle. Later they visited Keayne House in River Street, the birthplace in 1595 of their co-founder and first captain - Robert Keayne. He was the son of a butcher. Keayne and his family arrived in Boston in 1635. He initially worked as a tailor, and later became a prominent public figure in 17th-century Boston.

The Pilgrim Fathers established the Plymouth Colony in 1620. Formed in 1638, the Company pride themselves on being the 3rd oldest chartered military organization in the world, and the oldest in the western hemisphere. They were formed as a citizen militia for instruction in military discipline and tactics, there being no permanent, professional, English standing army until 1660, following the Restoration.



Members of the Company were predominantly from the upper-middle and upper classes within Boston. Four members - including John F Kennedy - have served as President of the USA.

I knew a little about their existence but was prompted to find out more on seeing two wreaths at the birthplace memorial a few days after their visit.



With Thanks to  
AHAC



# Museum Update November 2023

## Museum Accreditation

Following submission of paperwork to the Arts Council to renew our museum Accreditation, we have received a number of queries to respond to before our papers can be put forward to the Accreditation panel. We aim to respond to these queries by the end of the year. This should enable us to be considered at their next Panel meeting in January 2024.

## Flood to the Museum Store

Unfortunately, the museum store suffered a low-level mains water leak to the museum store on 21/09/23 from a failing piece of copper piping to the adjacent facilities. Fortunately, it was discovered quickly but the floor was soddened which has caused a lot of disruption. Objects that needed to be moved to avoid further damage were moved up to a meeting room swiftly thanks to quick reactions from staff and volunteers. A vacuum was used to remove the excess water and two industrial dehumidifiers have been drying out the room since the incident. Fortunately, there was minimal water damage to the collection but there is a lot of work to do to record, document and manage objects that were salvaged. Our curatorial volunteers are helping us each Tuesday to progress with this work.

Harwell Restoration conducted a site visit on 04/10/23 to assess the damage and advise on next steps. They confirmed that the floor and masonry were still wet and expressed concern about potential damage of the area under the mobile racking unit. They have carried out a detailed moisture survey. This included an investigation beneath the mobile racking unit. We await the detailed report to agree and plan for the next steps.

In the meantime, we applied for £1000 for a collections care grant from the Southeast Museum Development Agency. They deemed our case as an emergency and agreed to grant us £2000 to help us manage the remediation project.

This leak has put our new forward plan on hold whilst we prioritise the collection; however, we are looking at how we can offer new engagement opportunities for visitors – albeit a more manageable and a much scaled down approach.





## Volunteers

We would like to welcome Peter, Mina and Isabella to our volunteering team. Please say hello to them when you are visiting. We hope they settle well into their roles - we are sure they will be a great asset to our team. Alex is working hard to get more applicants started as fast as he can.

Store volunteers ironically resumed two days before the leak occurred at the museum store. They are now continuing to join us every Tuesday afternoon to help with the organisation of the salvaged objects which is a great help.

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Museum Manager

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On a recent visit to Brooklands Museum I was delighted to see Sir Sydney Camm's drawing set from the 1950's. I believe it featured in a temporary exhibition in the Royal Borough Museum some years ago. He designed the Hurricane whilst working at Hawker's Kingston factory. They were produced at Brooklands from 1937 - 1942. GH

**I hope that you have enjoyed the Newsletter. Would you like to contribute - an article perhaps, or an interesting old photo? An encounter in the Museum ?  
Please contact me - [geraldhyder@outlook.com](mailto:geraldhyder@outlook.com)**



**Now available at the Visitor Information Centre in the Guildhall.  
We also have our traditional Christmas Card - 'Castle and Corgis'  
£3.50 for 5 cards.**

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