CHINGFORD **HISTORICAL** SOCIETY



Number 24

NEWSLETTER

Spring 2022

£1.00 (free to CHS members)

FROM THE EDITOR

The last 6 months has been a busy time for the society as we recover from COVID restrictions and set our sights on preparing for our new home at Chingford Station Community Hub.

We have also been involved with LBWF in a project to provide Chingford with its first Heritage Trail that includes 15 historical sites with a map and accompanying booklet.

We would like to thank members and friends for attending our real meetings again after COVID and look forward to your continued support - Gary Stone

Interact with us on the following platforms:



@Chingfordhist



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Chingfordhistory.org.uk



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Chingford Historical Society Tube



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Forthcoming Talks

See a full list at www.chingfordhistory.org.uk

24th March 2022 – On the beat in Hatton Garden- Talk by Chris Foster. Stories & tales from the area over the years. Followed by the AGM

21st April 2022 – Children's workhouses in East London and Essex in the late 19thC - Talk by John Walker – The harsh realities of life in Victorian workhouses

19th May - History Talk- Talk by TBA

Lawrence of Arabia - by David Boote



As BBC Radio Essex wanted Chingford Historical Society to say a few words about the association Lawrence of Arabia had with Pole Hill when they interviewed me for a radio programme on 2nd January, this proved to be difficult. The programme makers assumed it would be possible to park the

radio's vehicle on Pole Hill, but there is no parking near the top for visitors. Also, it is hard to compress the story into a few sentences.

Many famous people are described as complex characters but the phrase fits Thomas Edward 'Ned' Lawrence, born in 1888, particularly well. His parents were not married. His birth, and that of his four brothers, resulted from an affair his father had with the governess of the father's legitimate children, four daughters. Lawrence's mother was also a child born outside wedlock. She and Lawrence's father did form a stable relationship, though they and their children moved from place to place for a while. From 1896 they lived in Oxford, which perhaps helped get their second son Lawrence into university there. The family was wealthy enough to employ servants, but it had a shaky claim to be within the British Empire's ruling class. A bungalow was built in the garden for Ned to have the kind of semi-independent existence that he needed, even as a teenager.

At school and university Lawrence developed an interest in castles built by the Crusaders pushing against Islamic might in the Middle East. He got a first class degree in history at Oxford in 1910. His talent got him a job in the British Museum's excavations at Carchemish on the Syrian – Turkish border, between 1911 and 1914. Letters home suggest his family more than tolerated his individuality, and that T E Lawrence took the role of a British leader guiding other nationalities through their problems. He formed a strong relationship with a young Arab, Dahoum, in whom Lawrence saw potential for an emerging nationhood that would be resistant to both Ottoman and French imperial ambitions.

A friend of Lawrence from Jesus College, Oxford University, Vivyan Richards, became a history teacher at Bancroft's School, Woodford in 1909. The School's art teacher Arthur Bowmar Porter (1876-1960) had a hut on Pole Hill, Chingford, by agreement with the landowner, High Churchman and Socialist the Reverend

William Edmund Moll (1856–1932). In 1912 Richards put his own building on Pole Hill, mainly made from wood but with a copper-canopied stone hearth, as the centre of a camping ground for Boy Scouts and Bancroft's School cadets. Lawrence joined these camps a number of times.

The start of the First World War quickly changed Lawrence's life. From December 1914 he brought his knowledge of Arabic to strategic planning for the Middle Eastern 'theatre' in the First World War, one in which Britain's ally on the Western Front, France, was not treated as a friend. In 1916 Lawrence escaped his desk job for an unorthodox



role helping Arab fighters inflict damage to Turkish infrastructure. This was the part of his life that he would later describe in his book 'Seven Pillars of Wisdom'.

At the end of the War Lawrence was very disappointed that French colonial rule was re-established in Damascus.

On the day that Lawrence's service in the British Army ended, 1st September 1919, he bought some land on Pole Hill. He went on to buy more pieces of land on Pole Hill as he could afford them, some of them from the Rev W E Moll. His landholding was in an arc with Woodberry Way on the inside of the curve and the Greenwich Meridian Line obelisk at the centre of the outside curve.

For six months from August 1919 an educational entertainment was performed at the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden called 'With Allenby in Palestine and Lawrence in Arabia' using photographic slides, moving film and music. This creation of the Lawrence of Arabia myth suited him because it helped his public campaign for Arab self-determination. Winston Churchill in December 1919 brought Lawrence into the Colonial Office. The Feisal with whom Lawrence had been working since 1916 was installed as the ruler of Iraq, and his brother Abdullah as the ruler of Jordan, supported by British officered armies.

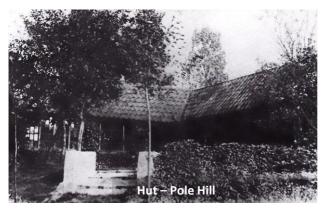
Richards served in the First World War but the experience made him oppose militarism, and in his training of youth he substituted craft skills for soldierly ones. Living conditions at the Pole Hill camps were spartan and included a daily cold bath. Richards also organised winter evening outdoor sessions for Bancroft's schoolboys opposite the School by Knighton Wood, to which Lawrence came on at least one occasion.

Lawrence invited his architect friend Herbert Baker to advise on a more prestigious building. Richards and Lawrence could see the humour in involving Baker, who had designed many buildings in South Africa and India, and was to be the architect of India House and South Africa House, London and the present Bank of England. In the summer of 1921 Richards' building on Pole Hill was destroyed in a grass fire. He replaced it with an L-shaped construction, roofed with tiles, and called by him 'a cloister'. It had a garden and a 'diving pool' (a 'plunge pool' presumably) A room was dedicated for Lawrence's use, though he does not seem to have spent any appreciable amount of time there. In the roof space were enclosed beds 'Meum & Tuum' (Latin for Mine and Yours) intended for Richards and Lawrence. Peter Read states that the building was 60 feet south-south-west of the Meridian Line obelisk. Amongst the male teenagers who attended Pioneer camps there were some from the Custom House Boys Club.

In 1922 Lawrence resigned from the Colonial Office and began a series of attempts to serve in the British forces, in a junior capacity and under pseudonyms.

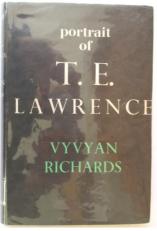
In the background was Robert 'Robin' Vere Buxton (1883–1953) who played a leading role in British army operations against the Ottoman Empire, the same sphere of the First World War as Lawrence. Buxton after the War returned to his senior position in Martins Bank, through which the subscribers' edition of 'Seven Pillars of Wisdom' was financed and finally published in 1926.

Also in 1922 Richards resigned from his teaching post at Bancroft's School and



returned to his native south Wales. Lawrence started to look to Dorset as his home when not in armed services accommodation, but bought two more pieces of land on Pole Hill in 1923. He bought a cottage, Clouds Hill, near Bovington army camp in Dorset in 1924. In 1928 his will bequeathed his land at Pole Hill to Richards, but in 1930 he transferred it to the Conservators of Epping Forest, as an extension of the Forest. He could have sold it for a higher price to a house developer but chose not to. Lawrence died in a motorcycle crash in 1935.

Books have been published about Lawrence's life from time to time, keeping him in public memory, and a cinema film that is still popular. The poet Robert Graves, one of Lawrence's many friends, wrote 'Lawrence and the Arabs', published in 1927. Vivyan Richards produced 'Portrait of T E Lawrence, the Lawrence of the Seven Pillars of Wisdom' in 1936.



Peter Read, a lifetime Chingford resident, believes the City of London, guardian authority for Epping Forest, should restore and display to the public Vivyan Richards' building, which was transferred from Pole Hill to the premises of the Superintendent of Epping Forest at The Warren in the late 1930s. Richards and Lawrence were admirers of William Morris, who grew up in places now within the London Boroughs of Waltham Forest and Redbridge. Morris remains an inspiration for craft design. The problem is that Lawrence's values now look outdated. The British Empire has gone. Supporting the violent overthrow of other governments is state

policy around the world but is usually secretive and rarely appears glorious. Exploitation of ethnic divisions is effective, too effective. It is deeply unfashionable to revel in all male activities, and the risk of abusive relationships is

Richards' sudden departure from verv evident. Bancroft's School requires an honourable explanation. His and Lawrence's extreme intimacy with school pupils arouses present day suspicions of sexual impropriety, though the actions and words of their contemporaries and connections indicate a belief in the basic integrity of the two friends. The story of Lawrence and Richards is a very human one and could inspire some fictional exploration of the nature of the relationship between them, their struggle to deal with wartime experiences, and the iron self-control they demanded of themselves and their protégés.



Early Years in Chingford Hatch - by Joan Mary Thompson (nee Meyrick)



I was born in October 1920 in a small cottage in Chingford Hatch. The cottage was one of four called Larkswood Cottages. We occupied the one on the far right. I lived with my mother, father and older sister. My sister Doris was born in 1915. My father served in France in the Army Cycling Corps for the duration of WW1. The cottages

were owned by my Great Aunt and Uncle, Minnie and George Rochester. They lived nearby at Brook Farm, Chingford Hatch.

We had a very large garden and my father Richard Meyrick grew a lot of produce and also kept chickens. I remember that he did have his name in a national magazine as his chickens laid an exceptionally large number of eggs because he fed them with a certain chicken food. He loved growing flowers and didn't like my mother picking flowers to bring indoors. He also said that when he died he didn't want any flowers at his funeral. His wishes were carried out and there were no flowers or wreaths present.

My father built a rustic arbour along the right hand side of the garden and in the summer my mother Dorothy Meyrick (nee Evans) used to serve teas for a local tennis club. The club was across the fields opposite our cottage. I do remember that on one occasion my father bought some jars of jam that were being sold cheaply and they were used the next weekend for the teas. Apparently the jam was very runny and the tennis club people were getting it everywhere, over the tables and the arbour and collapsing with laughter. I don't think my father bought any more of the cheap jam!

We had no indoor toilet or bathroom in the cottage. We had an outside toilet down the garden. We had no electric light.



Doris and I used to walk to school through a wood and were told not to speak to the gypsies who lived there. I seem to remember that Doris and I used to play with two other girls who lived in the cottages.

One Christmas Day morning it was very dark and Doris and I found that we each had a large Christmas stocking at the foot of the



bed. These were presents from our Welsh Uncle Tom and Aunty Kath and were a cause of great excitement as money was very tight in our household.



When I was 3 or 4 years old I was taken ill at home and the doctor wasn't sure what the trouble was. I was sent to Barts Hospital in London. It was found that I had appendicitis and an abscess had formed so that I had to have an operation. It was said that I was the youngest patient they had had in Barts with appendicitis. It was thought that tomato seeds had caused the trouble! I spent 7 or 8 weeks in hospital and apparently the nurses made a fuss of me. They used to take me into the nurses' room. When I was discharged from hospital they gave me a large baby doll dressed in knitted clothes. I was told that on arriving home at the cottage I started to cry and wanted to

return to hospital because the cottage was so dark and dingy.

When I was about 6 years old we moved to Southend-On-Sea. However, on the outbreak of war in 1939 families were encouraged to move away from the coast as an invasion by sea was thought possible. My father was a postman and was allowed to remain behind. My sister was married and lived away from the coast, however, my mother and I moved back to



Chingford Hatch and lived for a couple of years with my great aunt and uncle at Brook Farm. I had worked in a chemist shop in Southend and got a job with Boots in Chingford. I remember seeing the City of London in flames from the high ground at Chingford during the Blitz. Night time entertainment still continued and I used to walk home by myself through the forest to the farm after an evening out. I eventually joined the ATS and served in the UK and overseas in Ceylon (as it was then) and Singapore.

This article refers to Brook Farm at Tower Cottage. However we only have evidence of a Brook Farm near Newgate Street at this time.

A Street brawl in Hall Lane - by John Conen



On 1 October 1920 The Globe (a national newspaper that ceased publication in 1921) reported an incident in Hall Lane, Chingford under the lurid headlines 'Merry widow at a silver wedding,' 'street riot at midnight brings a policeman', 'guests fight' and 'woman in nightdress armed with truncheon.' At Waltham Abbey Police Court, John Middleton was summoned for assaulting P C Walter Byway. Other guests at the silver wedding party, also residents of Hall Lane, were

summoned for 'threatening and abusive behaviour'. This was Hall Lane, South Chingford in 1920 not 2020!

PC Walter Byway, who lived at 7 Longton Terrace, said he was aroused at midnight by sounds of rioting in the street outside his house. He found about twenty men and women fighting and when he intervened, he was struck and thrown to the ground. His wife came out in her nightdress bringing PC Byway's truncheon but had it taken from her! However, she was able to blow his whistle and thereby summon other policemen to the scene. According to one of the accused, the trouble had started when Mrs Abbott, a widow with three children, had appeared dressed 'in male attire as a sailor'! The Middleton family lived at Oakdene (where the celebration took place), and of the other guests summoned, the

Greggs lived at Woodlands, and the Barltrops at Bhundara. The merry widow Mrs Abbott lived in Norfolk Terrace. Middleton was fined £2 and the others £1, which seems rather lenient!

Houses in Hall Lane did not have street numbers until around 1923.



Longton Terrace, which is just to the west of the former library is now nos 60-78 Hall Lane, and Norfolk Terrace is nos 22-36. Oakdene was in the terrace nos 80-86, Woodlands is still no.81 and Bhundara was no.107 but it was demolished about ten years ago and replaced by two new houses.

St Egbert's College – by A McGovern

St Egbert's College was an Independent fee paying Catholic College catering for boys from the age of eight to 16 as boarders or dayboys mainly from Essex and East London. It was run by The Brothers of Our Lady of Mercy, a Belgian order founded in 1839, who had been running a number of schools in England since 1855



including St Aloysius College in Highgate. At any given time there were usually about ten of the Brothers on the teaching staff.

The Brothers initially bought a building plus about five acres of land from the Church of England, which was formerly the Rectory and grounds of the local parish church. The plot lay behind the houses on The Ridgeway from the then Town Hall to the War Memorial and then down Kings Head Hill to approximately Pole Hill Road. The main entrance was on The Ridgeway to the right of the Town Hall, and had a side entrance off of Kings Head Hill, just past Jack Pracy's sweet shop, which led into the playground.

The Rectory was renamed the Chantry and The College opened on the 20th September 1920 with two classes and 24 boys. The classrooms were in the Chantry and later in outbuildings known as "the huts" and "the stables". In 1926 plans were approved for a lecture hall to be built behind the Chantry. As it had a stage and lighting facilities the Brothers allowed it to be used by the people of Chingford for dances and plays.

By 1928 pupil numbers had increased to over 100 with an expanding number of day and boarding pupils, so plans were approved to construct a large three storey building to be approached via a 250 yard driveway from The Ridgeway. In 1933 Hallwoods of Clyde, Manchester moved on site and started work on the building which subsequently became The College, and remained so until it was demolished in the early 1970s. The College now had ten classrooms, a large assembly hall plus a science lab. The Chantry was also updated at this time providing improved dormitories and an infirmary on the top floor for the boarders. By September 1936 the College roll was 220 pupils, and boys could regularly be seen around the town in their red blazers with green braid and half red and green caps.

With the outbreak of war in 1939, the College was initially evacuated to Stanstead in Suffolk and then to Stainsby Hall in Derbyshire, along with pupils from St Aloysius College, Highgate, but some of the Chingford dayboys were catered for at a large house in Crescent Road, Chingford. Whilst the College was evacuated during the War, the buildings were converted for use by the Civil Defence in case of a gas attack and their vehicles and equipment occupied most of the playground.

In January 1945 a V2 rocket fell at the junction of Pole Hill Road and Kings Head Hill. It exploded mid-air and the Venturi (engine) came through the roof of the lecture hall. The damage was never made good and the hall was used after the war as a store and a bicycle shed for the many pupils who cycled in, some from as far afield as Ilford.



All pupils returned to the College in January 1945 but as day boys only as the option to board ceased. By the late 1950s, the College roll peaked at around 350 pupils when it was quite common to find several non-Catholic boys in most classes to satisfy the financial pressures of running the College at the time.

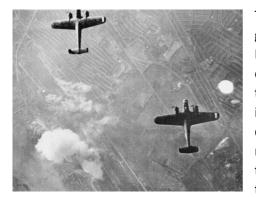
The College closed in 1970 and the Brothers transferred to St Aloysius College in Highgate and the site was sold to developers. The only remaining reference to the College is that an access road from The Ridgeway to the housing development is called St Egbert's Way.

When news broke that the College had been sold for development, reports circulated that attempts were being made to have a preservation order placed on the Chantry, which was the ex-Rectory, but sadly the developers moved in quickly and demolished it before such an order could be obtained.

You can read an expanded history of the College in the History of the Order booklet in the History section on the Association's website www.oldegbertians.co.uk

If you were a former pupil of St Egbert's College, or possibly know somebody who attended, please get in touch via the website.

A big bomb in the little blitz – by John Conen

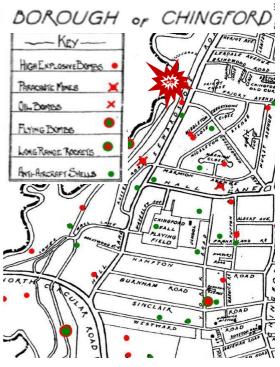


The Luftwaffe's Operation Steinbock is generally known as the Little Blitz or Baby Blitz. It comprised a dozen or so air raids on London and the south of England in the first few months of 1944, and was initiated as revenge for the RAF's devastating attacks on German cities. The raids were not welcome after nearly three years of respite from bombing, and their noisiness and use of large powerful

bombs and incendiaries were disturbing. They were usually less than an hour in duration and were met by intensive anti-aircraft fire, and as night fighters were also deployed, the raids weren't very effective and Luftwaffe losses were high.

Several of the raids affected Chingford. On the night of 18/19 February 1944, the sirens sounded in London at 12.37am and shortly after bombs fell across a wide

Londoners area, taking bv surprise - most failed to go to shelters. A 1,000 kg high explosive bomb falling on the footpath at the rear of houses in Sewardstone Road South (now Waltham Way) almost opposite the junction with Priory Avenue, caused enormous damage to property and utilities. Warburton in Chingford at War says 'this was one incident which might easily have been attended by more serious consequences, instead of which there were only four minor casualties.' Given the blast effect, residents if not probably injured were badly shaken up. The crater measured sixty feet across and was twelve



feet deep, and serious damage was caused to a main sewer (the western intercepting sewer which ran under the footpath), electricity cables and telephone lines, and over 200 houses were damaged - an illustration of the extensive damage caused by the heavy bombs dropped during the Little Blitz. Many residents had to be temporarily re-housed.

The Civil Defence records I have examined for 1944 do not refer to bombs over 1,000 kg, but a bomb of 2,500 kg, the 'Max', was used in the Little Blitz. The bomb which fell at Chingford on 19 February 1944 could well have been of this type given the size of the crater and the extent of the damage although it was reported as a 1,000 kg bomb.



Derek Wetenhall undoubtedly refers to this incident when he records that a bomb dropped along his road on a house similar to his - he lived at no.215. Before school the next morning he went along the footpath at the back to see the damage and found that the Anderson shelter in the garden of no.145 was completely blown out of the ground and lay there upside down, concrete foundations and all. Derek had a look for shrapnel to add to his collection but found none even when he climbed down into the crater which the bomb had made. On climbing out he bumped his head on an electric cable which had been hanging from pylons which crossed over the gardens - fortunately it was not live!

Today in Waltham Way, nothing remains to remind us of what was an unexpected and unpleasant experience for local residents.

Sources: Conen, J., The Little Blitz (2014) - Warburton, S., Chingford at War (1946) - Derek Wetenhall's account can be found on the BBC WW2 People's War archive - https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar

Extracts from the Parish Magazine (Pt 6) - by Elizabeth Edwards

After retiring from the British Library, Elizabeth now has an interest in the parish and in particular the Parish Magazines. They reveal an insight into the local running of Chingford in the 19th and 20th centuries.

1889 - Old Church: beams had been placed inside the ruin to support the roof which reduced the space available for the congregation. It was proposed to hold a short Mission service on the first Sunday in the month at 6.30pm.



12 June 1889 - The first tennis match of the newly formed Connaught Club was played against Leyton. It was played at their courts near Warren Pond. An asphalt court had also been constructed to allow practice all year.

Sept 1889 – Police charges: this is the common heading of Chingford news in local papers. "The misdemeanours of the excursionists and visitors to the Forest are all laid to the charge of the parish of Chingford, so that any stranger as he runs his eye over the paragraphs in the paper must receive the impression that there are an enormous number of card-sharpers, drunkards and bad characters in proportion to the population of the place." "It is time to protest against having the sins of the north and east London attributed to Chingford. The residents in this place who have been brought before the magistrates are remarkably few in number, and no serious crime has been charged against any parishioner for many years."

Feb 1903 - George Bartrip resigned as Church Clerk after 30 years due to failing eyesight and was succeeded by his son Percy. The Bartrip family had held the post of Church Clerk for 3 generations.

Nov 1903 - Miss Halloway, a trained nurse was appointed Chingford's first parish nurse who made home visits for non-infectious patients, however she did not go to confinements nor did she do night visits. Patients were expected to give a donation for her services to the Nurse's Fund via the Rector.

May 1906 - At a public meeting held in the Parish Room the Chingford Rifle Club was formed and officers elected. "It is important that every young man should know how to use a rifle."

Chingford Police – A History (Pt3)

New station 1887 - The constables that had worked the area for some years on a different basis moved in, including two mounted officers. With the taking into use of the new station some alterations were made to the boundary lines of the surrounding station. Areas were taken from Walthamstow, Enfield Highway and Waltham Abbey. Chingford station was paired with Walthamstow, leaving the influence of the latter pair of stations, but remaining under the jurisdiction of the Waltham Abbey Petty Sessions. The area covered stretched from Mott Street, Sewardstone, in the North to Highams Park in the South.

Police horses were withdrawn from Chingford prior to the Great War in response to a massive increase in mobility and police response ability brought about by the safety bicycle and the telegraph by the turn of the century. This process was hastened by the widespread adoption of the telephone shortly afterwards.



A police telephone box was installed at Winchester Road, Highams Park in 1902. This being an isolated precursor to the police telephone boxes that followed some 30 years later.

During the Great War of 1914-18 the Chingford Special Constabulary

swelled the ranks at the station. The additional manpower mainly dealt with the first air raids on the British mainland – guarding military strongpoints including the Royal Naval Air Service Station Chingford at the bottom of Kings Head Hill. They also ran one of North London's major air raid reporting centres situated on the roof of the Kings Oak Public House, High Beach in conjunction with surrounding Special Constabulary groups.

All these duties were facilitated by the forming of a motor car section, using both their own cars and a number borrowed for the duration from well to do local people. This was the largest such group and initially unique. To place the availability of this motor car section in its proper perspective, it should be noted that the availability of any form of motor transport to the regular police was still some 15 years away.

In 1924 an additional strip of potential building land was purchased to the rear of the existing station for ± 160 .

Police Orders for May 6th, 1932 transferred Chingford back onto the Enfield Highway sub-Division from May 9.

The severing of ties with Walthamstow was to be short lived, the following year, in another re-organisation, Chingford, Walthamstow and Waltham Abbey were all grouped together, transferred from 'N' Division to 'J' Division from 6 a.m. on Tuesday August 1, 1933 (P.O. 27.7.1933). At that time 'J' Division was known as the Hackney Division.

Although Chingford had use of the single police telephone box at Highams Park since early in the century, an extended, force wide, police telephone box system was brought into service from the mid 1930s. The erected, blue painted wooden or concrete, boxes were mainly sited at major junctions in Chingford, each being connected to Walthamstow station by private lines. The boxes used by Chingford police in particular were:-

- Box 22 at the junction of Winchester Road and Larkshall.
- Box 23 in Old Church Road by Hall Lane.
- Box 24 in Beresford Road near Rangers Road.
- Box 25 at the base of Kings Head Hill near to the junction with Sewardstone Road. At the time this section of road was called Waltham Road North.
- Box 26 sited in Sewardstone Road by Mott Street, the northern boundary of the Chingford police area for a further 30 years.





At the same period, and primarily to support the police response to calls from the public, the first, locally based, official motor transport arrived, to be initially based at Walthamstow, but covering the whole subdivision from Leyton to Nazeing. – **Part 4 in next edition.**

LATEST CHS NEWS

We have successfully held real talks again at C of E Primary School in Shaftesbury Road together with our on-line Zoom platform. Despite some technical issues, we have had very positive feedback.

CHS is growing and we are looking for enthusiastic people to join our committee to help with the general running of the society. A very rewarding position for someone interested in local history, meeting new people and being part of a motivated team. Please contact Gary on 07970 524553 or enquiries@chingfordhistory.org.uk

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Once again this year the society will have a presence at the Chingford Village Festival at The Green on Saturday 11th June from midday until 5pm. Future events will be posted on our website.

If you would like to contribute to the newsletter or have any historical material to donate or share, please contact Gary Stone on 07970 524553 or enquiries@chingfordhistory.org.uk

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