



Byfleet Heritage Society.

Issue 30

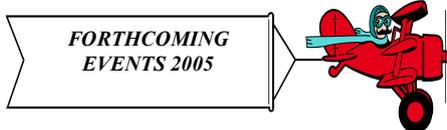
Newsletter

February 2006

Welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter, which, as you can see, contains details of the interesting programme of speakers arranged for us by Chris Glasow. There really is something for everyone in the coming year, and we look forward to seeing you at the Heritage Centre.

2006 is also the 10th anniversary of the opening of the Heritage Centre by Sir Cliff Richard. We are planning on having a bit of a party, and very much hope that you can come along to help us celebrate. Plans are afoot and details are being finalised, so please see the back page for more information. And, of course, if you feel you would like to become involved in any way, big or small, we would welcome you with open arms!

I'll sign off with a request to also note the article on the back page about continuing to use the library. With libraries being threatened with closure all over Surrey, we really do need to use it or run the risk of losing it! Thanks very much and hope to see you soon.



2006

Thursday 16th FEBRUARY: Mulberrys to Motorways by **Ken Bewsey**
A history of the Mouchel Parkman company
Byfleet Heritage Centre, Byfleet Library, 8.15pm

Thursday 16th MARCH: The History of Aviation at Brooklands by **Julian Temple**, Curator of Aviation at Brooklands Museum.
Byfleet Heritage Centre, Byfleet Library, 8.15pm.

Thursday 13th APRIL: The Archaeology of Surrey's Past by **Rob Poulton**, Surrey Archaeology Unit Manager
A talk on the techniques and methods used on some of Surrey's Archaeological sites
Byfleet Heritage Centre, Byfleet Library, 8.15pm.

Thursday 4th MAY: SOCIETY AGM
followed by **Signs in the Byfleet Landscape** by **Judie English**
A look at the clues to our history in the landscape of Byfleet

PLEASE NOTE that this meeting will be held in the CAWSEY ROOM, BYFLEET VILLAGE HALL, 7.30PM

Thursday 8th JUNE: Hampton Court behind the scenes by **Ian Franklin**, a Warder at the Palace.
Does the Hampton Court ghost really exist?
Byfleet Heritage Centre, Byfleet Library, 8.15pm

Thursday 6th JULY: Roman Transport in Surrey by **Dr David Bird**, Surrey Principal Archaeologist.
A look at Roman activity in Surrey
Byfleet Heritage Centre, Byfleet Library, 8.15pm.

Thursday 14th SEPTEMBER: Telegraphs and Semaphores by **Richard Muir**
Admiralty signalling in Surrey
Byfleet Heritage Centre, Byfleet Library, 8.15pm

Thursday 12th OCTOBER: Stuart Surrey by **Prof Peter Edwards**
A look into the world of Surrey during Stuart times
Byfleet Heritage Centre, Byfleet Library, 8.15pm

Thursday 9th NOVEMBER: The Ancient City of Rome by **Ian Franklin**
Rome, its people and places
Byfleet Heritage Centre, Byfleet Library, 8.15pm

Thursday 7th DECEMBER: Christmas get-together. Speaker to be confirmed.
Byfleet Heritage Centre, Byfleet Library, 8.15pm

**Members free. Guests £2
Everyone very welcome.**

For the Record...

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

Byfleet Heritage Society's November talk featured Jim Phillips from the Wey and Arun Canal Trust, who spoke of "London's Lost Route to the Sea". The Wey and Arun Canal was once 23 miles long, linking the Rivers Wey and Arun and forming a vital route from London to the English Channel. It actually consists of two canals. The Arun Navigation, running between Newbridge and Pallingham, was opened in 1787. The Wey and Arun Junction Canal, stretching from Newbridge to Stonebridge Wharf south of Guildford, was built in 1813. Work on the canal was intense, as there were 26 locks to engineer, and all this was done with only 30 navvies, some Irish and some French prisoners of war from the Napoleonic Wars. The canal ran commercially until trade declined with the coming of the railways. In 1871 an Act of Abandonment was passed and the Arun canal was officially closed, although parts of it were already derelict. The Arun Navigation lasted until the beginning of the 20th century, but eventually it too closed. The canal remained abandoned until 1970, when the Wey and Arun Trust was formed, with the aim of restoring the canal to its former glory.



An amazing amount has been achieved by the Trust since its creation. There are three aqueducts along the canal, one of which has been restored at Lordings Lock. This carried the canal over the River Arun, and had to be rebuilt from river level up. There was also a waterwheel at this aqueduct, which lifted water from the river to the canal. The wheel was kept turning by using the flow of the river, which was directed through one of the arches of the aqueduct. Each vane carried up 2 gallons, and the wheel turned at about 4rpm. Restoring these aqueducts is no easy task, and involves much heavy machinery, such as at Drungewick, where a 43 tonne excavator was driven onto the site. Also 26 piles, each 12 meters deep, had to be bored, and a new roadbridge had to be built.

Some of the locks have also been restored. Loxwood Lock proved to be a huge project, as the lock, an aqueduct and a bridge had to be built. At one point, the Trust had 68 volunteers laying bricks to cover the bottom of the lock. There are five stone built locks on the canal, all within 10 miles of the original quarry. This was as far as a cart load of stone could travel in one day, so if the sites were over 10 miles away, it would incur another day's cartage fees. Building a lock is not a straightforward matter of simply putting a hole in the ground. The brick walls are arched to withstand the pressure of the earth and prevent the lock caving in. In some cases, the work done 200 years before was still in good condition. For example, the brickwork on the bottom of Brewhurst Lock needed no repointing, despite being submerged for 2 centuries. The canal presently ends at Loxwood High Street, where the canal has met an obstacle. To continue, they would have to cross the road, but are not allowed to raise the road. Therefore the only solution is to tunnel under the road, lower the canal and build a new lock to regain the lost footage – at a cost of approximately £1.2m!

At present, 2.5 miles of the canal is operational, and a boat rally is held once a year. The Trust owns three boats, 2 work boats and a boat for public trips. All are named after figures from the Canal's history. The trip boat is the Zachariah Keppel, the original contractor who built the canal. The first workboat is the May Upton, named after the surveyor who mapped out the line of the original canal, and the third boat is the John Smallpiece, the clerk to the original canal group.

The Trust continues its work to restore as much of the canal as possible. To make life easy, three things have to be in place – enough water to fill the canal, enough money to carry out new works and maintenance, and the permission of the landowners where the canal passes through their property. Unfortunately, there is often a shortage of water, landowners' attitudes can vary and, of course, there is never enough money! But the Trust and its loyal band of volunteers keep working away to ensure that the original navigable link between London and the sea is restored, and that the Canal remains a pleasant place to take a walk, do some fishing, or take a boat trip while enjoying its unique history. The Society thanked Mr Phillips for a look both at the old canal, and at all the work being carried out to ensure its restoration.



For our December meeting, **Mike Webber** continued his display of David Chapman's photos of Byfleet, this time covering the area **outside Byfleet between 1978 and 1991**. These showed that, although it only seems like five minutes since these pictures were taken, quite a lot has changed even in that time in and around Byfleet.

We began our tour in Woking town centre, where a photo taken in 1989 showed the digging of the foundations for the Peacocks Centre. On closer inspection, a sign in the photo showed that the resident engineers for the project were our own Mouchels. The photos showed other building work in the area, including photos of West Byfleet before and after the arrival of Waitrose. In 1984 the site was a large car park, but in 1987 building work on the supermarket began. Differences in the traffic control were also noticeable, and members were reminded of the old mini-roundabout that used to be at Byfleet Corner, but has since been changed to a system of traffic lights. A nice local touch to the photo was pointed out when members recognised Mr Clarke standing outside his jewellers shop on the left hand side of the road just by the roundabout.

In the other direction from Byfleet, along the Wey Navigation Canal, we saw a photo of the building site for Pyrford Marina, near Pyrford Lock in 1983. The signs outside proudly proclaimed the planned opening of the marina in "summer 1983". However, another photo taken in July of that year showed that this did not quite happen. But despite delays, the Marina has been functioning busily now for many years.

Of course, the biggest building project to affect the village was the arrival of the M25, which opened completely in 1986. We saw many photos of this huge operation as the road gradually developed from a sandy, empty stretch, to the fully operational motorway. How the levels of traffic have increased was shown by a photo of the Byfleet stretch in 1984, showing only 4 cars! There were also stories of people cycling along the motorway before it opened, or driving along and not seeing a single car. We were told of one lady from Addlestone who cycled along the motorway once it was opened—something that no-one would be keen to try today! One interesting photo showed a contractors' "village" in Derisley's field. The mobile homes had been made to look like they had always been there with the addition of a lovely little garden. The owner had planted a beautiful flower bed, spelling out the words "Balfour Beatty M25 1982".

Over at Brooklands, things were happening too. We saw pictures of a cycle race prior to Parish Day in 1982, and the shooting of an advert for the Opel Kadett in 1984. In 1986 Vickers' flight shed number 2 was demolished. VC10s had been assembled there, and the shed was so vast it was known as "The Church". The shed was also reputed to be haunted. A sign in the photo showed that the asbestos and demolition disposal contractors were Byfleet's own Ebenezer Mears & Son. To end, we saw pictures of the Sultan of Oman's VC10 arriving at Brooklands museum in 6th July 1987. This was a large-scale operation, involving taking down lampposts and either removing or chopping back trees that fell in the way of the flight path. Once again David's photos had given members a delightful trip down memory lane.

In January the Society welcomed **Professor Peter Edwards** who provided us with an insight into **Tudor Surrey**. During the 16th century, Surrey was home to many famous people and events that had an impact not only on Surrey, but on the whole of England.

For example, Haling in Surrey was the home of Lord Howard of Effingham, Lord High Admiral and leader of the victorious fleet against the Spanish Armada in 1588. His noble status meant that the office was given to him rather than a mere gentleman like Sir Francis Drake, even though Drake was by far the more experienced sailor. The huge reality of the threat of the invasion of mainland England was brought home by Professor Edwards' slides from Wimbledon Parish Church, where 16th century arms and armour is still stored. Every village and town had a militia who were trained and held in readiness should an invasion occur. This militia could prove vital, as at the time England had a very small professional army.

Another major event that touched lives at all social levels was the Reformation. There was great religious upheaval during the reigns of the Tudors from Henry VIII to Elizabeth I. Henry first broke from Rome in order to marry Elizabeth's mother, Anne Boleyn. He also took the opportunity to "reform" the church in England, investigating the monasteries and finding them corrupt. Very many of these institutions were dissolved, and Henry VIII and his favourites also happened to make a large profit along the way. Newark Priory near Ripley was dissolved in the 1530s and its goods and furnishings all sold. Even the stone from the walls and lead from the roofs was sold off or reused. The loss of Catholic religious institutions had a knock on effect. Henry's son Edward VI abolished chantry chapels. These chapels, such as the Lovekin Chapel in Kingston upon Thames, were set up to provide masses for the soul of the founder to ease their passage to heaven. The chapels also did a lot of good work in the community, especially giving elementary education to local children. Once abolished, the education provision in England suffered a set back, until Edward's grammar schools were up and running.

Royalty frequently visited and stayed in Surrey. Henry VIII built the famous Nonesuch Palace, and he also stayed at Oatlands in Weybridge. Byfleet Manor was owned by Henry's Master of the Horse, Sir Anthony Browne, and the manor was also part of the Honour of Hampton Court. Slightly more modest houses from the Tudor period still survive in Surrey too. Tillings Farmhouse in Bramley is actually a late medieval single storey house. However, as the population increased in 16th century Surrey, so did general wealth, which led to a period of home improvements and rebuilding. Clues in the structure of the building, such as timbers in the roofspace and soot on the loft wall from before a chimney was installed showed that another storey had been added to make the more luxurious two storey house that exists today.

Many clues remain in Surrey as to its industrial and agricultural past. Use of land varied according to the underlying soil type. In the chalky areas, sheep were farmed, and the dung would also help to improve the quality of the soil. Where the soil was very light and sandy there was a lot of common land, and the Surrey peasants could exercise their rights of common, such as grazing their animals or collecting furze for firewood. We gained an insight into the life of a Tudor Surrey farmer with a look at John Stevens' accounts. He farmed wheat and rye, and also bred cattle and sheep on the downs. As the economy of 16th century Surrey was basically rural, markets developed to sell on the produce to the hungry growing population. Some towns had markets two or three times a week, plus an annual fair. Kingston market was one of the larger ones, and as the need for markets increased, certain parts of the town became designed to sell certain goods. Kingston market was a corn market, but there were also areas specifically to sell horses and apples, uses which still lend their names to the Horse Fair and Apple Market areas of Kingston today.

Heavy industry also existed in Surrey. Friday Street still shows evidence of the 16th century iron industry. The road into the town runs across the top of a dam made to dam the lake to power hammers to beat the iron. The iron industry used large amounts of charcoal, but contrary to popular belief, industry did not destroy the woodlands, but actually helped them. In order to ensure a constant supply of wood for charcoal, trees were coppiced, or had their main trunk cut out, encouraging the growth of smaller branches around the base which were much more suitable for charcoal making.

Of course, a rise in population led to a rise in prices and some unemployment and poverty. We ended the talk with a thought for those less fortunate members of the population. Parishes were ordered to provide for their own poor, but petty pilfering was rife, even though stealing goods worth more than 1 shilling could result in the death penalty. We ended with a slide of the stocks, where wrongdoers were punished and which still exist in Abinger.

BYFLEET FACES AND PLACES

An aerial view of St Mary's church. The postcard is unused, so we don't have a postmark to get an idea of the date, but as you can see, the church stands in solitary splendour.

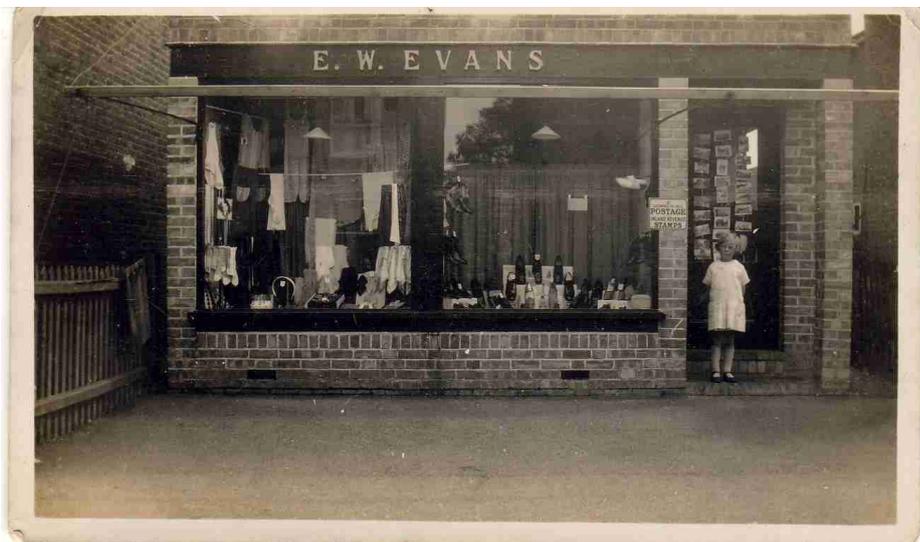
The photo was taken before the building of the Manor Estate, or even before the houses in Church Road.



A works outing in a lovely charabanc. We have no information about who these fine gentlemen might be or even where they have ended up. Looking at the stoney beach, it could be Brighton or Worthing, but who knows?

If you have any information, please let us know!

A picture of E W Evans of Chertsey Road. This is the shop whose atmosphere we have tried to evoke in the display in the Heritage Centre, which contains quotes from people who remember watching Mr Evans working away mending boots and shoes.



It's our birthday



It was a whole 10 years ago that Sir Cliff Richard came to open our Heritage Centre at Byfleet Library, so we feel the need to celebrate. **The Woking Community Play Association** have agreed to perform a play for us based on Byfleet's rich and interesting history on **Saturday 27th May**, hopefully on Plough Green. The Association will work with Jeff Sechiari and other members of the Society. They are particularly looking for help in writing up some new material, but if anyone is interested in taking part at any stage of the theatrical process, or is just interested in seeing what is going on, there will be a meeting to discuss the project on 13th Feb in the Plough at 7.30pm. If you cannot make the meeting, but would like to find out more, or offer assistance in any way, please contact Jeff Sechiari on 341082, or keep an eye out at the library.



Come along and be part of the fun and help make this a party to remember, and make a note of the date in your diaries.

BYFLEET LIBRARY.

AS YOU MAY HAVE SEEN IN THE LOCAL PRESS, SURREY'S LIBRARIES ARE AGAIN UNDER PRESSURE AND THREAT OF CLOSURE. ALTHOUGH WE HAVE MANAGED TO HANG ONTO OUR LIBRARY SO FAR, WE MUST NOT GET COMPLACENT, AND IT REALLY IS A CASE OF "USE IT OR LOSE IT".

PLEASE ENCOURAGE ALL YOUR FRIENDS AND FAMILY TO POP IN AND BORROW A BOOK, OR TAKE PART IN ONE OF THE MANY OTHER ACTIVITIES ON OFFER, FROM CHILDREN'S STORY TIME TO THE READING GROUP TO THE BRIDGE CLUB. AND, OF COURSE, OUR HERITAGE CENTRE.

PLEASE HELP TO MAKE SURE WE DON'T LOSE THIS VALUABLE VILLAGE RESOURCE.

Those of you who like to do a little websurfing will be interested to know that Chris Glasow is busy developing our very own website. Soon members will be able to access all their heritage society needs on-line.

The site is at www.byfleetheritage.com, but is still in the first stages of development at the moment. If there is anything particular you would like to see included, please let us know by leaving a note at the library, or ringing Tessa on 351559.



Don't forget

If you would be able to join a rota to help with providing the teas at the end of our monthly meetings, please let us know. Many

