

Issue 65

Newsletter

January 2016

A very happy New Year to all our members, and we wish you all the best for 2016. This year marks the twentieth anniversary of the opening of the Heritage Room at Byfleet Library. Many of you will remember the occasion, which was the brainchild of Doug Bright who was aided by many willing volunteers. If you weren't there (or if you were, and would like to reminisce), a look back at the event is inside.

Also see below for our new diary of talks, which Jeff Sechiari has been working hard to put together. We hope you enjoy them, and please remember that Jeff is always grateful for any suggestions or help with organising speakers, and would be delighted to hear from you.



All talks are held at **St Mary's Centre for the Community, Stream Close, Byfleet** and will begin at **8.15pm** (except for the AGM which begins at 7.30pm)

Thursday 21st January: Chris Glasow takes us on a Trip Down Memory Lane.

A look at the history of mankind's use of memory technology - from Stonehenge to computers.

Thursday 18th February: Join us when we have our old friend **Iain Wakeford** to tell us all about **Old Woking As It Was**.

Thursday 17th March: Tonight Dick Alder will speak on Ancient & Heritage Trees – A look at some of the interesting and historic trees in Weybridge, Walton, Hersham and Cobham.

Thursday 21st April: "Putting Byfleet on the Map": Phil Wilson will guide us through some historical maps of Byfleet, in particular the early work of the Ordnance Survey in and around Byfleet.

Thursday May 19th: Society AGM (Please note earlier start time of 7.30pm), followed by Byfleet Heritage meeting. Join us this month as we celebrate the 20th birthday of the opening of the Heritage Room.

Thursday 16th June: Speaker TBA

Thursday 14th July: Speaker TBA

Thursday 8th September: Jim Allen reviews the Local Stars of Variety and Music Hall. Come and find out about the stars who lived nearby.

Thursday 6th October: Members' Short

Talks. This month, our members take the floor with short talks on their own subjects of interest. Come along for an evening of variety and interest.

Thursday 3rd November: Speaker TBA

Thursday 1st December: Christmas Social. Join us for a mince pie while **Mike Webber** reviews the **new photographs the Society has** come by throughout the year. Don't forget, we are always pleased to see your photographs and to take scans for our archive.

Members free, Guests £2 Everyone very welcome!

Don't forget—if you have a topic or an idea for a talk, please let us know.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO US!

It is rather a shock to realise that February 2016 will be the 20th anniversary of the opening of the Heritage Room at Byfleet Library. Doug Bright had petitioned long and hard for a Heritage Centre to display Byfleet's long history, and once Surrey County Council gave permission to use half of the old meeting room at Byfleet Library, preparations went full steam ahead. Members of the Society worked up to the last minute to get the room ready on time. The opening, on February 1st 1996. was well attended by members, local dignitaries, and celebrities, with Sir Cliff Richard performing the opening honours. The Addlestone and Byfleet Review reported the event as follows:



"SUPERSTAR SIR CLIFF OPENS BYFLEET'S NEW HERITAGE ROOM



Local Superstar Sir Cliff Richard opened the new Heritage Room at Byfleet Library last Thursday morning at a ceremony also attended by Mayor of Woking, Cllr Neville Hinks, accompanied by Mayoress, Cllr Joan Mackintosh, and other local dignitaries.

Sir Cliff, dressed in petrol blue jacket, pale green shirt, and black jeans, looked fit and relaxed as he performed the opening ceremony and unveiled a commemorative plaque. He told the gathering that he was proud to be part of the village community and felt comfortable and at home in the Byfleet area where he had lived for well over 20 years.

The history of the neighbourhood was

of great interest to him. "Our yesterdays make us what we are today, and our todays shape who we will be tomorrow," Sir Cliff said.

On behalf of Byfleet Heritage Society, Katy Sechiari, 11, a pupil at St Mary's Church of England Primary School, presented Sir Cliff with mementoes of the occasion. The first was a History of Byfleet written by well known village elder and local historian, Howard Cook, who sadly could not be present because of a broken leg. Next there was a framed picture of St George's Hill, where Sir Cliff had his home, taken from an original water colour painted in 1864. The third gift was an estate map of St George's Hill Estate dated 1928.

Chairman of Byfleet Heritage Society, parish councillor Douglas Bright, gave a vote of thanks to Sir Cliff, and to all those who had worked so hard to make the vision of the Heritage Room a reality. There was special thanks to Tessa Westlake, secretary of the Byfleet Heritage Society, who had worked through the night until 5am that morning to ensure all was ready for the day's event.

Mr Bright also thanked Surrey County Council and Woking Borough Council for their financial support of the project, and for sponsorship given by Byfleet Parish Council. The co-operation of the library service and Elmbridge Museum were also greatly (cont. p3)



(from page 2) appreciated, together with the efforts of members of the heritage society.

This generosity and practical help had enabled a little-used meeting room to be converted to be a splendid heritage room, he said.

Cllr Bright, who in turn received warm praise for his personal vision of the project, told guests that his father -in-law, the late Albert Cooper, had been one of the Byfleet schoolboys who had discovered the historic log boat found in the Wey near Sanway in 1907. The National Trust has provided an exhibition about the Wey



Navigation, and a volunteer has completed a magnificent scale replica of the log boat, now proudly displayed in a special glass case.

Tim Stoop, great grandson of wellloved local benefactor, the late Mr F C Stoop, of West Hall, had loaned the heritage society several family mementoes, and was also present at the opening ceremony.

Byfleet Heritage Society hoped that local businesses would sponsor individual display boards in the exhibition room. In return company cards would be displayed

on the exhibits to acknowledge the firms' civic minded action. SONY has donated a video camera to the heritage society, and it was planned to record a video history and documentary about Byfleet and to make the recordings available in the heritage room.

After the formalities, Sir Cliff signed autographs before taking a closer look at the exhibits. He showed great interest in the fine maps, photographs, pottery and flints on display and chatted with folk in the heritage room.

Top: Chairman Doug Bright and Secretary Tessa Westlake with Sir Cliff. Middle: The Mayor and Mayoress of Woking with Sir Cliff. On the left is Phyllis Stevens, daughter of L R Stevens, author of "Byfleet, A Village of England" Bottom: Sir Cliff with one of the items loaned by Elmbridge Museum (and a pun from the local paper that's so bad it's good!)



Byfleet Library had a distinguished guest at the opening of its new Heritage Centre. Sir Cliff Richard took time out from his busy schedule to drop in at the library, and even took time to have a browse around the history section. The pop star is pictured urning his keep





In November we welcomed Martin Cutler who returned to give us the second part of his talk about Medals of the Second World War. Tonight Martin concentrated on

the Distinguished Flying Medal, and the Distinguished Flying Cross. These were awarded to members of the Royal Air Force for an act or acts of valour, courage or devotion to duty whilst flying in active operations against the enemy. Those below commissioned rank received the Medal, while officers received the Cross.

Martin had many wonderful stories of bravery and service to relate connected to the medals he has collected. There is sadly not enough room



The Distinguished Flying Cross

The Distinguished Flying Medal

here to recount them all, but we hope this small selection gives a flavour of the evening.

Paul Gerald Louis joined the RAF in 1939, rising from Sergeant to Wing Commander over his career. He first flew with 258 Squadron in Accrington. and later joined 615 Squadron, where he flew Hurricanes. He was sent to India in 1942 for the Burma campaign, where he exchanged his Hurricane for a Spitfire, the first one to fly operationally in Burma. He was so successful that he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Medal, for a sortie which intercepted a Japanese reconnaissance

aircraft. Louis was later exchanged to the United States to teach fighter tactics. In all, he completed 258 sorties, and died in Virginia in 1971, aged 73.

Martin then showed a Distinguished Flying Medal and bar from his collection. A medal "with bar" means that the recipient has acted valiantly enough to earn their particular medal on more than one occasion. Only 60 bars were awarded to Distinguished Flying Medal holders, and only one person received two bars. Flight Sergeant Turner was awarded the Distinguished Flying Medal in 1941, for completing 32 operations. He flew with 50 Squadron, using Hampdens, completing 47 operations in total at a time when the life expectancy for Hampden crews was around ten missions. He was awarded his bar in 1942 for completing over 400 operational flying hours, including the raid on Genoa and also a daylight attack on Milan. He also attacked the Turpitz. He was demobilised in 1945 after 85 operational sorties.



A De Havilland Mosquito

Flying Cross. His flying career began as a flying instructor in the USA, where he trialled a number of American aircraft that later came into British service. In 1943 he returned to Britain

Flight Lieutenant Ellison was awarded the Distinguished

to fly Mosquitoes with 142 Squadron. He became part of the Light Night Striking Force, an outgrowth of the Pathfinder Force, which used the lighter and longranging Mosquito to perform harassing raids on Germany, such as the continued bombing of Berlin, in which Ellison took part; as these raids took place on full moonlit nights, considerable risk was involved, but Ellison survived.

Less fortunate was James Ferdinand Cutler, Flight Engineer, who flew

Halifaxes with 146 and 640 Squadron. He died on only his second mission, and his grave is a private one, rather than a Commonwealth War Graves Commission grave, as he died "at home" rather than overseas. His aircraft developed engine trouble, which led to problems on landing. Unfortunately his plane contained a full bomb load, and he was killed. Martin pointed out that this highlighted the part of luck in the life of an airman. Many of the medal recipients discussed in tonight's talk had taken part in many operations and completed hundreds of flying hours, but sometimes, as in Flight Engineer Cutler's case, luck was not on their side.

We thanked Martin for generously sharing his collection with us, and for passing on some of the incredible stories of the servicemen who received them.



A DFM and Bar

Our Christmas meeting saw Mike Webber give our now traditional review of pictures and items that we have been lucky enough to collect over the year. Members and non members alike have been very generous in sharing their objects with us; very many thanks to you all. There is not room in this newsletter to show all the wonderful things that Mike displayed at our talk, but here is a selection:



To the left is one of the only photos we believe we have seen to show Binfield Hall in Binfield Road, with Roy Rogers sitting on the wall outside. Does anyone else remember the hall?

On the right is a street party to celebrate the end of the Second World



War in 1945. The location is Hart Road.

The picture on the left shows the then new Parvis Road, . In the background on the right you can see Arden House, and on the left, Lake Close is being built on the site of the demolished Lake House, home of W G Tarrant.

The gravestone on the right was discovered on clearing undergrowth in St Mary's churchyard. It is to Gerald Napier, who was killed flying an updated version of the Bristol Boxkite at Brooklands. Flight magazine of August 1911 reported: "...When banking for a spiral descent, a sharp gust of wind caught the machine and, healing right over before the pilot could recover, she side-slipped to the ground. Unfortunately, the engine broke away by the



impact , and struck Mr Napier, injuring him fatally. His passenger was thrown clear of the debris, and thus escaped with severe shock". Napier is believed to have been Brooklands' first aviation fatality.

To finish, Bob Chuter displayed the St George's Cup which had been won by a horse racing relative back in the 19th century. Jim Allen has since done some research and found the following in the *Surrey Herald* of August 1894. "The race was for ponies of 13 hands and under, carrying 9 stones. It was open to riders from the district, and was over a one-mile course. The winner was Mr H Chuter's 'Little Nell'. The winner made most of the running and although Mr Dix's 'Tommy Atkins' came up well and overtook her at the last lap, 'Little Nell' shot ahead and won easily. The race was part of an annual athletic sports and pony races day, held at Broadoaks (although the previous year it was held at West Hall). The weather was very wet, so the attendance was affected. Other events included further pony and donkey races, athletic races, cycle races and a tug-of-war between the married and single men of the Byfleet Band (the married men won!)."



From our archive: Byfleet Parish Magazine September 1930

GARDEN FETE September 5th and 6th, Friday and Saturday At ROYSTON CHASE September 5th to be opened by Dame Ethel Locke-King, CBE

The holiday season is scarcely over yet, but a great deal of progress has been made in the preparations of the Garden Fete. We were up against an initial difficulty in the fact that Royston Chase has been sold since the inception of our plans. It is a great happiness to think that it has been purchased, as we shall doubtless find Miss Geraldine Talbot a great asset to our Village life. To our great delight the new owner of Royston Chase is desirous of helping us in any way that she can, and she generously allows us to proceed and to hold the Garden Fete as originally fixed at Royston Chase. We are deeply grateful to Miss Talbot for this friendly action.

Though many of our helpers are still away we hear that all is going well. Everyone has been buckling to, and we are assured that given fine weather and a good crowd that we shall raise a considerable sum of money for our Church's needs.

In the way of music a Marconiphone (Burndept) has been obtained with the pick of records, and this great instrument will thrill us with the very best of music of every shade and variety. We hear too that there will be innumerable competitions and every attraction that the human mind can conceive. All we want is that the whole parish should rally and that they should invite their friends. We know that everyone is desirous of



Royston Chase, which stood on the site of Laurel Grange

making the old Church in a satisfactory condition, and though some do not worship under our roof yet they are equally keen that the old Church should hold her head up, and not be ashamed of her equipment.

When the Church was restored the old heating apparatus was spoiled in its efficiency, and a new one, though obviously anticipated by the channels which were made, was left uncompleted. The position is quite impossible, and it is the duty of the Church Council to make ever effort to remedy one of the defects caused in part by the restoration. We do not wish to minimise the splendid work of the restoration and the great response which resulted, but with all the improvements which were effected it put the heating apparatus more or less out of gear, and left it for the immediate future to put things right.

The other matter of the outside premises calls for our attention, and the Church Council have shown their grasp of the situation in deciding that this too must be put in order. A couple of hundred pounds will go a long way, and the money would be well spent for everyone who has the welfare of the Church at heart wants to see these two defects remedied.

We are able to give an approximate list of patronage. We have received many very kind letters but some who reply do not very clearly state whether or not we may use their names...Mrs Stoop and Mrs Rutson are helping us and we are promised the support of all our prominent Church people...

...We want everyone to do his bit. It is surprising what can be done when we all pull shoulder to shoulder, and we shall hope that all who care two-pence for their Church will bring that two-pence with them...

Don't forget! If you still receive Society notifications and newsletters by post, but would like to change over to paper-free email instead, just drop a line to Tessa at Tessa@westlakesystems.co.uk and she will put you on the mailing list. Thank you.



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