

HAPPY NEW YEAR from BOSHAM WI!

Almost 40 'masked, sanitised, spaced out (!) and multi-layered cheerful members attended the first meeting of 2022. Everyone was delighted to be back seeing each other again. The birthday cake was cut by our very special oldest member - RITA GILBY - and then the cake was cut up and wrapped ready for each member to enjoy with a cuppa at home.

The speaker was Susan Howe whose talk was entitled 'Indiscretions of a Tour Guide'. She is someone whose abiding passion is history (but hated maths) and, although her father was Governor of St. Helena, the family eventually came to live in Bosham for many years.

To become a fully qualified London Tourist Blue Badge Guide involves very extensive training for two years and they are allowed not only to work in and around London, but extensively in the UK and even abroad. Her husband was a hotelier and she went abroad with specialist groups to look for tigers in the jungles of India, take Painting groups to Zanzibar, go Riding in the Rockies and once, when in Botswana, a guide had been attacked and killed by a crocodile just before she arrived. That was a shock. It was about 120 in the shade and Susan's group was desperate to cool off in the inviting water - so they did - but in an area that had a large sign saying "No Swimming - Crocs!" Luckily, all was well.

Susan has looked after many different groups from home and abroad. She has taken Harvard Alumni around Winchester Cathedral (with many challenging questions to a then newly-qualified young guide), Hymnologists from New England wanting to stand on and sing hymns on the graves of hymn-writers, Debt Collectors from New York City and at Waltham Abbey she and her group were faced with a large group of Satanists shouting and waving banners at the entrance. She dealt with it all in her stride - and with a sense of fun and lightheartedness.

One amusing story was concerning a trip to Brocket Hall in Hertfordshire with Mills & Boon authors specialising in the risqué Regency period. It was not known whether the Brocket family was at home that day, but Susan had failed to do a headcount when getting ready to leave. Thinking all of the group was present she told the coach driver to depart - although one person had been left behind. Suddenly a Lamborghini sped up the drive behind the coach carrying the 'missing tourist'. After climbing into the coach the rather excited lady related her story saying she was getting rather worried about how she would be able to rejoin the group when suddenly, "the Lord appeared". (Lucky lady - not only to have met him but to have had a short but speedy ride in such a super car).

Now a bit of local history: Susan also mentioned taking an American group to Tangmere Military and Aviation Museum and she made reference to Pilot Officer William (Billy) Meade Lindsley Fiske III who was an American combat fighter pilot and Olympic bobsledder. He won a gold medal at the 1928 and 1932 Winter Olympics as driver for the bobsledding team and was flag bearer for the team in 1932. He was one of the first US citizens to travel to the UK at the onset of WWII to join the RAF and one of seven American pilots to take part in the Battle of Britain. He was based at Tangmere and on August 16th, 1940 he scrambled to his Hurricane to intercept a formation of German Junkers over the English Channel. His squadron destroyed eight German aircraft, but

Fiske's aircraft was badly damaged and on fire. He managed to nurse his burning plane back to Tangmere and had to be recovered from his aircraft after he crash-landed. Sadly, he died the next day of wounds he sustained over the Channel. He is buried at Boxgrove Cemetery and a beautiful stained glass window is situated there in his memory. Later, in 1941, a memorial was unveiled at St. Paul's Cathedral.



The next meeting is on WEDNESDAY 2nd FEBRUARY at 2.30pm when we will have a representative from the First Responders to speak about Defibrillators. Useful - as there is one outside Bosham Village Hall.

Anyone new to the area would be made most welcome at any of the meetings, but if further information is required, please contact Rosemary Keating on 01243 839953 or see the website at boshamwi.co.uk

Photo shows Bosham WI President, Rosemary Keating on left with Rita Gilby cutting the birthday cake made by Richard Fidler for our Centenary year