

SANDBACH NEWS 2023

Written by Stewart Green for Newspaper's / articles

9 January 2023

NEW WAR MEMORIAL TO SUNKEN SHIP



As the new year starts Sandbach has a new official War Memorial and tribute to the 93 men who lost their lives on the H.M.S. Vimiera which was adopted by the town during Warship Week in 1941 and sank on the 9 January 1942 when it hit a mine in the Thames Estuary which had been placed there by German Battleships about a month before.

On the 9th January 2023, in the Foyer of the Town Hall in Sandbach the Mayor Katheryn Flavell unveiled a memorial to the men of H.M.S. Vimiera who died when the ship sank. Their names have been recorded on a memorial board next to the Shield / Plaque of the ship that had been presented to the town after Sandbach adopted HMS Vimiera in 1941. The memorial also has a replica ships bell as the original ships bell went missing a few years ago.

Attending the ceremony 81 years to the day after the HMS Vimiera struck a mine and sank were Steve Hyland (Caretaker at the Town Hall who put together the tribute and restored the shield), Lt Antonio Valente RN (Royal Navy representative from Regional Command). David and William Adderley whose relative Norman A Tudor (Able Seaman) had died in the sinking. Norman was the brother of David's mother who died just before the Covid outbreak and whose ashes David hoped to spread over the spot in the Thames Estuary where the Vimiera lays at the bottom of the sea in two pieces. Talking to me at the ceremony David said, "Had his mother been with them she would have been very proud of the tribute... it was a pity she didn't live long enough to see the memorial".

Ex Royal Navy personnel, representatives from the Royal British Legion (Sandbach Branch) and Sandbach History Society also came to see the unveiling.

LIST OF THOSE WHO DIED ON HMS VIMIERA

Albert W Aldridge (Engine Room Artificer)
Andrew Anderson (Electrical Artificer)
Frederick Ashby (Able Seaman)
Albert R.W. Ashworth (Able Seaman)
James W B Baker (Ordinary Seaman)
Thomas G Bales (Stoker / Petty Officer)
James Bass (Able Seaman)
Herbert G Benjamin (Supply Petty Officer)
Kenneth C Bird (Ordinary Seaman)

Robert William Briggs B.E.M. (Able Seaman)
Archibald Sinclair Brown (Able Seaman) RNVR
Henry "Harry" Bernard Burch (Ordinary Seaman)
Arthur A.W. Cannon (Chief Petty Officer)
John Carroll (Ordinary Seaman)
Thomas L Carruthers (Ordinary Coder)
David S Chalmers (Able Seaman)
Francis Clark (Able Seaman) RNVR
Robert G.H. Clark (Ty / Acting Petty Officer)
Leonard Curtis (Leading Seaman)
Henry G Dean D.S.M. (Chief Petty Officer)
James Dyball (Able Seaman) RNVR
Albert E.G. Dye (Stoker)
Frederick Edelston (Able Seaman) RNVR
William S Elliott (Able Seaman) RNVR
James Farrell (Able Seaman) RNVR
William H Fasey (Able Seaman)
Matthew E Fearon (Ordnance Artificer) RNVR
James N Fielding (Stoker)
William L Forbes (Ordinary Seaman)
Stephen H Fowler (Leading Telegraphist)
Edward W French (Canteen Manager with the NAAFI)
John D Gibbons (Signalman)
Malcolm G Hamilton (Ordinary Seaman)
Harry Hand (Ty / Act / Leading Stoker)
Reginald J Harris (Ty / Leading Cook)
Frank Hawes (Ordinary Seaman)
George William Hillson (Engine Room Artificer)
William H Hodgson (Engine Room Artificer)
James E Hurley (Able Seaman)
George V Hutchings (Signalman)
Alfred J Inglis (Ordinary Seaman)
William J Ingram (Stoker)
Eric L Ireland (Able Seaman)
James D.C. Johnston (Able Seaman) RNVR
William Kelly (Stoker)
Frank E Kemp (Able Seaman)
John T Kidson (Sick Berth Attendant)
John T Lee (Able Seaman)
Leonard Lemon (Ordinary Seaman)
William J Littlewood (Stoker)
Matthew Lord (Ordinary Seaman)
Francis McAnna (Act / Leading Signalman)
Andrew McCormack (Able Seaman) RNVR
Duncan A McDougall (Able Seaman) RNVR
William Miller (Able Seaman) RNVR
Earton F Mills (Able Seaman)
Charles J Milway (Able Seaman)
John H Moffatt (Able Seaman) RNVR
Ronald D. T. Morris (Stoker)
Francis V Moses (Ordinary Telegraphist)
Joseph Nugent (Able Seaman) RNVR
Arthur O'Connell (Telegraphist)
Ralph W.E. Ord (Ty / Act / Petty Officer)
Leslie W.H. Reading (Stoker)
James Ritchie (Ty / Act / Leading Seaman)
Samuel R Rowlandson (Able Seaman)
John H Ruchley (Able Seaman)
Henry A.G. Ruffell (Signalman)
Thomas D.C. Shields (Able Seaman) RNVR

Robert I Shipp DSM (Chief Petty Officer Stoker (Pens))
 Frank Smith (Able Seaman)
 Lewis E.J. Smith (Ty / Act / Leading Seaman)
 John S Steven (Telegraphist)
 Reginald E Stoner (Ty / Act / Petty Officer)
 Thomas Swinton (Stoker)
 Robert "Roy" M Thomas (Ordinary Seaman)
 Harry H Tompson (Shipwright)
 Owen E Thomson (Able Seaman) RNVR
 John W Tomkin (Ty / Petty Officer Cook)
 Gerald F Treen (Ordinary Seaman)
 Norman A Tudor (Able Seaman)
 Thomas Watkins (Able Seaman)
 David Watson (Stoker)
 Joseph A Waugh (Ordinary Seaman)
 Stanley A Webster (Ordinary Seaman)
 Sydney Whitney (Ty / Act / Leading Seaman)
 Charles R Wilkinson (Stoker)
 Archie W.G. Wilson (Leading Stoker)
 Charles E Winsley (Stoker Petty Officer)

FOUR SAILORS DIED AFTER THE SINKING FROM THEIR WOUNDS OR BODIES FOUND

Able Seaman John Husband RNVR (Also known as Jack)
 Able Seaman John Jamison RNVR (Died 10 Jan 1942)
 Midshipman David Lacy RNR
 Leading Seaman Frederick G Simpson

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20 January 2023

SAD LOSS TO THE BRASS BAND COMMUNITY AND SANDBACH



It is with great sadness that I report the passing of Nigel Birch on the 20 January 2023. He was according to the 4 Bars Website (Brass Band Website) "inspirational" to the numerous players who have passed through his hands while in charge of the Lions Brass Bands in Sandbach for over 35 years. At a special concert on the 5 July 2015 to celebrate the bands anniversary many past members came along to join the current band with players

from Fodens, Roberts Bakery Band Black Dyke, Grimethorpe and with many other players happy to return to the concert stage with Nigel to join his celebration.

The Lions Youth Band started in 1989 as the Crewe and District Youth Band and in 1989 it became the Lions Youth Brass Band after the Congleton Lions started to sponsor the players. In 1990 Nigel Birch started conducting the band.

Over the years the band has recorded a number of LP's, CD's and Cassettes with their first being made on the 5 October 1990 at the Clock House at Keel University by a company based at the time in Zan Drive in Wheelock. The recording was of Mary's Boy Child and included singers from local schools and organisations.

After many successes in the completion world in 1994 the band became the National Youth Champions of Great Britain at Salford on the 19 February but it was not without incident as the coach that was supposed to turn up to take them to the competition failed to arrive and after a quick phone call, Coppenhalls Coaches from Bradwall Road came their rescue getting the band to the competition with only 20 minutes to spare before their performance.

In 1995 Nigel left the band to devote more time to a new family with wife Helen and daughters Charlotte and Frankie.

In 2001 he rejoined the band after his break to conduct the band at their rehearsal room at Ruskin High School in Crewe, with the band showing off a new set of uniforms at a concert in Sandbach High School on the 28 September 2001.

Sandbach High School was a familiar venue to Nigel as he had been to school there in the 1970's when it was called Sandbach Secondary School and like every brass musician at the school he joined the Brass Band which included myself. It was always going to be something Nigel would continue to do as his brother Kevin and sister Sandra were also a major part of the music department's output during this period with solo's during assembly and concert appearances. Still to today I remember sitting a couple of seats down from Nigel as he rose quickly through the band to first cornet.

His influence on the Lions Youth Band goes further than just conducting as they have become part of the Community of Sandbach with an annual concert organised by the local Rotary Club and from 1990 the band has been involved with the annual Remembrance Day service first playing in the church for the hymns and then later being asked to play on the Market Square for 30 minutes before the procession arrived with the Robert's Bakery Band and a dash to the church to play the hymns.

Under Nigel's direction the band have performed at concerts with Sandbach Voices, had guest artists from Foden's Band and played in the Sandbach Transport festival in 2007 and at a Christmas Concert at St Mary's in Nantwich in 2010 which was recorded for Hospital Radio Leighton.

The band has also played an annual Christmas concert at Sandbach School which included all three of the bands with member of different age groups in a fun evening's entertainment.

The band also split into small groups to entertain shoppers at Waitrose on the Saturday and Sunday before Christmas and didn't stop for Covid with You Tube videos replacing live performances and between shutdowns the band played out in the cold to brighten up the season not only in Sandbach but also Holmes Chapel, Middlewich and other venues.

In 2004 Nigel was awarded the Citizen of the Year award by Sandbach Rotary Club for his work with the band and young players in general encouraging them to enjoy music.

In 2020 Nigel was given a Brass Band Special Award for his services to the youth band world an accolade he richly deserved.

In July 2022 Nigel took the band to Llandudno in Wales for a concert this was to be one of his last performances in front of the band as in October 2022 Ian Raisbeck from Foden's Band took over as conductor from Nigel Birch who was "taking a break from the band due to illness". From the Facebook page you can still see Nigel taking an interest in the band, which now has his daughter Charlotte as Chairman of the Committee.

Many tributes have poured in since the announcement of Nigel's death from past members, brass bands and friends who have lost this young influencer in the brass band world.

On the 23 January 2023 at Sandbach School the family invited past and present members of the Lions Youth Band to join them in a celebration of Nigel's life by playing music together and to remember a remarkable "unsung hero" of the brass band world.

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26 January 2023

MAJOR INCIDENT ON M6



At about 9.30pm on Thursday the 26 January 2023 Sandbach Fire Brigade headed out to the M6 Motorway to attend a crash between two HGV Vehicles with it looks like one hitting the back of another which then hit the central reservation. The vehicle behind was a canvas sided articulated vehicle which was flattened in the crash. Both drivers were able to get out the vehicles.

According to the official website two appliances attended one from Winsford and one from Holmes Chapel but according to pictures taken at the time there were at least seven appliances on the scene with two coming from the Crewe junction and the Sandbach appliance which was seen heading towards the crash.

The crash took place just before the exit from the service station on the northbound side of the motorway. This area is part of the Smart Motorway network and brings into doubt if it is a safe way of using the motorways as it is supposed to close off one of the lanes to let Fire and Ambulance vehicles access to incidents but instead two appliances from the south of the region were unable to get to the scene without getting stuck as it was blocked off by vehicles with only a small gap being produced by some cars moving onto the small strip of grass by the barrier.

Very few police were also in attendance allowing the vehicles late at night to eventually build up towards Junction16. Surely this should have been blocked off and vehicles diverted past the scene along with the service station exit road onto Newcastle Road being used to clear the traffic or in this case taking traffic through the service station and out via the exit road under controlled conditions to bypass the incident which was just before the exit.

28 January 2023

MAYOR'S QUIZ

Sandbach Mayor Kathryn Flavell held a Quiz at Sandbach Town Hall on Saturday the 28 January 2023 with Phil Mason reading out the questions in his usual style with food supplied by Symphony Catering at the Rugby Club and Rafferty's Chip Shop with a lovely stew and chips. Ann Nevitt made most of the arrangements for the evening which had a packed ballroom of quiz lovers.

8 March 2023

PRESENTATION TO CHILDREN WHO HELPED RESCUE WREATHS FROM SANDBACH WAR MEMORIAL

On Saturday evening the 18 February 2023, (21 or) 30 year old Pawell Jarecki of no fixed abode destroyed all the wreaths left on the War Memorial by dumping them in the local river along with breaking up the wooden crosses dedicated to ex service personnel who had lost their lives in conflicts over the years from the Great War to the latest conflicts. The 30 year old was arrested on the morning of Sunday the 19 February and charged with criminal damage and theft and has been released on bail before his appearance at Crewe Magistrates Court on the 5 May.

By Sunday morning at 9.32am residents started to notice the wreaths in the river by the bridge and put pictures on social media but it was while on his way to deliver the Morning Papers that Leon Walker (14) noticed the stones and wreaths from the memorial and feeling it was wrong called his friend Arron-Ray Holme (10) to help retrieve the wreaths in the river to put them back on the War Memorial.

Social media went wild calling for the boys to be given some recognition and on Wednesday the 8 March 2023 at a small ceremony they were presented with Certificates of Achievement by Marjorie Newton of the Sandbach Branch of the British Legion and a gift from the Town Council's Mayor, Kathryn Flavell.

John Dwyer the Police and Crime Commissioner was humbled and honoured to be at the ceremony. He said that he so often hears of young people who don't respect authority, don't do this, don't do that, don't do the other and he has a view that the vast majority of people no matter what their age, sex, colour or religion, the vast majority 89% of those people are decent hard working law abiding people and there is a relatively small number who ruin it for everybody else. What we witnessed on that Saturday was we had a toe rag from one end of "that" society the 10%, who took off all the stuff from the Memorial and dumped it in the brook and on the other side of the coin we have these young lads and he was honoured to be with these two lads and was so proud of them as they without parental control just got on and did what was the right thing to do. John went on to say his job is dealing with criminals but also dealing with nice people and he then describe them as being nice people.

After the event the returned and replaced wreaths and crosses were rededicated by the Rev Bee Boyde of St Mary's in a ceremony attended by members of the Royal British Legion and others on Monday the 20 February.

Some of the Stones from the memorial are still missing as well as the list of names that were missed off the memorial when it was first dedicated and added to a wooden plaque last year. The Mayor also offered the two a chance to accompany herself in the Mayors car during the Sandbach Transport Festival Parade.

Picture L to R = John Dwyer (Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner) - Leon Walker - Marjorie Newton (Sandbach Chairman of the British Legion) - Mayor of Sandbach Kathryn Flavell - Arron-Ray Holme - Ceri Lloyd (Chief Officer at Sandbach Town Council).

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13 March 2023

BEST CHIP SHOP

On Monday the 13 March 2023, the 1st Sandbach Rainbows and the 4th Sandbach Brownies presented Neil Rafferty with a certificate to show he runs the best Chip shop in Sandbach.

This was all part of a new badge awarded to the Rainbows and Brownies called the "Chip Shop Challenge Badge" and it involves a number of tasks connected to that popular meal. One of the tasks was to taste chips from shops within walking distance of the meeting place in the Masonic Hall and to grade them to find the best in town for taste, portions and customer service. Members of the Brownies went to the shops to purchase the portions like a mystery shopper and then brought them back to the hall for the rest of the packs to do the tasting adding their observances of customer service before the final decision was made and Rafferty's at 7 Welles Street, Sandbach came out first.

The badge was created in memory of Surrey West leader Monique Gill who died in the summer of 2013 and is designed to focus on sustainable fishing and the origins of potatoes. Started by Helen Wood in memory of her friend who before she died told her how much she and her Guide unit enjoyed walking around the fish and chip shops in St John's in Woking, sampling and judging their chips. Every autumn the 3rd Knaphill Guides have done the chip shop challenge and since 2013 they had always talked about creating a badge for the end of the challenge. In 2016 Tasja one of the guides came up with a design which has been adopted by the movement along with a challenge pack.

Rainbows are expected to complete two activities plus the visit to the chip shop, Brownies must complete four challenges, while Guides must do five challenges and the Senior Section have to complete four challenges from a list of activities. These activities are to look at Fish (Craft ideas, Food Ideas, Ideas for games and extra fish activities), Chips and Potatoes, Sustainable Fish using the resources from the Marine Conservation Society and of course the visit to the chip shops.

Sandbach Rainbows and Brownies decided to do a Poppy design back in November using a Potato Stamp; they did a blind tasting of fish fingers to see which ones were their favourites and those made with Pollock (North Atlantic fish) came out top. Next was to do the volcano experiment using bicarbonate of soda and vinegar. Along with the chip tasting and other activities they have now completed the challenge.

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