



Issue 87

Newsletter

August 2021

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

We are slowly emerging from the most difficult times most of us have ever experienced. Two recent significant events for our Society, in its 25th anniversary year, have been the reintroduction of our monthly 'drop-in' mornings in the Heritage Room on Saturday 7th August, when it was good to meet some members face-to-face again, and the delayed annual boat trip along the Wey Navigation canal on August 19th.

The next scheduled event is our Annual General Meeting (just 15 months delayed!) set for Thursday 16th September at 8.15pm. Please make a note of this important date **BUT BE AWARE THAT AT PRESENT WE DO NOT KNOW THE PERMISSIBLE CAPACITY OR LAYOUT OF OUR MEETING ROOM UNDER THE CURRENT COVID REQUIREMENTS.** We hope to be able to confirm these arrangements approximately two weeks prior to the scheduled date, and we will keep you accordingly updated in early September.

Once we are assured that we can resume our monthly meetings in a safe way, I will put together a programme of talks by contacting all the speakers who we had to postpone last year.

Many congratulations to all the winners of the photographic competition for our 2022 calendar, and thanks to everyone who entered. As you will see when the calendars go on sale in September, there is an interesting selection of 'Byfleet through the Seasons', and we thank Grahame Larter, from the Surrey Advertiser, for independently judging the entries.

Elsewhere in this newsletter, please find details of our 25th anniversary draw. As always, keep safe and well.

Jim Allen,
Chairman

BYFLEET HERITAGE SOCIETY CALENDAR 2022—COMPETITION WINNERS!

We are very pleased to announce the winners of our photo competition, whose entries will make up our 2022 calendar. Thank you to everyone who sent in their pictures—we have really enjoyed seeing all the lovely photos depicting our village throughout the year. Thanks very much also to Grahame Larter for acting as our judge.

Our winners are:

Bruce Bovill	Catherine Drew
Steph Eade	Chris Glasow
Michelle Good	Claire Johnston
Marc Platt	Tina Price
Ben Tugwell	Tessa Westlake

Congratulations to everyone, and watch this space to find out when the calendars are on sale.

FIRE STATION NEWS

The Byfleet Fire Station Trust are still fundraising to save Byfleet Fire Station and return it to community use. We held a very successful Fun Day on Plough Green on June 5th. The weather was perfect, and we were delighted to see so many people come along and enjoy the day. There were stalls on the green, the fire station doors were open to allow people to see inside, and some vintage fire engines were greatly appreciated by young and old alike. Just under £4,000 was

raised.

In other fundraising news, we are waiting to hear if we have progressed to the next stage of our Your Fund Surrey funding application, and also awaiting a reply from the National Lottery Community Fund.

You can keep up with the latest news on Facebook (www.facebook.com/ByfleetFireStn) or Twitter (twitter.com/ByfleetFireStn), or if you would like to donate, we have a Go Fund Me page at <https://gofund.me/1e802ca7>



The grand opening of the new fire station was reported in the West Surrey Times and Guildford Gazette, May 30th 1885.

OPENING OF THE NEW FIRE-ENGINE HOUSE

On Tuesday the new engine-house, erected in the centre of the village at the most prominent junction of roads, was opened by Sir J. W. Ellis, Bart., M.P. It is one of the prettiest buildings in the neighbourhood, and probably the most convenient engine-house in the surrounding locality. The firemen, under the control of Captain F. Morris, were called at 6 o'clock, and were drilled in the Cricket Field in the presence of Sir J. W. and Lady Ellis, J. Ramsey Stubbs, Esq., and a number of others; and to the satisfaction of those present, the firemen went through a series of drills in very quick time. The engine was then drawn by the firemen to the front of the new engine-house, where Sir J. W. Ellis and Lady Ellis had preceded them, followed by a number of onlookers. Sir J. Whittaker having unlocked the door, asked that the engine should be drawn in. This being done, the worthy Member for Mid-Surrey made a very pleasant speech; and in formally giving the use of the engine-house to the brigade, he promised that while the brigade kept everything in good order, and carried on everything satisfactorily, they should retain the use. The speech was received with cheers. Captain F. Morris, in thanking Sir John and Lady Ellis for their kindness, promised that he would do all in his power to make the brigade a success, and to protect the new engine-house from any wilful damage. He said he trusted that the firemen would do all in their power to show their thankfulness to Sir John and Lady Ellis for having built them such a pretty and convenient engine-house. In conclusion, he proposed three cheers for Sir Whittaker and Lady Ellis. These were given with great force, not only by the firemen, but a number of onlookers. Sir Whittaker thanked the company on behalf of her ladyship, adding that he always consulted Lady Ellis in what he did for the benefit of the parish. Sir John also thanked them for himself. In conclusion, he invited all the firemen and some of his own employees to a supper which he had provided for them. The guests included some of the resident gentry, amongst those present being: E.A. Clowes, Esq., Joseph Stevens, Esq., J. Ramsay Stubbs, Esq., J. Rice Holroyd, Esq., Charles Spicer, Esq., A. Gilbert Jones, Esq., G. Barron Holroyd, Esq., Captain F. Morris, Messrs. C. Clark, A. Bissett, J. Start, A. Jarratt, F. Bradley, and W. Start. After the cloth was cleared, the chair was occupied by Sir J. W. Ellis, M.P., and a suitable list of toasts was gone through. When Sir John and the principal visitors retired, the firemen enjoyed themselves greatly with harmony and joke until the hour of separation.



Byfleet Fire Brigade (photo from Chertsey Museum)

BYFLEET'S PAST – LOOKING BACK 150, 100 AND 50 YEARS AGO

ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO, 1921

- * Mr George Champion, who was verger at St Mary's Church for 25 years, spent a well-earned holiday, through the kindness of a number of friends. During his term of office, Mr Champion assisted at 313 weddings, 641 funerals, and over 1,000 baptisms.
- * Dr Brind said he had been to the new mortuary at Byfleet, which was extremely satisfactory, stating, "As a matter of fact, it was the best mortuary in his district".
- * Last summer (1920) there was a danger of the land flanking St Mary's Church being built upon, thus spoiling the pretty view of the ancient church. The danger was averted, and in order that it shall not occur again, Mr F C Stoop purchased the three acres and conveyed them by deed to the church authorities "to use as part of the churchyard or burial place".



Byfleet Comrades Club decorated for George V's Silver Jubilee

- * The Byfleet Comrades formed a pierrot troupe under the direction of Mr A R Yeates.
- * A public meeting was held at the Comrades Club in March, with Mr W G Tarrant presiding, at which a sub-committee was elected to act in connection with the Woking & District Unemployment Aid Committee, and deal with cases of unemployment in Byfleet. Mr Tarrant said that there was not a sufficient number of cases of unemployment in Byfleet for a separate Unemployment Committee to be formed, and a sub-committee would be adequate.

- * The Byfleet Musical and Entertainment Society, in aid of the Lord Haig's Warriors Day Fund, presented Gilbert & Sullivan's opera, 'Trial by Jury', preceded by selections from the operas 'Yeomen of the Guard', 'Gondoliers', 'Mikado', 'Pirates of Penzance', 'Iolanthe', 'Patience', and 'HMS Pinafore', at Byfleet Village Hall, in April. Tickets: 5/- and 3/- (numbered and reserved), and 1/6, including tax.
- * Messrs W G Tarrant Limited signed a contract with the French Government to erect 1,000 wooden houses in France, at such places (familiar by name during the war) as Albert, Bapaune, Arras and Bethune, which are situated in the most badly devastated regions. In May, Mr W G Tarrant had returned to Byfleet from France, where he had been making a tour of inspection of the firm's depots and organising various schemes.
- * The Committee of the Byfleet Variety and Dramatic Association decided to put into rehearsal a three-act play, and also a light dramatic opera, and a small orchestra had already been formed. For anyone interested in joining, the subscription was 2 shillings 6 pence. The Hon Secretary, Mr Leonard Stevens, Weycote, would gladly give any further information about the Association.
- * Petersham Lawn Tennis Club was formed, with Mr W G Tarrant's employees, using the Petersham Estate courts. Annual subscription – W G Tarrant's employees: ladies 5/-, gentlemen 7/6. Hon. Members – ladies 15/-, gents 21/-.
- * A well-known residence in Byfleet, The Cedars, which had been in the hands of Miss Haynes and her parents for over 35 years, was sold in June by Messrs Harrods Ltd, as Miss Haynes was leaving the district.
- * Mr O G N Tufnell, the well-known tennis player, who resided at Byfleet, played in the world's championship at Wimbledon. In the singles he reached the third round, where he was defeated by the Japanese player, Z Shimidzu, who afterwards reached the semi-final. In the gentlemen's doubles Mr Tufnell partnered M Alonso, the Spanish champion, reaching the third round, where they were beaten by Major Kingscote and J M Hillyard.
- * In June, the managers of Byfleet School wrote to Chertsey Rural Council, complaining that one of the Council's men had deliberately sprayed a number of the scholars with tar. They would be obliged to hold the Council responsible if damages were claimed by parents for spoilt clothes. The Surveyor said the man who was supposed to have committed the act had left the Council's employ. The Clerk was asked to reply that the Council admitted no liability.

- * The Byfleet Fire Brigade were summoned on a Thursday afternoon in late July to a fire at the edge of the Brooklands Track, which spread towards Weymede. Some common land and a number of buildings were involved, and, at one period, the house was threatened. Unfortunately the blaze was increased by a chance spark from the engine, which set an additional area alight, but eventually the whole outbreak was subdued, and the buildings were saved, after about two hours hard work.
- * The Fire Brigade was called to another fire in August, on this occasion at the rear of 'The Clock House', where a portion of the garden and park was in flames. After working for nearly four hours, the Brigade, under Captain V H Howell, succeeded in saving the fowl houses and prevented the flames from doing more serious damage to the trees, etc, and from spreading to the main building. A large area of the gardens and part of the park suffered damage, but little serious damage was done.
- * In September, steps were taken to start a lending library in Byfleet, and Mrs Rutson, of the Manor House, who is keenly interested in the formation of a Byfleet Library, stated that she would be very glad to receive suggestions on the subject.
- * Also in September, at the annual dance of the Byfleet Cricket Club, held at Bleakdown (now West Byfleet) Golf Clubhouse, it was announced that Mr F C Stoop, the President, had purchased the cricket field in the High Road, and the field adjoining, and had presented them to the club.
- * In October, Mr Howell presented the report of the Fire Brigade Committee to Byfleet Parish Council. He said that out of £179 spent in fire-fighting work by the brigade, he had been able to reclaim £104, and hoped to get another £30. That would mean that 20 calls would have cost the Council less than £4 each.
- * Amidst general regret and good wishes Sir John and Lady Snell left Byfleet, after having resided at Wey Barton for several years. Sir John took a leading part in the production of 'HMS Pinafore' in 1920, and both he and Lady Snell evinced a great interest in local affairs, particularly Lady Snell, who was one of the mainstays of the Byfleet Musical and Entertainment Society, and also the Surrey Goat Club.
- * Messrs Ewbank & Co reported the sale of Wey Barton, described as "a modern residence with gardens of 2¾ acres".



* On Armistice Day morning in November, the unveiling took place at the Byfleet C of E Schools of a brass tablet containing the names of the 31 Old Boys who fell in the war, and of an oak book case with banner to commemorate the war-work done by the school children during the period 1915-1918. The inscription and names are engraved in black on a gilt background, and are as follows:

To the glory of God and in proud and ever grateful remembrance the following names of old boys of Byfleet C of E School, who gave their lives for King and Empire in the Great War 1914-18 are hereby

affectionately inscribed: W Ardrey, F Burdett, G Chuter, T Denley, S Evans, J Francis, P Freeland, A Gregory, J Heath, J Heather, P Higgs, A Mace, A Mandeville, M Matcham, E Morrish, W Penfold, B Punter, H Punter, H Ralph, W Ralph, H Sibley, R Skeet, E Smith, L Steadman, S Sutton, A Turner, P Turner, A White, G Whitlock, J Woodhams, W Woodruff. Their names liveth for evermore!

- * At the Woking Sessions in November, Hodgson's Brewery Co Ltd presented plans in respect of the Plough Inn. The alterations were being made for the purpose of increasing the catering facilities, and had nothing to do with drinking. The Bench raised the point that there were a number of exits at the back of the premises, and it was proposed to increase these by putting in another door. The Brewery representative said that it was in order to facilitate the taking of food to the front of the house. They were prepared to make it a window instead. On this undertaking, the Bench approved the plans.
- * Mr F B Locke, the popular headmaster of the Byfleet C of E Schools, was ordered by his doctor to spend a quiet time away from Byfleet, and in December he stayed with relatives near Southampton. Apparently, great pressure of public and school work for a long period caused Mr Locke to have a nervous breakdown.

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NOTES AND QUERIES
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We were very pleased to receive a batch of photos showing life and events at St Mary's School. Three of them are below, showing cookery, art and music classes. The recorder ensemble really takes me back (and I admit that I still have my descant and treble recorders and even get them out occasionally—usually when no-one else is around!). If anyone knows anyone pictured or can have a guess at the dates we would love to hear from you.



ARTHUR JOHN BLISS

Can anyone help Anne Milner? She is researching Arthur John Bliss, who was an iris breeder, principally in Devon.

Arthur was born in 1862, the eldest son of a vicar in Oxford. His father converted to Catholicism and eventually went out to Rome, helping research and translate the papal archives. Arthur travelled to New Zealand and South Africa as an engineer, before returning to England, deaf and apparently crippled. He eventually moved down to Devon. Anne is trying to find out what happened to him between his return and his move to Devon.

Anne says, "By chance I came across a postcard sent to a Mr A J Bliss, Byfleet, Surrey in 1896, from W Cooper Ltd - horticultural suppliers. I was totally unaware of the possibility of him being in Surrey at that time, but a colleague from the Bliss Family History Society found an Arthur J Bliss on the electoral register at Scott's Cottages, Byfleet in 1898. Would you perhaps be able to help with any further information about either Mr Bliss or Scott's Cottages?"

Arthur would have recently returned from South Africa, having gone out in about 1890, but became ill so only stayed a couple of years. He next 'pops up' in around 1910 corresponding with W R Dykes, a well known iris person, who was researching species irises, and was a schoolmaster at Charterhouse School in Godalming. At around this time it is known that he was spending much time with one of his brothers in Kent, where he started breeding irises, but then went down to Devon, where he settled at Morwellham Quay, near another brother who was estate manager at Endsleigh, the Duke of Bedford's Devon property."

Anne is now the National Collection Holder of Arthur Bliss's irises, and if you would like to know more about him and his irises, you can visit www.blissiris.co.uk.

If anyone has any information about Arthur and his time in Byfleet/West Byfleet, or about Scotts Cottages, do let us know via the usual channels (see back page for details).



FROM OUR ARCHIVE

25th ANNIVERSARY DRAW

To commemorate our 25th anniversary, and in lieu of special events that we hoped would take place this year, we are holding a draw with a number of Byfleet-related prizes. The rules are simple.

Every currently paid-up member will be allocated a number (two for joint members). For the removal of doubt, only those who receive this newsletter are paid-up members and are therefore eligible!

Once we have allocated all the numbers, we will arrange for an independent person to make the draw, and those who win prizes will be notified accordingly.

The prizes include:

- * A copy of the soon-to-be-reprinted book, 'Byfleet: A Village of England'
- * Two tickets for a future coach trip (excluding the National Memorial Arboretum)
- * A copy of our 2022 calendar
- * Two tickets for next year's canal boat trip
- * A Byfleet Fire Station Trust mug
- * A Byfleet Amenities Group tea towel
- * A Byfleet Amenities Group shopping bag
- * A set of Byfleet Heritage Society notelets

The draw will take place in the autumn.



Members might be interested to have a browse at a new web-site dedicated to the noble art of Tug of War.

You can go to www.tugofwararchives.com to see lots of photographs of various teams in action. The site intends to include

a brief history of each club, along with any prizes they achieved. They are also hoping that anyone who knows anything more about the

pictures or clubs (such as venue, year, or names of any pullers), or with pictures of their own, will get in touch to add their information.



Left: BAC Tug of War Team 1969



Above: New Haw and Woodham Tug of War team—undated

NEWSLETTERS VIA EMAIL

Just a reminder that if you would like to receive your newsletters and other Society news by email, do let us know. Just drop an email to Tessa@westlakesystems.co.uk to be added to our emailing list.

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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