

NEWSLETTER 144

APRIL/MAY 2000

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Notes and News

Planning matters

Applications have been lodged to demolish 9 Lower Park Road (a mid-Victorian stuccoed detached house, one of the very few such houses in Loughton), and 35–39 Church Hill (a double-fronted Edwardian house and a bungalow) and to replace them with flats. Loughton Town Council have objected to both of these applications.

Sainsburys. A planning application was also lodged with EFDC on 1 March for a 28,000 square feet supermarket on the old Chigwell UDC offices site in Old Station Road. The proposed building would be in art-deco style.

Grange Farm, Chigwell. EFDC decided on 29 February to allow redevelopment of the so-called core site of Grange Farm with luxury houses, subject to a legal agreement allowing public access to the rest of the site. The former camping and sports area was opened by Princess Elizabeth in July 1951 and closed on 31 March 1983.

CHRIS POND

Police matters

Loughton was added to the Metropolitan Police District (along with Chigwell and Waltham) in 1840. The Metropolitan Police area was extended outwards in 1965 to cover Romford, Upminster and Hornchurch when those districts (previously policed by the Essex county force) were added to Greater London. But the boundaries were not adjusted inwards, so that the county force policed those areas to be retained in Essex.

With the establishment of a mayor for greater London and the vesting of the Metropolitan Police Authority under him, it became illogical to have areas, such as ours, policed by the Met. They were turned over to the Essex force by virtue of the Greater London Authority Act 1999, with effect from 1 April 2000. A ceremony was held on that day at Loughton Police Station to mark the handover. Chigwell Police Station was to be closed.

CHRIS POND

Blue plaque

Loughton Town Council recently erected a blue heritage plaque at 33 The Avenue, Loughton, the former home of Captain Richard Stannard, VC (1902–1977). Captain Stannard lived in Loughton from approximately 1937 to 1949. There was an official unveiling ceremony on Saturday, 18 March, which was attended by representatives of Loughton Town Council (including our chairman) and the Royal Naval Association and the Royal British Legion. An article about Captain Stannard appears on page 2 of this issue.

A mound of information required

Does any LDHS member know anything about the mound on the Debden Hall site? The mound is situated approximately half-way along the Grosvenor Drive boundary of the land and is now covered in undergrowth. It is shown as an antiquity on most maps, most clearly on the 25" OS old editions. So far as is known it is not a scheduled ancient monument, nor is it documented. The mound is conical in shape, not elongated like a barrow.

CHRIS POND

More on the British School

Further to the report in Newsletter 143 about the Society opposing an application for outline planning permission to demolish the old British School in Smarts Lane and Chris Pond's note on the history of the school, Richard Morris, OBE, has kindly supplied a report of 1870 on the school. Matthew Arnold reported on Loughton British School in May 1870, Log Book of British School, Loughton:

"The present master, an old pupil teacher of mine, came here in July last. Both the attendance and the instruction have during the winter been greatly affected by scarlet fever, but the numbers are now considerable. The order is satisfactory. The cause of illness being removed, the weakness of the instruction, now far too great must be remedied. The arithmetic is defective all through the School, and the spelling in the third and fourth standards. The answering in geography is good and this subject is taught in a way to interest the children. A competent person attends every afternoon to teach the girls needlework. The water is not yet laid on to the offices. The maps want renewing and they should be hung up in the schoolroom. My Lords will look for improvement as the condition of an unreduced grant another year."

Source: *English History from Essex Sources 1750–1900* (Essex Record Office, 1952).

Local Hero – Captain Richard Stannard, VC, DSO, RNVR

Mr Peter Tipler, Chairman of the Loughton Branch of the Royal Naval Association, has kindly contributed the following article on the life of Captain Stannard, a subject he has been researching since 1994:

The Norway Campaign was not one of the successes of the War and the Navy was called in to evacuate troops from several points, among which was Namsos, about 100 miles north of Trondheim, where troops had been landed on 14 April 1940. Amongst the ships sent there were the 15th and 16th Anti-Submarine Striking Forces.

These splendidly named forces were actually composed of four trawlers each, with Royal Naval Reserve officers and crews from the Royal Naval Patrol Service. Their duty was to patrol the fjords for submarines, but slow and lightly armed as they were, they made easy targets for the Stuka dive bombers, who soon made it impossible for them to operate in daylight.

The 15th Anti-Submarine Striking Force, under Commander Sir Geoffrey Congreve, arrived at Namsos at 0200 on 28 April 1940. Lieutenant Richard Been Stannard, RNR, commanded HM Trawler *Arab*. A merchant seaman, he wore the interwoven gold rings of the Royal Naval Reserve on his jacket.

Arab was ordered alongside the cruiser *Carlisle* to ferry stores and equipment from the ship to the shore. The first air raid began at daybreak when *Arab* was cast off from *Carlisle* and later secured alongside a jetty astern of a French ammunition ship *Saumur*. She was still there when another air raid began. A bomb landed on the jetty and set fire to many tons of hand grenades which had been disembarked.

Lieutenant Stannard ran *Arab's* bows against the jetty and held her there by running the engines slow ahead. He sent all but two of his crew to comparative safety aft and then tried for two hours to put out the fire with *Arab's* hoses. He succeeded in saving part of the jetty, which was invaluable in the later evacuation.

Arab spent the night of 28–29 April ferrying a battalion of 850 French troops from shore to ship before facing a long day of air attacks in which 16 near misses damaged *Arab's* rudder and propeller and cracked her main engine castings. Stannard had to find shelter by running *Arab* under the cover of some cliffs. The air attacks continued the next day. Stannard took his own crew and the crew of the damaged trawler *Gaul* ashore and set up an anti-aircraft gun position on the cliffs, where he beat off a succession of dive-bombing attacks. The next morning many of the men, including Stannard, were suffering from frost-bitten feet and Stannard had been wounded by a bullet. However,

when a bomb hit the trawler *Aston Villa* and set her on fire, Stannard went back on board *Arab* and had moved her about 100 yards, just far enough off, before *Aston Villa* blew up.

At last on 2 May, when the Namsos evacuation was almost complete, they were ordered to leave and as Stannard set *Arab* with her damaged engines gingerly going down the fjord, another vessel received a hit from a bomb and caught fire. Stannard took *Arab* alongside and took off her crew. At day break when they had barely cleared the entrance to the fjord a Heinkel 111 bomber appeared on the scene. The pilot signalled 'steer east [back to Namsos] or be sunk'. Stannard said later 'he appeared to be a novice' and he flashed back what he called 'a suitable answer in reply'. Stannard held his fire until the unwary pilot made a pass, banking over them at a range of 800 yards. *Arab* opened fire with every gun and the first burst brought the Heinkel spinning down into the sea. Stannard then brought *Arab* safely home in spite of her damaged engines.

A few weeks later he would be at Dunkirk and again in the thick of the action. In his own words: 'Dunkirk was a picnic compared to the hell of Namsos.'

As his citation of 16 August 1940 said: 'his continuous gallantry in the presence of the enemy was magnificent and his enterprise and resource not only caused losses to the Germans but saved his ship and many lives.'

Arab survived 31 air attacks in five days at Namsos and, in a way, it was appropriate that when Stannard went to Buckingham Palace to receive his Victoria Cross from King George VI on 3 September 1940, the first anniversary of the outbreak of war, the ceremony was switched from the quadrangle to the great hall – because of an air raid!

He was mentioned in dispatches in December 1940 for gallantry in command of *Arab* during an air raid on a convoy he was escorting when the SS *Statira* was bombed. By now he was Lieutenant Commander RNR.

King Haakon awarded him the Norwegian War Cross on 19 October 1942 for his bravery at Namsos Wharf on 28 April 1940.

Stannard was promoted Lieutenant Commander RNR on 29 June 1940 and then commanded HMS *Ramsay*, one of the 50 ex American destroyers, in 1941.

In May 1943 he was back at Buckingham Palace to receive from the Queen the Distinguished Service Order for his part as captain of the destroyer *Vimy* which with *Beverley* sank U18 during a three-day and night running battle in the Atlantic beginning on 4 February 1943.

Stannard went to sea as an apprentice in the Port Line ship *Port Victor* in 1918 and advanced from Fourth to Second Officer from 1922 to 1928. In March 1929 he joined the Orient Line and also became a probationary Sub Lieutenant RNR. Promoted Lieutenant RNR in 1932 and Second Officer in the Orient Line in 1937. After *Arab* and *Vimy* he commanded *Peacock*, *Prince Henry* and *Stanley*. He was promoted Commander RNR on 30 June 1947 and left the Reserve in September, rejoining the Orient Line as Chief Officer and Staff Commander in 1949. He was promoted Captain RNR in May 1952.

About this time the RNR (twisted and knotted) and the RNVR (wavy Navy) became one as the RNVR Permanent Reserve, so Stannard became Captain RNVR not RNR as throughout his wartime career.

He survived a car crash in 1945 and moved to Australia and became Marine Superintendent of the P & O Orient Lines of Australia.

The Royal Naval Patrol Service Museum at Lowestoft was opened by his surviving two daughters with his actual Victoria Cross in their possession. I believe one daughter lives in Australia and the other daughter lives in Surrey.

Richard Been Stannard was the first RNR VC winner of the Second World War. He was born on 21 August 1902 at Blyth, Northumberland, one of three sons of Captain George Davis Stannard, Master Mariner, and Elizabeth Jane Stannard (née Knowles). His father's ship, *Mount Oswald*, was lost with all hands on a voyage from Baltimore in February 1912 and Richard and his brothers went to the Royal Naval Merchant School (in Essex and later in Wokingham, Berkshire) which was founded in 1827 for the orphans of merchant seamen.

In 1928 at West Ham he married Phyllis May Tomkin, the daughter of G P Tomkin, a printer of Leytonstone, Essex. He lived at 33 The Avenue, Loughton, from 1937 till 1949 and at Balmoral Heights, Sydney, New South Wales, where he died on 22 July 1977.

The Royal Naval Patrol Service have a full-length portrait of him in their Museum at Lowestoft and consider him as their own special hero. We in Loughton consider him as our 'Local Hero'.

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Award</i>	<i>Ship</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Investiture</i>
Lieut	VC	HMT <i>Arab</i>	Namsos	3.9.40
Lieut Cdr	MID*	HMT <i>Arab</i>	SS <i>Statira</i> bombed	N/A
Lieut Cdr	Nor War Cross	HMT <i>Arab</i>	Namsos Wharf (28.4.40)	19.10.42
Lieut Cdr	DSO	HMS <i>Vimy</i>	Convoy SC 118	22.6.43
Lieut Cdr	MID	HMS <i>Peacock</i>	Psq Convoy JW 59	N/A

*MID = mentioned in dispatches.

PETER TIPLER (*Chairman RNA Loughton Branch*)

Archaeology

Peter Newton, in the Newsletter of the Theydon Bois and District Rural Preservation Society, reported that visits had been made to the Archaeological Department at County Hall, Chelmsford, and a record made of finds in the vicinity of Theydon Bois:

Somewhere in the area of Loughton Lane and the Green a palaeolithic flint hand axe was found. (The Palaeolithic Period ended about 12000 BC.)

On the site of Birch Hall, when the previous, Victorian, house was there, some bricks were found under the lawn which might have been Roman but no structures were discovered. Current Ordnance Survey maps show the presence of a well in ancient times. It is possible that there may have been a medieval moated house there, perhaps as part of a deserted medieval village. There is mention of the house of a 'John ate Birches' in 1319 and Birch Hall is also referred to in 1542 and 1777.

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