

Lots of news in our latest newsletter! Firstly, if you fancy a trip on the canal to try and cool down during this hot weather, maybe you'd enjoy a place on our boat trip. See below in the diary section for details of how to book your place. If the water is not for you, perhaps you might prefer wheeled transport. If so, details of our upcoming coach trips are on the back page.

Looking further into the future, you can be super organised for 2019 by buying one of our calendars! Available nice and early if you need to send abroad. See back page for more details.

Finally, it was lovely to see so many members at our AGM, and many thanks to those of you who renewed your subscription. If you haven't yet managed it, you should find a form with your newsletter, but please let us know if you have any queries. And enjoy the rest of the summer.



All talks are held at St Mary's Centre for the Community, Stream Close, Byfleet and will begin at 8.15pm.

Thursday 23rd August The BHS goes boating. Our annual EVENING BOAT TRIP will take place along the Wey Navigation canal. Boats leave at 6.30pm from Byfleet Boat Club. Tickets £12. Please email Jim Allen on jimboallen46@yahoo.co.uk to reserve your place, or see him at Byfleet library on Saturdays between 11am and 12 noon.

Thursday 20th September: David Taylor on 'From Clapham to Bloomsbury - the Lushington family.'

Thursday 18th October: Please note change of date. Join us for another of our popular evenings of "Members' short talks". If you have a topic that you would like to share please contact us.

Thursday 15th November: Please note change of date. Rev Nick Aiken will speak about "Pyrford."

Thursday 20th December: Our annual Christmas meeting, at which **Mike Webber** will show a collection of photographs and other items of interest that the Society has acquired during the year. Don't forget, we are always pleased to see your photographs and to take scans for our archive.

If you would like to give a short presentation for our October meeting, please let us know. Society contact details are on the back page.

**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.



Congratulations to Jim Allen

I am sure you will all join us in sending many congratulations to our Chairman, Jim Allen, who has been awarded the British Empire Medal in the Queen's Birthday Honours List for Services to the Community in Byfleet. Very well deserved!

Here is Jim outside our stand at Parish Day, joined by the Mayor and Mayoress of Woking (on the left) and Chris Glasow (right). The day was another fun-filled event and we were pleased to welcome so many visitors to our displays.

For the Record...

After the business of our AGM in **May**, we discussed **School Days**. Jim Allen gave us an overview of school life in the area in the 19th century. In 1806 the county historians, Manning and Bray, note that there was a Sunday School in the village. This had probably been established by Robert Bowyer at Byfleet Lodge. He started with a few village children and also offered to give a sermon to parents. A day school was later formed. Mrs Bowyer paid the wife of a village carpenter £10 per annum to teach 20 children or more. She also gave the children a suit of clothes annually so they could be neatly dressed on Sundays.



A voluntary day school for 24 pupils was recorded in 1818, as well as a school building for 63 children, who were “taught for nothing” by the Rector, the Rev William Haggitt. By 1833 there were three voluntary schools in the village teaching 49 pupils. One of these was located at No 11 Church Road until 1870, when the house became a laundry. A church school was established in 1840. A Post Office Directory of 1845 lists a National School in Byfleet with Mr William Smithers as the master. Later listings show that it was common for the master to be aided by his wife. The 1846 ‘Return of the Church Schools’ shows a Byfleet school accommodating 67 children in two rented rooms. The running costs were £74 3s 0d, with two teachers being paid £26 and £20.

In the 1850s the Rector, the Rev John Newton Spicer applied for a grant to provide a proper school building, as the existing school was held in two cottages nearly a mile apart. The application was granted. The schoolroom, designed by Sidney Smirke, would measure 60ft x 20ft x 13ft, be heated by two stoves and divided into two parts - one for infants and the other for older children - by heavy curtains. A separate teacher’s house would be at the rear. The total estimated cost for the whole project, including the equipment, was £994 1s 5d. The accommodation was for 150 children who paid 1d an week, with “a higher rate” for children of tradesmen and farmers. In 1856/57 the buildings were enlarged on the site of the present St Mary’s Day Centre. There were 146 places.

From 1862-1890 the level of government grant given to schools became reliant upon pupils reaching specified standards in both attendance and attainment, assessed by a school inspector. In 1875, the inspector was the poet, Matthew Arnold. He reported: “The Schoolroom is large, cheerful and well-fitted, and the behaviour of the scholars is quite steady.” He reported weakness in arithmetic, spelling and reading in some grades, but “the great deficiency is in the instruction of the children under seven...A more satisfactory report on the instruction of the infants will be expected next year or the grant for them will be withheld.”

The school weathered a few problems. In 1873 school attendance became compulsory, although this was frequently ignored, especially, as Byfleet was then a rural area, if there was work for children to do in the fields. The log book reports “William D. re-admitted after 9 months’ truancing helping farmers” and in 1874 “Henry H. and James C. sent into the fields to work. Have been at school only 14 times in 2 years”. Summer holidays were called harvest holidays, and there was time off for the annual ploughing match and the agricultural dinner which was held in the school room. As late as 1881 the head, William Sharp, mentions great difficulty in enforcing compulsory school attendance, even though the law had been amended in 1878 to allow six out of ten attendances as adequate. Headmasters offered incentives for perfect attendees, such as Post Office Savings stamps, medals and certificates, or even soup and cocoa in winter. At the turn of the century, illness added to the problem. Measles was the main offender and often the school was closed. Sometimes three or four deaths were reported.

Schools other than St Mary’s appeared. In 1871, the county magistrates persuaded John Leyland to move the Surrey Certified Industrial School for destitute boys not convicted of crime from its Wandsworth home to Byfleet. He appears to have been of some wealth, as he purchased a considerable area of land at Byfleet Corner at the junction of the Old Woking Road and Parvis Road. He built himself a house, ‘Rosemount’, and at the bottom of his “garden” (a 250-acre estate!) he built a large institutional building as the school. Regular school inspections were made by magistrates from the Chertsey Bench, who commented on the health of the boys, the conditions of the school, and the accuracy of the accounts. The 1881 census shows that there were 247 occupants of the school, including 41 members of staff. After Mr Leyland’s death in 1882, it was discovered that he had made no provision for the future of the school. It was saved from closure by the magistrates, and relocated to larger premises in Mayford, opening in 1887 as the Mayford County Industrial School [on the site of the present Mayford Centre]. In 1893, the Byfleet buildings were taken over by the ‘Waifs and Strays’ and renamed St Nicholas Home. Services were conducted there by the Byfleet clergy. The Home later moved to Floyds Lane, Pyrford, on land given by Mr F C Stoop in 1906 and renamed St Nicholas Church of England Home for Waifs and Strays. Later both a school and a hospital were established in the grounds, the latter of which later became the Rowley Bristow Orthopaedic Hospital.

In 1884, the Rev H Cecil Fellowes wrote, presumably to the Education Authority, to ask advice for a Miss A R Fellowes who wished to set up a school in conjunction with her Orphanage. She had engaged a school mistress and wished to provide for 20-25 children. The school would be in the Parish of Byfleet, adjoining the orphanage. It seems that the orphanage was at the Clock House, and the school in the White House next door.

Jim also mentioned two little known schools. A fleeting entry in Kelly’s Directory of 1890 refers to the Church of England Women’s Missionary Association High School, located in Byfleet Hall. This intended “to train women for future usefulness in any sphere to which they may be called, by giving them a sound, religious and practical training, including preparation for the Oxford and Cambridge local examinations and for all higher branches of women’s education”. And the Parish Magazine for September 1897 announced the opening of Byfleet High School for Boys. “A NEW AND IMPORTANT ARRIVAL. Highfield, now called Highfield Park, where lately Miss Cooper resided, is now taken by the ‘English High Schools Company Limited’, 60 Chandos St, London, who propose to open it as a High School for boys on September 20th. A report the following year stated: “[The] scholars now number 30, a bright, intelligent, happy-looking lot as I saw them at their brain work. They are getting on swimmingly it seems, for, whereas only one could swim at the beginning of the summer term, all could swim by the end of it.” It was interesting to find out about the many schools in the area.

In June we welcomed Bob Fuller who told us some of the history and stories behind the Victoria Cross, Britain's highest award for bravery.

The Victoria Cross was inaugurated in 1856, since when 1,358 have been awarded. Prior to the Crimean War there was no specific award for bravery. The Government could award a title (such as with the Duke of Wellington) or, for the average soldier, promotion. Queen Victoria was very interested in the Crimean War, even having photographs of the wounded soldiers sent to her. The Queen, her friend William Russell from the Times newspaper, and the Duke of Newcastle had the idea to create one award for all ranks for bravery. The medal would be a plain, simple, metal cross. The ribbon was originally blue for the navy and red for the army, but later became red for all. At first the inscription read "For Bravery", but as Queen Victoria did not like this, it was changed to "For Valour". The design was approved by the government on 29th January 1856, with medals backdated to 1854, the start of the Crimean War.



The medal was to be awarded for acts of bravery within sight of the enemy, which had to be seen and reported by an officer. The award included a pension of £10 per annum, which was increased to £100 in 1959 and, after Joanna Lumley's campaign on behalf of the Gurkhas, increased again in 1995 to £1,000. The medals are made by one company, Hancocks, using bronze from two canons captured at Sebastopol. There is still enough metal left for another sixty or so medals. In the case of multiple acts of bravery at the same event, the medal could be awarded by ballot where one soldier would be chosen to receive the medal, although this is very rare. Before 1902 the medal could only be awarded to someone who survived the action, but in 1902 Edward VII allowed the VC to be awarded posthumously. The medal (and pension) can also be taken away from a recipient for murder, bigamy, theft, or long term imprisonment. Eight medals have been withdrawn.

Bob told us many tales of bravery and selflessness in the course of the evening. The first VC was awarded to midshipman Charles Davis Lucas for his actions during the Battle of Bomarsund in 1854. During the battle a cannonball with a fuse landed on the deck. Davis ran towards it, picked it up and threw it overboard thus saving both the ship and all on board.

Bob also explored some of the more unusual awards. Three people have been awarded the VC twice. Surgeon Captain Arthur Martin-Leake for his action in bringing in wounded soldiers under fire in the Second Boer War and First World War, Captain Noel Chavasse for doing the same in 1916 and 1917, and Captain Charles Upham, a New Zealander, for his actions in Crete in 1941 and the Western Desert in 1942. Three sets of fathers and sons, four sets of brothers, four sets of uncles and nephews and four cousins have won the award. There was also the strange case of Lt Colonel Eric Wilson, who was awarded the VC once when "dead" and once when alive. In 1940 Wilson had to set up machine guns on the hills of the Tug Argan Pass. Wilson's position was extremely exposed and he came under heavy fire. With the enemy approaching, Wilson ordered four men to stay and the rest to withdraw. The four were killed, but Wilson survived and was captured. However, it was assumed by the rest of his men that he too had died in the assault. He was thus awarded the VC "posthumously". However, Wilson had been given medical treatment and taken to an Eritrean prison camp, but the news that he was still alive took two years to get back to Britain. His wife had to return the VC, so that he could be re-awarded on his return home. He was awarded his medal by King George VI at Buckingham Palace, and said he did so on behalf of his men.



Lt Col Eric Wilson VC

Women have only been eligible to receive the VC since 1921, and there has never been a female recipient. Bob felt that if anyone deserved the award it was Odette Churchill who worked for Allied Intelligence in the Second World War. She was captured and interrogated but despite being badly tortured by the Gestapo, she never gave any information, even when sentenced to death. She was interred in Ravensbrück concentration camp and during the German retreat, was delivered to the Americans by the camp commandant. The commandant believed she was related to Winston Churchill and hoped to curry favour with the Allied Army. Odette later lived in Burwood Park. She was awarded the George Cross rather than the VC.

A recipient of the VC also lived in Byfleet. At the Battle of Canal du Nord in 1918, Captain Cyril Frisby, under intense fire, took two men and captured an enemy post with two machine guns and twelve men. Captain Frisby later lived in Binfield Road and is buried at Brookwood Cemetery. We thanked Bob for telling us the history of this famous medal, and for sharing the stories of some of its brave recipients.

 * In July's talk **Chris Glasow** used great technical wizardry to present his talk **Byfleet Then and Now**. *
 * Chris had travelled the village, finding the locations shown on old postcards and taking a photo of the *
 * modern scene, matching the picture as exactly as possible (chimney stacks proved a useful anchor point). *
 * Chris then showed the original picture, fading into the modern picture. This revealed some major changes, *
 * but also a variety of fairly minor, harder to see, changes too—and at times how things have stayed the same. *
 * For instance, the Binfield Bakery stays a constant landmark, but while the Clock House looks relatively *
 * unchanged, comparison of the old and new pictures shows that the position of the gate has changed, and *
 * some buildings beyond the clock tower have now gone. Caillard Road looked very spacious with no cars *
 * parked in the road at all, while the configuration of the roads has changed completely by the war memorial, *
 * which originally sat on a triangular island formed by the junctions of Parvis, Chertsey and High Roads. On *
 * the other hand, the road over the bridge at Bluegates Hole has hardly changed at all. *
 * Chris had also created some very interesting reconstructions of St Mary's church, showing the *
 * development of the building and also recreating how the church interior would have looked in previous ages *
 * when the internal galleries were still in place. *
 * We were grateful to Chris for a very interesting evening, stepping back in time to see the village and *
 * church as they were. Sadly it is very difficult to recreate here on the page, but here is a selection of old *
 * postcards of some of the scenes Chris took for you to compare and contrast for yourselves. *



Top left: High Road looking towards the Binfield Bakers, with Arkells Bazaar (later Boundys).
 Top right: The Clock House, showing more buildings beyond the clock tower which have since been demolished.
 Middle left: The Post Office looking towards the Blue Anchor.
 Middle right: Caillard Road looking towards Oyster Lane and the Brooklands track.
 Left: Byfleet War Memorial showing the old street layout with Arden House behind.

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NOTES AND QUERIES
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WEST BYFLEET RECREATION GROUND

You have probably heard about the planning application to build a pub on West Byfleet Recreation Ground. Catherine Buchanan is interested in finding out more about the history of West Byfleet Rec. She has found mention of the Recreation Ground Charity in 1913, and that the land was gifted by Messrs Stoop and Charrington. Also that the land was used to grow food during the Great War.

Does anyone have any more information about the origins of West Byfleet Rec, or memories of it being used for other purposes?

If you do, let us know. Many thanks.



Feeling a little warm? If the current heatwave is proving a bit much, maybe you can feel refreshed with a couple of photos sent to us by Shirley Parker. The one on the left shows children enjoying the new paddling pool on Byfleet Rec, possibly in the 1950s.

The photo on the right shows children cooling off in the Wey Navigation Canal at Dodds Bridge.

Do these bring back memories for anyone? If they do, we'd love to hear from you.



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**SOCIETY NEWS,
 AND QUERIES**
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Coach Trips

The Society's coach trips are proving to be popular. On 10th May, a full coach travelled to Portsmouth, where there were opportunities to visit the historic Dockyard, to ascend the Spinnaker Tower or to go shopping in the Gunwharf Quays complex. Nick Hewitt, the Exhibitions Manager at the Dockyard and the speaker at our March meeting, met some of us and introduced us to the Battle of Jutland exhibition. Other attractions visited included the Dockyard Museum, HMS Victory and the Mary Rose. A bonus was the sight of the Royal Navy's newest aircraft carrier, HMS Queen Elizabeth, which was in dock undergoing fitting out. Those who took the dockyard cruise were able to see this massive vessel close-up.

On 28th June, a party of 29 went to the Royal Hospital Chelsea, where we were given a guided tour by one of the Chelsea Pensioners, Bill Bullick. The premises are much larger than one might imagine, and after seeing an introductory film, we were taken around the various buildings to see examples of how the pensioners used to live in small rooms (their accommodation has been much improved in recent years), as well as the dining hall and the chapel. At the time of our visit there was an artistic exhibition, featuring various vehicles in the courtyard, and some of us noticed the Hairy Bikers having a look around.

On both occasions, we travelled with Safeguard Coaches, with whom we have a good relationship, thanks to Mary Macintyre's negotiations.

Our next coach trips are to Brighton on 13th September and our annual London Lights visit on 6th December.

Contact Mary on 01932 341586 for the Brighton tickets. London Lights tickets are not yet on sale.

Iain Wakeford will be conducting a walk around Byfleet's war memorials on Sunday 12th August. The walk will start at 2pm from Byfleet war memorial (at the junction of High Road and Parvis Road).



Iain says, "All walks are free and open to everyone, no need to book, become a member or pay a subscription – just turn up. For more details email info@heritagewalks.org "

HERITAGE SOCIETY CALENDAR 2019

Yes, we know it's early, but just to let you know that our 2019 calendar is now available. This year's theme is Byfleet's History on Wheels and we hope you enjoy our selection of pictures.

Calendars cost £5 and can be purchased at our monthly meetings or at our library drop-in mornings on the first Saturday of the month. They will also be available from Byfleet Library from mid-September.

NEW EXHIBITION AT RIPLEY MUSEUM GAMES AND PASTIMES

From July until
 the end of
 September

Every Saturday
 10-12.30

Next to Ripley
 Village Hall
 GU22 6AF

For more
 information see



www.sendandripleyhistorysociety.co.uk

If you need to contact the Society, we can be reached in the following ways:
 Leave a note at Byfleet Library, email us at info@byfleetheritage.org.uk or ring our Secretary, Tessa Westlake
 on 01932 351559

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