



THE STEYNING SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER FROM THE COMMITTEE

Registered Charity No. 269859 www.steyningsociety.org.uk

October 2025

Dear Members,

Gillian Downham

We are very sorry to report that Gillian Downham died at the end of August. Gillian was a member of the Society and the daughter of Betty and Harry Ford who was a chairman and president of the Society and produced the original Guide to the Conservation Area.

Al Fresco Party at Saffrons and Grants

We held a garden party in July to raise funds for the grants we make to local organisations, raising over £1,700. We were lucky enough to be offered the beautiful gardens of Saffrons by Tim Melton and Bernardean Carey. Our good fortune continued with the weather which was exactly right, neither too hot nor too cold. The popular Riverboat Shuffle's background music added greatly to the atmosphere. The evening was made all the more enjoyable by the Smock Alley sparkling wine generously provided by Sarah Lavery. Photographs and a full account of the evening can be found in the Events section of the Website or by following the link [Al Fresco Jazz | Steyning Society](#).

On the subject of grants, we have made grants so far this year to Southdown Nursery, Steyning Woodcraft Folk, Steyning Downland Scheme, Steyning Town Community Football Club and Tracing the Rails, which is the project making an online history of the old Steyning railway line and can be seen on YouTube.

Cruising on the Waverley

A group from the Society braved the weather and sailed on the Waverley, the world's last seagoing paddle steamer, from Southampton to the Isle of Wight and back to Portsmouth on 17th September. Wendy Francis's lovely account of the voyage accompanies this newsletter and can be found in the Events section of the website or by using the link [Cruising on the Waverley](#). Brian Lavery's briefing note for the trip can be found there or by using the link [Paddle steamer Waverley](#).

Trip to Tangmere Military Aviation Museum

We are organising a trip to Tangmere Military Aviation Museum on Monday, 3rd November 2025. The coach will leave the carpark outside the Steyning Centre at 9.30 am and is planned to return there at 3.30 pm. The day will include guided tours of the Museum in small groups, a one-hour talk on the SOE with the focus on the Special Duty Pilots who operated out of Tangmere during the Second World

War, lunch at the Anglesey Arms and a brief optional visit to Boxgrove Priory and Church after lunch. The cost is £40 per person which includes coach travel, entrance fees, the talk and guided tour at the Museum but NOT lunch or any donation to the Priory. Full details, including a brief history of the airfield by Brian Lavery, can be found in the Events section of the website or by following the links [Tangmere Trip](#) and [Timetable for the Tangmere Trip](#).

If you want to book a place, please pay online: The Steyning Society s/c: 20-98-74 a/c: 60832235 and let our Treasurer know that you have done so: adriangobat@hotmail.co.uk. The trip is open to non-members so do encourage friends to come along. **Finally, please remember to email Nicola Mason (nickymason82@gmail.com) no later than 27th October with your choice from the Anglesey Arms' menu, which is on its website (<https://www.theangleseyarms.com/dine/>), so that everyone is served promptly and there are no disappointments.**

Christmas Supper

We will be holding our annual Christmas supper jointly with the Museum at The Steyning Centre on Friday 19th December 2025. The evening will start with a reception at 7 p.m., supper will be served at 7.45p.m. and the evening will end with some jazz from the Sea Jam Quintet. Normandy Dining, who catered for us last year, will be providing the meal. This will consist of chicken in a creamy bacon and mushroom sauce or mushroom stroganoff as a vegetarian option (both will be gluten free), roast potatoes and seasonal vegetables, followed by butterscotch pudding with vanilla ice cream and a butterscotch sauce (a gluten free version can be produced on prior request). Vegan meals can be provided if specifically requested in advance. Wine and soft drinks will be served before and during the meal and coffee or tea with mints will be served after the meal. There will be a raffle as well.

Tickets cost £35 each. We are sorry that we have had to raise the price this year but this is because of increased costs. We hope that this will enable us to break even on the evening. Tickets will be available next month at Steyning Bookshop and at the Museum. They can also be bought by paying the amount into the Society's bank account [details above] but please notify our Treasurer if you do this (adriangobat@hotmail.co.uk).

As usual, guests are welcome, so please encourage as many friends and relatives as you can to come along and enjoy the evening with you. If you would like to sit in a group, please tell the Treasurer when you buy your tickets and we will try to arrange this but we can only confirm a group booking if all members of the group have bought tickets. We plan to arrange tables of eight but tables can accommodate nine if necessary.

AGM and Bowl Awards

We are holding the AGM and presentation of the Steyning Bowl Awards at The Steyning Centre at 7.30 pm on Friday, 17th April 2026. This will be followed by a talk, details of which will be announced later. This year, the awards will focus on those who have made a significant contribution to culture and the arts in Steyning. We invite nominations from members and from the public at large. Nomination forms are available in the AGM section of the website and can be found by following the link [nomination-form](#).

Cruising on the *Waverley*, the World's Last Seagoing Paddle Steamer, 17th September 2025

A group of Steyning Society and friends sailed on the *Waverley* from Southampton, cruising down Southampton Water, in to the Solent, on to Yarmouth, the Needles and finally Portsmouth. Brian Lavery brought the cruise on the historic ship to our attention. Thank you, Brian. The *Waverley* was built in 1946, replacing the original Victorian ship which was sunk during the evacuation of Dunkirk in 1940.



The *Waverley* approaching Yarmouth Pier

For me, alighting from the coach and seeing the paddle steamer was like a magical step back in time. I found it quite an emotional moment. I think, all the more so, since in 1950 my father and brother had cruised on this ship from Brighton Pier. My mother and I watched from the shore at Saltdean as she steamed by.



A family party on a Clyde steamer around 1950

As we cruised we experienced the nostalgia of bygone days with the wooden benches on the viewing decks, wooden rails everywhere and the wooden interiors of the tea room and the observation lounge. On calm days, ours wasn't, there might have been steamer deck chairs. Although it was a very

misty, with the Purser's commentary, (and Brian's invaluable historic notes), we were introduced to all the sites and places of interest on the River Itchen, in the Solent and on the Isle of Wight. At one point when lunch (delicious) was being served, the various currents converged causing some exciting turbulence.



The engines

We went below and, fascinated, could see the Engineer operate the main engine to drive the ship's massive paddle wheels. There was a port hole where I could see and hear the paddles powering through the water.

Due to the gales, we could not begin our journey from Shoreham Port. The sea state was just too high for safety. However, the Waverley is usually in the South Coast area in September. So maybe next year, if the timetable allows, there will be a cruise from Shoreham Port. I shall enjoy another trip on the *Waverley*.

Wendy Francis