



# WESTENDER

MAY - JUNE 2008

VOLUME 6 NUMBER 5

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## LOCAL LEGENDS (15 )

**Mr R.W.C. FLETCHER**

**1851 - 1928**



Mr Ralph Warneford Cresswell Fletcher was the owner of the 277 acre Hatch Grange Estate, West End, from 1872 – 1928. He was born in Gloucestershire in 1851 and was educated at Eton and Trinity College, Cambridge. Prior to his marriage he was the Captain of the 8<sup>th</sup> Hampshire Rifle Volunteer Corps. Being the sole heir to his father's estate, the "Manor of Hatch Grange" was acquired for him in his youth.

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**WEST END  
PARISH  
COUNCIL**



Continued from front page



ABOVE : Hatch Grange House

LEFT: Mrs Frances Fletcher (wife of Ralph Warneford Cresswell Fletcher)

Upon his marriage in London to Frances Mara Lovekin in 1872, the couple moved into Hatch Grange house, previously named Grange Farm and became part of the local gentry.

His estate consisted of 277 acres of mainly arable and pasture land, extending from the High Street in the south, Chapel Road then to Quob Lane in the east and Allington Lane comprising the northern and western boundaries. The 200 plus acres of farmland was managed by a tenant farmer occupying Hatch Farm (now Larch Close). This area is largely covered by detached houses today, except for Round Hill which is still grazed.

Mr and Mrs Fletcher soon created attractive gardens, shrubberies and rockeries around their house which looked out over the remaining acres of undulating parkland which we know as present day Hatch Grange. Beech, oak and Corsican Pine trees were planted nearby and the magnificent avenue of lime trees was created about 1874. This avenue with its entrance at Hatch Lodge on the High Street, provided an impressive drive for the horse-drawn carriages which arrived for social gatherings in Victorian times. Fortunately most of these trees still exist.

The coat-of-arms for the Fletcher family was created for them in 1900 and includes two red squirrels holding an arrow aloft, above the inscription '*Droit comme une fleche*', (as straight as an arrow) relating to the true meaning of Fletcher which was "arrow maker". Red squirrels used to abound on Hatch Grange, as elsewhere in West End, before the Second World War. The red squirrel has since reappeared but only symbolically atop the clock and cupola tower on the roof of the Parish Centre.

Mr Fletcher enjoyed boating, hunting and shooting with music and reading providing quieter past-times. He commanded the Botley (military) Volunteers for 12 years, served as JP and a church-warden at St. James' Church, helping to raise funds for the new church built in 1890. He was also a member of the Parish Council and was its Chairman in 1901-2 and 1905-10.

They raised two daughters, Esme and Hilda, who were well known locally. Mrs Fletcher was in command of the Hants 138 Red Cross (South Stoneham) Division and held regular Red Cross classes for local girls in the dining room of Hatch Grange house.

Mr and Mrs Fletcher lived on and ran the Hatch Grange estate for 56 years until their deaths in 1928. They were both buried in the family plot, just left off the main path into the Old Burial Ground, off the High Street. Their deaths led to the gradual break-up of the estate, but fortunately over 30 acres remain today as a public open space owned by the West End Parish Council. The jewel in West End's crown.

NB. Further information can be gleaned from the book '*Hatch Grange – a stroll back in Time*' (£5.00 available from the museum or from the author Pauline Berry)



# THE APRIL MEETING

A Review by Stan Waight



SOME OF THE PICTURES FROM OUR ARCHIVE SHOWN  
AT THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

TOP LEFT: 1931 WINNER SUPERMARINE SCHNEIDER TROPHY  
PLANE S1595 PHOTOGRAPHED AT CALSHOT

TOP RIGHT: HIGH STREET AND THE 'BLACKSMITHS ARMS' PUB  
c.1900

BOTTOM RIGHT: 'JUBILEE LODGE ODDFELLOWS' OUTSIDE THE  
NEW INN c.1930



The Annual General Meeting had come round again, and the first part of the evening was devoted to reports and elections. Neville, Peter and Nigel all reported a good year for the Society, its finances and the museum respectively, and all the members of the Committee were thanked for their efforts. The Committee was re-elected *en bloc*; except, that is, for the Secretaryship, which Lin agreed to take over from Pauline now that retirement was in the offing.

The attendance at AGMs is not normally very high, but this time there were nearly 40 of us. Perhaps the promise of pictures from the archive had something to do with it, and there was no disappointment. Nigel laid on a series of mainly old, mainly black-and-white photos and spoke a little about each of them. Even if I am not a native of West End, I thought that they were quite stunning,. Some were unique, particularly the private photos of the Schneider Trophy planes at Calshot - I can vaguely remember being taken down to the seafront at East Cowes to see the last race of the series in 1932 (or do I just remember being told that I had been taken down?).

Nigel is to be congratulated, not just for such a variety of fine pictures, but for the effort he has taken to acquire them.

We have become accustomed to enjoyable and thought-provoking meetings, and this was just one such event even if it was the A.G.M!

**Don't forget .... WEST END CARNIVAL 21st June 2008**  
**Parade starts at 1.00pm followed by a traditional Fete on**  
**Hatch Grange .... a good day out for all the family!**



## AN OLD CRIME SCENE

By Pauline Berry



**LEFT:**

**The victim Miss  
Frances Pressley**

**RIGHT:**

**George McDonald  
Williams**

*Pictures from the  
Daily Echo  
Thursday  
21st February 2008*



Following the Daily Echo's revival of old crimes in the Southampton area, there came to light recently a story to stir the memory of some of our members. For it was on a cold day, December 6<sup>th</sup> 1954, that an unpleasant murder occurred in the triangular area of Woodland between Moorhill Road and Thornhill Park Road. Little remains of these woods near the Thornhill roundabout which have long since been replaced by housing.

The victim was an elderly lady, Miss Frances Pressley, who had lived with the Bennett family at Moorhill Farm near the A27, for many years. This little lady, nicknamed 'Sis', left her home and made her weekly trip along this wintry path cutting through the woods to Thornhill Park Post Office. Sadly, someone lurking in the bushes, attacked her and left her for dead. Following her discovery, she died a few days later, from head injuries, in hospital.

There appeared to be no motive for her killing until George McDonald Williams suddenly presented himself at the Civic Centre Police Station and confessed to the murder. He said he had been drunk and intended to rob Miss Pressley but changed his mind. Williams, who had a history of prison terms in Broadmoor and Parkhurst, had apparently come to Southampton to find work only 3 days earlier. Williams was duly charged with murder, since he was deemed sane, but he later retracted his confession. He said he was prepared to hang but not to return to Broadmoor; but he knew details of the case and was able to lead the detectives to the exact spot where the crime had been committed. The defence of insanity was not raised then, and at the Winchester Court, Williams was found guilty by the jury. His appeal against his conviction was rejected but he did not hang which was the penalty at that time. He cheated the hangman because the Home Office finally decided that he was, in fact, insane and was to return to Broadmoor where he had been a patient between 1949 and 1950.

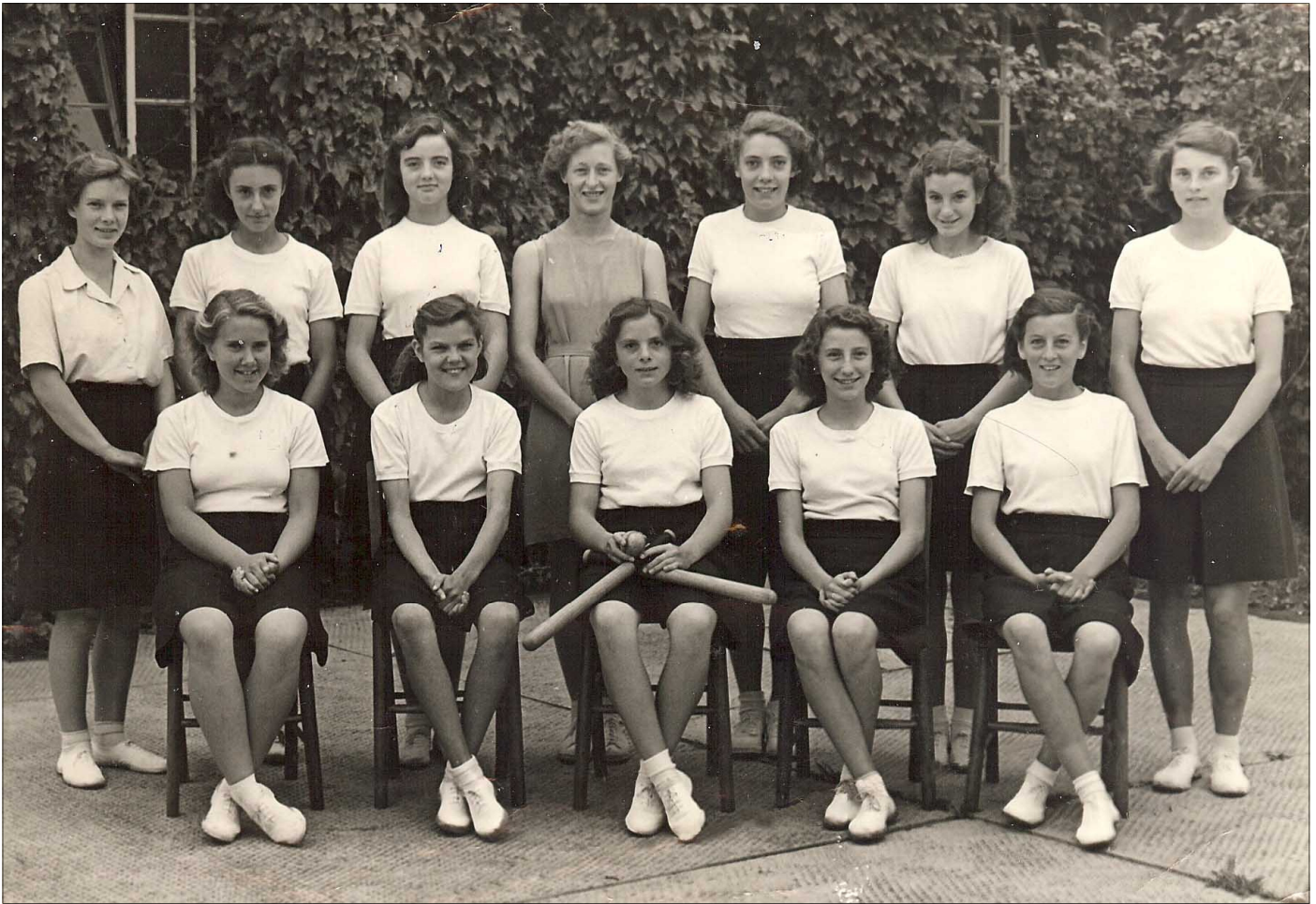
So George Williams, described in court as a man of 'very peculiar mentality' must have been devastated by this decision. The judge, Mr Justice Hallett, stated that he had never encountered such a case, during his many years of experience, where the prisoner had confessed and denied his guilt so many times.

**Don't forget ... WEST END CARNIVAL 21st June 2008  
for more information telephone 023 8047 1886**



## SCHOOL FRIENDS MEET AFTER 58 YEARS

As recounted by Mary Hallifax (nee Blake)



**HEDGE END COUNTY SECONDARY SCHOOL ROUNDERS TEAM 1950**

**T**wo photographs taken 58 years apart with a story to tell. The first picture (above) is of the Hedge End Secondary School Rounders team 1950. The second picture (next page) is of Pat Croft (nee Sargeant) and Mary Hallifax (nee Blake).

In the Rounders team Mary Hallifax is second from the left and Pat Croft is third from the right. Their story began in 1940, when they both started school at West End Infants, later called St. James' School and the current building known as the Hildene Community Centre. They were both in Mrs Tebbs class; this teacher lived in Telegraph Road, West End. They became firm friends and at the age of eleven both moved on to Hedge End Secondary School which was later to become Shamblehurst Junior School when the Wildern School was built next door. Their Headmaster was Mr H. Simmonds who is remembered by many older folk from West End. The school was entered in the Southampton Rounders League and in their last year at school in 1950, they were both selected for the team. On leaving school they went their separate ways and not to see each other again for 58 years.

In 2007, the Southern Daily Echo had a series entitled "Where are they now". Mary sent a photograph of the rounders team dated 1950 into the paper which resulted in many letters from those girls who featured in the picture. These were passed on to Mary by the "Echo" which meant she was able to contact them by letter and telephone. In particular, her friend Pat Croft, to whom she talked at some length recalling not only school days but how their lives had mapped out over the years.

In February of 2008, Mary had a call from her friend Pat to say she intended to visit her sister Hazel who lives in West End and could they both come for coffee one morning. It was on a Monday morning at Mary's house they met and spent a very happy time going over old school photographs and the many

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memories of the time together as young girls. Pat now lives in Barnstaple, Devon, after many years travelling the world with her husband, who was in the RAF. She used to live in Kootenay Avenue, Thornhill when at school. Mary lived in Chapel Road, West End in what is now a day nursery.



**FEBRUARY 2008 MEETING OF SCHOOL FRIENDS AFTER 58 YEARS.**

**Mary Hallifax (nee Blake) and Pat Croft (nee Sargeant)**

## **CHRISTMAS (probably about 1958)**

**By Janice Uphill (nee Stickland)**



**I**n the 1950's West End was what I considered to be a proper village; a post office, a pub (or two), a school and several small shops, one of which was Fray's on the corner of Upper New Road and the High Street.

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On the run up to Christmas every year the children of the village would queue up to see Father Christmas at Frays. He was nestled on a drawing room chair, next to a small decorated (real) Christmas tree at the end of an aisle filled with the usual mundane items of tinned meat and vegetables, dog food, Vesta matches and Brillo pads to mention just a few.

The photograph (on page opposite) shows my younger sister Sarah, my brother Michael and myself, all mesmerised by one of the village stalwarts who happily donned the red suit and white beard at that very special time of year for us children.

I don't really remember the present, although clearly we had one; the overriding memory was of the visit itself—something that no amount of money could buy!

Frays was also our stop on the way home from school, if we were very lucky, to buy a penny chew. How many children would be happy with that these days.

I have very fond memories of growing up in West End, first in the small terrace of houses (4, High Street) that has now been replaced by Netto's and then at 12 Orchards Way where I lived until I got married and left for the dizzy heights of Botley.

## **LOOKING BACK ..... Extracts from old copies of West End News**

Extract from "West End News" of 1983....

### THE MANOR OF HATCH

I am greatly indebted to Mrs Reuben Fray and her daughter-in-law, Mrs D. Fray, for the loan of some old Deeds which the late Mr R. Fray appears to have acquired, probably when the Gater family sold Black House. Some of them were very faded and difficult to read but I have managed to pick out quite a lot of past history of Hatch, Allington and Townhill.

The Manor of Hatch, as it was called in 1724, was owned by Edwin or Edmund Dummer, who lived at Swaythling. The tenant of Hatch Farm was one Jeremiah Outon (Owton) who must have passed on the tenancy to his son, as it is also recorded that when Nathaniel Middleton died and the Manors of Townhill, Hatch and Allington were sold, John Owton was renting Hatch Farm, with an acreage of 198 acres, 2 rods, 22 perches.

During the 18th century £5 of the income from Hatch had to be used annually towards the upkeep of a Schoolmaster but it is not mentioned where or to whom.

Later, when Mr Caleb Gater bought the Manor of Hatch, 40 shillings of its income had to be donated to the welfare of South Stoneham's poor.

The Manor of Hatch was the land within the boundaries of Chapel Road, Quob Lane, Allington Lane junction with Quob, along to the junction of Swaythling Road and up through the High Street where it meets Chapel Road. Included was Hatch Farm, The Coppice and Lands of Bardensland (Barnsland). It is interesting to note that the coppice, which measured 8 acres, must be what we knew as Dummer's Copse and certain lands, buildings and coppices at Shamblehurst sometimes known as Shamble Street, which must have been an old name for Shamblehurst Lane.

These must have been what is now Berrywood Farm. Over the doorway of the farmhouse is a stone tablet with the initials "**R.W.F. 1903**", indicating that Richard (*sic*) (Ralph) Warneford Fletcher had owned and built the house during his ownership of the Manor.

C.W. Sillence

**Why not come to the CARNIVAL on 21st June 2008 and visit our museum at the same time - open 10am to 4pm**

# 500 YEARS OF PORTSMOUTH ROYAL DOCKYARD

A review by Nigel Wood



Our May speaker was none other than Madeleine Selby, who gave us “500 Years of Portsmouth Royal Dockyard”; almost her first words summed up the subject, “*When Britain ruled the waves it was from Portsmouth Dockyard.....*”

Household names of ships such as Mary Rose, Victory and The Warrior all came from Portsmouth and the Royal Navy Museum apparently holds the largest collection of historic monuments in the UK.

Throughout the talk, there were a string of superlatives associated with Portsmouth Dockyard, being the “first” in the field for many things. The main period of growth for the Royal Dockyard occurred between 1750 and 1832. It was deemed to be the best natural anchorage on the South Coast, being used on several occasion’s as an embarkation point for expeditions to Europe.

Portsmouth received its first royal charter from Richard the Lionheart in 1194, at a time when we were a dual kingdom – the majority of present day France belonging to the English Crown. However, when King John succeeded the Throne we managed to lose most of our French possessions and in 1212 the Dockyard was walled in for the first time as a form of protection against attack.

During the 100 Years War with France (1337 – 1453) that followed, Portsmouth saw a revival of its fortunes, and extra defences etc.. were put in place.

In 1495 during the reign of King Henry VII, Portsmouth received the worlds first dry dock, previously ships requiring repair were “careened”, tilted over to one side and that side repaired followed by the same procedure for the other side. The dock was 200 ft long by 65 ft wide by 35 ft deep, constructed with wooden sides it was reinforced with stone. Number 1 Dry Dock is situated close to the site of HMS Victory today.

The Mary Rose was built at Portsmouth between 1509-1510 and Sir Walter Raleigh left Portsmouth on many of his expeditions. The Dutch Wars of 1652-4 and 1665-7 provided much work for Portsmouth Dockyard and surprisingly it was a Dutchman who designed many of the new defences built at this time. The work was mostly carried out by Dutch prisoners of war. In 1665 the Mast Pond was built, the timber for masts being floated in via a canal. This canal was lined unusually not with stone but with British elm

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timber. We had an interesting mention about the history of some of the small boats that are on display in the pond today.

The term “Royal Navy” was in general use from about 1700, and the buildings that sprang up in the dockyard until the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century were mainly constructed of timber. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century Portsmouth Royal Navy Dockyard was the greatest industrial complex in the world.

1698 saw the Great Ship Basin constructed with various dry docks, Edward Dummer, Surveyor to the Navy Board designed the first stepped stone dry dock known as Number 5 Dry Dock. The first ship to use this dry dock was HMS Britannia. During the later 18<sup>th</sup> century brick built buildings gradually replaced the original timber ones. Three Great Storehouses were built between 1760 and 1790 to house stores consisting of rigging, blocks, rope, nails, pitch, whale oil and many other items - Recycled ships’ timbers were used for much of the construction of the floors and roofs.

The clock tower was badly damaged during the Blitz in World War 2 but was replaced later. The Great Rope House was set on fire in 1776 by Jack the Painter, who was an ardent supporter of the American Colonies who we were at war with; he was caught and hanged outside today’s Victory Gate. Madeleine then went on to explain the British system of rating warships from 100 gun Ship of the Line down through 74 gun two deckers etc..

Admiralty House was built in 1876 as the Dockyard Commissioners residence, and surprisingly it had the first flush lavatory in the country installed. This was just one of the many “firsts” associated with Portsmouth Dockyard. St. Annes Church was built in 1787 as the Dockyard Church and is still in use today. The Naval Academy built in 1732, which had accommodation for 40 cadets was nearly lost during the Blitz in 1941 but was later rebuilt, it hosted many cadets who later became famous including Jane Austen’s brother. The site contained many buildings including a Fire Station, Mortuary, Shops etc.. a town within a town! By 1800 Portsmouth Dockyard was the largest employer in Great Britain.

The Napoleonic Wars saw the first steam engine installed in 1799. Block Mills followed in 1803 powered by steam, manufacturing machine made blocks of hitherto unknown uniformity than when made by hand. The mills continued in use for over 100 years. HMS Victory, the world’s oldest continuously commissioned warship was completed at Chatham and based at Portsmouth in 1759 (completed in 7 years), she was not immediately required for active service and so went into “ordinary” (mothballed) until 1778 when she received her first commission and of course became Admiral Nelson’s flagship at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805 and in so doing gained immortal fame.

In 1843 the Dockyard expanded to service the new Steam warships, Number 2 Steam Basin was built and one of the world’s largest steam forges installed, opened in 1848 by Queen Victoria.

In 1860 in answer to the perceived threat posed by France and her new iron clad steam warship “La Gloire”, HMS Warrior was constructed in a mere 18 months as Great Britain’s answer and is now at Portsmouth as a floating museum, fully restored. In 1864 the Admiralty reclaimed land at Portsea Common, using convict labour. HMS Inflexible the first warship to use electric lighting and the largest warship afloat at the time was launched in 1876. HMS Dreadnought was built at Portsmouth in 1906, she was the first turbine driven warship and took just 366 days to build. The arms race started with Germany culminating in World War One, and for the first time large numbers of women were taken on to replace the men who were needed in the services. They were known as “Triangle Girls” due to the triangular “On War Service” badges they wore.

World War 2 saw a new hazard, aerial bombing, and both Portsmouth and the Dockyard were major targets for the German Luftwaffe consequently badly damaged, the memorial window in St. Anne’s Dockyard Church illustrates some of the devastation caused. 1944 saw Portsmouth Dockyard bursting at the seams with shipping for the Invasion of Europe and it was here that X-Craft (midget submarines) left to act as beacons just off the invasion beaches.

On 1<sup>st</sup> November 1984 Portsmouth Royal Navy Dockyard was renamed and civilianised – an “obituary” appeared in a local newspaper! It is now mostly a Naval Heritage site of national importance. The talk was very comprehensive and contained some excellent slides and as usual was executed superbly by Madeleine. The audience of some 45 members and guests showed their appreciation and many of the questions that followed indicated this. Well done Madeleine we look forward to your next offering!

## OBITUARIES

### JOYCE PITTER

**1920 - 2008**

It was with great sadness that we learned of the death of Joyce Pitter, widow of the late Ken Pitter, a prominent West Ender (see Westender for September—October 2005).

Joyce passed away on 12th May 2008 aged 88 years. During her life she had played a prominent part in local life and politics and became Mayor of Southampton in 1977, the same year that she officially opened the Itchen Bridge. She married Ken at Bitterne Church on 11th May 1940.

Our sincere condolences go out to her family and friends on their sad loss.

### BETTY MOODY

**1916 - 2008**

As this edition of Westender goes to press, we have learnt that Betty Moody (nee Goodwin) wife of our late President Bob Moody passed away in the early hours of Sunday 25th May 2008. Betty for many years along with her husband Bob were members of WELHS, and after Bob's death in 2004 Betty continued to attend our meetings and was to be seen out and about in the village until fairly recently due to illness, she will be sadly missed. Our sincere condolences go out to her family on their sad loss.

### On this day (4th. June) in.....

- 1703** Samuel Pepys was buried at St. Olave's in London's Hart Street.
- 1798** Giovanni Casanova, Italian adventurer, lover and romancer, died at his castle of Dux in Bohemia.
- 1805** The first 'Trooping of the Colour' took place, at Horse Guards Parade in London.
- 1910** Christopher Cockerell, British engineer and inventor of the amphibious Hovercraft, born at Cambridge.
- 1913** The 'Suffragette' Derby took place, during which Emily Davidson was trampled to death when she threw herself in front of the King's horse 'Anmer' at Tattenham Corner.
- 1940** The evacuation of allied forces from Dunkirk and St. Valery was completed - having started on 27th May.
- 1944** Allied forces entered and liberated the city of Rome.
- 1958** The first Duke of Edinburgh Awards were presented, at Buckingham Palace.

## THE NEXT MEETINGS ARE ....

**July 2**

**THE 'THETIS' WIDOWS**

*John Avery*

**August 6**

**GUIDED VISIT TO TOWNHILL PARK HOUSE GARDENS**

*Rosaleen Wilkinson*

**(Further details nearer the time)**

**September 3**

**SHIPS OF THE SKY - The Flying Boats of Southampton**

*Colin van Geffen*