



THE STEYNING SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER FROM THE COMMITTEE

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

December 2025

Dear Members,

Christmas Supper

We are holding our annual Christmas supper this year 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. Tickets are now available at Steyning Bookshop and at the Museum. They can also be bought by paying the amount into the Society's bank account (sort code: 20-98-74 account number: 60832235) but please notify our Treasurer if you do this (adriangobat@hotmail.co.uk). At the same as you buy your tickets, please also notify the Treasurer if you would like a gluten free, vegetarian or vegan meal.

As usual, guests are very 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 accept group bookings if all members of the group have bought their tickets. We plan to arrange tables of eight but tables can accommodate nine if necessary.

Trip to Tangmere Military Aviation Museum

A group from the Society visited the Tangmere Military Aviation Museum on 3rd November. The visit started with a talk about the Special Operations Executive (S.O.E.), which operated out of Tangmere during the Second World War, and was followed by a tour of the Museum. The group then moved on to the Anglesey Arms for a pub lunch before visiting Boxgrove Church and Priory. Jill Wellings and Val Stringer have both written lovely accounts of the trip which accompany this newsletter. Their accounts can also be found in the Events Section of the website, along with Brian Lavery's informative

briefing note for the trip, or by using the links [Tangmere Trip-Jill Wellings' account](#), [Tangmere Trip-Val Stringer's account](#) and [Tangmere Trip](#).

Church Street Railings

Members will have noticed the deplorable state of the railings, pavement and retaining wall at the junction of Church Street and the High Street and how the railings have progressively deteriorated during the year. West Sussex County Council, as the Highway Authority, is responsible for maintaining them so we have been working with Steyning Parish Council to persuade the County Council to make good the damage. We have reminded the County Council that it agreed with the Society that it would be responsible for the future maintenance of the railings when the Society renewed the railings at the beginning of the century and that we expect it to honour this agreement. The County Council has told us that it has recently upgraded the priority of the remedial work because of the deterioration of the railings and that it is obtaining quotes for the work. More recently, we have heard from the Parish Council that the County Council is trying to persuade it to pay half the estimated cost of the work, which was originally estimated to be about £33,000 but is now estimated to be about £24,000.

We will continue applying pressure on the County Council to honour its agreement with us but members who share our concerns about the railings etc. may wish to write to Steyning's County Councillor, Paul Linehan (paul.linehan@westsussex.gov.uk), and the County's Director of Highways, Matt Davey, at County Hall, Chichester, PO19 1RQ. We do not have his email address but his PA's address is Tracey.Butcher@westsussex.gov.uk.

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 short talk by Drs Maddie Blackburn and Paul Dennison entitled "Moving to Steyning", when they will tell us about their experiences of moving to the Town. This year, the awards will focus on those who have made significant contributions to culture, the arts and history in Steyning and the surrounding area. We invite nominations from members and from the public at large. Nomination forms are available in the AGM section of the website. They should be completed and returned to us by 16th February 2026.

Grants

So far this year, we have made grants to Southdown Nursery, Steyning Business Chamber (for Christmas trees), Steyning Community Orchard, Steyning Downland Scheme, Steyning Parochial Church Council (for new lighting in the churchyard), Steyning Town Community Football Club, Steyning Woodcraft Folk and Tracing the Rails. Tracing the Rails is the project which is making an online history of the old Steyning railway line and can be seen on YouTube. Episode 4 includes an interview with our Membership Secretary.

Finally, we wish all our members a very Happy Christmas and New Year and we look forward to seeing you at our meetings next year.

Visit to Tangmere Military Aviation Museum

3 November 2025



Our coach dropped us off at the entrance where we split into our allocated group to take it in turn to attend the one hour presentation by Sheryl Green in the Neville Duke Hall. This focused on the special duty pilots and agents who trained and operated out of Tangmere during the second World war. This eloquent speaker later met us by the replica Lysander aircraft and explained how it had been modified to enable it to play a vital role during the second World war. In the Tangmere Hall where there were many exhibits illustrating the history of Tangmere from 1917 to 1970, there was a comprehensive exhibition devoted to the equipment, training and activities of the special SOE Agents and pilots who flew the Lysander aircraft from Tangmere to and from occupied Europe. We were subsequently at liberty to explore other areas of the museum, including the aircraft both inside the halls and outside, try out a flight simulator, look at memorabilia displayed or sit and watch various films including the Douglas Bader story.

Some would have liked more time to look around but all too soon we had to re-join the coach which took us on to the Anglesey Arms for our pre-booked lunches which lived up to expectation. We were allocated tables in a section of the pub so we could all sit together which made it a very sociable occasion. Sorting the bill/payments out afterwards was something of a trial but hopefully Nicola hasn't received any demands from the Management since for underpayment.

Most people decided to leave with the coach to go down to Boxgrove where we were set down to walk up the lane to see the remains of 13th century Boxgrove Priory and then into the adjacent church of St Mary and St Blaise. The stained-glass windows are lovely, as was a poppy display in readiness

for Remembrance Sunday. This was an added bonus to the outing so far as I was concerned, as it is many years since I last visited (whilst cycling up through Boxgrove to the lovely West Sussex villages beyond).

A most enjoyable, well organised day out, thank you.



An enthusiastic Joanna sitting in the cockpit

Valerie Stringer

DAY TRIP TO TANGMERE

On Monday 3rd November a number of us set off by coach to Tangmere, armed with a Fact Sheet kindly compiled by Brian Lavery. On arrival at the Museum and after hot drinks in the cafe, we met up for a talk given by Sheryl Green, an impressively knowledgeable lady who lectures on the Allied Intelligence Agents during the 2nd World War. She began by telling us that in 1940, the Special Operations Executive (S.O.E.) was set up and how Allied Intelligence Agents were flown in and out from Tangmere Aerodrome. The Westland Lysander was the aircraft mainly used to transport the Agents into Occupied Europe with the even more dangerous missions in then retrieving them as well as taking supplies to the resistance networks. Although discussing some of the heroic men who were Agents, such as Jean Moulin, Sheryl concentrated on the number of women Agents who served as Couriers and Radio operators, such as Diane Rowden, Cecily Lefort, Violette Szabo and Noor Inayet Khan, all of whom flew out from Tangmere and were tragically captured by the Nazis and executed. Sheryl also spoke of the rivalry of the Intelligence Agencies at the time.

We then moved on into the many different areas of the Museum, illustrating the history of Tangmere from 1917-1970 (when the aerodrome was closed down by the RAF). There were so many aircraft on display, I loved seeing the streamlined Hawker Hunter, the Spitfire and the Lightning Interceptor. So much information to take in, the time flew by, I was sorry to miss the Flight Simulator where visitors can "fly" a number of different aircraft.

After an enjoyable break for lunch at the "Anglesey Arms", the coach took us to the Priory of St. Mary and St. Blaise at Boxgrove which was initially established as a Benedictine Priory in the 12th Century. History tells us that a church existed here even before the Norman Conquest. The architecture is a mixture of Romanesque and Gothic with spectacular stained-glass windows. The ceiling depicts flowers and foliage. More recently a stained-glass window was installed commemorating the 1st American aviator to be killed in action during the Battle of Britain and his grave is in the churchyard. The Priory Guest House, close by, is now in ruins but it was where dignitaries were entertained and where travellers and pilgrims could rest.

Then it was back on the coach for the drive home! A most memorable day, a lot to absorb and certainly worth a return visit. My thanks to Nicola Mason for organising it and keeping us all together.

Gillian Wellings.