

Resume of events since the of Presentation of the Petition, Protect Biggin Hill St George's Royal Air Force Chapel of Remembrance, then standing at 17,000, to three Secretaries of State, the Prime Minister, and the London Borough of Bromley, on Battle of Britain Day 15th Sept 2017. The current number of signatories now stands at 25,360+. Sept 2018.

During the Autumn of 2017, demolition of the Vestry, part of the Listed Building housing the Aircrew Association stained glass window. No attempt had been made by the LBB or its BHMM Trust to contact the ACA at the planning stage to advise of this intention, it was left for members of the public to inform the Association. The Leader of the Council, Cllr Stephen Carr had resigned on Battle of Britain Day 15th Sept 2017, subsequently the new leader, Cllr Colin Smith, received a huge number of representations to halt the demolition and review the situation, but he refused. Even the Local Government Ombudsman investigating the planning procedures asked on our behalf whether LBB could hold back until he had concluded his review of what was a Council granting itself a most controversial unpopular approval, on a split vote requiring the Chair's casting vote.

Taking over of the St George's Room (the rear part of the Chapel) and its artefacts to be part of the so-called Museum. To view the Groundcrew and the Battle of Britain stained glass windows, other than at a great distance through a glass partition, will in future require payment of the Museum admission charge (circa £7.50). These windows and the collection in the St George's Room were all achieved through public donation.

During April 2018, all the trees around the Memorial Chapel, planted in the early years by the then Chapel Community, most of whom are probably now deceased, which created an air of tranquillity and gave the Chapel maturity, were cut down. Although this was part of the planning approval, when it happened there was disbelief that it was actually carried out, particularly during Springtime when flowering trees were in bloom and in the bird nesting season. These trees and shrubs, including two rare Irish Yews, have appeared in photos, paintings and even Christmas cards for the past 50 years and this is how the Chapel will always be remembered, not as it now appears - stark and industrial. Some objectors have even remarked that the 'new look' of the Chapel, now treeless with the flat-roofed windowless Museum encompassing it, reminds them of a building they had seen on visits to a Nazi Concentration Camp on the Austro-German border.

Currently, building of the ugly inadequate Museum replacing the large Vestry, which had been generally considered to be the most attractive part of the Chapel. With the ACA window above its arched doorway, it was the backdrop to many Wedding photos. Now described even by official bodies such as Historic England as just a 'Visitors Centre' it is being built with wholly inappropriate imported off-white, mass produced machine-made 'Euro' bricks (hand-made bricks were promised) manufactured by the huge Austro-German company Wienerberger AG. If an investigation of this company had been undertaken first it would have quickly revealed that it was involved in Jewish Forced Labour during the 1930s and 1940s and was consequently targeted by both Bomber Command and the American Airforce. Only since this has been revealed, have the Council

and its Trust had the audacity to try and claim that the choice of bricks was a deliberate act of reconciliation. The overwhelming public opinion is that they are inappropriate for this most sensitive site and it was this view that motivated the head of Buckinghamshire Brickmaker H G Matthews to offer his bespoke handmade bricks to the project free of charge. This would only have delayed the project by a week as just a few of the bricks had been laid and H G Matthews would have even purchased the Wienerberger bricks from the BHMM Trust. His remarkable offer was rejected and the inferior brick, which will inevitably discolour, has continued to be used. This fact must have now dawned on the BHMM Trust because the small 'test walls' that had been built behind the Chapel, to see how the laid Wienerberger bricks would appear against the red Surrey bricks of the Chapel, have now been painted white! (See attached photo). Winston Churchill, an amateur bricklayer himself and who instigated the building of the Chapel, surely would not have countenanced the use of such imported bricks when British bricks were available, even if they weren't free! He would also have appreciated the quality of the now demolished Vestry's detailed brickwork, in contrast to the plain stark walls of the Museum. Jim Matthews also pointed out to the Council that had a Museum project at Biggin Hill been publicised within the UK construction materials industry, most likely all the materials would have been obtained free of charge – such is the affection for the RAF.

Finally, it seems that despite claiming to have achieved funding of £5.3 million, there is not even enough money to complete the project! It was noticed that half of the rear part of the new build was not being started, this being the 'Learning Centre' described by the Council's own consultants as 'critical to the scheme'. This is probably why the Head of the Charles Darwin School, Sunil Chotal, has stepped down from being a member of the BHMM Trust. The truth is contained in a Bromley Council report going back to July 2017 which can be downloaded from the internet. (LBB Report No DRR17/032, 5th July 2017). The front page fraudulently states 'the project is now complete and all funding is secure', but the truth is hidden in the final pages which few would read, where it states the underfunding to be £600k and claiming that the Learning Centre is now a 'phase two' of the project - to be constructed presumably when the Museum is accepting visitors!? To 'bulldoze' this highly controversial scheme through, involving demolition of part of this most sensitive Listed Building against the public's will, whilst in reality not having the funding to complete the project and also before the Local Government Ombudsman has reported on the Planning application procedures, has to be viewed as extremely dubious.

Cambridge Professor of the History of Architecture, Gavin Stamp, born in Bromley, wrote three articles on what he saw as an ill-considered, inadequate, ugly project. The last one, written shortly before his untimely death on 30th Dec 2017, ended with: 'A Battle of Britain Memorial Museum ought to be above party and faction; and should be popular, uncontroversial and irenic *' (* meaning - conciliatory, non-confrontational, peaceful).

