

Chairman - Mr Keith Andrews, Treasurer - Mrs Margaret Walton, Secretary - Mrs Barbara James
 Committee Members - Ms Angela Lane, Mrs Annette Hughes, Rowford Bowditch, Anthony Truett, Richard Gibbs

BAFEPOW NEWS SHEET FOR MAY 2026

ANZAC DAY – NEWS FROM AUSTRALIA

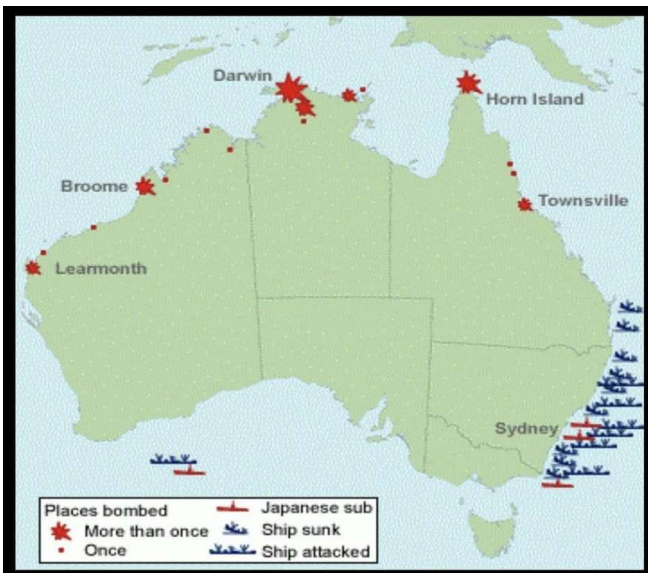
With the upcoming commemorations here in the UK of VE Day, lets take a look elsewhere and remember that some BAFEPOW members out in Australia will have been remembering their own on April 25th – ANZAC Day and even here in the UK there were quite a number of ANZAC services held.

The Australian and New Zealand soldiers played an important role in the First World War. The ANZAC troops first fought together in Flanders at Messines in June 1917. They had previously fought together in Gallipoli. It is estimated that 62,000 Australians and 18,000 New Zealanders died during the First World War. Many of those who did survive and made it home again suffered life altering psychological traumas and physical injuries.

And so, when WWII broke out, once again it was the brave armed forces of Australia and New Zealand (among other empire countries) that were once again united with us against the enemy in Europe and then also in the Far East. For some time after WWII ended, ANZAC Day dwindled in the support that it received until now it has once more grown to become an important date on the remembrance calendar and it is growing annually and it is commemorated in both Oceania and more recently in the UK and Europe.

FROM KEITH BETTANY

Keith sent the map below displaying the attacks launched by the Japanese against the Australians as they further attempted to expand their empire. These attacks on Australia are not well known to have been carried out but further emphasise the determination of the Japanese to take over such a huge area.



Forgiveness

The Key to Freedom

The word 'Forgiveness' was something I learnt from Bill Schmitt, a former POW. He told me that it is far easier to forgive than it is to carry around a heart full of hate. These are words I have heard from many other POWs as well.

“Bit like UK & German Forces, too close to us for comfort.”
 (Keith Bettany’s comment on the map!)

The words at the bottom of this cover page sent also by Keith might be contentious with a few:-
 “The word ‘Forgiveness’ was something I learnt from Bill Smidt, a former FEPOW. He told me that it is far easier to forgive than it is to carry around a heart full of hate.” These are words I have heard from many other POWs as well.”

ANZAC DAY IS REMEMBERED BY BAFEPOW MEMBERS IN THE UK

Around the UK there were many ANZAC services held around April 25th and we were very fortunate to be represented by Tony Truett who laid a wreath at the service that was held at the Cambridge War Graves Cemetery, Newmarket Road, Cambridge. It was a gloriously warm, sunny Spring day and you can see the BAFEPOW wreath lying flat at the front right of the memorial in the photo below. Tony was invited to attend on our behalf by David Bailey MA, chairman of Cambridge Branch RAFA who welcomed him to represent the nearest remaining FEPOW Association group that is still in existence – BAFEPOW! The drum tower is of interest and it represents the tradition on the battlefields of old where the drums were used as a form of communication and were stacked up to magnify the sound of the beating out of orders above the din of battle.



Phil went to Cannock Chase -



The photo on the left shows the brass band playing and in the righthand one there are some of the re-enactment group dressed in WWII uniforms.

Our member, Phil Bradshaw, went to the service that was held on Cannock Chase at the Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery there. Some of you may remember that we did a trip to visit this cemetery some years ago and I felt that the German section of this cemetery was sadly austere and felt strangely chilled whilst the other areas which included Australians, New Zealanders and Canadians amongst others, and

they all lay in areas with a better feeling of peace and tranquility (this was possibly my own feeling on the day of our trip!)

The photo to the right is of Watchman VII, a black Staffordshire Bull Terrier and he is the reserve regimental dog for the Staffordshire Regiment.

There was also a number of veterans from the Mercian Regiment present along with a good number of local people.



MEMORIAL DEDICATED TO 'BARTON BILLY' ON 15/04/2026 (Featured on BBC Midland News)

A Gloucester war veteran has officially been honoured with a memorial in the Tredworth Road Cemetery in Gloucester to mark his efforts during the Second World War.

Bill Clements, who was known locally as 'Barton Billy', was captured and held as a Prisoner of War by the Japanese during the conflict in the Far East during WWII. He was badly treated by his captors and returned to Gloucester when the war ended as a broken man, even losing the power of speech.

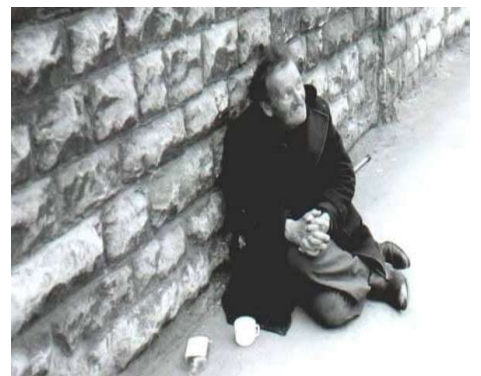
He spent much of his time on the streets around All Saints Church and Victoria Street, despite having a flat nearby, but the reason why is somewhat heartbreaking and powerful. Because Bill could not bear to be inside after his ordeal, he lived on the streets but was looked after by many around the Barton and Tredworth community, people giving him food, drink, clothing and even cutting his hair for free. Officers from Barton Street Police Station also looked after him.

Bill Clements died in 1995 after a time in the Bohanam House nursing home on Barnwood Road, but his story came to life further thanks to a recently published book called '100 Gloucester Characters'.

For decades, Bill was a familiar figure around Barton, often spotted near the doctors' surgery, All Saints Church, or along Victoria Street. Local traders and residents looked after Bill, offering food, drink, and clothing. Despite their kindness, Bill lived on the streets until his passing in March 1995.

As a POW, Bill was held in Changi before being sent to work on the Thai/Burma railway where the traumatic experiences he endured in the PoW camps left him terrified of enclosed spaces—so much so that he was unable to sleep inside his own home and instead chose to sleep rough.

Bill as a young man The new memorial in Tredworth Road Cemetery Bill lying on Barton Road



Below are some comments about Bill from among the many about him and he was obviously treated kindly and with great fondness by those who knew him and respected him.

“It was reported that when Queen Elizabeth II visited Widden Primary School in 1986 and her car passed along Barton Street, Bill got up from the pavement, where he had been sat for around four hours, and saluted Her Majesty.”

“After the fall of Singapore, Bill was among the British soldiers who were sent to work on the infamous Burma railway, from which the majority never returned. He suffered dreadful experiences at the hands of brutal prison guards. He and his comrades were forced to lie on a runway while the Japanese threatened to drive a steamroller over them.

“Bill, who had joined the 3rd The King’s Own Hussars before the war, returned to Gloucester in 1945 with a head injury and as an emaciated shadow of his former self. He was very patriotic, had a peculiar sense of humour and liked a joke. In 1988, he moved from his flat to be looked after at the Bohanam House nursing home in Barnwood. His aim was always to die by the Gloucester Park Cenotaph and he never missed a Remembrance Sunday.

MORE INTERESTING INFORMATION ABOUT HMS EXETER

We have been so fortunate recently to have our members Tom Jowett and Martin Horwell – both the children of crew from the ill-fated HMS Exeter in WWII – joining us on a fairly regular basis and they have taken part in some very interesting discussions. Recently Tom asked me (BJ) if I had heard about the ‘Exeter Express’ and I had to admit that I knew nothing about it. He then said that he would send me the information for it and it is so interesting as it relates to the families of the unfortunate men who were captured and imprisoned by the Japanese and who didn’t know if their loved ones were indeed dead or alive and even where they might be. I therefore asked him if it could go into our news sheet so you could all read about it. There is a coincidence too, in that, more has come to light about how folk at home coped with the limited information that they were able to receive from anywhere about their loved ones – originally I first heard about the Hope-Robinson letters at the VJ75 COFEPOW lunch where there was a very interesting presentation given about these letters, of which about 2000 of the original 5000 have been passed to and held at the Erewash Museum in Ilkeston, Derbyshire.

The BBC did an extremely programme about Mrs Hope-Robinson which I wholeheartedly recommend watching by following this link :- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c6ppv5lz29ro>

However here is a short synopsis of the story and it emerged that later there were moves by the Department of Defence to block what she was doing!

During World War II, a young mother in search of information about her husband trapped in a prisoner of war camp in Thailand did something - thought to be against the wishes of the War Office - which saw 5,000 letters of thanks and hope delivered to her.

Hope Robinson's husband was an officer in the British Army who was captured by the Japanese in Singapore in February 1942, and kept as a prisoner on the Burma Railway.

In November 1944, two soldiers who had lived in the same camp as her husband, Major Paul Robinson, arrived home after escaping captivity.

Mrs Robinson, from Ilkeston, in Derbyshire, turned up on the doorstep of one of the men the day he returned, interviewed him, and produced a pamphlet about life in the camp.

The next discovery was by Phil Bradshaw who discovered that just a very short distance from where we hold our monthly meetings in Birmingham, there had a been a group of relatives and friends of FEPOW who used to meet up and support each other and they met at 11, Hill Street – after the war ended and the POWs returned home, it was hoped that the members of this group would continue to link up and form a FEPOW Association as was already happening in various places around the UK. So far there is no

evidence that this is how the Birmingham Association came into being – a visit to the archive at Birmingham Central Library Archive might throw some light onto this as there are some items stored there from BAFEPOW.

So then Tom came along with his 'Exeter Express' and at our meeting on 14/04/26 he also told us more about how he came to discover the existence of this and we are very grateful to him for bringing it to our notice and for allowing us to share it with you. If any more comes to light on any of these topics, we will add it in a future news sheet.

From Tom :-

A quick recap of the timeline during the final commission of HMS Exeter & the time until the crew's internment ended:

1st March 1942	Battle of the Java Sea HMS Exeter scuttled.
11th March 1942	All survivors (600+) interned at Macassar. The town was nominated as a prospective Base for the IJNavy, so the PoW camps were run by the Imperial Japanese Navy.
2nd April 1942	7 Senior Officers and 4 telegraphists shipped to Japan
21st April 1942	Senior Officers and telegraphists interned at the IJN Interrogation Camp at Ofuna, near Tokyo, Japan,
8th September 1942	Senior Officers transferred to Zentsuji. (A show camp recognised by Red Cross)
24th October 1942	215 officers and crew transferred to Nagasaki, Japan.
5th October 1943	23 Officers transferred to Camps on Java.
May 1944	J C Wyatt transferred to look after PoWs working on the Sumatera Railway.
15th August 1945	VJ-Day EXETER/Macassar lads in Japan and Java are transported home on troop ships.
23rd September 1945	Remaining survivors collected from Macassar.

A couple of years ago, I heard somebody mention the existence of the "Exeter Express", a quick search of all the obvious locations found nothing.

I did hear that it was a newsletter distributed around the HMS Exeter Officer's wives and families. So now I could directly enquire of their descendants if there were any paperwork remaining from their Grandparents, and did it include anything entitled "Exeter Express"?

A couple of replies suggested that there were copies still in existence. Needless to say, the next part of the project was to collect as many copies as I could, & to find out more about the newsletter.

Eventually, I discovered that the newsletter was sent around the Officer's wives and families, and included news about and from the PoW camps, there were 14 editions, dated from April 1943 -over a year after the ship was lost- through to August 1945, and so the collection began.

The collection began slowly, but obviously prompted further questions -like who edited it? All questions came back with similar answers "Not my Mother/Grandmother!".

HMS Exeter survivors were interned at Macassar; and nothing went into or out of the camp, so relations only received news when some of them were interned at better-run camps, like Zentsuji, Fukuoka and the Bicycle Camp at Jakarta. The newsletter contained extracts of letters or postcards received from the Camps, plus whatever information had been picked up from Tokyo Radio. Until the PoWs were moved to Zentsuji, Jakarta and Fukuoka, nothing had been heard from the survivors.

Mail from the camps were limited to postcards or letters with a maximum wordage -the frequency and quantity was dependent upon the local Commander. Mail to the camps were limited by UK censorship requirements, mail sent from the Commonwealth were allowed to contain photos, the British were not allowed to send them.

I noticed that a couple of the editions mentioned a presentation to The Royal Devon & Exeter Hospital, so I searched their records and committee minutes, finding a number of mentions, the first being of the Children's ward being approached by a Commander J O Wyatt about donating an item to the ward, the funding coming from the thankful relatives of the Officers that survived the sinking of HMS Exeter in the Battle of the Java Sea, subsequent mentions were about the purchase and subsequent presentation of a gramophone. The presentation was made on 4th November 1943; along with 100 or so records and installation, the cost came to just over £112. Surplus funds (£100+) were placed with the Matron to be spent as she thought suitable.

This mention of Cdr J O Wyatt rang a bell, on the crew list there was a Surg Lt J C Wyatt, maybe they were related? This was enough for the Commander to be moved up to be favourite in the running order for being the editor.

Donations kept coming in and sufficient were available for a cot to be bought and donated to the Children's ward, this was presented on 1st March 1945, at a cost of just under £500.

Fast forward to last year, there was an article in the COFEPOW Newsletter by a Mr J Wyatt advertising a booklet about his Father, "our" Surg Cdr J C Wyatt. I contacted him to ask some questions: "Is your Father the J C Wyatt that was on board HMS Exeter's final commission", and "Did his Father, Cdr J O Wyatt, edit the "Exeter Express"?", & if the answers are "Yes", "Do you have any spare copies?". Within a week, the booklet and all 14 copies of the "Exeter Express" arrived in the post.

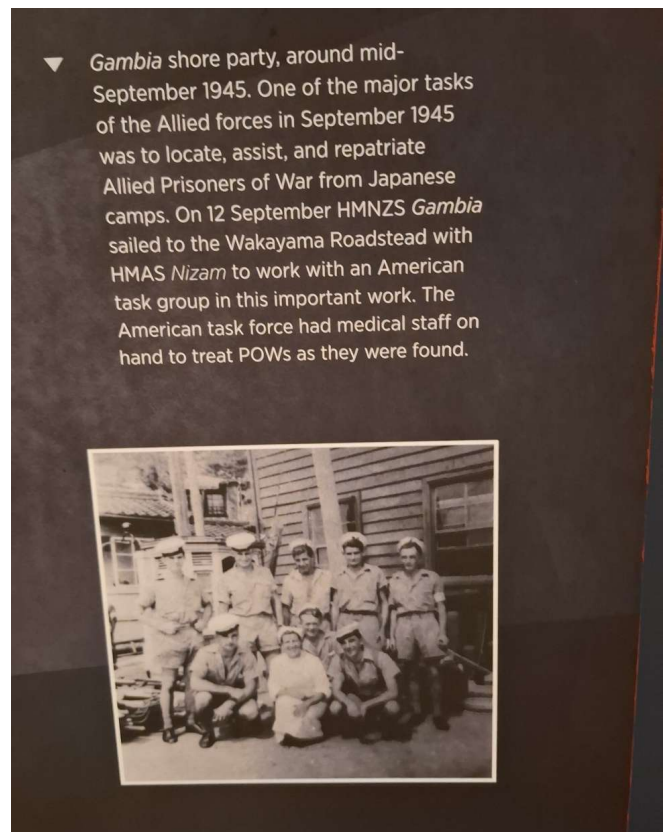
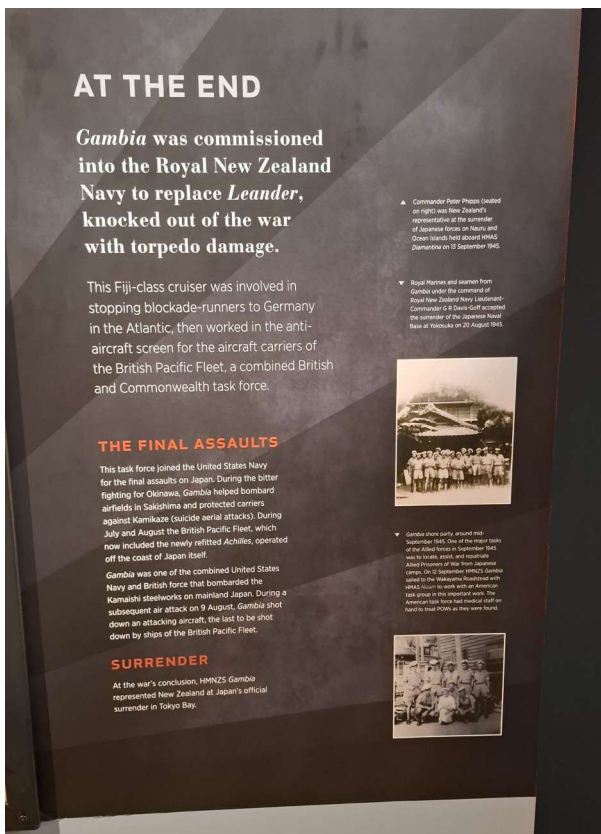
A bit of a post-script: as the lads came home, the collection was continued to pay for the design and installation of the window in Exeter Cathedral as a memorial to the lads that didn't come home. The surplus after paying the £408 for the window paid for another cot in the Children's Ward at the Royal Devon & Exeter Hospital.

The cot was more expensive than the stained-glass window!

Thank you so much, Tom, for talking about this at our meeting and sharing the basic transcript with us!

ANGELA'S LAST TWO PHOTOS FROM HER VISIT TO NEW ZEALAND

It is very thoughtful of Angela to photograph different things relating to FEPOW history whilst traveling on her various trips and she sent two more taken in the Navy Museum in Torpedo Bay, Auckland. As other items in the news sheet have a naval link, it seemed appropriate to include these – The Gambia was a ship belonging to the New Zealand Navy which was part of a joint task force seeking out FEPOW and retrieving them for care before repatriation.



WWII IN TWENTY FIVE PICTURES FROM 1931 TO 1947

In the March BAFEPOW news sheet, I put in the details of a talk that was to be given by Ian Binnie at the Birmingham and Midland Institute in Birmingham City Centre. He seemed to have taken on the impossible task of telling the history of WWII in 60 minutes. I was joined by my fellow BAFEPOW members, Angela and Phil and we sat eagerly awaiting the talk to begin. Ian told us that he was going to achieve this in fifty minutes and that 'Barbara' was then going to talk about the FEPOW, Internees and Romusha in ten minutes – shock and horror – that was the first I had heard about participating in any way apart from taking a large number of my books with me to form a display.

Well, Ian's talk was amazingly interesting and he used the twenty five pictures to mostly tell of the invasion by Japan of China and all the awful atrocities that took place there. The very first photo showed a British officer with some soldiers and he asked the audience who the officer was – no-one knew – but he told us that it was Major Lumley, Joanna's father and he was with a group of Gurkhas. He also included a photo of Pearl Harbour after the devastating attack on 08/12/1941, a photo of General Percival when he offered to surrender to the Japanese in Singapore and a photo of the atomic bomb mushrooming up over Hiroshima on 06/08/1945.

Then it was my ten minutes and, hopefully, I did our FEPOW proud as I based my account on my experience of being the daughter of a Birmingham FEPOW who was captured in Singapore, moved in a 'Hell Ship' to Saigon where he remained until his repatriation to Liverpool on 19/10/1945. I mentioned that I thought he had fought in Europe as he read book after book about WWII in Europe and I also assumed that all fathers had nightmares and suffered from Malaria. I then recounted that just a few hundred yards from where we were sitting, the late Leonard Wilson, Bishop of Birmingham had originally been the Bishop of Singapore during WWII and how he had been arrested and tortured by the Kempetai as a suspect in the Double Tenth Incident. I explained how I had come to understand more about my Dad's experience as a FEPOW after I was confirmed by Bishop Wilson when I was thirteen and my Dad's brother told me of the significance of the Bishop to Dad – and that was my ten minutes over!

I did also manage to include a mention of the interned nurses and how badly interned women were treated and also the Romusha. I was so pleased how many people came to talk to me and ask questions when the presentation was over but we had to leave the room as our time was up – however, later this year Phil is going to do a presentation for the members of this well known history group and I shall let you know the date and details when it has been finally arranged.

ROLL OF HONOUR

Ken Tinkler RN (30/09/1926 – 06/04/2026) - it is with much sadness that news came that Ken (30/09/1926 - 06/04/2026) passed away very peacefully in his sleep on Easter Monday.

Ken was aged just eighteen and he had been serving as a radar operator in the Royal Navy aboard the destroyer, HMS Quadrant, throughout the Pacific campaign and they had to go round the islands of Tokyo Bay in August 1945 to tell the Japanese kamikaze torpedo boats that the war was over. He was also part of a small escort party who went aboard the USS Missouri when the Japanese surrender was signed marking the final end of WWII.

(BJ) – I had the honour of meeting Ken when he attended the VJ80 service at St Nicolas Church in Kings Norton and I was also invited to attend. After the service I was so fortunate to spend time chatting to Ken and his daughter, Jayne, and hearing about how he was involved in the ship's work locating camps where FEPOW were held and he described his shock at the condition of the prisoners. Ken and Jayne attended the BAFEPOW VJ80 lunch at the Holiday Inn on 02/09/25 and he was such an interesting man who was so bright and bubbly and had an amazing sense of humour and we really enjoyed having him with us. His daughter said that he had greatly enjoyed meeting us all and talking to everyone. Sadly Ken didn't make it to his 100th birthday in September and we send our condolences to his family and friends – he will be much missed.



Ken when I met him after the VJ80 service at St Nicolas Church, Kings Norton, Birmingham



Ken enjoying himself as the guest of honour at the VJ80 BAFEPOW lunch at the Birmingham Holiday Inn.

Angela and myself (Barbara) were able to attend Ken's funeral at St Nicolas Church on Kings Norton Green on Wednesday, April 28th. He was given a service with full military honours with five standard bearers and troops of cadets and also veterans from the Navy, Army and RAF and a large number of members of the local community where he was well known and loved. It was an extremely moving service and he then went for a private family only service and cremation at Redditch Crematorium.

RIP dear Ken, you were a true gentleman and an amazing character!

MESSAGE FROM THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION ABOUT THE NMA

A representative from the RBL has posted the following news about the renaming of the NMA.

'I am delighted that we have today announced our intention to rename National Memorial Arboretum as the National Remembrance Gardens.

The Arboretum has been part of the Royal British Legion since 2003 and over the past 23 years we have invested significantly to grow and develop the site leading to a formal merged earlier this year.

350,000 people visit every year and it will continue to be open to all, free to visit, and the nation's year-round place to remember. If you haven't visited, please do - it's such a special place with more than 400 memorials across 150 acres.

There are a large number of posts from news companies e.g. the BBC, ITV, Channel 4, newspapers, RBL branches and supporters of the NMA and there seems to be little if any support for the renaming of this nationally important place that so many of hold dear in our hearts and for us especially as so many FE-POW, many from BAFEPOW and the West Midlands, took pride in seeing it develop from the very start. I, myself, commented on one site about the RBL losing sight of its original pledge to support the Armed Forces and their families as well as concentrating on remembrance to turn from a dedicated charity to a 'business'. I thought that I would be vilified but the more I read I did not find a single comment in support of this change of name.

It does not matter what it is called, so long as it is there for future generations to visit and to learn about their ancestors who bravely took up the call to arms for this country in its defense – We Will Remember Them – To Remember Them Is To Honour Them!

WELFARE GRANTS FOR FEPOW AND FEPOW WIVES AND WIDOWS

If you need help with a grant towards hospital stays, Nursing Home Costs, alterations to the home, mobility aids etc, then please get in touch with:-

Mr Stephen John, the Java Club by email:- stephen.su.47@gmail.com

Mrs Pauline Simpson, NFFWRA by email:- enquiries@nationalfepowfellowship.org.uk

The BAFEPOW news sheet is put together by the association secretary, Barbara James, and, hopefully, it contains items of interest to all members. You are very welcome to suggest future topics or to submit items for future inclusion. You can contact me via email:- bmjames142@yahoo.co.uk or by phone:- 07954104857

