

BRADWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER No.18 August 2022

Up-coming events

August is a month without a Tuesday talk. The only event we hope you will support us in is Carnival Day on 30th July. You can do this either by helping to erect and later pack away the tent on Beggar's plot (10.30 and 16.00 respectively). Otherwise you might help selling books etc or supervising the sticking of pins in a map of Scotland. Or simply come and stick your pins in the map!

For those of you who offered to scan (mainly) photographs in the files you took away we are hoping you will be able to bring the scans on a memory stick along to the September meeting of the Society. We will return the stick after we have transferred the files to the BHS laptop. Just to remind you: we hope you can save your scans as jpegs identified by the unique code associated with each photograph eg BHS2/5/1/2

Correction

Joan Clough (of Brough) has pointed out to us that Jesse Eyre (first name misspelled with an intrusive ('i')) has been incorrectly identified in the list of the service men visiting home in July 1916 during WWI. In fact Jesse was the father of Peter (TJP) Eyre now living in Brough. Joan has kindly supplied a correct military history for Jesse Eyre. She writes that her account comes from Jesse's service record that is somewhat difficult to read in places.

Service number: 38505

Date of birth 1880 (in error it should read 1890)

Religion C of E

Joined Army 21.7.16 for the duration of the war.

Entry to Royal Flying Corps 21.7.16 Second Air Mechanic (Rigger)

RAF 1.4.18 (on formation)

Occupation : Joiner, Wheelwright, Overseer and Rate collector.

Family member : Henry Eyre, Hope House, Brough (Father)

Height 5'5 1/2"

Hair Dark Brown

Eyes Blue

Complexion Fresh

Hospital 15.5.18 To England by hospital ship HMHS *Jan Breydel*

Transfer to RAF reserve (Shrewsbury) 8.3.19 as Rigger and Carpenter.

Discharge to Brough 30.4.20

Bradwell men who joined the Royal Navy in World War II

In about the 1980s the late Walter Rowland conducted interviews with three sailors with Bradwell connections who served in the Royal Navy in World II. Stephen Rowland kindly gave these notes to the BHS and they are transcribed here. The three were Noel Henry Fletcher, Ron Wharton and Wilfred Cusworth. Here we reproduce Walter's notes on the Naval career of Noel Fletcher (accounts of the other two named sailors will appear in subsequent Newsletters). Some of Walter's hand writing has proved difficult to read and has been completed where possible from contemporary accounts of events described here.

Noel Henry Fletcher

Was born on 25th July 1923 to parents John and Betty Fletcher. He enlisted in April 1942 (together with Graeme Daniels) both volunteering for the Royal Navy. Their first posting was to one of the 'Stone Frigates' the shore base HMS *Ganges* at Shotley near Ipswich where they trained for 13 weeks. The two parted company then with Noel going to Chatham and Graeme joining HMS *Sheffield* (known as Shiny Sheff because the fittings were of stainless steel rather than brass). Noel went to another 'Stone Frigate' HMS *Balding* 3. In the following 12 months he advanced from Able Seaman to acting Petty Officer (Artisan's Branch). He arrived in Iceland on 12th December 1942 (later to be Iceland's independence day) – everywhere shut up. Were housed in specially built Nissen huts and someone had to stay awake all night to keep the fire alight. They were called out often at 2 to 3 in the morning to load supplies onto Icelandic ships from where they were to go down the fjord to the battleships HMS *Anson* and HMS *Howe* that were protecting convoys in the North Atlantic, including Russia. At this time Iceland was neutral with a few Germans living there and the UK paid for the base rather than just occupying it. But the Americans had nearly all of the facilities. For their spare time they fished (lots of cod) and once played the Russians at football (were told to let them win).

Was back in 1943 to Chatham with a week's leave before being transferred to Glasgow to join HMS *Seraphis* laid down in 1941 she had recently undergone sea trials and was commissioned to join the Russian convoys. Picked a convoy up at Iceland and took it through to Murmansk and on to Archangel. Returned with the convoy after 10 days (loading with wood). It was 20 to 30° (F) below freezing. Seawater froze and men watching the steampipes could only stay for 15 min and wore goggles and waterproofs. Had also to watch a full steam railway engine fitted to the forecastle for heating purposes. Made 12 – 14 trips before returning to Glasgow for a refit. Then went to Durban for a week and on to Sydney, Australia. Returned to Chatham via the Mediterranean for a refit in June 1944. Onboard HMS *Swift* on June 5th 1944 escorting the first lot of (D-Day) troops at 1 or 2 in the morning. Then off Cherbourg shelling – emptied magazines. Picked up wounded soldiers and Norwegian sailors from HNoMS *Svenner* and took them to Plymouth - very calm coming back could see the wake for 20 miles. This contrasted with going out when

the sea was rough. Later HMS *Swift* pulled up a mine with its anchor chain and the explosion sank the ship with many casualties. Later Noel went to Jersey with supplies. On board a corvette also escorted the PLUTO (Pipe Line Under the Ocean) that was on HMS *Conumdrum* across the channel to Cherbourg. Returned to Chatham and did a trade test to become a full petty officer.

In July 1947 Noel married Freda M Goddard.

Sadly the name of Noel's brother John George Leonard Fletcher is one of those inscribed on the Bradwell War memorial having died at Arnhem.