



Byfleet Heritage Society.

Issue 14

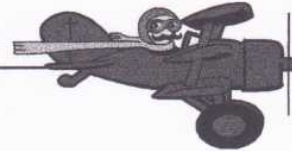
Newsletter

November 2000

*November came in with storms and floods, and I hope all of you managed to avoid the worst. In the hectic build up to Christmas I hope you will find time to put the dates of our forthcoming events into your diaries, and find time to come along. Some details are to be announced, so watch this space. We still need someone to help co-ordinate our efforts on this side, so see the article below for more details and please give volunteering your consideration!*

*As members will know, our Chairman, Doug Bright sadly died in August. We are working on a commemoration for the Heritage Centre, which without Doug would probably not exist. He will be greatly missed.*

### FORTHCOMING EVENTS



**Thursday 14th DECEMBER:** Jim Allen of Byfleet Players will give a talk with a Christmassy feel.  
Byfleet Village Hall, Room A, 8.15pm

**Tuesday 16th JANUARY:** Iain Wakeford will speak to the Society on Sir Anthony Browne, friend and favourite of Henry VIII and former owner of Byfleet Manor.  
Byfleet Heritage Centre, Byfleet Library, 8.15pm.

**Thursday 15th FEBRUARY:**  
Byfleet Heritage Centre, Byfleet Library, 8.15pm

**Thursday 26th MARCH:**  
Byfleet Heritage Centre, Byfleet Library, 8.15pm

**Thursday 26th APRIL:**  
Byfleet Heritage Centre, Byfleet Library, 8.15pm

**Thursday 24th MAY:**  
Society AGM  
Byfleet Village Hall, Room A

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

As you can see, the committee has booked dates for the New Year, with some speakers still to be confirmed, so make a note in your diaries. More details in the next newsletter, and in a separate diary sheet to be issued soon.

We can get so far, but we still need someone on the Committee to co-ordinate our efforts. Please don't think we are looking for someone to take on the whole thing alone! Beryl has kindly volunteered to book the venues, and the committee as a whole produce and follow up ideas for speakers or outings. But this makes things a bit fragmented.

What we need is someone who could make sure all the pieces end up in the right place, such as being the point of contact for the speaker, being there to welcome them on the night (or arranging for another committee member to do so), telling me if the slide projector, screen etc is needed, and letting our lovely tea ladies know the next batch of dates. It will not be a case of being left to book all our venues and speakers on your own! Honest!

Please help. If you would like to volunteer or would like more explanation of what would be involved, please ring Tessa Westlake on 01932 351559. Very many thanks.

## For the Record...

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

On Friday, September 22nd members were treated to a view of Byfleet in the 20th century via the postcard collection of Mike Webber and photos of former Byfleet resident David Chapman.

Mike started with a postcard which had posed a bit of a mystery for him. Postmarked 1932, it showed the Rover League at the St Nicholas Home for Crippled Waifs and Strays, Pyrford. This puzzled him until he found other postcards of St Nicholas, where it became clear that this was the former name for the Rowley Bristow Hospital.

Another mystery, so far unsolved, is to do with another postcard labelled the Victoria and Albert Hospital, Byfleet, dated October 1917 and showing what Mike presumes to be wounded soldiers from World War One. Does anyone know where this hospital was? Or the Blytheswood Hospital?

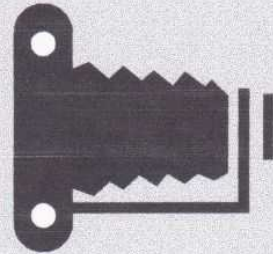
We saw many delights on our evening in Byfleet of times gone by. We saw people sauntering along in the middle of the road at Byfleet Corner – unthinkable now, and the entrance to the village before the M25. We saw some of the large houses such as Lake House, where members remembered skating on the lake and also scrumping apples, Old Lodge and Royston Chase Hotel which have long since disappeared.

Down by the Wey Navigation we saw the recently demolished Boat House in its former glory, and also Byfleet Wharf, where one member remembers the Cartwheel Club meeting in one of the buildings. Apparently all sorts went on, but despite the audience's curiosity, he refused to be drawn further!

Many of Byfleet's vanished buildings were revisited, such as Stream Cottages, which were formerly the workhouse, the old Tithe Barn (now Bruce Close), Byfleet Brewery and Foxlake Farm. York Road Furniture Works also featured where aircraft petrol tanks which could be jettisoned once used were made during the war. The factory employed 250-300 people. Another former Byfleet business was Ebenezer Mears, whose fine steam lorry featured on one postcard, sporting the telephone number Byfleet 17. And Freeland's Ironmongers was fondly remembered, being known as the "Tuesday shop", as whenever you went in and asked for anything the answer was invariably that "it would be in on Tuesday".

It was a delightful look back to a more peaceful time, when the streets were not lined with parked cars and goods were delivered to your door by a horse and cart.

Much has changed greatly in the last 100 years, but it was heartening to see some things still looked the same, such as the church and the village hall. We were very grateful to Mike for sharing his collection with us and taking us down memory lane.



Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year  
to all our Members



The Society's October event found members and guests comfortably snuggled into the Children's Section of Byfleet library learning about the experiences and work of the Byfleet Oral History Group.

Paddy Holroyde gave a detailed account of the Byfleet Oral History Group, from an original suggestion within the Society, to its present position of having completed eighteen interviews in a study entitled "The Parish of Byfleet and Its People".

She explained that the Group applied for funding via Help the Aged, through the Millennium Commission Award Scheme. Help the Aged looked for an enterprise that offered people an opportunity to use the skills and abilities acquired throughout their lives. The output of which must prove to be of significant benefit to the whole community. BOHG's project was deemed ideal and a grant of just under £4,000 was given.

Part of the money was spent on purchasing recording equipment and training for volunteer interviewers. Contributors were sought and encouraged to lay down on audio tape, fresh and original material not available from any other source. This unique accumulation of personal experience and recollection is being archived by the Surrey History Service at their Woking Centre. A tape loan service is also being set up by the Oral History Group, where tapes from the collection can be borrowed. At the moment this service is free.

Mike Webber demonstrated the equipment used by the Group and explained how the interviews are set up and conducted. The kit consists of items that have become the national standard for recordings of this nature. Mike explained that a "Morantz" professional portable tape recorder is taken along to a contributor's home. Recordings are usually made using a small "tie clip" style microphone, although a single microphone on a table is sometimes preferred. Once "wired up" with these little inconspicuous microphones, contributors often forget that they are being recorded: one person even confided to the interviewer, "Just between you and me....."

After the interview has been laid down a copy is made and the original virgin tape is lodged with the Surrey History Service. Providing secure storage for the growing collection is of paramount importance, but placing the material into the public domain is valuable too. Eventually Surrey History Service hopes to provide facilities for students of history to listen to the recordings. However, Byfleet Oral History Group retains the Copyright.

During the refreshment interval, the audience was able to listen to a compilation tape, composed of brief snips from each of the first sixteen interviews.

In summing up, Paddy told of future plans for the Group and we were delighted to hear that the venture will continue, well beyond its original time frame. If you would like to have more information from the Byfleet Oral History Group, do telephone 01932 406649, or email Paddy via [rhloyde@ntlworld.com](mailto:rhloyde@ntlworld.com)

## Vickers Evening



On **November 16th** former Vickers/BAC employees gathered at Byfleet Heritage Centre to remember the factory and the aeroplanes it produced at Brooklands. It had been pointed out to the Society that the Heritage Centre had no display on Vickers, which had played such a large part in the life of the village. So it was decided to invite people along to share memories, anecdotes and photographs of life at Vickers.

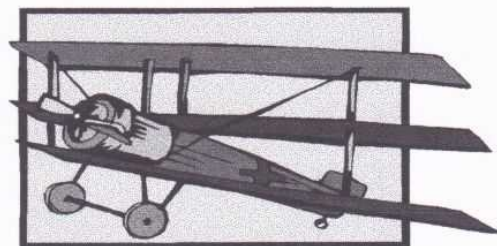
A small display of the pictures already obtained by the Society helped to prompt the memories of those present. Tessa Westlake started the evening by explaining the purpose of the meeting. She hoped that by collecting information and pictures, the Society would be able to tell the story of Vickers, not just the aeroplanes it made and the work it provided for the village, but the large part the company played in the social side too. There were pictures of various Vickers sports teams, and many present remembered eagerly awaiting the annual children's Christmas parties.

Vickers, originally set up in Erith in Kent in 1911, first came to Brooklands to test its Number 1 Monoplane. The Vickers Flying School was set up in 1912, and the aircraft factory followed in 1915. The Vickers housing estate on Caillard Road and Dawson Road was built to house the workers.

The Vimy, Wellington, Vanguard, Valiant, VC10 and Concorde are just some of the famous names in aviation that were made at Brooklands, as well as the TSR2, a top secret project at the time. One member remembered security being so tight that on remembering he'd left his pass in his coat pocket inside, he wasn't allowed to go back in to fetch it even though the guard had just seen him come out! But he also remembered window cleaners being allowed in without any problems! Other Byfleet residents remembered being advised to open all windows when completed planes were about to take off, in case the vibration caused the glass to shatter. There was barely room for take off from Brooklands, so the minimum of fuel was loaded. Planes had to reland almost immediately at Wisley to refuel.

There were memories of wartime too. Vickers was badly bombed in 1940, leaving 83 dead. Two pieces of shrapnel-pierced girder from that bombing are on display at Brooklands Museum. One villager remembered hiding in her under-stairs cupboard and seeing the door twist with the blast of the bomb. Others remembered the 24 barrage balloons set up to foil a repeat attempt.

Some marvellous memories and photos were shared, and in due course the Society should be able to tell this part of the village's history at the Heritage Centre. Don't forget, if you have had your memory jogged by hearing about our meeting, please write down what you remember and hand it in at Byfleet Library, and preserve it for posterity!



# SOCIETY NEWS

## *A Family History Query—can you help?*

*We have had a letter from a Miss Grisdale, who is trying to find out about the history of Binfield House.*

*“Ann Jackson, an ancestor of mine, gave her place of birth as “Binfield, Surrey” on the 1851 census. She would have been born about 1773 but I cannot find her baptism on the printed PR transcripts for Byfleet or surrounding area at the Woking RO.*

*There does not seem to be much written about Binfield other than a reference in Gover’s “Place Names of Surrey” which says it appears on the 1548 land registry and the 6” OS...[L R Stevens “Byfleet A Village of England] only mentions Binfield by virtue of two trade directory entries that have been reprinted for Byfleet and list Binfield House in 1862 and 91.”*

*If anyone knows or has anything that may be of use to Miss Grisdale in researching Binfield, or knows of anyone who has an interest, (or indeed, if you think you may also be a descendant of Ann Jackson!) please ring Tessa Westlake on 01932 351559. Many thanks.*



## **More Family History.**

Noel Riekie is trying to find out about his ancestors, also from Byfleet.

His mother was born in “old Brewery Road, Byfleet” in 1906, and the family emigrated to Western Australia in 1912.

His mother’s parents were David Lewis Fagence and Henrietta Susan Fagence, nee Polley. David Fagence was a master plumber and is believed to have had a bicycle shop in Byfleet.

David Chapman’s collection of photographs has turned up trumps again, and I have been able to forward Mr Riekie a picture of not only his grandparents, but his great-grandparents. If anyone else has any information that might be useful in Mr Riekie’s search, please let Tessa Westlake know on 01932 351559, or leave a note at the library. Or if you are on-line, you could e mail Mr Riekie direct on Nriekie@senet.com.au.

## ***Does Anyone Remember.....?***

A member has heard of two West Byfleet coal merchants who owned their own railway coal wagons, but he is not sure about the livery of these wagons.

Is there a railway enthusiast out there who knows, or even anyone who remembers seeing the wagons?

If you can help, please either leave a note with the librarians at Byfleet Library, or call Tessa Westlake on 01932 351559.

Thank you.



Jeff Sechiari, our Membership Secretary, would like to thank everyone for their kind good wishes during his illness earlier this year—it was very much appreciated.

It’s good to see Jeff back in the swing of things.



## Corporate Membership

The Society currently offers individual and family membership but we are now introducing Corporate Membership, open to all companies with an interest in the local community.

Corporate membership, which costs £25, will entitle members to receive two copies of each issue of the Newsletter and Journal, together with free entry for two to all Society events.

The names of Corporate Members will also appear on lists in the Heritage Room and Newsletter.

So if you would like your company to join the Society, or if you would just like to take out an advert in the newsletter, please don't hesitate to contact me for further information or a sample Newsletter. An example of the type of advert you could have is shown below.

Many thanks.

Jeff Sechiari, Manor Side East, Mill Lane, Byfleet, Surrey KT14 7RS (01932 341084)

## The Heritage Society Abroad!

At the meeting in June, the idea of a trip to the National Monuments Record in Swindon was raised, and some interest expressed.

This would be the furthest afield the Society has ventured to date, and we would like to see if there was enough interest in the trip before getting down to organising the nitty gritty.

If you are interested, would you mind either leaving a note at Byfleet library, or dropping a note through my door (8 Brewery Lane, Byfleet) or giving me a ring (01932 351559), expressing interest and also if you have any strong preferences as to the time of year or how the trip is undertaken. And watch this space for more details.

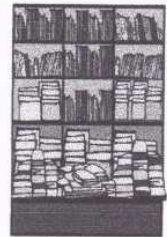
## FRIENDS OF BYFLEET LIBRARY

**27th November** at the library at **7.30pm**. A **150th Birthday Party** is also planned, with lots of fun and games, on **December 2nd, 2-4pm**.

Do go along and support your library. Byfleet would be a much poorer place without it, and once again it is a case of "use it or lose it".

The Friends of Byfleet Library is up and running, with regular meetings being held to think up ideas to make the library even more enticing.

You might like to know about their next couple of meetings. A Friends meeting will be held on



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on becoming a  
Corporate Member  
See above for details.**