

Our last newsletter came to you just after we all went into lockdown to help prevent the spread of the coronavirus. It's been a strange time and we hope that you and your families have kept safe and well. Since the lockdown we have been unable to carry on our usual activities; our monthly drop-ins at Byfleet library have been suspended, and our monthly talks since February have had to be postponed, but we hope you enjoyed the newsletter and our latest Journal which we published in April.

Things are beginning to open up a little now. We may be able to resume our meetings in September, but this will depend on whether group gatherings become possible and if St Mary's Centre for the Community reopens. We will let members know nearer the time if this can go ahead. Whenever it happens to be, our first meeting will be the AGM which has been held over from May. This is the time when subscriptions become due, so there will be a membership form along with this newsletter—more details on page 5. Some of you have sent in your subs already, so thank you very much for your continued support.

July would have been another opportunity to meet our members at Parish Day, but sadly this will not take place this year. We will all miss our annual fete, so we have included some pictures of past Parish Days to try to make up just a little for its absence. We look forward to the event returning in its full glory next year.

Although we have had to postpone our photo competition, we will still be producing a calendar for 2021 on the theme "Byfleet Through the Ages." The finishing touches are being applied, and we will keep you up to date on when and where you can get your copies.

In the meantime, we hope you enjoy this newsletter, and remember you can keep in touch via our Facebook page. We look forward to seeing you all again soon. Stay safe and well!

FORTHCOMING
EVENTS 2020



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

2020

Thursday 16th July

Martin Sumpton will speak about 'Capability Brown—How He Made His Mark Upon the English Landscape from Wimbledon Park to Blenheim.' -
postponed

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!**

A note for your diaries: our Membership year runs from 1st May to 30th April each year. New members who join after February 1st will not have to renew until May of the following year.

For the Record...

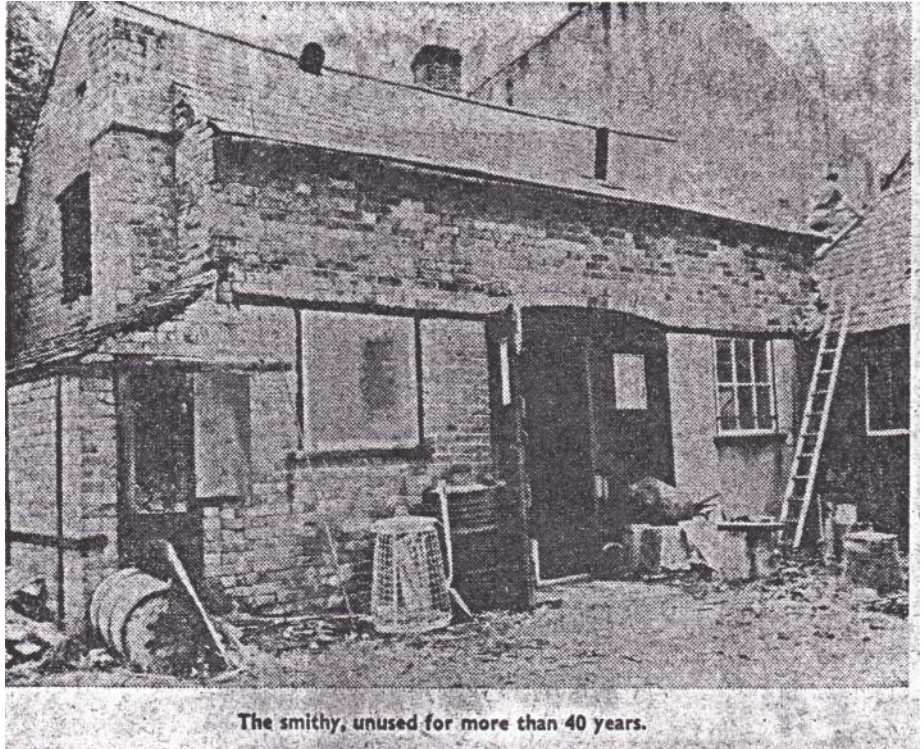
From the Herald and News dated 15th July 1966

"18th century smithy is doomed"

The recent purchase by Mid Surrey Motors Ltd. of the adjoining property and business well known as Horace Freeland (L. Rowley), marks the end of a very long chapter in the history of Byfleet.

Described in the title deeds as ironmongers, cycle works, blacksmiths and garage, the firm's earliest history is shrouded in the mists of time but a direct descendant, Mr T.H. Freeland, was able to fill in some of the details.

He remembers being told that the blacksmith's shop dates from about the middle of the 18th century. His great-grandfather, James, was the first Freeland to own the business, to be followed by Henry, who died in 1914, when Horace took over. Horace passed away in 1957 and Mr L. Rowley, who purchased the business, retained the old familiar name.



The smithy, unused for more than 40 years.



The forge, still as sound as the day it was made.

Mr J. Crawley, Managing Director of Mid Surrey Motors, described plans for the future of the old building. The smithy must come down as the building is in a dangerous condition. The shop will be used as a store. Eventually the whole area will be roofed over, vastly increasing the size of their showrooms and workshops.

The old smithy, which must have been in the centre of transport activity in those early pre-motor days, still holds some relics that bear witness to the "made to last" principle of the old craftsmen.

The forge bellows, not used since 1920, are in remarkably good condition and still work. The wood block floor is still sound in spite of the passing years and the trampling of heavy steel shod hooves. On the forge the maker's name is clearly visible, Holmes of Staines.

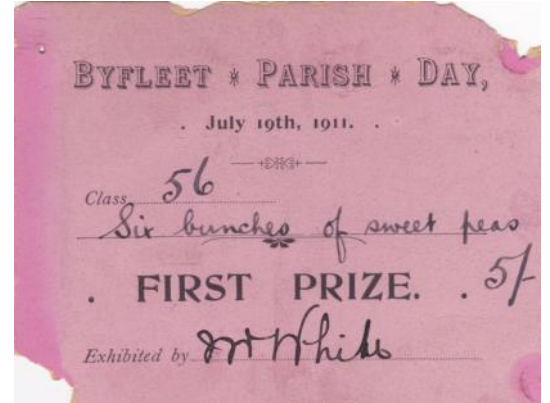
Enquiries have failed to trace the makers, perhaps a reader may know."

On the right is a picture of Freelands in its prime. The shop stood along Oyster Lane opposite Plough Green. Cobb House and Pizza Commodor are now on the site.





Sadly Parish Day has had to be cancelled this year, but here are some pictures from our archive to keep you going until next year. Above—a baby show in 1936 and duck races in the 1980s. Left: cycle race at Brooklands track. Right: First prize for sweet peas in 1911. Below: a 1980s dog show; Mr Jolms and Major Griffin dressed up for the fancy dress parade; Sir Barnes Wallis and George Edwards ready to open the day. Bottom: a tug of war contest and girls from St Mary's school dancing the Diageason in 1910.



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Trainspotting as an Education

When steam locomotives were the principal means of hauling trains, I remember the comment that “Every little boy wants be an engine driver when he grows up”. Not me! Growing up in a railway cottage off Oyster Lane, alongside the main line between Waterloo and the West Country, my ambition was to be a guard on a goods train. In my pre-school years I would wave at the freight train that passed by just before four o'clock every weekday afternoon. In particular, I waved at the last vehicle, the guard's van (properly called the 'brake van'). The guard, who seemed to be the same man every day, would wave back. I thought how wonderful it must be to ride in the van, with its internal fire and seating, and to stand outside during good weather. I didn't realise what the guard's duties involved, playing an important part in controlling the train, and using the manually-operated brake to reduce speed and eventually to secure the train when it stopped.

I was an avid 'trainspotter' (now called 'railway enthusiast'), and learned much about our country, as many of the locomotives were divided into classes, including 'Lord Nelson', 'West Country', 'Battle of Britain', 'Schools', and 'King Arthur'. Thus I had an early education in history and geography, identifying important people and places.

As my father was a platelayer on the railway, I knew when important trains would be passing. Our cottage was just west of Byfleet & New Haw station (then called West Weybridge). To the east of the station the branch line from Windsor joined the main line at Byfleet Junction. This meant that trains would be on the track closest to the house, and I and some fellow train buffs could stand on the embankment to see, for example, Royal trains which occasionally passed by. Such trains were preceded by a 'light' engine, one travelling without carriages, used to ensure that the track was free from any obstructions or security concerns. Shortly afterwards, the Royal train passed by but, although we waved, we never saw any Royalty.

Other specials were the boat trains taking passengers to meet the liners at Southampton, and the 'Bournemouth Belle' a daily service at 12.55 pm, comprising Pullman coaches. For a limited time there was also a 'Devon Belle', another Pullman train, complete with an observation car at the rear. My story has come full circle, as I was able to ride in this carriage on the South Devon Railway last year.

Jim Allen

An interesting story from The Times, 14th March 1819:

£30 Reward: Solomon Hedgecock has escaped from the constable of Byfleet, Surrey, who was conveying him to Horsemonger Lane for breaking open a cottage in the night, and stealing a quantity of Pig Meat, salted; he is about 5 feet 10 inches high, 25 or 30 years of age, long light brown hair, with a bald place about 3 inches over at the back of his head, which seems to have been scalded, thin face, and rather slight mode, through strong and bony, stoops and has an awkward swinging walk; had on, when he escaped, a brown smock frock, a racking apron, dirty white trousers, high shoes – the left one worn out at the toe and at bottom – rather a good hat for a common man. Whoever will apprehend the said Solomon Hedgecock and lodge him in His Majesty's gaol at Horsemonger Lane, shall receive the above reward, on application to Mr John Floodgate and Allan Shears, Byfleet, Surrey. March 13, 1819.

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**SOCIETY NEWS,
AND QUERIES**

Subscriptions for 2020/21

We usually hold our AGM in May, and it is at this meeting that subscriptions for the coming year become due. However, since we have all been in lockdown, our meetings have been suspended for the time being. We have been hoping for clear news on when we might be able to meet again, with our first post lockdown meeting to be our AGM. However, as that still seems likely to be some way off, and some people have been asking about renewing their subs, we have decided to send out our renewal forms now.

You should find a form along with this newsletter with all the necessary information. Some of you have already sent us your renewals, for which many thanks. Also, if you have joined the Society after February 1st this year, you will not need to renew until 2021. If you fall into either of these camps, then please ignore the form.

Otherwise, subs can be sent to our Treasurer (address on the form) or dropped off at Byfleet Community Library if that is more convenient. The library is still closed at the moment, but the post box is checked on a regular basis. Please do get in touch if you have any queries.

Thank you very much for your continuing support and we very much look forward to seeing you all again soon at one of our meetings or monthly drop-in sessions at the library.

Photo competition

As you may remember, we were aiming to compile our calendar for 2021 by holding a photo competition. We had received some beautiful entries Byfleet in the Autumn and Winter. However, Covid-19 had other plans, and we have had to postpone the competition while we all dealt with the strange circumstances of lockdown.

Not to be outdone, we have moved the competition's closing date to 31st May 2021, and the winning entries will now make up the calendar for 2022. Any entries we have received already will be held over for consideration, but if you have already entered and are inspired to send us some more photos, we would be delighted to see them. The theme is "The Seasons of Byfleet." We have some lovely autumnal scenes, so (if the weather behaves) we are looking forward to seeing some summery entries featuring some of our Byfleet landmarks.

Full details on the rules and where to send your entries can be found on our website at <http://www.byfleetheritage.org.uk/competition%202021.htm>

Good luck!

BYFLEET DISTRICT NURSING ASSOCIATION

**Parish Nurse, I, Queen's Avenue. Tel. 2658
Miss G. Talbot (Hon. Sec.), Vanners, Byfleet.**

who will be glad to receive Subscriptions.
Anyone wishing to become a Member of the
Association should apply to her or to the
Nurse or to their District Visitor

*Messages for the Nurse should be sent preferably before 9 a.m., and except
in urgent cases, not later than 5 p.m.*

From the Parish Magazine of 1944, just before the NHS was born. Does anyone remember their family belonging to this?

**SOCIETY NEWS,
AND QUERIES**

We received an enquiry from Rosamund Bowen about Paxton Gardens. She says:
 “My friend and I grew up in the mid 1950s on Paxton Lane. Some 70 years later we are still in contact. Our fathers all worked for Vickers, with my father Donald Bowen was on the first test flight of TSR2. We are trying to put together a history of Paxton Gardens, especially what the land was used for, prior to building Paxton Gardens post WW2. We had lovely rhododendrons and we think they were probably planted many many years prior to the construction of Paxton Gardens.”
 If anyone has any information about the origin of Paxton Gardens, please get in touch and we will pass it on to Rosamund.

Members might like to know that, while The National Archives at Kew are closed, they have made the digital records available on their website free to download. You have to register for an account, and downloads are limited to 50 items over 30 days in order to regulate demand—more details on what is available and how to register here: <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/about/news/digital-downloads/>

Records available include: First and Second World War records, including medal index cards, Military records, including unit war diaries, Royal and Merchant Navy records, including Royal Marine service records, Wills from the jurisdiction of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, Migration records, including aliens’ registration cards and naturalisation case papers, 20th century Cabinet Papers and Security Service files, and the Domesday Book.

This service will only be available for as long as the Archives are closed, but if you are researching your family tree, or some local history, this might be a good time to have a browse and see what you can find.

LOOKING AHEAD
2021

Despite things being a bit up in the air, we will still be producing a calendar for 2021.
 Although we could not go ahead with our planned photo competition due to all the restrictions surrounding the coronavirus, we have managed instead to compile a calendar on the theme “Byfleet Through the Ages”, which we hope you will enjoy.
 We will keep you up to date with when it becomes available, and where you can obtain copies in due course, so watch this space.

BYFLEET LIBRARY
 We are sure that, like us, you are looking forward to Byfleet Community Library opening its doors once again. At the time of going to press we are still awaiting news on when this might be. Surrey County Council plans to gradually reopen libraries from 6th July; the first of these will be Camberley, Dorking, Egham, Epsom, Farnham, Godalming, Guildford, Horley, Oxted, Redhill, Staines, Weybridge and Woking.
 We will endeavour to keep you updated on any news about Byfleet, and we look forward to opening up the Heritage Room once again and welcoming everyone back to our monthly drop-ins as soon as conditions allow.



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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