



Elham
Historical
Society

September 2020

Volume 10, Issue 2

Chairman's Message

This was intended to be a message of hope, and it still is, but of hope deferred, because the resurgence of Covid-19 and the new restrictions on groups meeting mean that there is no prospect of having meetings of the Society until well into 2021.

All that you as members are getting for your money at the moment is this half-yearly Newsletter, plus the occasional essays from Andrew and me that Andrée is posting to you. We are very grateful for continued support, for there are ongoing expenses that we are committed to, even without meetings.

Our biggest outgoing is to the Village Hall for the Archive (one of the Hall's few sources of income at the moment). Add to that our website charges, insurance, and a couple of subscriptions, to the British Association for Local History and the Kent Archaeological Society, and we are committed to just over £500 per year.

We have small reserves, but they will not sustain us for long. I am sure that the £500 which is committed as the publication fund will generate income once invested, and that, I know, depends on me getting my nose to the grindstone.

As to subscriptions: whether to extend the period or offer refunds is being considered by the Committee, but will best be resolved at next year's AGM, which I hope will be an actual rather than a virtual event.

You will have seen in the September Elham Newsletter that photos of Audrey Hepburn which were the property of her childhood friend Audrey Sampson are being used by a film company. That generated a fee, and Audrey Sampson's family have generously donated £100 of it to the EHS, as we made the initial contact. Donations always welcome!

DMB

Programme of Events for 2020/21

Sadly the Committee have, after much debate, decided that we will not commence holding our monthly meetings until the New Year. This reflects the cautious approach that other local historical societies are taking. If the situation alters we will, of course, review our decision but the feeling is that with Autumn and Winter approaching and, at the time of going to press, infection rates rising, we would be wise not to plan any gatherings at present.

The idea of Zoom talks still hovers but the numbers interested were insufficient to make the arranging worthwhile, although there was some interest and the speakers seem quite willing to lay these on as a way of getting around the regulations. However, when things do improve we have a line up of very interesting speakers who are happy to come and talk to us – socially distanced of course!

Before the lock down we had been anticipating a visit from a volunteer from Herne Bay Museum who was going to talk to the children in Elham School about the mystery of the Roman Pudding Pans. Andrew Joynes had been going to give us a tale of 'ice, empire and evangelism' with a talk entitled "Down North on The Labrador – the life and times of Wilfred Grenfell." It is hoped that both of these events can be rescheduled before too long.

Our AGM on 24th April was done on-line...lets hope we'll be able to get together for next year's!

In addition to a visit to Godmersham Park Heritage Centre with its Jane Austen connections, we still have in the pipeline the talks previously arranged ie Wallace Murray talking about the history and work of the Walmer Lifeboat, Imogen Corrigan telling us about "The Searchlight Girls of WW2," Hilary Tolputt about "Fashionable Folkestone", Kristina Boulden on a Farming Calendar and Rob Baldwin on the Staffordshire Hoard. I feel sure they can all be re-arranged when the time is right.

Meanwhile, work on projects continues behind the scenes and we should be able to tell you more about these in our next newsletter.

Art History

Those members who are interested in art and historical paintings might like to have a look at the ArtUK website which is the 'online home' for every public art collection in the UK, representing a collaboration between over 3,200 British institutions. Their aim, they say, is to 'make art available for everyone – for enjoyment, learning and research". You can explore the collections by either searching artworks, or artists or by theme through topics. The collection, they say, is a photographic record of the nation's publicly owned oil paintings. Each item is fully described and low resolution images are available to download for non-commercial uses. You can also buy prints through the website's shop <https://artuk.org/>

The Legacy of War



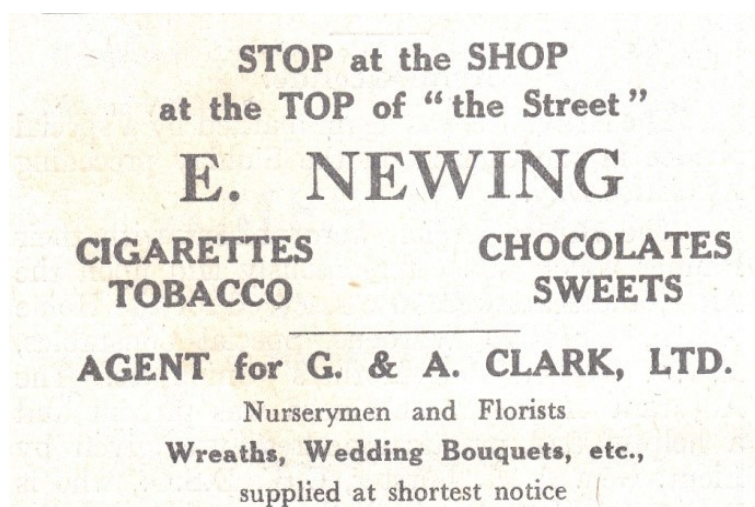
Ted Newing on leave after the First Battle of the Somme

Growing up in Elham during and just after the Second World War, I was aware that my parents had similarly had their formative years during and after the First World War. **Their** parents were of the generation that was physically involved in that dispute, and *their* contemporaries included a number of aging single ladies who had probably missed their chance of marriage because of the “Lost Generation” of young men who died in the war. More obviously poignant were the war widows: Mrs Johnson at Mill Hill, who had lost her young husband in November 1914 and their only child just three months later; I never saw her wearing anything but black; Mrs Hayward, at Southdown Cottages, whose husband was killed just weeks after their marriage, and Mrs Hogben, at Old Cottages, approaching a hundred and still mourning the death of her son.

I knew a number of men who bore the physical scars of that war, but as a child and young man I was quite unaware of the emotional scars that so many of these men suffered but largely kept hidden. My father’s father was away for almost three years, but he had an ‘easy’ war in India. My mother’s father, with whom I had less contact, had been in the trenches, and looking back I can see that may have contributed to his being not the nicest of men.

The Legacy of War Cont ...

These thoughts have been prompted by a meeting with John Bennett, author of a short but moving book "Hell in My Head, how a family coped with stress and trauma following military conflict". One of John's family members was Ted Newing, who lived next to Mrs Hayward in Southdown Cottages and ran the shop at Denmark House. This was primarily a sweetshop and tobacconists (there was an enamel "Players Please" sign with the bearded sailor), but he also carried a range of general grocery goods. His advert in the Parish Magazine was catchy:

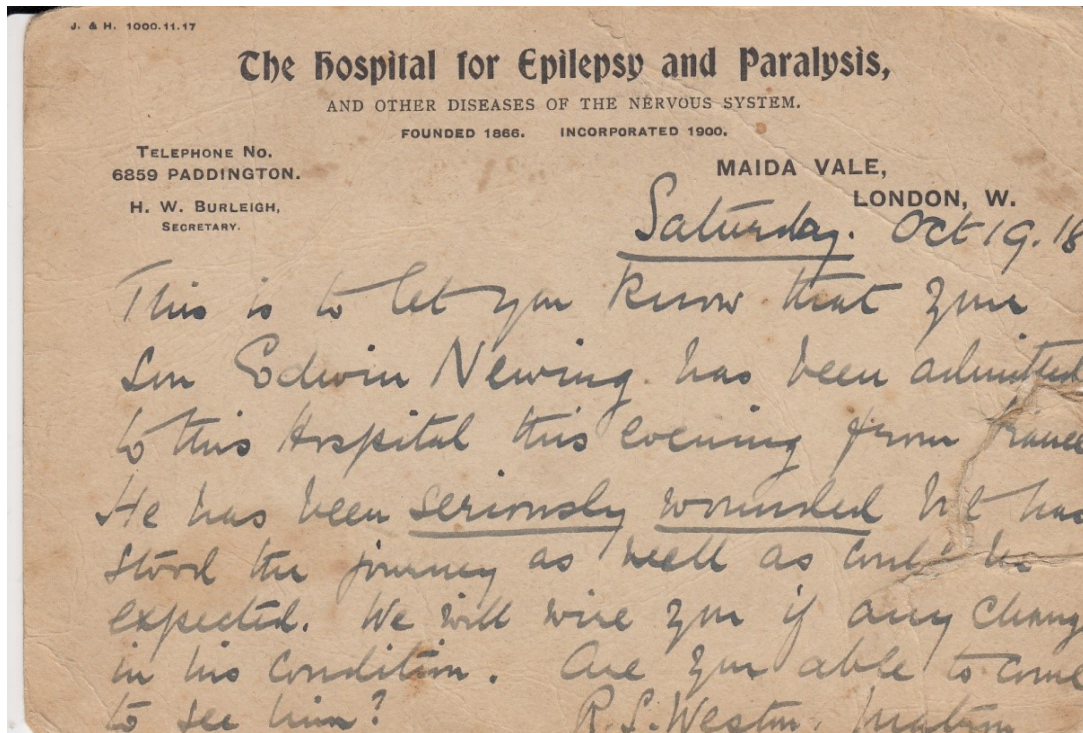


I remember Ted as a cheerful friendly man, but that is probably how you would perceive someone who supplied you with precious sweets during a time of rationing. I was certainly aware of his damaged left arm, and we all marvelled at the dextrous way that he held a heavy sweet jar in the crook, and poured the exact amount into the scales. Probably many of the adults of the village were aware of his inner demons, but I had no concept of that, and indeed was fairly unaware of the horrors of combat during WW1. During my years at both primary and grammar school, there was very little mention of that conflict (I didn't do History beyond O Level). Today's children are rightly more aware.

Ted's full wartime records were destroyed, like so many others, in a Second World War air raid, but John Bennett has managed to piece together some of his story. He was wounded on the 1st July 1916, the notorious first day of the Battle of the Somme. That wound was relatively slight, and after treatment in a Field Hospital, he was returned to the front line.

The Legacy of War Cont ...

By 1918 he was serving with 1 Platoon, 1st Buffs, who were in the thick of the action in September and October. Ted was seriously wounded, and lay in a shell hole in no-man's land for three days, partially paralysed and unable to call for assistance. When he was recovered he spent a short time in a Field Hospital, but was quickly returned to England for specialist treatment. His mother was living at Jacques Court Cottages, and was informed by postcard.



Ted was to spend many months in hospital before returning to civilian life and Elham late in 1919. We do not know if his mother was able to visit him. At a convalescent hospital in Norfolk, he was cared for by a young nurse called Daisy Scrivener. They became close, and Daisy moved down and worked for four years at the Royal Victoria Hospital in Folkestone, until they eventually married in 1924.

In the meantime Ted, unable to return to the work on the farm which he had done before the war, had taken a lease on the little lock-up shop at Denmark House. It was no goldmine, but it brought in a reasonable income, and provided Ted with social contact throughout the day. It was when he turned the key in the lock at the end of the day's trading that the demons struck from the trauma he had suffered. As he made his way home (and it was only a couple of hundred yards) his mind would go back to the war. By the time he got to the steps of Southdown Cottages, he couldn't remember whether he had locked the shop, and would return, sometimes as many as five or six times.

There were other symptoms, some of which we would call OCD today and Ted was fortunate that Daisy, having worked with so many other traumatised servicemen, was better able to cope than many other wives. As new treatments became available after the establishment of the National Health Service in 1948, Daisy tried to persuade Ted to seek help, but he could not cope with the prospect of again being an in-patient in hospital, and refused all treatment.

So Ted's struggles continued. Like so many others he sought relief in alcohol, and he died aged fifty-seven in 1954. Daisy had lovingly cared for him for him almost from the time that he came home damaged from the war. Only now, when I know the full story, do I understand why she looked so haggard towards the end.

D.B.

On a personal note

John Bennett has donated to the EHS a number of photos and cards relating to Ted Newing and his family, including the two used to illustrate the previous article. They will need to be catalogued to become part of the Society's growing archive.

The most recent is a postcard which Daisy Newing sent in June 1958. The card is one of the series of twelve which were published for Hubble's Stores in 1919, but which were still being sold in 1958, and indeed quite a few years longer.



This was already a historic document in 1958, because it shows the old weatherboarded south porch of the church, which was replaced by the present porch in about 1950.

Daisy's message relates to Ted's grave. The wet weather was probably holding up the installation of a headstone. John Harvey, the gardener who lodged with her, was going down to the cemetery to cut the knee-high grass.



On a personal note Cont

I was intrigued to read the last sentence “I expect Mr Boughton is tired after his day’s work”. My grandfather was almost eighty-one at the time, and still working almost full time. Less than two years earlier he had done all the flint and most of the brickwork for a new farmhouse at Dane Farm, Bladbean. Most days the farmer, Micky Mann, would bring him home at about half-past-four. One day it was after six – he had volunteered to stay on and help get in the baled hay, as rain was threatened.



At eighty-two, he built the flint wall in front of West Bank. It is still looking good after more than sixty years. The photo, taken by Joyce Eveleigh of Broadview, Old Road, was published in “Country Life”.
D.B.

Are you researching your family history.....?

The Family History Federation have launched a new **Parish Chest** which brings together much information compiled and marketed by individual family history societies, together with other genealogical goods and services. It includes parish registers, wills and probate, memorial inscriptions, directories, poor law records, maps, census and much more. This could be a great help if you think you have reached a dead-end with your research!

www.parishchest.com

Also useful might be: www.familyhistorybookonline.co.uk

and www.familyhistoryfederation.com

A Wolf at his Heels

This year marks the 850th anniversary of the murder of Thomas Becket in Canterbury Cathedral. Until the Corona crisis threw everything off course, elaborate preparations were afoot to celebrate what was to be called 'Becket 2020', with special services and displays planned in the Cathedral itself and exhibitions in local and national museums. Many of these plans have had to be put on hold, and even the commemoration of Becket's death on December 29th will depend on how events unfold through the autumn. Andrew Joynes, who has been a volunteer guide at Canterbury Cathedral for over a decade, reflects on the quirks and complexities of the Becket story...

Thomas Becket and I go back a long way: I suspect it is the case with everyone of my generation, schooled as children in the particular version of English history which was known as 'Our Island Story'. One of my earliest childhood memories is of a family visit to Canterbury Cathedral as night was falling, when I was terrified by the account of how Becket's assassins burst out of the shadows to strike him down in front of the candle-lit altar. Then, thirty years later, on a walking tour of North Devon, I peered round the door of a remote church in the middle of a field, and was told by an old man who was tuning the bells that the church had been endowed by one of the assassins as penance for his part in Becket's murder. Two decades after that, my tutor on a Medieval Studies course told me he had once set out to trace the origin of the phrase 'Who will rid me of this turbulent priest?' – supposedly muttered in angry frustration by Henry II as a curtain-raiser to the murder - and established that it was first used in a nineteenth-century school textbook.

During my decade as a guide leading tours round the Cathedral, I must have told the story of Becket's complex relationship with Henry at least five hundred times. Some years ago an American college student who was studying creative writing came up to me when a tour ended and said, 'You do realise, don't you, that the story of those two men is one of the basic plots of fiction?' And she went on to explain why it has a universal appeal. It is the story of two friends who become enemies; the enmity results in the death of one of them, and the subsequent remorse of the other. The dead man is placed among the stars; his former friend lives on, diminished and contrite. 'It's like something from the Book of Genesis, or a Greek myth,' said the young American.

The basic facts of the story are easily set out. Thomas Becket was born in c.1120, the son of a London merchant, and as a young man was taken into the household of Theobald, Archbishop of Canterbury. There he was given a grounding in canon law with a view to becoming an advocate in the church courts which provided a parallel – and increasingly competitive - system to the royal courts of justice. When the young King Henry II, the first of England's Plantagenet dynasty of monarchs, came to the throne in 1154, Theobald recommended that his protégé Thomas should be made Chancellor, the principal advisor to the king. The two men became firm friends. They feasted together, went to war together, and Thomas represented the king on important foreign missions. In 1162, following the death of Theobald, Henry insisted that his friend should become the next Archbishop of Canterbury. In this way, with an ally at the head of the English church, he hoped to push back against an increasingly assertive papacy, which he feared was encroaching upon the authority of the English crown. The monks of Canterbury Cathedral's Christ Church Priory – who had the formal responsibility of approving candidates for the archbishopric - at first opposed the nomination, but the king's will prevailed, and the monks gave way. Thomas was ordained a priest, consecrated as archbishop the very next day...

A Wolf at his Heels cont ...

...and almost immediately the king's plans began to unravel. Thomas handed back the Chancellor's seal, angering the king and his retinue, and set about defending the rights of the church as robustly as he had once asserted the king's authority as Royal Chancellor. In just over two years relations between the two men had deteriorated to such an extent that in 1164 Thomas went into exile in France, fearing for his own safety. There he remained for six years, until the pope – who was increasingly concerned about this state of affairs – brought about what he hoped would be a reconciliation. The king grudgingly gave permission for Thomas to return to England on condition that he behaved tactfully and did not assert the rights of the church in such a way as to question royal authority.

Thomas returned to Canterbury in December 1170, but even before he landed at Sandwich he caused offence to the king once more by upholding a series of excommunications against those bishops of the English church who had collaborated with the king during his absence. When news of this reached Henry in France, just before Christmas, the royal anger burst over the heads of his knightly retinue, whom he accused of failing to defend his honour: 'What miserable drones and traitors have I nourished and promoted, who let their lord be treated with such shameful contempt by a low-born cleric...'

Immediately four of the king's household knights took ship for England, and convened at Saltwood Castle near Hythe on the night of December 28th. The following day they rode up the old Roman road with a rabble of supporters, and confronted Thomas in the archbishop's palace. They argued with him all afternoon, accusing him of impugning the king's honour and threatening to arrest him, before storming out to fetch their swords. Accompanied by a small group of worried personal servants, Thomas went into the cathedral for the evening service of vespers. He forbade the door behind him to be locked ('Unbar the door! I will not have the house of God turned into a fortress...') and in doing so opened the way to his own death. The knights burst in, struck at him with their swords, and fled back into the darkness shouting 'We are the king's men! The traitor is dead...'

Those are the basic outlines of a very convoluted historical narrative. Guiding groups round the cathedral, I have often thought that, to do full justice to its drama and complexity, one might assemble a panel representing various professional disciplines. Clearly there would have to be a medieval historian, who would explain that in the twelfth century (a time of relative enlightenment, so much so that the term 'The Twelfth Century Renaissance' is used by historians) there was an early exploration of theories of the nation-state as it is understood today. In an effectively functioning state, there cannot be two poles of authority, such as the Church and Crown represented in the early Middle Ages. In other words, the personal tensions between Becket and Henry, two strong-minded advocates of their respective positions, were implicit in the confused social and political realities of the time. Such was the spin which the Church put upon the death of Becket - which saw the Canterbury tomb of the hastily canonised saint become one of the principal pilgrimage shrines in medieval Europe - that the seesaw of authority came down firmly in the Church's favour. It was to remain there until Henry VIII took back control at the Reformation four hundred years later, proclaimed himself Supreme Governor of the Church of England, and ordered the destruction of the old Catholic shrines - including that of Becket at Canterbury.

A Wolf at his Heels cont ...

I would also want to see a mitigation lawyer pleading the cause of Henry II, for whom I have always had a good deal of sympathy. One cannot overestimate the extent to which a medieval king who took his job seriously - as he had to, for otherwise he would be deposed – was weighed down by management stress. Henry was not only King of England; he was overlord of a domain which stretched from the Scottish Borders to the Pyrenees. Normandy was still under his control, as was South-West France by virtue of his marriage to Eleanor of Aquitaine. ‘I rule from the saddle’ he used to complain. He had to be on display throughout his English and continental domains, facing down local rebellions, quelling his barons and feudatories with the charisma of royal authority. Little wonder therefore that he made snap judgments – such perhaps as the ill-advised decision to make Thomas his Archbishop of Canterbury – and flew into a rage when his plans went awry. Henry was genuinely appalled when he heard of his former friend’s murder, and made a great show of repentance in 1174, when he knelt by the tomb of the newly canonised saint in the crypt of Canterbury Cathedral to be symbolically flogged by every one of the cathedral’s monks. And so we cut to the last scene of the film ‘Becket’, based on the stage play by the French playwright Jean Anouilh. Flinching as the scourge strikes his shoulders, the kneeling king – played by Peter O’Toole - mutters: ‘You win, Thomas. You win...’

The next witness on the panel might be an anthropologist, who would describe the court and household of Henry II as an ‘honour-based warrior culture’ (with the word ‘honour’ conveying an obsessive concern for reputation and renown). From that first symbolic act of handing back the Chancellor’s seal, Thomas caused offence by questioning the king’s authority, and did so in clear sight of the retinue of warrior knights who had sworn a blood-oath to defend the king’s dignity. The anthropologist might draw a parallel with the codes of the Mafia, or even with gang culture in London or New York. Thomas was ‘dissing’ the king by his stubborn defence of the Church’s position and his refusal to co-operate with royal policy, and he paid for it with his life - just as a young man might be stabbed to death in a London street today for showing disrespect to a gang-leader.

And it would certainly be important to hear from a behavioural psychologist, who might analyse Becket’s frame of mind throughout the developing years of crisis between Church and Crown. He was after all not of aristocratic lineage – he was a merchant’s son, his family background was in trade - and he must often have been taunted about this by the retinue of knights around the king, most of whom were descended from the companions of William the Conqueror. Did Thomas’s sudden elevation to high ecclesiastical office go to his head? Did he have a martyrdom complex? Or, more likely, did the feudal structure of medieval society play a part in his sudden *volte-face* from ally to opponent of the king? In feudal society, every person existed within a kind of social triangle, with the individual to whom they owed fealty at the apex of the triangle. While Thomas was the Royal Chancellor, the individual to whom he owed fealty was the king. When he became archbishop it was God who was at the apex of his personal feudal triangle... and God would have trumped even a Plantagenet monarch as a focus for feudal loyalty.

A Wolf at his Heels cont ...

So complex is the story of Becket's life, death and subsequent pilgrimage cult that it can bear examination both by experts – historians, lawyers, anthropologists, psychologists – and by generalists like myself, whose imagination is often caught by the random details which give history its life and colour. Details such as these: in his glory-days as Royal Chancellor, the magnificently clad Thomas Becket, haughty and tall, would stride through the anterooms of the court with a tame wolf at his heels....the surname of Reginald Fitzurse, the leader of the assassin knights, means 'the son of the bear'... Pope Alexander III, who was a personal friend of Becket, was so shocked when he heard of the murder that he refused to allow an Englishman to approach him for a month afterwards...the earliest known representation of St Thomas of Canterbury is a mosaic in Monreale near Palermo, where it was commissioned to mark the marriage of Joanna, daughter of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine, to King William of Sicily in 1177...the word 'canter' to describe the rhythm of a horse comes from 'the Canterbury gallop', referring to the gentle lolloping pace of the pilgrims' steeds along the springy turf of the Pilgrims' Way...



Mosaic of St Thomas of Canterbury in Monreale, Sicily

In the heyday of the Becket pilgrimage cult – when the saint's shrine at Canterbury was one of the three main pilgrimage destinations in Western Christendom (together with the shrines of St Peter in Rome and St James at Compostela) our own Elham Valley would have been regarded as part of 'Becket Country'. As spring arrived pilgrims from the continent would have landed at Dover, and made their way across the hills to the east of Elham towards Canterbury. They would have paused at churches like Barfreston to admire the magnificent Romanesque doorway with its carving of an enthroned archbishop, and stayed at the nearby pilgrim hostel. An accompanying priest – the medieval equivalent of a tour guide – would have told them of the extraordinary miracles which occurred at the tomb of St Thomas in Canterbury. He might have indicated the direction of Sandwich, where the soon-to-be martyred Thomas returned to England 850 years ago, and Saltwood Castle, where the malign Ranulf le Broc – a longstanding enemy of Becket – conspired with Reginald Fitzurse and his fellow assassins. He might even have indicated the course of the Elham Valley, up which perhaps a contingent of Le Broc's men travelled towards Canterbury on the day of the murder to join the main group galloping with grim determination up Stone Street.

A Wolf at his Heels cont ...

Little of that pilgrimage culture remains, except of course for the marvellous series of Miracle Windows in Canterbury Cathedral itself, and a few Becket-related artefacts in local churches. In St Mary's Elham, for instance, there is a reredos incorporating a medieval alabaster panel showing Becket in confrontation with Henry at the Council of Northampton (the last time they met before Becket fled into exile) and a modern re-creation of a medieval panel showing the actual murder (this is very similar to an alabaster panel in the British Museum).

Such artefacts are like pebbles on the sea-shore, the eroded fragments of a once-great promontory of pilgrimage culture at Canterbury. Guiding at the Cathedral, I would sometimes tease my group of visitors by quoting Chaucer's Prologue to the Canterbury Tales in the original fourteenth-century text, and then giving the modern translation: I remember that the young American student of creative writing was particularly taken with this. The Prologue speaks of how sweet-showering April, laying the dust of the March drought, reviving the plants and encouraging flowers to appear, fills the human heart with divine restlessness. 'Then langen folke to gan on pilgrimage/The holy blissful Martyre for to seek...' I often think that the 'longing' to go on pilgrimage which Chaucer talks about was in fact a medieval manifestation of ancient pagan beliefs, a surfacing of Celtic springtime and fertility ritual. It is an irony that Thomas Becket, one of the 'new men' of the Twelfth Century Renaissance – an innovative period during which talented individuals of low birth were able to rise on the basis of their ability - should have become the focus of a cult with such ancient roots.

Thomas Becket and the English people go back a long way...

Andrew Joynes



15th Century panel in the British Museum showing Becket's murder

Elham in the Battle of Britain

From the 10th July 1940 until 31st October 1940 the pivotal Battle of Britain was fought in the skies above Elham. This period has been excellently documented by the author Dennis Knight in his book *Harvest of Messerschmitts*, however as 2020 marks the 80th anniversary of the battle the Elham Historical Society thought it would be fitting to recall a few events from that period. The latest COVID-19 restrictions have meant that we have postponed plans to hold a tour of the sites in and around Elham associated with the following events.



Monday 8th July 1940 at 3.45pm First German aeroplane shot down over England at Bladbean Hill. Leutnant Johann Böhm from 4th Staffel Jagdgeschwader 51 was arrested and taken to Broome Park.

Extracts from Mary Smith's Diary August 1940

12 Mon Raids nearly all day. Nazi plane down on Running Hill about 8.30 a.m. Loud odd A.A. bangs all morning. Heavy battle overhead 5.30 – 6 p.m. Down cellar. Tiles off Hemsley's & Butcher's.

13 Tues Nazi bomber overhead about 7.15 a.m. Very sharp A.A. It came down across railway just beyond Barham Station. Air battle at 4 p.m. Nazi airman down at Parker's by parachute. Leg wound.

15 Thur B. Comber's birthday. One raid (nothing much) early morning, another before dinner, heavy for a time, another 3.30 p.m. Very heavy (bombs at Palm Tree – no harm done) another 7 p.m. only one sharp burst of machine gun.

16 Fri Buzzy raid at 12 & another at tea time – not nearly so heavy as yesterday. Nazis reached outer London.

17 Sat Daddy sent an R.P. wire to the Offens to see if safe. A lovely sunny & quite normal day. M. Pegden here in afternoon. Mr Duff-Cooper broadcast on R.A.F. successes at night.

18 Sun Heavy raids at dinner time & after tea. Bombs round about. Attack on London driven off.

19 Mon Quite a normal day. All Britain declared a defence area.

20 Tues Buzzy raid 2.30 – 3.30 p.m. Heavy guns Dover way. Churchill spoke on the war situation. It rained in the evening the first time for ages.

21 Wed Two bursts of A.A. during morning. Explosions & some A.A. during the afternoon. Ginger came to tea.

22 Thur Heavy bangs during gunfire attack on convoy in morning. Raid warning 1 – 2.50 p.m. – nothing but a few distant bangs & buzzing. Another 7 – 8 p.m. A Spitfire crashed in flames on Adam & Eve. Pilot landed. Dover shelled at 9.30 – awful bangs.

Elham in the Battle of Britain cont

23 Fri Quite normal except for a little very distant gunfire. Made Sambo a pillow out of my old dressing gown.

24 Sat Ghastly. Raids incessantly from 8.10 – 5.30 p.m. Bombs at Dreals – terrific A.A. fire. Shelling over Dover.

25 Sun Quite nice – nothing but a slight buzz 6.30 – 7.30 p.m. Lord Halifax & Mrs Eden at church in morning. Saw them drive away.

26 Mon Raids at 12 & 3 p.m. – not bad here but bombs on Folkestone. Letter from Joan, telling of dreadful time in Ramsgate on Saturday.

27 Tues Quite decent. A few pots at a stray Jerry about 12 and a buzz at one.

28 Wed Terrible all day. Bombs at Park Lane. Alice slept here.

29 Thur Only two raids. Saw a plane fall and a parachutist come down.

30 Fri Terrible – Raids nearly all day.

31 Sat Not quite so bad. Fierce scrap overhead at 9 a.m. Nazi came down by parachute in Hog Green. Saw him. Only slightly wounded.



12th Aug 08:20 Oblt. Friedrich Butterwick was shot down over Elham. (Photo by Horace Cook). His plane crashed into Running Hill next to the Chalk Pit, he was found dead in a field six miles away.



15th Aug Anti-Aircraft Fire over Elham
(Photo by Horace Cook)

Elham in the Battle of Britain cont



29th Aug Bill Green was shot down over Elham. Bill was, by his own admission, a very inexperienced pilot when he was shot down over Elham at 20,000 feet. Unfortunately, his parachute was damaged by cannon fire and failed to deploy correctly. Amazingly it opened just seconds before he hit the ground at Mill Hill Farm, Elham.



In 1995 Bill, with his wife Bertha returned to Elham and were presented with a copy of Dennis Knight's book, *Harvest of Messerschmitts*. The following day they visited Mill Hill Farm and the Kent Battle of Britain Museum at Hawkinge, where they were greeted by the museum's chairman, David Brocklehurst. David was then able to take them to the crash site near Ladwood where Bill's Hurricane came down in 1940.



David Brocklehurst, Bill Green & David Jason

In 2010 Bill returned to Mill Hill Farm and was interviewed by David Jason for the ITV program "Battle of Britain".

Elham in the Battle of Britain cont



31st Aug German air ace Oblt. Eckhart Priebe is shot down over Elham. He parachuted into the village, landing in the fields at Hog Green. Walter "Wally" Harris MM rushed from the Elham Service Garage through the streets and lanes and was first on the scene. Priebe handed over his revolver to Walter and for Priebe his war was over! Wally recalled "We scattered when we saw the plane catch fire and the pilot bale out, but I happened to be close to where he landed so I took his pistol and arrested him." Soon the village PC Hamilton was there, just in time to stop Trixie Williams taking further swipes at Priebe with a stick. Trixie's husband Ken had been taken Prisoner Of War earlier that year when he was part of the British Expeditionary Force in Northern France. The photo of Priebe descending into Elham was taken by Dr. Hunter Smith, from his home Aykley Heads.

1st Sept Mrs. Elizabeth Boughton (Derek's Great Grandmother) was killed. The engine from a Hurricane became detached and fell to earth, destroying the kitchen where she had been preparing Sunday lunch.

5th Sept – 2.25 pm Sergeant Malcolm Gray of No.72 Squadron was killed in action. His Spitfire crashed in flames in Elham Park Woods.



Elham in the Battle of Britain cont

25th Sept - Lord Lovat an extraordinary Scottish nobleman who had formed one of the first commando units choosing Gillies and Game Keepers for its personnel was up to his tricks in Elham during 1940. He arrived wearing a major's uniform with a tam-o-shanter and, after inspecting the Home Guard, was closeted for a long time with Major Kinsley Dykes to whom he presumably outlined his plans for the formation of special squads, Britain's Secret Army.



These units would, in the event of a German invasion, stay behind on Romney Marsh and in the hills, hiding during daylight and creating havoc behind enemy lines at night. For these suicide squads he was looking for men who had special qualities and knew the ground like the backs of their hands. After his visit it was noticed that leathery reliable "Foxy" Sturmeay the Huntsman, Shepherd George Austin and the immensely powerful William Benefield no longer trained with the Elham Home Guard platoon, nobody asked questions and the little underground bunkers with camouflage steel lids still exist on Romney Marsh and in the coastal hills and woodland.



The Messerschmitt dump in The Row, Elham



In his book *Harvest of Messerschmitts* Dennis incorrectly shows the dump being situated in fields next to the windmill, shown above. The paddock which contained the crashed planes was in fact opposite Prospect Terrace and is now the site of a modern semi-detached property.



Peter Verney in the front garden of his home Briar Bank, Elham. The barn in the centre of this photo is that actual location of the Messerschmitt Dump where crashed enemy planes were brought for examination. Peter also recalled a strafe attack by a German plane on an engine parked under Lickpot bridge. Shells for the long-range guns had been stacked on the platform of Elham Station, covered in a tarpaulin. The plane strafed the engine hitting Lick Pot bridge, almost cutting down a telegraph pole close to the station masters house and setting the tarpaulin on the platform alight.

Sun 22nd Sept Gordon Young's diary records "Bombs dropped on Elham"

Elham in the Battle of Britain cont

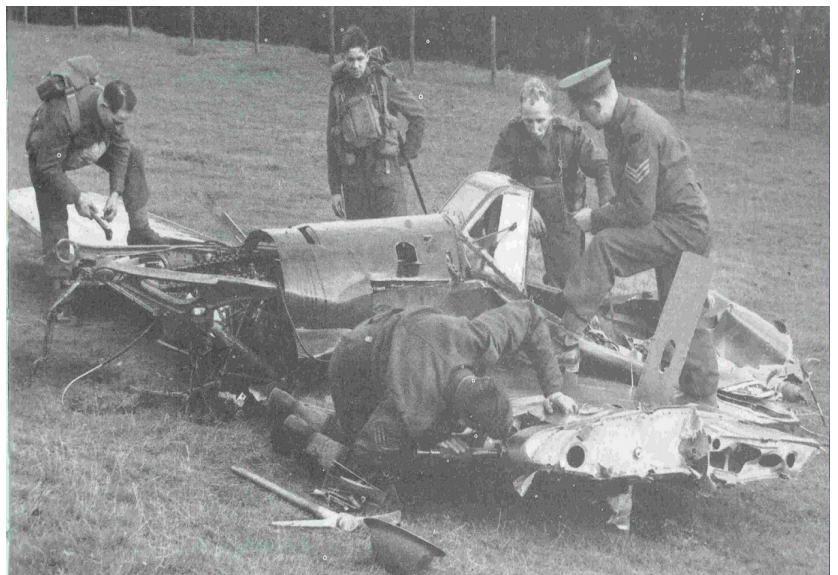
Oct 1940 From the Elham Parish Magazine: The Vicar's Letter. "So far the invasion of our Island Home has not taken place, and the "lightening war" of the German Air Force which was to prepare the way by terrorising London and paralysing both the Nation's power and will to resist has utterly failed in its main purpose. For this we must thank the R.A.F., nor must we forget the splendid and untiring work of the A.R.P. and A.F.S., while the cheerful courage and dogged determination to carry on displayed by the men and women of Britain has first surprised and then called forth the admiration of the world."

15th Oct 9.20am Leutnant Ludwig Lenz – 1st Gruppe Lehrgeschwader 1 Killed in Action. Bill Morgan remembers the Messerschmitt that came down having been separated from its engine. The engine made a large crater in the road outside the Brickfield Cottages, in Park Lane, with the fuselage fluttering down in a field behind Spruce Lawn. This incident is mentioned in Dennis Knight's book *Harvest of Messerschmitts* and a photograph on page 149 shows Bill's sister Iris, in her housemaid's pinafore standing next to an unknown land army girl.



The Bf 109E-7 of Lt. Ludwig Lenz of 3(1)/LG2 that blew up in the air over the Kent countryside 15 October 1940

Peter Verney recalled that the plane just blew up, possibly because of bullets hitting a bomb held underneath the fuselage of the plane.



31st Oct. The Battle of Britain is won!

Nov 1940 From the Elham Parish Magazine: The Vicar's Letter. "Last month I watched a British airman force down a German fighter on the outskirts of the parish. The Englishman was merciful as it seemed to me. He could have blown to pieces the German pilot, but he withheld his fire when the Nazi was obviously beaten and was coming down. He afterwards circled round for some time to make sure of his "bag", and then did something which fairly took my breath away – he quickly rolled his 'plane over in the air, as you might spin a tennis racket in your hand! It is, I believe what the R.A.F. call "the Victory Roll". Well, it struck me as typical of the national spirit which is overcoming all kinds of dangers and difficulties with courage and endurance in the full ardour of youth, until its efforts are crowned with Victory.

2020

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Don't forget our wonderful collection of vintage postcards at a cost of 60p each or £4.00 for a pack of eight. These are always available at our meetings in the Village Hall.



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We now have our own Facebook group where people (EHS members and non members) can upload pictures and make comments about Elham's history. If you are on Facebook then please take a look.

It's your Newsletter!

We've got lots of good "stuff" to tell you about in these newsletters but we hope that you, our members, will also provide contributions.

Everyone will have their own special areas of interest so, to stop us banging on about our own obsessions, send us your thoughts and photos etc. Letters to the Editor are always appreciated!

Please email me:

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