

Horley Local History Society NEWS

March 2010

Meetings Calendar

The Society meets at Strawson Hall, 156 Albert Road, Horley, Surrey, at 7:30pm for 8:00 unless stated below.

Monday 26 April 2010 “A Wartime Diary” by Margaret Nicolle

Monday 24 May 2010 “The Bluebell Railway 50th Anniversary” by Roger Price

Monday 28 June 2010 “Working in Branches of Boots the Chemist in the 1950s” by Marion Simpson

Monday 26 July A walk, details TBA

The Passing of a family name in Horley

Brian Bunkell died on 9 February 2010 the son of Robert (Bob) Bunkell who arrived from Norwich in Norfolk in 1930 with his wife Gladys and set up his well remembered fishmonger's shop in Victoria Road (where “Tulsi” is today).

Bob quickly became not only a well known and respected tradesman in the then village of Horley, but also a character of some standing. His short and rotund figure could always be seen standing outside of his open-fronted shop in all weathers, sometimes wearing his dark homburg hat. In WW2 he was a leading member in the Home Guard and was the cook when out on exercises. The often told tale of his miss-demeanour one night is related in “Horley in Wartime” (p 63) that consequently was looked on with good humour after many of the Company regained their good health.



Bob outside of his shop in the 1950s (Courtesy Richard Cooper)

Daughter Bette was born in 1930 and Brian 2 years later with his intense interest in animals and an ambition to become a vet.

The photo (Courtesy of Mike Hall) below is of Brian at the early age of 4½ yrs dressed as a



French onion seller at the celebrations in Horley of the Coronation of King George VI in May 1937.

Brian initially gained a first class certificate in agriculture and spent 2 years undertaking practical farming and a year with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, at Ipswich. At 23 he joined the Royal Army Veterinary Corps for 3 years that included animal research and a dog handling course and it was only after this did he join the family business in the shop.

This was in the late 1950s and during the next 20 years the business became extremely well known not only in Horley but for many miles around. Their joint knowledge of fish recipes and their delectable fish platters, plus the attraction of such a tremendous variety of fresh fish, drew customers from afar and the

name of Bunkells became synonymous with Horley itself. He was ably assisted by his Horley born wife, Evelyn, known by all as Bunty, who took the pennies.

He was always so keen to promote his profession, giving talks to schools and women's organisations on how to prepare and cook fish. He became an active member of the National Federation of Fishmongers, serving as Vice-President, then President. After the shop was forced to close in 1979 he spent a spell in the industry on the east coast before returning south to Claygate to help a family set up a brand new fishmonger's shop. His final professional accolade was to be appointed a Trustee of the Billingsgate Seafood Training School.



Horley Youth Cricket Team

Brian is in the front row the second seated from the right
(Courtesy of Jill Fenn)

Brian was full of fun and extremely quick witted. Always willing to jest with customers, especially the ladies. He was a keen sportsman, cricket and football being his interests from an early age, the former led him to join the Horley Club and he started Horley United Football Club, became its chairman, then its President. He became a founder member of Horley Round Table and later also became its chairman, as he did as a member of the Old Peoples Welfare. He was said to be the organiser of the very first post-war carnival in the Horley.

His association with Horley community groups knew no bounds; he was an active supporter of Doug Anderson's Swimming Pool Association as well as serving as a Trustee of the Smith's Charity in Horley.

In his later life he threw himself into supporting a Cancer Help Centre and "threw" is the right word. He acted, sang in the choir and did every job that was asked of him.

His sister Bette also served Horley community for some 50 years of her life as she expended virtually all her energy as a leading member of the Archway Theatre



Left Bette Bunkell

She became a founder member of the Bart's Players and went on to join Horley Central Players and contributed in founding the remarkable "Surrey Strollers" who were pioneers in taking live theatre on several occasions to the Isle of Mull.

Although she did initially tread the boards she found her forte was more suited to back-stage work and prompting. She never sought the limelight, but quietly ensured that productions ran smoothly and efficiently.

While the name of "Bunkell" does still live on, but sadly not in Horley, it has however now passed into the history of the town. This is not only because it became associated with one of the finest local outlets where fish could be purchased and help gained in its preparation etc, but also because both father and son became such notable and likable characters themselves who added so much to the community of Horley. Bette also contributed to the name of Bunkell in her own quiet way and so the family name should and will be long remembered in the town.

(Much of the above information concerning Brian was compiled by Peter Longhurst)

(Brian Buss.)

This newsletter is published by the Horley Local History Society.

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