

*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.*

FORTHCOMING  
EVENTS 2016



*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 well-loved 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



## For the Record...

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



The Distinguished Flying Medal

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.



The Distinguished Flying Cross

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 DFM and Bar



A De Havilland Mosquito

Flight Lieutenant Ellison was awarded the Distinguished 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 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 long-ranging 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.

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, heading 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!)."



