

Elstree & Borehamwood Museum

Friends Newsletter

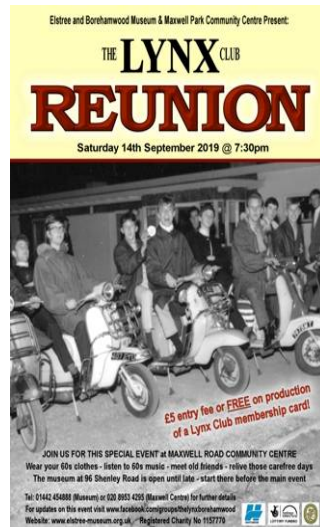
September 2019 : Issue Number 21



THE LYNX CLUB REUNION

The next *Friends* event

The Lynx Club Reunion will be the next important event for the Friends of the Museum. In conjunction with Maxwell Park Community Centre we are celebrating our current Exhibition *Good Vibrations* by holding a Sixties night on Saturday 14 September 2019 at 7.30pm in the very place where it all happened in Boreham Wood.



the Elstree Way Hotel, etc – but The Lynx is still there in Maxwell Road, and still as strong as a community centre today as it was 50 years ago.

The entrance fee is £5, but we have arranged that all Friends of the Museum will enter for free. There will be a paid bar and food, and we are sure you will have a great evening.

Many a famous musician played The Lynx Club in the 60s before going on to world-wide fame and fortune. From Elton John (when he was still Reg Dwight!) to Eric Clapton, from stadium-fillers The Who to Fleetwood Mac, they all paid their dues back then on the 'circuit'. And The Lynx was on that circuit.

Of course they won't be with us, but we hope as many of the original members of the youth club, and fans of 60s music and fashion will be joining us for an evening of nostalgia and fun. Wear your 60s clothes and relive those care-free days! Whatever your age, if you like the Sounds of the Sixties, then this is the place to be.

The other 60s venues in Boreham Wood have all closed – The Crown, The Red Lion, The Green Dragon, Elliott's Social Club,

Please phone the Museum on 01442 454888 or email info@elstree-museum.org.uk to add your name to the Lynx List so we can cater for everyone. If you haven't visited the Exhibition yet, the Museum will remain open later on this Saturday evening so you can get in the Sixties mood first before travelling to Maxwell Park.

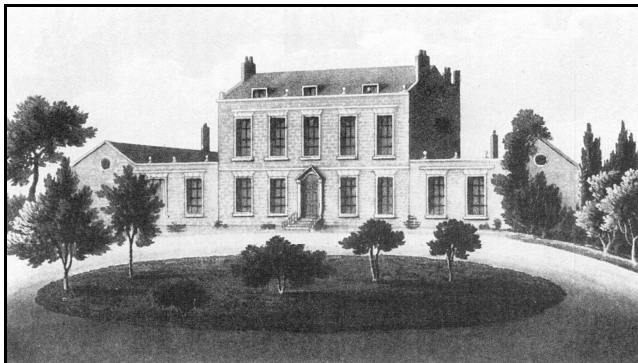
Maxwell Park Community Centre, Maxwell Road, Borehamwood, Hertfordshire, WD6 1JJ. 020 8953 4295

Updates to the event can be found on

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/thelynxborehamwood/>

TWO MURDERS, A PREMONITION AND A SIMPLE TWIST OF FATE

The Annual History Walk, part of the Civic Festival, took place this summer in Elstree for the first time. Led by Dave Armitage, ably assisted by John Woolston, a hardy band of history walkers met up at St. Nicholas School for a two hour ramble through the environs of Elstree. Walking through to an extension to the graveyard we gathered at the grave of Sir Percy Winn Everett and his wife Zita. Everett was an editor at Pearsons when assigned to help Baden Powell, the hero of Mafeking, write *Scouting For Boys*. Meeting up at the famous Brownsea Scout Camp in 1907, Everett became BP's right hand man, Deputy Chief Scout, County Commissioner for Hertfordshire and was eventually knighted for his services to scouting in 1930. His daughter Geraldine Winn was born in 1903 and became the local doctor in Elstree, known to everyone as Winn.



Schopwick Place

They lived in Schopwick Place from 1921 and we moved there next through the back garden and round to the front. Built around 1710 on the site of a house noted in the archives in 1528, this splendidly symmetrical house had north and south wings and pavilions added in the late 18th Century, though much development work has happened since, and now it's Grade II-listed.

We walked through to the side and front of St Nicholas Parish Church. The current building dates from 1852, built with money donated mainly by the Rector's wife, and designed by Philip Charles Hardwick. Its most notable residents, however, occupy the graveyard.

Martha Ray was the first murder victim to be born and buried in Elstree. Her gravestone is clearly visible and was erected in 1928 by the 9th Earl of

Sandwich. Martha Ray was an actress and opera singer who was the mistress of John Montague, the 4th Earl of Sandwich (yes, that 'sandwich') and bore him up to 9 children. Unfortunately the Reverend James Hackman became acquainted and besotted with her, and ended up shooting her dead outside Covent Garden Opera House. He was hanged, and she was buried in the clothes she died in under the orders of Sandwich who was inconsolable.

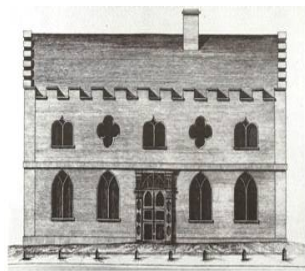


Martha Ray by Nathaniel Dance 1777

The second murder victim to be buried in the churchyard, and whose gravestone has long gone, was William Weare. A professional card gambler he was murdered on his way home from a gambling session in 1823. He had won money from John Thurtell and was lured into the countryside near Radlett by Thurtell, William Probert and Joseph Hunt with the intention to rob him and get the money back, but it went wrong. A knife and pistol were discovered in Gills Hill Lane, Radlett the following day. After a confession by Probert the body was found where it had been dumped in a shallow pool near the bottom of Allum Lane. The body was recovered and taken to the Artichoke Pub and kept in the cellar overnight. The inquest was held in the pub and Thurtell convicted of murder. He was hanged at Hertford and Hunt was transported to Australia. Charles Dickens

wrote about the gruesome story in his *Weekly Journal*.

Leaving the churchyard we moved past the location of Elstree Hall which was built in 1529 and demolished in 1881. Three of the original mantelpieces are to be found in Aldenham House, now Haberdashers' Aske's. Moving further up Elstree Hill North we passed St Nicholas' School which was built in 1884 by money donated by Henry Hucks Gibb of Aldenham House. It catered for 200 children with an average attendance of 150. The Almshouses next door were built at the same time.



Elstree Hall



Elstree Forge

We turned down New Road past one of the two smithies in the village – Elstree Forge was still operating in 1996, and was used by anyone wanting iron goods, not just horse shoes. Continuing down the narrow path past the school we turned out into Barnet Lane, crossed over and walked down Fortune Lane.

Here we found two points of interest, Summerfield House and The Fortune. The former was built around 1893 and was first owned by Thomas Narburgh, the proprietor of the *Sporting Clipper*. He also built other houses using similar brickwork in Summer Grove in Elstree. The next owner was William Stanger who had established *Stanger Testing Services* in 1874 as a cement testing consultancy, before branching into other materials. In 1903, Reginald Harry Hursthouse Stanger took over from his father and began testing materials for such varied projects as The Mall, Buckingham Palace, The Victoria & Albert Museum and South African Railways. He established laboratories in the rear grounds. Later the house was used by the Royal Observer Corp during WW2 because of its high prominence and clear eyelines from its top viewing rotunda. There was also a small observer post occupied by Group Charlie Two of the ROC further down Fortune Lane. Their job was to look out and

identify aircraft direction and height, then report by phone to the local command centre. When renovation took place at Summerfield, signatures from the ROC were found on the wall behind the wallpaper.

Moving on down the Lane we came to the site of The Fortune, a timber framed house that dated back to 1657. At the start of the war Ralph Handbury was Managing Director of the RKO Radio Ltd operations in the UK and had been living in Hampstead. With a premonition and fear for his family he relocated to The Fortune for safety, tucked away at the end of the lane as it was. He had been living here for just three weeks when a land mine dropped directly on the house on 26th September 1940, wiping out his wife, son, daughter and baby leaving his son-in-law as the sole survivor. These were the only fatalities in this area as a result of WW2.



The Fortune



ROC Post Elstree 1940

The above mentioned observer post was also badly damaged by the mine being only seventy-five yards from the house. All communications were destroyed, and the observers on duty, together with others sleeping there, were badly shaken. One was going for water at the time, and was about twenty-five yards away when the mine fell. He was blown through the air for some yards, but fortunately was not much the worse for his narrow escape. His car, which was parked in the Lane, was practically destroyed, and another, a little further away, was slightly damaged.

The tarmac Lane finishes at this point so we took the footpath down hill to the junction with a wide grassy back entrance to Edgwarebury House. Dating from 1540 Sir Trevor Dawson purchased the house in the early 1900s, and had the building completely renovated in the early 1920s, giving the house the mock Tudor frontage we see today and a medieval front door which came from Lewis Castle. There was enough timber left over to do the same for the High Street cottages in Elstree that

were replaced by those dreadful 60s flats. Later the building changed into a country club in the mid 1930s and was often used by film stars working at the studios. Finally it is now a hotel and has featured in many films including *School For Scoundrels* and *The Devil Rides Out*.

As we walked through Elstree Open Space and towards Elstree Hill South, Dave introduced us to the fascinating story of the Northern Line extension. By the mid 1930s the idea of extending the Northern Line from Edgware to Bushey South was a firm proposal. It was put to parliament in 1937 and construction of the line started in 1938. Coming from Edgware, the next station would have been *Brockley Hill* near Canons Corner and Spur Road. *Elstree South* would be the second and *Bushey South* the third. The entrance to a short railway tunnel for the tube train running towards *Elstree South* was constructed and completed in 1939, and you can still see its location from the footpath. The line was never finished – first the War intervened and then the Green Belt afterwards. However the tunnels lasted until 1965 when the M1 was extended south from Watford.

Elstree South station would have been on the current roundabout at the bottom of Elstree Hill, and had the line been finished it would have had a huge impact to housing around this area.



Tube Tunnels Entry



Aldenham Bus Works

Where Centennial Park now stands was a large works. Partly completed by the start of the war for tube train cleaning and servicing, this was turned over to aircraft frame production. By 1942 Mosquito airframes and Halifax bomber body parts were manufactured here before being taken by road to Leavesden and Hatfield for final assembly. London Transport turned the buildings over to bus maintenance straight after the war, and the 53 acre site developed into Aldenham Works which had a staff of 1800 when it

was officially opened in 1956. The largest bus overhaul works in the world was open for thirty years, hosted Cliff Richard in *Summer Holiday*, and was demolished in 1996.

We walked on, crossing over Elstree Hill South and heading through Elstree Hill Open Space. In the distance we could see the 'new' *Fisheries* pub. The original pub was knocked down and rebuilt in 1962. A row of cottages also stood next door, and the story goes that one World War 1 resident complained about the use of live ammunition by airmen from Shenley Aerodrome during target practice over Aldenham Reservoir. A few days later he was standing in his garden when a stray bullet fatally proved his point.

When we reached the junction of Aldenham Road and Watford Road Dave introduced us to Elm Place which was the country estate of the foremost actor of his day, William Charles Macready. In 1831 he leased the property and hosted many of his famous friends such as Charles Dickens and Robert Browning. He asked Dickens to be godfather to one of his sons who was christened in St Nicholas Church. Macready loved the fresh air and countryside of Elstree, and in his diary he often wrote about the love of getting off the stagecoach into the countryside and returning home to his wife and 5 children. He loved nothing more than country walks with his 2 dogs around Elstree.

Our merry band were nearly at the end of the History Walk, and we walked a short way up Aldenham Road before taking a hidden gap in the hedge to walk back uphill to the Holly Bush pub opposite St Nicholas Church. Dating back to 15th Century, the building is in a poor state of repair, but is Grade-11 listed, so there is some hope for it. Whether it will ever be a pub again is another matter. Another excellent Walk ended on a slightly sad note, but we had covered so much history in 2 hours there was much to think about thanks to Dave as always.

Elstree & Borehamwood Museum

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