

For the Record...



In the week of the 50th anniversary of the moon landing, we welcomed **Pat Norris** to our July meeting. This was particularly apt, as Pat had worked at NASA on the Apollo programme.

After studying Maths at university, Pat's first job at Hertz Radar brought him experience of both radar and computers, a combination which was of particular interest to American companies. Pat accepted an offer to work on NASA's space programme, first in Washington DC and later at Houston. Then, as the Apollo programme wound down, Pat moved to the European Space Agency, finally coming to Surrey.

On 16th July 1969 three men lifted off for the Moon—Neil Armstrong, Edwin “Buzz” Aldrin and Michael Collins. Armstrong and Aldrin made history as the first men on the Moon, supported by Collins in orbit in the Command Module. The Saturn rocket that propelled them off the Earth was the largest rocket in the world at the time, and is still the largest ever successfully launched. Conditions in the Command Module during the launch were tough. The astronauts experienced four times the force of gravity for two and a half minutes as the first stage fuel burnt at a rate of 13 tons per second. When the second stage separation took place, Saturn V was travelling at 15,000mph. These stages would have been very bumpy for the crew, with the engines stopping and starting and sections being detached from the rocket. The craft then orbited the earth one and a half times so that all systems could be checked. Then the third stage rockets were fired to take the astronauts to the Moon. Even travelling at 23,000mph, this journey would still take 3 days. On July 19th 1969 Apollo was in orbit around the Moon, and on July 20th at 9.17pm London time the Eagle touched down. Then at 3.56am on Monday 21st July 1969 Neil Armstrong took the first historic step out onto the surface. He and Aldrin stayed for almost 22 hours before returning to Earth.

An area on the Moon had been chosen for the landing and Pat had worked on the calculations for the previous eighteen months. However, in reality this area turned out to be on the edge of a large crater and strewn with large boulders. During the descent some alarms had sounded in the capsule and so Armstrong had been preoccupied with discussing this problem with Mission Control. When he finally looked out at the Moon's surface he was uncomfortable with what he saw, so he decided to take manual control of the capsule instead. Back on Earth, Mission Control, tracking the capsule, could not understand why Armstrong had not yet landed. However, they could not see the actual conditions. Armstrong ended up flying for 30—40 seconds longer than intended, taking his fuel reserves to the limit, and overshooting the planned landing site by about 6 kilometres.

Although Pat's team had worked long and hard on the mathematics for the landing software, everyone was working on something that had never been tried before, so although they were reasonably happy with their work, they were still working with several unknown quantities. It had been noticed that the trajectory of an unmanned craft sent to take pictures of the Moon in 1967 changed unpredictably the closer it got. The gravity field of the Moon turned out to be much more complicated than expected, and it was Pat's job to try and work out how to get around this! But it would be more than 20 years before NASA had enough information to understand the Moon's gravitational field fully.

Neil Armstrong's famous line (which he wrote himself) and the TV pictures and photographs of men on the Moon are now world famous (although there are no pictures of Armstrong, as he held the camera!). After the splashdown in the Pacific the three men were quarantined at Houston. They had the services of chefs and doctors and Armstrong celebrated his 39th birthday there. Ticker tape parades and great acclaim followed. Neil Armstrong came over to Pat's office to present awards to the team—but Pat was on holiday at the time! However, Pat did later meet Buzz Aldrin. All three astronauts strongly believed that Apollo succeeded because of the vast team behind them, and for this reason they declined to have their names on the Apollo 11 insignia.

What of Apollo 11 in the 21st century? In 2013, Jeff Bezos, founder of Amazon and allegedly the richest man in the world, hired a crew to dive and find the Saturn V engines. He managed to bring two to the surface, and paid for their conservation. These are now on display in Seattle. Would we be returning to the moon any time soon? Pat thought probably not, for several reasons: you would need to build a giant rocket with one single use; it would be more economical (and less dangerous) to send probes rather than humans; the military aren't so interested as they were during the Cold War; and there is no real political reason for spending such a vast amount of money. However, there are several existing initiatives that may come to fruition. Elon Musk has built rockets, but they are still only half the power of Saturn V. He claims his purpose is getting to Mars. Jeff Bezos has his space flight company, Blue Origin, one of whose projects is the New Armstrong, but the company is very secretive about its progress. In Russia, although they have had several launches, none have been successful and there is not much investment. China are carrying out more and more complex missions and hope to put humans on the moon by 2030. India, in a bid to rival China as the main space agent in Asia, have announced a plan to put a man in orbit around the earth. Perhaps India and China will compete in a new space race.

We could have listened to Pat all night on the fascinating subject of space travel, but after some questions from the floor, we had to draw to a close and thanked Pat very much for sharing his experiences with us.



In September Sue Jones told us about “**Working the Wey—the early bargemen of the Wey Navigation 1650s-1750s.**” The northern part of the Wey Navigation was opened in the 1650s, and extended to Godalming a century later. While a very pleasant place for a walk or cycle today, it was previously populated by hard working bargemen. Sue noticed that although there were many books on the canal’s history, there was not much about the people who worked there, and she decided to rectify this.



By Wm Stevens & Sons - River Wey Navigations, National Trust, Copyrighted free use, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=16124672>

A “navigation” falls somewhere between a canal and a river. Improvements are made to the existing river, building banks and towpaths, digging new sections and forming locks and weirs. The Wey Navigation was a very early attempt to improve the river for transport, and happened quite quickly. The canal began with an Act of Parliament in 1651, and opened in 1653. There was a further Act in 1671 to settle land

disputes caused by the canal building and to introduce a toll, called “River Pence”, by the Proprietors of the Navigation to Guildford Corporation. An Act was passed in 1760 to extend the canal to Godalming, which opened in 1764. The whole plan was created by Sir Richard Weston, a landowner and agricultural improver of Sutton Place. He wanted to control the river, which regularly flooded his land, and also to improve transport to get Surrey produce to London. The Guildford Corporation supported the plan, as the previously profitable cloth trade was in decline and the town needed an economic boost, which the canal duly provided.

The barges that sailed the canal were driven either by poles, horses, sails, oars, or even hauled by men. A map from the 1730s is illustrated with barges on the canal. These have canvas awnings to protect the crew from the weather and square bows like a punt. Sue does not know if this was real or artistic licence. People would not live on the barges full-time. A crew of two or three people would live on board while travelling from Guildford to London (2-3 days). Great skill was needed to control the barge on a flowing river and with the horses. When travelling while the river was in flood, the barges often needed a pony on the stern to provide a brake.

The barges transported a range of goods, but from Surrey it was mainly grain and timber to London, returning with coal. Indeed, Surrey saw an increase in coal use over peat once the Wey was made navigable. The canal changed not only trade and the economy, but also people’s domestic lives.

But what of the people? What did it mean to be a bargeman, and what was their reputation? Sue has trawled a variety of records to find out—birth, marriage and death registers, quarter sessions, wills, newspaper reports, Poor Law records and many more. Once she can ascertain a name and a date, she can try other sources and piece together the information.

A very useful source was the Navigation Proprietors Accounts Book 1724-1758. This records the bargemen’s payments for using the Navigation. Sue worked out that on average about 17 different families used the Navigation. About a third of the names only appear once or twice, but two-thirds turn up more often, although varying in their trade. The amount and duration of their trading varies from John Wiltshire who paid £10pa for 2-3 years, to John Sink, who paid £40pa for 15 years, to the Lockwood family who paid £850 per year at their peak (when a Labourer might earn £20pa) and traded for many years.

The reputation of the working bargemen was a little shady. Stealing livestock as they went along the river was supposedly a common bargeman crime. However, there was also a great sense of community among them. Sue discovered an entry for the burial of “five men that were hanged” at St Mary’s, Guildford. A newspaper of 1730 reported that these five had been executed, but the bargemen had collected money to pay for their coffins and, despite the surgeons asking for the bodies, the bargemen “brought them off and saw them interred.” Bargemen also made it in local politics—at least two became Mayor of Guildford (John Wilkins three times and Nehemiah Wilkins once in 1732). Hugh Moth became Master of Abbots Hospital between 1744-49. Sue had also uncovered the life story of William Knight. William’s father had died in 1736, which put the family into poverty. In 1748, aged 14, William was apprenticed by the Overseers of the Poor to John and Edward Andrews, bargemasters at Guildford. In 1757 William married Mary Lockwood, a daughter of a very successful barging family. The poor apprentice had made good!

There are quite a few women in the records, with most years between 1724-58 containing women’s names. Sue found 13 different women recorded in all. Some were the daughters of bargemen who inherited the business. For instance, Ann Wilkin’s father left her all his barges and horses. There were also widows carrying on their late husband’s trade. Andrew Powell’s will stated that everything was to go to his wife first, and then his son. In the account books, widows are usually referred to as, for example, “Mary, widow of John Smith”. But Catherine Bowyer, who was the widow, daughter and sister-in-law of bargemen, is, after a few years in business, referred to as “Catherine Bowyer, widow.” Sue wonders if this means Catherine was accepted as part of the barging community in her own right.

It was most interesting to listen to Sue’s piecing together of these long-ago lives, and we really enjoyed a glimpse into the barging community of the Wey Navigation.

BYFLEET PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION

Send us your photos of Byfleet through the seasons! We would love to see how you see our village, so we have decided to hold another photography competition, and to choose the best entries for our 2021 calendar. The rules and regulations are below, along with details of how to submit your entries. We can't wait to see your photos!

PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION RULES



The subject for the Byfleet Heritage Society's Photographic Competition 2019/2020 is 'The Seasons of Byfleet'. The theme is open to individual interpretation, but must clearly show a location in the ancient parish of Byfleet.

Entrants can submit up to four photographs, either as prints or electronic images, in colour or black & white.

Images may be digitally enhanced to remove spots or scratches, but not manipulated. Entrants may enhance the picture to make it brighter, clearer, etc, but not manipulate the content. Byfleet Heritage Society, and the judges reserve the right to exclude any image they believe may have been excessively treated so as to alter its authenticity.

The competition is open to all. Competition judges and their immediate families are not eligible to enter. Entrants under the of 12 years need to have the consent of a parent or guardian to enter.

Each entry should be marked with the name, address, and contact telephone number (both daytime and evening) of the entrant, and where the photo was taken.

Entries may be left at Byfleet Community Library, High Road, Byfleet, KT14 7QN, in a sealed envelope clearly marked 'Byfleet Heritage Society Photo Competition', or posted to Tessa Westlake, 8 Brewery Lane, Byfleet, KT14 7PQ. Electronic entries should be emailed to Photos@ByfleetHeritage.org.uk

The organisers accept no responsibility for entries lost, damaged or delayed in the post.

The competition closes at midnight on Sunday 31st May, 2020.

Entrants who would like their entries returned should include either a SAE or a note stating that they will collect them from Byfleet Community Library after the judging has taken place.

All entries will be judged by a panel of judges. They will consider a range of factors, including composition, technical ability, originality, and interpretation of the brief. The judges' decisions will be final, and no correspondence can be entered into.

The winning photographs will be featured in our 2021 calendar, a copy of which will be presented to each successful entrant.

All entries must be the original work of the entrant, and must not infringe the rights of any other party. The entrants must be the sole owner of copyright in all photographs entered, and must have obtained the permission of any people featured in the entries or of their parents/guardians if children under the age of 16 years are featured.

Further, entrants must not have breached any laws when taking their photographs.

Entrants will retain copyright in the photographs that they submit to Byfleet Heritage Society. By entering the competition all entrants grant to Byfleet Heritage Society the right to publish and exhibit their photographs, both at Byfleet Community Library or other similar location, and on the Society's website or Facebook page. Entrants whose photographs are selected to appear in the Heritage Society's calendar for 2021, pursuant to paragraph 10 above, grant to Byfleet Heritage Society the further rights to publish and exhibit their photographs in print, on their respective websites or in any other media. No fees will be payable for any of the above uses. Photographers will be credited wherever their photograph is used.

By entering the competition, entrants will be deemed to have agreed to be bound by these rules, and Byfleet Heritage Society reserves the right to exclude any entry from the competition at any time and in its absolute discretion if it has reason to believe that an entrant has breached these rules.

Byfleet Heritage Society reserves the right to cancel this competition or alter any rules at any stage, if deemed necessary in its opinion, and if circumstances arise which are outside of its control.

If a winner is unable to be contacted after reasonable attempts have been made, Byfleet Heritage Society reserves the right to use a chosen photograph in the 2021 calendar and any subsequent exhibitions.

These rules are governed by the laws of England and Wales. This competition is administered by Byfleet Heritage Society.

Email: Photos@ByfleetHeritage.org.uk
www.ByfleetHeritage.org.uk



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NOTES AND QUERIES

After the photo of Addlestone Swimming Club in the previous newsletter, we received the following from member Mike Gathercole:



In the current newsletter information is requested about the picture of Addlestone Swimming Club. Although I never swam there, I recollect the site as being on the western side of the canal perhaps a quarter or half mile along towards Weybridge from the New Haw lock.

As children we were discouraged (forbidden!) from swimming in the canal - parents thought it much too deep. They were not swimmers.

However, in the 1950's we spent many summer days swimming in the River Wey mostly off the island below the road bridge just before the junction with Brooklands Road. Our other main swimming place was a little further down river towards Brooklands through Weymede.

On one or two occasions we also swam near to Byfleet Manor and jumped off the footbridge leading to Wisley Common. When our parents found out we were barred from this area as they said there was a whirlpool there, although they were probably thinking of Bluegates Hole. I think the only danger in jumping off the footbridge was the likelihood that there were bikes, pushchairs etc under the water.

Janet Fludder also wrote us the following about the Swimming Club:

In the late 1940's at the age of 10 I joined Addlestone Swimming Club.

A group of us would cycle from Addlestone along New Haw road to Burcott Gardens. The bungalows were newly built in the grounds of Burcott House which still stands on the corner of Burcott Gardens.

At the end of Burcott Gardens you came to the Wey Navigation a section of which had been built up with wooden sleepers and sand bags to shore up the bank. There was a wooden hut which the girls used to change in, not sure if there was one for the boys or maybe they changed outside.

The couple who ran it at that time were Mr and Mrs Blackman who owned and ran the greengrocers in Addlestone High Street for many years.

Teaching us to swim involved a car inner tube or an inflatable ring to which a length of rope was attached and to this a long pole which supported whoever was in the ring. Once changed into our costumes we entered the water in turn and into the ring leaving arms and legs free with Mr or Mrs Blackman supporting us by holding the pole. We swam breast stroke as they walked along the bank as we swam along the edge and back.

One thing I do recall is the black ring around our mouths when we climbed out. None seemed to suffer any ill effects from this - we were lucky as a few years later there were outbreaks of Polio which was said to be caused by polluted river water - I'm not sure if this was true. Most of my friends are still with us so it did us no harm.

We also swam in the river Wey - we cycled to Weybridge along the old road to the lock and across the fields to Sandy Banks as it was known where we spent most of our summer holidays with a picnic of paste or jam sandwiches and a bottle of pop and as far as I know nobody drowned maybe thanks to Addlestone swimming club for teaching us to swim or just lucky.

As we became more confident we would cycle to the outdoor pool known as Woking Lido with its cold, clean, clear water - you could see the bottom of the pool unlike the murky waters of the river! Happy days
 Would I have let my children do the same - I don't think so.

A coincidence - my future husband lived in Burcott House from 1939 and, when I met him several years later and we married, had our wedding reception in the Billiard room which has since been knocked down and two houses now stand in its place.

Thanks very much to Mike and Janet for sharing their memories.

