

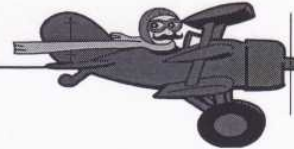


**HAPPY NEW YEAR** to all our members. I hope you all had a good time over Christmas and New Year. We are pleased to include in this edition news of an exciting project which Paddy Holroyde, our former Events Organiser, has got off the ground. I'll leave her to explain all about it inside, but I'll just take the opportunity to remind you that we are still looking for someone to help us continue to provide interesting events, and would be pleased to hear from anyone who could help out.

We have managed to organise events for the first half of the year, and we very much look forward to meeting you at some - or all! - of these.



**FORTHCOMING EVENTS**



**Thursday 24th FEBRUARY:** Come and join in an informal and fun quiz night. All answers will be found among the displays, so encyclopaedic knowledge of local history not needed! Byfleet Heritage Centre, Byfleet Library, 8.15pm

**Thursday 23rd MARCH:** Ray Sangar on The Martinsydes of Brooklands and Woking Byfleet Village Hall, Room A, 8.15pm

**Thursday 20th APRIL:** Philip Johnson on Hampton Court Palace. Byfleet Village Hall, Room A, 8.15pm

**Thursday 18th MAY:** Society AGM, followed by a talk by Mr Lyn Mileham on the History of Steam Transport. Byfleet Village Hall, Room A, 7.30pm.

**Thursday 22nd JUNE:** Simon Fowler of the Public Records Office talks at Byfleet Heritage Centre, Byfleet Library, 8.15pm.

**Members free. Non members £2  
Everyone very welcome.**

**Still Wanted!!**

**NEW EVENTS ORGANISER PLEASE.**

Paddy has been busy getting the Byfleet Oral History Group off the ground, which you can read more about in this newsletter. **But we still need a volunteer to take over from her as Events Organiser.**

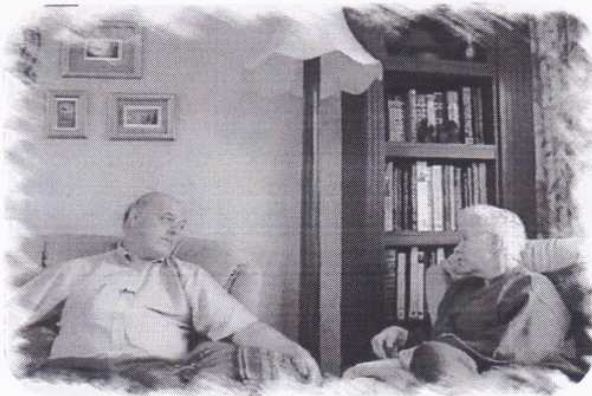
The committee have organised events up to and including June, and there are more ideas in the pipeline. But we really need someone to take over and co-ordinate our efforts, to make sure things run smoothly.

Can you help? The rest of the committee will lend a hand. Paddy says she found the job very enjoyable, so why not start the New Year with something different.

If you can help, please ring  
Tessa Westlake on 01932 351559

**A**  
Special Report of the  
Byfleet Oral History Group  
by Paddy Holroyde

Perhaps you've heard of the Byfleet Oral History Group. In Newsletters, and the local Press our Millennium Commission project has had a small airing. But, in view of the special study we are undertaking, the Heritage Society felt that you may like to take a closer look. To see what the venture is about, how it's evolving and whether it can be beneficial to you.



The Project is entitled "The Parish of Byfleet and It's People - An Oral History Study" I think the title describes the ambitions.

When we speak of 'Byfleet' in the context of the project, our parameters are the geographical boundaries that once encircled the Ancient Parish of Byfleet.

Interviewing a Byfleet resident (photo:)

2<sup>nd</sup> January 2000

## Have you lived here long?

Do you remember the big houses, or Rowley Bristow Hospital? Perhaps you work on the land? What about stories concerning the War years, childhood and education. The family laughter and tears. Your, or your family's Religious beliefs, aspirations and concerns. Remenisciences are so prized, but sadly, they can so easily be lost.

There are pearls of wisdom to record. Interesting and though provoking new material. Who can secure the recollections? Byfleet Oral History group are equipped and qualified to undertake this work.

Some of the group may be known to you. I do believe that they already view the Ancient Parish as a pretty special region, steeped in tradition and customs with a Royal connection.

People from Byfleet and West Byfleet. Those who now live, or have formerly lived in some parts of Pyrford. Even to the north, along the lower sections of St Georges Hill toward where Brooklands Museum now stands are eligible for inclusion. What's more, you won't necessarily have had to be born here, nor live here presently.

It's your story. You may prefer part, or all of your testimony to remain anonymous, that's perfectly acceptable. Your wishes will be respected and your requests honoured.

## For the Record...

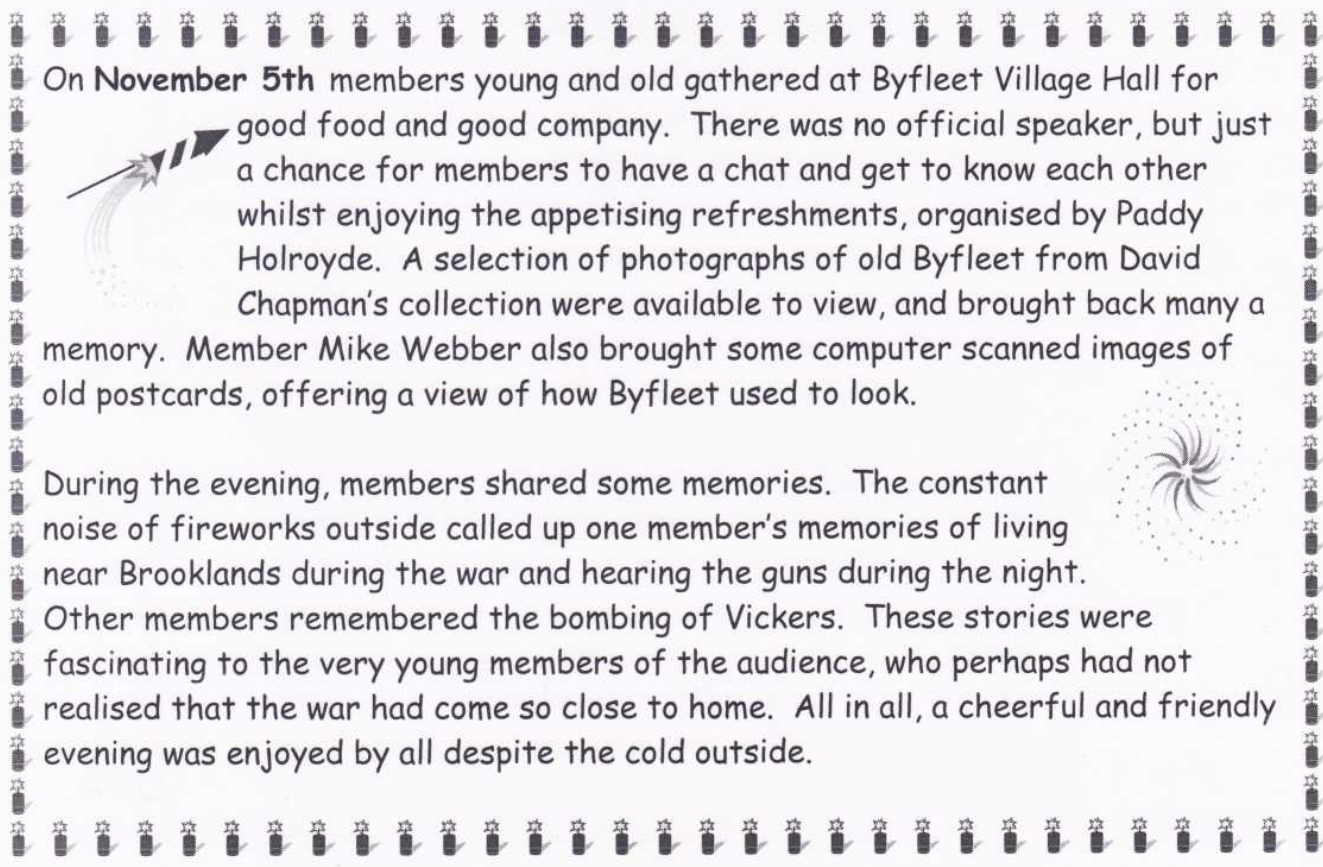
Did you miss a meeting? Find out how it went.

### Assizes of Bread and Ale, "Saddlers' Arms", Send Marsh, 20th October 1999.

The evening of 20th October was damp, slightly chill and windy when Phil and I and Ruth Minett gathered at Croxteth Hall in Ripley. We and others, mostly in Victorian dress were responding to the invitation to the Society by Lt-Col J W Molyneux-Child, Lord of the Manors of Papworth and Dedswell, to attend the Assizes of Cakes and Ale at The Saddlers Arms in Send Marsh Road. I had conducted a brief "recce" that lunchtime to ascertain the precise whereabouts of Croxteth Hall, and the parking arrangements, and had found His Lordship in pullover and wellies, busy making preparations for the evening. He told me that he was expecting 84 people (including, he thought, ten from Byfleet Heritage Society), a number of whom would be wearing authentic Victorian military uniform.

I suspect that the weather in fact discouraged many of the would-be participants, as those of us who stood watching the Morris dancers (two sides - gentlemen and ladies) outside the Hall had to wrap up well and put our umbrellas up. In due course we all progressed across the main road and up to Send Marsh Road to The Saddlers' Arms, where numbers then grew and there was more Morris dancing in the car park at the front. We met the baker (from Tring, Herts) who had brought the bread, baked to a mediaeval recipe, and the Ale Taster who, I noticed, donned numerous hats during the evening (more for his own amusement than any requirement to do so!). The point of the evening for the drinkers was to sample as many of the ales as possible (driving permitting!), for which we were given "voting slips". Later in the evening, the bread was cut with a ceremonial knife (borrowed quickly from behind the bar, as his Lordship's had been left behind!) and the Ale Taster declared it of good quality, as it had no stones in it! Sandwiches and sausage rolls were served throughout the pub and various singing and musical groups performed for our delectation. At the end of the evening the Ale Taster pronounced that all the ales at the Saddlers' Arms were well kept and expressed the gathering's thanks to the landlord and his wife, and to His Lordship.

Thanks to Pat Brown for this article. She has left photographs with me of her, Phil and Ruth looking very dapper in their Victorian dress. I'll bring them to the next meeting. Tessa



On November 5th members young and old gathered at Byfleet Village Hall for good food and good company. There was no official speaker, but just a chance for members to have a chat and get to know each other whilst enjoying the appetising refreshments, organised by Paddy Holroyde. A selection of photographs of old Byfleet from David Chapman's collection were available to view, and brought back many a memory. Member Mike Webber also brought some computer scanned images of old postcards, offering a view of how Byfleet used to look.

During the evening, members shared some memories. The constant noise of fireworks outside called up one member's memories of living near Brooklands during the war and hearing the guns during the night. Other members remembered the bombing of Vickers. These stories were fascinating to the very young members of the audience, who perhaps had not realised that the war had come so close to home. All in all, a cheerful and friendly evening was enjoyed by all despite the cold outside.

# Ancient Parish - Y2K Byfleet Revisited ...

FUNDED BY THE NATIONAL LOTTERY  
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Awards



∩ **A timely  
salute to the  
human spirit**

∩ **A serious  
study  
with a place for  
all**

∩ **We are  
waiting to hear  
from You  
please call us**



## WHAT IS ORAL HISTORY?

∩  
Oral History is the recording of peoples memories. It is the living history of everyone's unique life experiences.

∩  
Oral History enables the voices of people who have been hidden from history to be heard, and for those interested in their past to record personal experiences and those of their families and communities.

∩  
Oral History is new, interactive and exciting: It is shared history and a rare chance actually to talk to history face-to-face.

Although funded by HTA, this Millennium project is for people all ages. Please talk to us about any life stories that you, or your family may be willing to share with us.

**The Byfleet Oral History Group  
c/o Lismore, 10 Weymede,  
Byfleet, KT14 7DG  
Telephone 01932 406649  
email: rholroyde@unisonfree.net**

Members of Byfleet Heritage Society gathered in festive spirits on **17th December** to hear **Pat Eliot** talk on the **origins of our Christmas customs**.

Celebrations at this time of year began in pagan times. Early farmers, who relied on the sun for their crops, grew worried as the days grew shorter. So they devised ceremonies to bring back the sun.

In southern Europe the Romans celebrated Saturnalia on December 17th with eating, drinking and processions. People cross-dressed and slaves were elevated to masters for the day. Houses were decorated for luck with evergreen garlands and small terracotta figures, which nowadays represent the holy family. December 25th was the Birthday of the Unconquered Sun, when the god Mithras was asked to bring back the sun. Soldiers particularly worshipped Mithras, and so the religion was brought to all parts of the Roman Empire.

Northern Europeans celebrated the Feast of Yule. The Yule log was brought in from the forest and kept alight for seven days. If the log went out, this predicted bad harvests. Ghost stories were told, as during Yule the woods were surrounded by Odin and his band of gods disguised as Yule demons. If Odin came across a child who had been good, he would leave a present by his bed. Freya, the goddess of fertility, rode a golden boar, and a decorated boar's head was always served in her honour. A fruit in the mouth symbolised the sun. Even now pork appears in some form on our Christmas tables.

In the 4th century, Pope Gregory I fixed Christ's birthday as December 25th, and over the centuries, Christianity borrowed from the pagan traditions and disguised them. Evergreen decorations were kept, but holly came to represent Christ's agony on the cross, with the berries representing his blood. Mistletoe was banned as being too pagan, although it was hung on smokehouse doors to keep witches away from the meat. Odin the gift-bringer became the Father of Christmas and appeared in plays dressed in a long blue, fur-trimmed robe until the 18th century. He gradually merged with the Christian St Nicholas, Bishop of Myra in Turkey, on whose saint's day children received honey cakes. Originally mince pies were large pies made of many different meats and spices, baked in an oval dish representing the manger. The pie was topped with pastry and a pastry figure of Jesus. Eventually Oliver Cromwell banned them as idolatrous.

Tudor and Stuart festivities were so boisterous that Oliver Cromwell banned Christmas entirely in 1644. However, discrete celebrations went on in out of the way country places, and Charles II reinstated it in 1660. George III introduced the Christmas tree to court, later popularised by Prince Albert. But Christmas hit a real low in the 18th century. A decline in religious observance combined with workers in the new factories being unable to stop work for 12 days meant that Christmas was almost forgotten.

Then a picture of Queen Victoria by her Christmas tree revived the festival, as people copied the Royal family. Also Charles Dickens was interested in the old customs and started to put them into his novels. A gift-bringing figure had died out in Britain, although he still lived on the continent. Then an illustrated version of Professor Clement Clarke Moore's "A Night Before Christmas" in 1848 showed a fat, jolly St Nicholas in a red, fur-trimmed tunic. Coca-Cola changed the colour of the fur trim to white, and so the modern Santa was born.

Christmas cards were invented by Sir Henry Cole as a short cut to the long letters it was traditional to write to family and friends. His invention co-incided with the Penny Post and improvements in printing, and the idea really took off. Robins were a popular theme - as were Christmas nudes! In the 1880s the Sunday School Union demanded a more religious theme!

Lastly the pantomime was originally a period of mime while the scenery was being changed between acts. The Victorians lengthened it, giving it words and songs. Elements of ancient Saturnalia crept in with dancing and cross-dressing.

So we could see that while our traditions have been shaped by the Victorians, they themselves borrowed from some very ancient times.

## SOCIETY NEWS

### ADDLESTONE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Members might be interested to know of events held by Addlestone Historical Society. All meetings take place at the Community Centre, Station Road, Addlestone at 8pm. There is a charge of £1 for visitors. New members always welcome.

Feb 1st: Members evening	Sept 5th: To be advised
March 7th: Wey and Arun Canal Trust Commander J M Phillips OBE	Oct 3rd: Recent Archaeological Work in NW Surrey Rob Poulton
April 4th: Mount Browne and Surrey Police Speaker to be advised	Nov 7th: New Life for Old Theatres Ken Woodward
May 2nd: Paper Mills of Surrey Professor Alan Crocker	Dec 5th: Social Evening.
June 6th: AGM at 8pm followed by "Chertsey Tiles" Victor Spink	

### UPDATE ON HELP WANTED

We are still open to offers of new committee members, as you may have seen in the last newsletter. Ideally we would like someone to help out with fundraising ideas, or to help spread the word about the Society.

Also, we would like someone to keep an eye on preparations for Parish Day and the Woking Local History Festival. Although there is not much involved, organising our attendance at these would be very much easier if we had someone to give us a gentle reminder once a year of what needs doing in good time.

Either job would not take up too much of your time, and the committee meets once every six weeks or so. So don't be shy! If you would like to help out, or if you would like to talk to someone to see what might be involved, please ring **Tessa Westlake** on **01932 351559**. Thanks very much.

History enthusiasts should not miss  
**The South East Regional Industrial  
Archaeology Conference 2000,**  
at Chertsey Hall on April 1. Tickets are  
£9.50 until March 17th. Bookings after  
this date, or at the door will cost £12. It  
will consist of a lecture and displays  
organised by the Surrey Industrial History  
Group.  
For more information please ring 01372  
720040



Elmbridge Museum  
are having a Film  
Evening on Monday  
February 7th at Wey-  
bridge Library Hall. To re-  
serve your seat or for more in-  
formation, please  
ring  
01932 846081

