

# MALDENS AND COOMBE HERITAGE SOCIETY

## MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 26th MAY 2015

### AT NEW MALDEN BAPTIST CHURCH

Mary, greeted all members (40)

There were apologies for absence from Chris Coke, Tim Everson, Terry Newman, Tracy Stickler, Sonia Coleman, Harvey and Carol Brearley.

There were no new members.

The minutes of the last meeting was taken as read and signed. It will appear on the Society website at a later date.

Mary thanked the church for the use of their meeting place, and for their catering facilities.

Robin mentioned that as we now had publicity leaflets with the dates of forthcoming meetings would members please take some to circulate among any of the groups (Churches etc) they attended. We were also looking to place some in notice boards and in libraries. There was a good take up at the end of the meeting so hopefully word will get around.

Robin was also trying to establish who was RR Thompson. This was a company that operated on similar lines to Pyram in the manufacturing papier Mache models in Chestnut Grove (nos 38-42). They also manufactured life size mannequins and robots, in fact everything for a retail window display. Frank D thought they were the company that operated from a building that stood opposite the bottom of his garden during the war. He said that they manufactured the tops of mortar bombs, and after an explosion that sent clouds of paper pieces into the air, they relocated to Grafton Road.

We were then entertained by our speaker John McCarthy whose talk was entitled "Cinemas and Theatres of Malden and the local area". He related how the Cinematograph Theatre opened at 7 Coombe Road on July 26<sup>th</sup> 1911. It had about 300 seats and was situated three doors from the railway station. The seats were covered in red plush with the fittings and curtains made of the best materials. Pictures were "very clear with an almost entire absence of flicker". The films were changed every Monday and Thursday with shows in the afternoon on Wednesday and Saturday. The cinema closed in 1921 and was replaced by the New Malden Club.

The Picture Theatre on the corner of Sussex Road and Malden Road opened on 28<sup>th</sup> November 1921. It was unclear how many seats it contained and whether there was any balcony, but there was certainly a tea room. The building changed its name to The Plaza in 1929 after being sold to Wainwrights and there was a Plaza Symphony Orchestra which performed between films. It burnt down on 27<sup>th</sup> December 1936.

John then proceeded to tell us about other cinemas and theatres in the Kingston and Surbiton areas whilst also relating about the Odeon a Shannon Corner which operated as a cinema from 1938 to

1960. John also touched upon the Brycbox and Green Theatres both sadly now gone. It was a very interesting and well presented talk which I can't do justice to here in these short minutes.

Robin then related the story about the oldest building in New Malden. He related that he had received an email from a gentleman who said that his daughter needed to know which was the oldest building in New Malden, for a school project. Robin had sent back a suggested answer based on information available, but was then informed from another source that this answer had now appeared on the social media Facebook as the definitive answer, which had never been the intention. He declared that it was very difficult to establish whether there was one such building that could be identified and he suggested that he had been wrong to suggest a possibility.

We were then entertained by a slide show from Julian based on the action that earned Ian Bazalgette his Victoria Cross. Like the similar illustration for Cyril Barton last month, the pages had been culled from the Victor magazine for boys. Julian gave an update as to the book being produced concerning the three VC s associated with the Maldens And Coombe. He had very gratefully received an illustration from York Museum of the medal belonging to Lt Humphrey Firman, but was having difficulty securing similar illustrations for Barton and Bazalgette from Hendon.

Robin thanked Mike Burns for the hospitality shown towards members during their recent visit to Malden Wanderers on 15<sup>th</sup> May and reminded others about the visit to Tiffins courtesy of John King on 28<sup>th</sup> May.

The meeting closed with the next planned for Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> June 2015