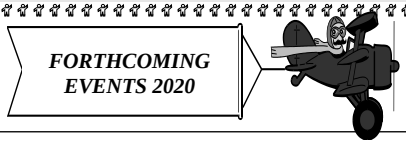
Byfleet Heritage Society

Issue 81 *Newsletter* *January 2020*

A very happy New Year to all our members, and we hope you will enjoy the talks and meetings we have planned over the coming year. Also a reminder that our photo competition, "Byfleet through the seasons", is still active, so if you have taken pictures of the lovely Christmas lights, the recent frosty mornings, or even events from back in the summer like Parish Day, we would love to see them. Don't forget to send us your photos of the village in the coming seasons too.

Our first drop-in session at Byfleet Library will be on Saturday 1st February, so come along between 10.30-12.30 to say hello. We hope to see you soon.



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

2020

Thursday 16th January
*Come and hear **Helen Gristwood** talk about **'The Use of Drugs in Victorian Asylums.'***

Thursday 20th February
Mike Swaddling** will update us on **'Clandon Park: The Fire and the Future.'

Thursday 19th March
***'Parry Thomas - Byfleet's World Record Breaker'** by Mike Forbes.*

Thursday 16th April
*A talk about the area's glamorous past this month when **Dr Simon Brown** speaks on **'Film Making in Walton-on-Thames.'***

Thursday 21st May
*Society AGM, followed by a talk by **Ian Franklin**, State Apartment Warder at Hampton Court Palace, **'Hampton Court—Behind the Scenes.'***

Thursday 18th June
Our annual boat trip along the Wey Navigation canal, setting off from Parvis Wharf and heading towards Pyrford—details to follow.

Thursday 16th July
Martin Sumpton** will speak about **'Capability Brown—How He Made His Mark Upon the English Landscape from Wimbledon Park to Blenheim.'

August—*no meeting*

Thursday 17th September
***'A Members' Evening'** when we will reminisce about Vickers/British Aerospace aircraft factory.*

Thursday 15th October
*For fans of Downton Abbey or Upstairs Downstairs, **Judy Hill** will tell us about '**Misdemeanours Below Stairs in Victorian Britain.'***

Thursday 19th November
'The Bishops of Winchester—Their Place in our History'** by **Tony Paice.

Thursday 17th 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.*

Members free, Guests £2
Everyone very welcome!

For the Record...

We were pleased to welcome back **Chris Glasow** in October to hear more about **St Mary's Church,** this time during the medieval, Stuart, and Victorian periods. Chris pointed out that the Byfleet area has been occupied since pre-history, with Bronze Age settlements and artefacts such as a log boat found nearby. There is evidence that the Anglo-Saxon era had an influence on the position of Byfleet and the church. Broad Ditch was the course of the River Wey in Anglo Saxon times, and the narrow fields shown on modern maps are evidence of Saxon field systems. The Anglo Saxon settlement was possibly towards the modern M25, which maybe explains why St Mary's is in the position that it is. St Augustine brought Christianity to Britain in 597, but does St Mary's date from this period? A church is mentioned in Chertsey Abbey's records, although the monks were known to forge old documents when they were trying to lay claim to lands. The church was written about in 727, so it is fair to assume there was a church on the land then. It would have been a wooden church, possibly on the same spot as the present building. The church is also mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086, when it was listed as having three serfs, who were bonded men who had to work for their owners.

Who built the church? It is accepted that the present one is a rebuild dating from between 1290-1320. A tile fragment found in 1924 narrowed this range to c 1310. But who funded the building? The date 1310 fits in with Byfleet Manor reverting to King Edward II, and he is known to have stayed at the manor in 1307; the manor had been granted to Edward's favourite, Piers Gaveston, and the King visited him there. Another link to royalty is that Richard de Potsgrave, Edward II's chaplain, became Rector of Byfleet in 1308. Richard had a history of rebuilding Saxon churches, rebuilding the church in Heckington, Lincs, in 1307 whilst rector there. So did Richard suggest a rebuild at St Mary's? During restoration work, some medieval wall paintings were uncovered, but who was the crowned figure? Chris invited Catherine Warner, an expert on Edward II, to come and have a look. She felt that there was a very good chance that the painting of the king on the throne was indeed Edward II himself. He had connections to the local area, with his ownership of Byfleet Manor, and its occupation by Piers Gaveston. Another of Edward's favourites, Hugh Despenser, was resident at Woking Palace. There are accounts of Hugh bringing his boat up the Wey to visit Edward at Byfleet Manor, and also of Edward swimming in the Wey in the local area. Byfleet Village itself also featured in Edward's life. His household accounts show that on 8 July 1325, Edward gave a gift of 10 shillings to the wife of his chamber porter, Henry Law. The Laws were a Byfleet family, and gifts were also made to Henry's brother and father. One of the Law family females used to brew ale for Edward's household, and another of Henry's brothers was a chamber porter to the King. So the King had Byfleet people in his entourage.

When the wall paintings are examined, you can see that there are two images superimposed. The first is of a regal figure on a throne, wearing royal clothes and a crown and with no beard (Edward II was clean shaven when young). The later image is painted in a more saintly manner. After Edward's death, a cult grew up around his figure. Shrines were set up to him at which miraculous healing was said to have taken place. Might this later image reflect this cult? Further survivals from the medieval period at St Mary's include the fifteenth century font and one of the consecration crosses painted on the wall, the only survivor of the original twelve.

During the Stuart period Queen Anne of Denmark, wife of James I, came to live at Byfleet Manor. By 1612 Anne had started to withdraw from court life, and she took on the project of rebuilding the manor as a palace. Anne was also very devout, so it is possible that she became involved with St Mary's. She obtained the lease to Byfleet Manor in 1616, and at the same time Nathaniel Dyke was appointed Rector of St Mary's with Queen Anne as his patron. There is also a date of 1616 on the pulpit in the church, so does this commemorate Queen Anne's arrival? She possibly funded work on the church while she was in the area. Old drawings of the church show steps on the outside which led to an internal gallery along one side, with further two galleries, one on top of the other, at the end under the bell tower. The pulpit was originally much taller, with three tiers—the bottom for community announcements, the middle tier for reading the gospel and the top for giving the sermon.

The Victorian era brought significant change to the building. The church was enlarged with the addition of a new south aisle in 1841. Only about 25 years later, further alterations were made, including replacing the steel supports along the new aisle with stone columns; Chris wondered if this suggested that the previous works were in some way sub-standard. Chris finished with a mystery. Towards the back of the south aisle, in the side one of the pews towards the floor, there is a small square with a ring set in it. If you pull the ring, a long, single rod of wood appears, but no-one is sure what this is for.

(A comment from Tessa Westlake: I once saw something similar in a church in York. The lady arranging the flowers showed it to me, and said it had been put in for a member of the congregation who had gout or a bad knee or similar. During the service he could pull out the stick, stretch out his leg and rest his ankle on it to make himself more comfortable.) We thanked Chris for showing us the development of our church, and its royal connections.

Dr Christopher Wiley of Surrey University came in **November** to tell us about **Dame Ethel Smyth, Composer, Suffragette, and Surrey Resident.** Dr Wiley has been researching Dame Ethel for about twenty years, investigating her career as a composer and later as a writer of memoirs and biographies. She lived at a time when women were not thought capable of writing large scale musical works, and so she met prejudice on all fronts. So perhaps it was no surprise when she became involved in the Suffrage movement from 1910-1912. She lived in Surrey, first at Frimley Green and later at Hook Heath from 1910-1944.

Dame Ethel's early years were spent in Sidcup until she was 9 years old when the family moved to a house called Frimhurst in Frimley Green. Her father, Major General John Smyth, was posted to Aldershot, so the family moved to be near him. This house still exists and was later bought by philanthropist Grace Goodman as a place where families in extreme poverty could recuperate. The charity ensures that music making still carries on in the house today.

Dame Ethel's love of music was first nurtured by her mother and then by her German governess. Ethel wanted to train at the Leipzig conservatorium, which at first her father forbade. However, he later gave in, and Ethel enrolled in 1877. However, she grew disillusioned with the teaching but, while she dropped out of the school, she remained in Germany. She had studied with Heinrich von Herzogenberg and stayed with him, becoming very good friends with his wife, Leisl. She wrote several works for piano and strings, all of which are still performed today. Dr Wiley played one of her nocturnes, which showed very clever use of musical devices and demonstrated her talent.

During her time in Germany, Ethel networked with some famous names, including Greig, Tchaikowsky, Clara Schumann, and Johannes Brahms. However, Ethel and Leisl fell out over a man! Harry Brewster had fallen in love with Ethel, while unfortunately being married to Leisl's sister. Leisl chose to support her family and Ethel had to leave the Herzogenberg home. She moved back to England in the 1890s and became great friends with Sir Arthur Sullivan. They had both trained at Leipzig after growing up in the same neighbourhood with military fathers. Ethel also made the acquaintance of the Empress Eugenie who was living in Farnborough Hill, which led to contact with Queen Victoria.

Ethel's father died in 1894, and as her sisters had all left home and her brother was in the army, she sold the house and moved to One Oak in Frimley near to her friend, the Empress. She secured performances for some of her works at Crystal Palace and the Royal Albert Hall. Her Mass in D (written in 1891) was such a large scale work that many critics were bemused that it was written by a woman.

Ethel also composed operas, completing 6 in total. Her works such as Fantasio were performed in the UK, Europe and even the United States. Her opera, Der Wald, was performed at the Metropolitan Opera in New York City, the first opera by a woman to be performed by them, and the only one until 2016. Her most popular opera was The Boatswain's Mate.

1910 was a year of change. Ethel moved out of Surrey Heath to Hook Heath, where she built her own house, using funds from Mary Dodge, an American patron. Due to Ethel's passion for golf, the house was built next to Woking Golf Club. That September, Ethel heard Emmeline Pankhurst speak, and consequently pledged two years' service to the Votes for Women campaign. Ethel became a close friend of Mrs Pankhurst, even teaching her how to throw stones accurately. Ethel led marches, addressed rallies, and took part in the orchestrated window smashing in 1912; a recording of an interview where she describes the event stills survives. Various musical works reflect Ethel's interest, including The March of the Women in 1911, her most famous work. Ethel served her own time in prison for the suffrage cause, in a cell which overlooked the exercise yard. While the women outside were exercising, Ethel would keep them in time by putting her arm through the window and conducting with her toothbrush.

In 1913 Ethel moved to Egypt for a year to concentrate on her music. She obtained two contracts to perform operas in Germany, but the First World War intervened, severing contact with many of her European friends. During the war, she trained as a radiographer and was attached to the French Army; she also began to write her memoirs. Unfortunately, it was also at this time that she discovered that she was going deaf, although she continued with her music into the 1920s. She managed to write two last operas, a double concerto for violin and horn and several smaller works, although her deafness meant that she probably never heard her final works properly. She still managed to conduct the Metropolitan Police Band in 1930 at the unveiling of a statue to Emmeline Pankhurst next to the Houses of Parliament.

Ethel's deafness led to a change in her writing. Instead of music, she produced ten volumes of memoirs, collections of essays on her life, music criticism, and the status of women, and she completed two biographies—of Maurice Baring in 1938 and the conductor Thomas Beecham in 1935.

Ethel died in 1944 aged 86. Her ashes were scattered in the woods near Woking Golf Club. She now features in the We Are Woking campaign and her statue has been commissioned for Woking Town Centre—in which she will be conducting with her toothbrush.

For our first talk of the new year **Helen Gristwood** took us into the world of Victorian asylums and their use of drugs. The Victorian era saw an expansion in the use of many drugs that today are heavily regulated. Helen showed us some of the alarming concoctions that had been produced for home use—for children as well as adults. For example, One Night Cough Syrup was a mixture of alcohol, cannabis, chloroform and morphia, becoming the subject of a legal case in 1934 when its claims of therapeutic properties were found misleading. Dr J Collis Browne's Cough Mixture was described as a "safe and reliable family remedy" for just about any ailment. Originally created to fight cholera in India in 1848, it was mainly morphine and chloroform. Mrs Winslow's Soothing Syrup for teething children was so dangerous it gained the nick-named "the baby killer"! Containing morphine sulphate, spirits foeniculi (also used to make absinthe), and aqua ammonia, it was optimistically described as "perfectly harmless", but after reports of infant death and addiction it was withdrawn from sale.

If the remedies for children now seem alarming, the medicines regularly taken by adults were just as strong. Laudanum was used for many ailments and marketed as a sedative. The bottles warned that excessive quantities were poisonous—although it didn't say what "excessive" was. Cannabis opium was instructed to be taken with a wineglass of hot brandy every two to three hours; it was no wonder it was said "to relieve pain and procure sleep"! The label on a mixture of belladonna and opium even declared that it was "antagonistic" although "advantageous". Helen said that it was no wonder that Victorian Pharmacopeias had chapters not only on medicines but also antidotes.

As all these strong substances were readily available to all, it comes as no surprise to find that asylums used them in large quantities. Helen's interest in asylums began after finding that an ancestor had lived for 25 years in an asylum, and died there. She later wrote a thesis on the treatment of women in asylums, using examples from Brookwood, Colney Hatch and Knowle. The Lunacy Act of 1848 required all counties to provide accommodation for pauper lunatics. In total, 115 asylums were built. It was not intended to house patients for life, but to provide "moral management with kindness and care". However, the pauper asylums soon became overcrowded. Many of the women admitted were from the poorest areas of London, so as well being violent, suicidal, and in pain, many were also in poor physical shape. Helen gave examples of some of the sad reasons for admittance. One woman had poured paraffin on her head and tried to set it on fire; another had jumped down a well; another had thrown her children out of the window. Hallucinations, delusions and religious mania were common—more than one woman claimed to be Queen Victoria. Even once admitted, attempts at self harm were common, so Helen said it could be seen why the drugs were used.

The drugs fell into different categories. The most common sedatives were chloral hydrate and henbane. Chloral hydrate was a manufactured drug, but often given with a dose of henbane (or "Witches Brew"), one of the most poisonous plants on the planet. Another sedative, Dover Powders, induced euphoria. As well suffering mentally, many women had infections or injuries which needed pain relief. Opium was common (although could lead to mania if too much was taken) along with its derivatives laudanum and morphine; cannabis was also used. Belladonna, made from deadly nightshade, was swallowed, used as a poultice or as eyedrops, but is extremely poisonous.

Purges, administered to rid the body of toxins, were mostly derived from poisonous plants. Ricin, made from the castor oil plant, was the most widely used despite a few grains being enough to be fatal. Croton was so powerful that three drops could constitute an overdose. Used as a lotion to get rid of lice, a nasty side effect was that it also removed the skin. Senna was given, sometimes mixed with prunes to make it doubly effective. But the worst was probably Calomel, a drug manufactured from mercury chloride. It was used until the 1950s as a teething powder until it was linked to widespread mercury poisoning.

Other drugs were Digitalis to slow the heart (although too much and the heart would stop), Aconite and strychnine—now a pesticide! Chloroform and ether were used as anaesthetics. Stimulants included quinine, iron, and Fowlers Solution (liquid arsenic) as well as port, brandy, wine, beef tea, milk and eggs. The women were very well fed while in the asylum, and many of them gained 2 or 3 stone during their stay.

The drugs were administered by injection or as pills, powders or liquids, or as "Heroic doses" - large quantities of a mixture of drugs. The recipes for these were often alarmingly vague—for instance one suggests mixing "a little" of arsenic, quinine, strychnine, opium, and prussic acid—but doesn't say how much "a little" is.

The asylum records are quite detailed, and Helen followed the histories of four women patients. All the women were suicidal when admitted, and given combinations of the different types of sedatives, purges, pain relief and stimulants. Mary left the asylum 21/2 stone heavier than when she arrived, due to better food. Annie died of gangrene and consumption rather than any mania; and Anne, although she had jumped down a well, was ready to be released after only 4 months. The average patient stay was 3-6 months, although many stayed longer. In all, 72% were cured, 10% died (although, like Annie, of infection or illness caused by poverty rather than mania), 14% became long-term patients, for which there was originally no provision, leading to an expansion in asylum building. 4% were released against the asylum's wishes, but many of these later returned. We thanked Helen for a very interesting and enlightening talk about Victorian ideas about health.

Lloyds Bank in High Road has been closed for a while now, and the building, Petersham House, is up for sale.

However, when the property went up for sale in 1887, it was a bit more extensive. The map on the left shows the area that was up for auction. The estate is bordered by Oyster Lane at the top, with High Road on the right hand side and curving around the bottom. Petersham House is marked in red at the bottom.

In the auction catalogue, the whole is described as "A comfortable residence, with charming pleasure grounds and park-like lands of about 20 acres. Entered by a picturesque lodge and carriage drive."

It also had "Very superior stabling of five stalls and four loose boxes with standing for six carriages" as well as "Kitchen gardens, ranges of glass houses, and cottages for gardeners." The whole estate covered approximately 82 acres.

As for the house itself, downstairs there was a dining room, a drawing room, a morning room or study, a cloak room, a vestibule, a lavatory, and a passage leading to Domestic Offices. The Principal Staircase "is constructed in oak, handsomely panelled throughout, the loft window lighting it being glazed with Cathedral glass."

The staircase led to the two best bedrooms, and a third bedroom with dressing room. There was a water closet on the landing and a housemaid's closet (with water supply). A secondary staircase led to four other bedrooms including maidservants' rooms "conveniently fitted with large cupboards." There was a total of ten bed and dressing rooms in all.

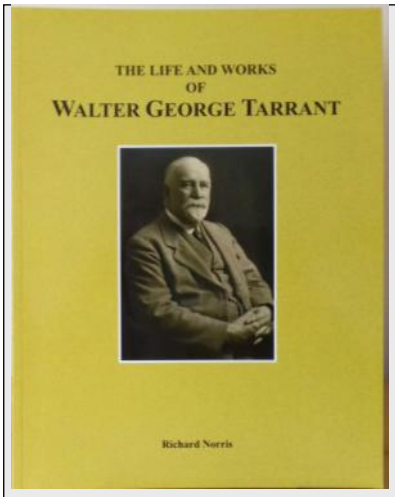
The Domestic Offices seem quite extensive. There was a servants' sitting room with store cupboards, a Butler's pantry with china, glass and plate cupboards, and a sink, a wine cellar, the kitchen with cooking range and hot plate, a scullery with copper, another water closet, a coal store, a knife and lamp house, the larder and a men's water closet.

What the auction catalogue doesn't say is how much it all went for!

SOCIETY NEWS, AND QUERIES

A reminder about our photographic competition to find photos to compile our 2021 calendar! The theme will be "The Seasons of Byfleet" and the closing date will be 31st May 2020, so there is plenty of time to send in your entries—or multiple entries if you feel so inspired. Full details at www.byfleetheritage.org.uk/competition%202020

We look forward to seeing your entries.



We have been carrying out an inventory of our archive over the last few months, reorganising its filing and checking that everything is where it should be. Unfortunately, we have found that our copy of "The Life and Works of Walter George Tarrant" has gone missing.

Has anyone seen it, or have we lent it to someone and forgotten about it? It is a large-ish book, approximately A4 size, paperback and with a cover as pictured left.

If anyone remembers borrowing it, or has it at home, could you please let us know? Either leave a message at Byfleet Community Library, or give Tessa Westlake a ring on 01932 351559

Many thanks.

We've been hunting around in the newspaper archives again, and this time we have uncovered the attempted theft of a bag of silver which was lost on the way from Byfleet Brewery and "found" by two ne'er do wells! From the Surrey Advertiser, Saturday 4th April 1874. At the Petty Sessions, Chertsey 1st April 1874.

For Theft: Joseph Simpson and Thomas Martin were charged with stealing £1 under the following circumstances: William Waddlingham said he was a drayman in the employ of Mr Baron Holroyd, brewer, of Byfleet. Last Saturday morning he had one pound's worth of silver given for change, which he placed in a bag. After having proceeded about half a mile from Byfleet, on his journey to Sunbury, he found that he had lost the money. He left his horse and cart in charge of another man, and went back to the brewery when he was told that a little boy had picked the bag and money up, and given it to two men, who had gone in the direction of Chertsey. He afterwards saw the bag which had contained the money.

William Legg, a boy, said he picked up a bag containing money in the road, near Mr Holroyd's brewery. He was about to take it into the brewery when the prisoner Martin, who was with Simpson on the opposite side of the road, said it belonged to him: As he was coming across the road, witness "pitched" the bag to Martin. The other man walked on. He afterwards told Mr Holroyd about it, and witness and two men followed the prisoners to New Haw. When asked about the money they denied all knowledge of it. They were made to return to the brewery, and then searched, but nothing was found upon them.

PC Prescott said he went to Byfleet Brewery last Saturday morning, and saw the two prisoners, who were charged by Mr Holroyd with taking a purse of money that had been dropped by one of the men. He searched them but could not find the property. At first they denied all knowledge of the affair, but afterwards, Martin said he picked the bag up off the road, but did not know what it contained. Witness took them into custody, when Martin said if the gentleman would forgive him he would tell where the money was.

Both men pleaded guilty to "picking" the purse up, and elected to be tried by the Bench. Sentenced to three months' imprisonment with hard labour.

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

Byfleet Heritage Society, Byfleet Library, High Road, Byfleet, Surrey KT14 7QN
Published by: Tessa Westlake, 8 Brewery Lane, Byfleet, Surrey KT14 7PQ