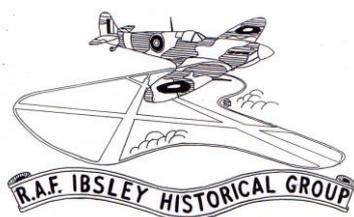


R.A.F. IBSLEY HISTORICAL GROUP

Patron: Stephen Young, Lord of Westbury and Waxham
President: Shirley Simmonds, MTC Driver, Ibsley, 1941
Vice President: Roy Chapman, R.A.F. Ibsley (Sopley) 1947

Hon. Secretary:
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Hon. Membership Secretary:

Owen 'Don' Blissett, Habbaniya, 234 Kempshott Lane, Kempshott, Basingstoke, RG22 5LR.

NEWSLETTER

No. 100

JULY 2017

First things first, but I will tell you more on myself and involvement with, and enjoyment, of writing every one of the Group's Newsletters since the first in October 1992 later.

SATURDAY 5th AUGUST and SUNDAY 6th AUGUST

**IBSLEY PAST AND PRESENT EXHIBITION
at THE VILLAGE HALL**

from 10.30 a.m. each day. Admission Free.

As last year this will be a mainly photographic Exhibition combining the story of the second World War airfield of R.A.F. Ibsley with numerous other pictures of the local area both from the past and some of the present.

I have been loaned some interesting copied material on the Motor Cycle Racing which took place on the old airfield in the early 1950's, when John Surtees took part, and also a few more pictures on the car race meetings.

Last week my son Graham who lives in 'The Bungalow' 'along the Gorley Road, only a few yards from Cross Lanes Chapel brought me in a copied picture he found had been left in his mail box. It has a caption on it 'Cross Lanes, Mockbeggar'. It is a very good picture of the Chapel and schoolroom when it was originally built. This has to be pre 1929 as that's when Graham's grandparents, Frederick and Dorothy Smith, had their bungalow built, and that is not on the picture. It shows the green at Cross Lanes, looking from the South over a then gravelled Mockbeggar Lane. There was no name on the back, or any note, as to who left this A4 size picture, but my son seems to think it may be blown up from an old postcard. A4 is a modern size of paper as backalong it was foolscap and quarto. It will be on display and I have asked my photographer, Matthew Stevens, to take a picture of the present day view to go alongside it. My thanks to whoever left it, so interesting.

I have also, just recently, made an interesting discovery about a member of No. 165 Squadron, something Douglas Warren, one of twin pilots here in July 1943, told me of when I met him in Victoria, Vancouver Island, Canada in 2007, and I was convinced he was joking. I am now researching this further and hope to have pictures and the story on display. He was a very famous person but no longer with us. Full story and pictures will be in October Newsletter as I know many members are unable to be with us over the weekend.

No doubt our friends from the Ibsley Horticultural Society will have their stand selling plants, produce and preserves, which proved popular last year.

Light refreshments will be served, tea, coffee, squash and biscuits. Hockey's Farm Shop just a couple of hundred yards away, towards Gorley, serve lunches, teas, and is licensed. I had reports from several of our members who went there last year that the food and service was good.

As stated at the beginning of this article Admission is **FREE** but we will be having a Raffle over the two days, to be drawn around 4-4.30 p.m. on the Sunday, and there will be a few collection boxes for donations. Any gifts of prizes for the raffle would be welcomed.

I look forward to seeing again Jim and Pat Chadwick who have said they will be coming from South Devon, Keith Bodman from Bath, together with other Group members, friends and local people.

SAD LOSS OF GROUP PRESIDENT SHIRLEY SIMMONDS

Shirley, who was our President for ten years, passed away on 28th April in her ninety-eighth year. There was a private cremation, date unknown, followed by a Thanksgiving Service at St. John the Baptist Church in Burley on 14th June, which was well attended. There was to be no flowers but donations in her memory may be made to the Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund and the Group have sent a cheque to this worthy cause. Shirley and Vernon had a daughter Anthea who survives them.

It was while at Ibsley in 1941 that Shirley, (nee Faulkner-Horne) met Vernon Simmonds a Battle of Britain pilot who was here with No. 118 Squadron. Shirley told me, one time, her posting to Ibsley as an M.T.C. Driver came about because she had a bad time after an operation for appendicitis and as her home was in Burley she could live off camp by being posted to Ibsley to aid her recovery.

She had many memories of her time at Ibsley and the filming of 'The First of the Few' while she was here. She said one time 118 Squadron were on a mission and all planes had returned, but not Vernon's which she always kept a lookout for. Shirley said she dashed to the other side of the airfield to see the C.O. who told her "don't worry missy Simmonds is OK he'll be back shortly", and he was.

Another tale she told was when No. 118 Squadron's Mess was at Cuckoo Hill and there was a big party there. Apparently it got a bit boisterous, with a number of pilots having their wives/girl friends attending, and as mentioned before Shirley was then living with her parents at Burley. She went for her car to go home and found it had been pushed down a steep slope by several of the young pilots, and so she had to be taken back to Burley by the Commanding Officer in his car. She never said how she got back to Ibsley next day or how they recovered the car.

Shirley, under her maiden name of Faulkner-Horne was a writer and had quite a number of books published, many for children, and with her love for the New Forest most were on ponies and horses. On one visit to her home she gave me a two volume copy of one called 'Pegasus and the Pony' which was published in 1999, It states on the page where she signed it for me, *'The Royalties from the sales will go to help the Fortune Centre of Riding Therapy in Hampshire which provides residential education for young people with special needs through a horse-based curriculum, and Riding for the Disabled worldwide.* Other books Shirley wrote, about a dozen I think, include The Horselovers' Anthology, Pat and her Polo Pony, Mexican Saddle, and Riding for Children.

Shirley and Vernon were married for 62 years until his passing in 2005 and lived at Manor Farm House in Burley, where they kept a herd of Friesian cows. Now I left Bournemouth Municipal College (now the University) after a two year Secretarial Course, Shorthand, Typing, Stenography, Accounting, Economics and Public speaking in 1955. I then went to work for an Architect in Ringwood, and he designed Manor Farmhouse, Burley, so that is when I first met Vernon and Shirley, but I had no idea they both served in the R.A.F. during the war and were at Ibsley, for some of the time. I'm almost certain my boss didn't either or he would have said. I even went to Burley to peg out the site of their new home, my boss using a theodolite and me holding the surveying pole. Little did I know then our paths would cross many years later, when the Group unveiled, in 2000, the Commemorative Plaque at Cross Lanes and Vernon and Shirley recognized me from so long ago, and me them. That was just great and a real pleasure.

Shirley was a very kind and generous person and in 2006 she commissioned a stained glass window to be placed in Burley Church in Memory of Vernon and all the pilots who flew in the Battle of Britain in 1940. I was privileged to go to the Unveiling and Dedication Ceremony with our then Chairman Mike Halpin. In July 2011 Shirley hosted a most enjoyable Garden Party at Manor Farm for Group members, to mark the 70th Anniversary of when Ibsley

became an operational World War II airfield. She even arranged for a number of R.A.F. Medical students to come along, to serve food and chat to us under their Officer in Charge, Wing Commander Christian Cornish.



The stained glass window



The Memorial window Plaque
(Shirley's photo of the Plaque in 2006)

Shirley Simmonds had this window made and installed in St. John the Baptist Church, Burley in 2006. It depicts from the top down, a Guardian Angel, two Doves of Peace, the Spitfires that took part in the Battle of Britain, the cows of Manor Farm, surrounded by the Forest and ponies, all celebrating the life of Squadron Leader Vernon Churchill Simmonds, one of the Battle of Britain pilots, many of whom gave their lives for our freedom in World War II.



APRIL 24th 2000 in Cross Lanes Chapel after unveiling of Commemorative Plaque. L to R. Vernon Simmonds, Ivor Jones, 'Bunny' Curreant, Vera Smith, Shirley Simmonds.



17th JULY 2011 President Mrs. Shirley Simmonds with serving R.A.F. medical students when she hosted a Group Garden Party at Manor Farm, to mark the 70th Anniversary of the opening R.A.F. Ibsley.

NEW MEMBER

We welcome as a new member Roger Taylor from Ludlow in Shropshire. I sent Roger the current year's Newsletters at the beginning of May. I didn't hear anything regarding my enquiry as to whether he had any connection with RAF Ibsley until the end of that month when he said that his response was delayed as he had been in Lymington for two weeks.

In an e-mail Roger says "I don't have any connection with RAF Ibsley but my father was an aeronautical engineer who remained in the RAF after the war and my first school was Milford Primary when he was posted to RAF Beaulieu in 1948. I chose the law as a career but I never lost my interest in the forces and the RAF in particular. I appear to have passed this interest on to my elder son (whose maternal grandfather was a distinguished pilot) and he in turn to his sons.

Dad always contrived to get his UK postings back to Hampshire and subsequent family connections have kept us returning to the Forest regularly for the past thirty years".

SID DEEDMAN

In our April Newsletter I published a picture of the helpers at the first Exhibition which showed Sid Deedman, the Group's founder Chairman standing on the right hand side. Little did I know that within days of printing the Newsletter I would read in a local newspaper that Sid had passed away at his home in Ringwood on 8th April aged 86. The Group has sent a cheque to the chosen charity MacMillan Caring Locally. His well attended funeral was held in Ringwood Parish Church.

Sid was a Ringwood man and his family had Deedman's Cycle Shop at Fridays Cross in Ringwood, which Sid ran for a number of years after his parents passed away.

Now a rather amusing story from the first Exhibition In 1992 when the Hut we used at Brooklands Farm had no doors. Peter Smith and Charlie West were to stay in the building overnight to look after the exhibits. Sid set up a booby trap wire somehow using a cartridge and some string or wire across the doorway. Charlie, answering the call of nature during the night forgot all about this and bang went the cartridge, don't know whether it woke anyone else on site.

Sid had a Barnes Wallis bouncing bomb, believe it was welded together from bits found on the Ashley Walk Practice Bombing Range not far from the airfield. We had this on display for two or three years outside the Exhibition Hut. I believe now his son, or grandson, have it in their garden.

There are a number of web sites on Ashley Walk and someone showed me one of a video of the practice bombs being dropped. I have found the site again so for those of you with computers go to <http://www.thenewforestguide.co.uk/> click on History ▼ and Ashley Walk Bombing Range will come up, then scroll down about two thirds of a long article and you should find a YouTube video of practice bombing at Ashley Walk..

FROM A 1968 NEWSPAPER CUTTING

I worked for seven years for Architect James Neaum in Ringwood, a quiet and clever man with a good sense of humour. He died suddenly aged 57 in 1968. What he never spoke about was the War, but during that time, the newspaper article states, "He was commissioned to camouflage gun positions, searchlights and other war-time installations along the coastline from Warmwell to Lyme Regis. This he did successfully with the help of men from a firm of building contractors, using canvas, chicken netting, rubbish and paint. Under the threat of frequent raids he worked on the Mulberry Scheme at Bucklers Hard, near Beaulieu, eventually taking the floating dock out to sea for her trials and seeing her handed over to the Royal Navy". I have often wondered what became of the plans for Mulberry as when I was working they were stored in the bottom drawer of the office plan cabinet. I feel almost certain they have long since been destroyed.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - THURSDAY 21st SEPTEMBER, 7.30 p.m. IBSLEY VILLAGE HALL

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

A REMINDER THAT THESE FALL DUE ON 1st SEPTEMBER

Current Rates; Adult £5.00, Junior 14-18 years £4.00, Under 14 Free

Please send to Hon. Secretary Vera Smith or you can pay at Ibsley Past and Present

NEWS of MEMBERS

Doreen Biles, our one time Hon. Treasurer, wrote to me saying she had moved from Ringwood and was now living in Verwood with her daughter Liz.

Bert Sadler e-mailed to say he had moved from Ferndown, Dorset to Weston-Super-Mare.

Roy Chapman, Group Vice-President. I received a phone call from a friend of Roy to say he is now in a care home in Hexham with severe dementia.

Roy and Betty Tamplin have also moved from their bungalow home on the Horton Road at Ashley Heath to a retirement apartment a short distance away on the same road.

If any member wishes to make contact please get in touch with me and I will check if they are happy for me give their address and phone number. I never give information without permission.

MY FUTURE PLANS: I will keep writing Newsletters and acting as Group Hon. Secretary, as long as I am needed and able to, but no more Exhibitions I have really enjoyed writing all the Newsletters, researching R.A.F. Ibsley and meeting a large number of personnel who served here, quite a number from overseas, together with members of their families, many of whom have become friends. More stories have been received since "So Much Sadness So Much Fun" was published in 2002 so these can be put in future Newsletters. I just love writing and from a teenager I became involved in voluntary work, scorer for local cricket clubs, ten years Secretary of Ibsley Village Hall and saw the new hall built, and opened in 1968, which is fifty years ago next year. Seventeen years as Secretary of Gorley Youth Football Club, started in 1973 with one mixed age team and ended up with six teams from under 12 to under 18 and all players had to be registered. Church Warden at Ibsley where I started a Sunday School. Thirty-three years as a local Parish Councillor. I also acted as Local Correspondent for the Western Gazette weekly newspaper My eightieth birthday is only a month or so away and my sons have been on at me for ages to write my life story, as they say although I keep telling them things they want my memories in a book and this is what I hope to do. I have made a start. Vera