



Byfleet Heritage Society.

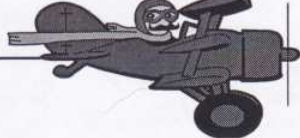
Issue 8

Newsletter

October 1998

After a fairly damp time over the summer, why not relax from raking up the already falling leaves with this latest copy of the newsletter. At the very least you can relive one of the few fine days by reading the account of our nature walk with Dr Reeve back in July, where we were lucky to get a lovely sunny afternoon. I hope you all had a nice break over the summer, and are ready to face the run up to Christmas - it seems like the cards and crackers appear in the shops earlier each year! On a personal note, in case anyone was wondering, I had a baby boy (John Duncan) on August 18th. He's already met a few members in the village (thank you for your good wishes), and we hope to meet more of you at Society events!

FORTHCOMING EVENTS



Friday 23rd OCTOBER: A talk on the cultural history of British folk music and song. The evening will be interspersed with pieces to illustrate periods and style. Byfleet Village Hall, Room A, 8.15pm.

Saturday 7th NOVEMBER, 10am: A visit to West Hall. Places on this visit are now fully booked.

Thursday 17th DECEMBER: A Christmas gathering. Bring along an item of memorabilia to show, partake of festive refreshment, and be seasonally entertained. Byfleet Village Hall, Room A, gathering starts 8.15pm, entertainment starts 9.15pm.

Friday 15th JANUARY: Historic Waterways of Surrey. An illustrated talk by Hugh J Compton of the Railway and Canal Society. Byfleet Village Hall, Room A 8.15pm.

Thursday 11th FEBRUARY: The Evolution

of the English Manorial System. The study of ancient West Surrey Lordships and re-enactment of traditional events and rural customs with special reference to Byfleet by Lt Col H W Molyneux-Child. Byfleet Village Hall, Room A, 8.15pm.

Friday 19th MARCH: The Paper Mills of Surrey. An illustrated talk by Alan Crocker, President of the Surrey Industrial History Group. St. Mary's Day Centre, 8.15pm.

Thursday 22nd APRIL: Society AGM and talk on Historic Locks and Keys by Victor Leonardi. Byfleet Village Hall, Room A. 8.15pm.

Friday 21st MAY: Explaining and Understanding Surrey's Historic Landscape. An illustrated talk by archaeological consultant Steve Dyer. Byfleet Village Hall, Room A, 8.15pm.

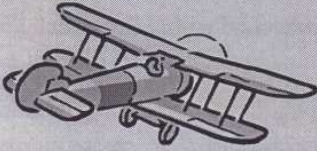
Sunday 27th JUNE: Visit to Cobham Flour Mill. Numbers limited to 20.

NON MEMBERS WELCOME, ALTHOUGH THERE MIGHT BE A SMALL CHARGE

For the Record...

Did you miss a meeting? Find out how it went.

On **11th June** Byfleet Heritage Society welcome **Mr Norman Boorer** to St Mary's Day Centre to hear about the fascinating **history of Brooklands**. Mr Boorer, who spoke to the Society last year about his childhood in West Byfleet, has a long association with the area, working in Vicker's machine shop and drawing office before working with such famous names as George Carpenter and Barnes-Wallis. He is now a volunteer at Brooklands Museum.

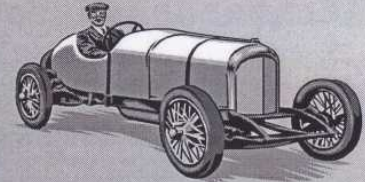


In 1906 Byfleet landowner Sir Hugh Locke-King built a concrete race track using £150,000 of his own money to give British drivers somewhere to practice and compete away from public roads where the speed limit was a grand 12mph. The track opened on June 17th 1907, and on June 28th the first of many world records was broken when S F Edge drove his Napier 1,851 miles in 24 hours. Early motor racing used horse-racing rules as its guide, so cars were weighed, racers wore coloured shirts and the cars all lined up in the Paddock.

In 1908 A V Roe flew the first plane at Brooklands, the first flight by an Englishman of a plane designed and build by himself. The open space in the middle of the track attracted aviators like Tom Sopwith, and flying schools run by Vickers, Bleriot and Bristols. The first manufacturer to move in to Byfleet was Martinsyde's, followed closely by Vickers who moved from Erith in 1911.

The First World War stopped motoring and aviation at Brooklands, although the FB12 Gunbus and Vickers-Vimy were designed there, and the Vickers-Vimy became the first aircraft to cross the Atlantic in 1919.

The years between the wars were Brooklands halcyon days. Race meetings were held regularly under the Brooklands slogan "the right crowd and no crowding". All the top names in motor racing were to be seen. Between 1914 and 1947 the world speed record was broken 28 times, 24 times by Brooklands cars or drivers. Brooklands Flying Club held displays every Sunday, where you could watch stunt fliers and parachutists, some of whom ended up in the sewage works, and where ten shillings would buy you a return plane ride to Windsor.



Motor racing never returned to Brooklands after the Second World War, but Vickers carried on. The factory was hit by an air raid in 1940 where over 80 people were killed. Manufacture of the Wellington and Hurricane was then distributed all over Surrey. Mr Boorer worked with George Carpenter on the fitting of a magnetic ring to the underside of a Wellington to detect and detonate marine mines. He also worked with Barnes-Wallis on his famous bouncing bomb.

Post-war planes to come from Brooklands included the Viking, Viscount, Valiant, Vanguard, VC10 and of course Concorde. In time Vickers moved from Brooklands, but an exhibition in 1977 at Elmbridge Museum provoked such interest that the idea of its own museum was born. In the early 80s Vickers sold 40 acres of Brooklands to Gallaghers, of which 30 acres was leased to the Brooklands Museum. Old sheds, workshops and the clubhouse were restored along with a replica bridge over the track. In 1988 the Wellington bomber R for Robert was recovered from Loch Ness and is on display in the place where it was made, now restored after 100,000 hours of volunteer work. Brooklands Museum is now a fascinating day out for old and young. The Society thanked Mr Boorer for a very interesting talk.

The Society was lucky to have a fine summer's day on *Sunday 19th July* for a *Nature Walk* along the River Wey with *Dr Nigel Reeve*. Dr Reeve explained that although the scenery looked rural, it was in fact an urban landscape with most of the features dictated by man. But there was still plenty to see as we set off towards the Manor House. Burdock, lords and ladies, herb bennett, greater celandine (which is actually related to poppies and not the lesser celandine), black horehound, himalayan and yellow balsam, ragwort and, of course, docks and nettles grow along the river banks. Wild hops and white bryony twine through the hedges. As we left the river bank and took the path towards Wisley we passed through fields and woodland where red campion, ladies bedstraw, tansy, horsetail, yarrow, common centaury and scarlet pimpernel were to be found. Heather, hypericum (or St John's Wort) and woodsage were to be seen on the tiny patches of heathland left among the trees.



Several species of fungi were discovered along the river banks and in the woodland. We saw examples of agaric and also earth balls and earth stars, which are related to puff balls.

After a very civilised stop at the Anchor at Pyrford Lock, we made our way back to Byfleet along the Wey Navigation, where hard rush, purple loosestrife and meadowsweet grow along the banks.

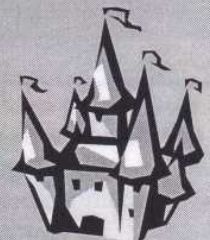
We didn't just look at plant life on our walk. Dragon and damsel flies were abundant on the water. Banded snails were common amongst the plants (as every gardener can vouch for) along with soldier beetles. Dead trees along the way showed signs where woodpeckers had been looking for a meal, and we were all pleased to see several species of butterflies (comma, red admiral, tortoise shell, meadow brown and gatekeeper) - a heartening sight when you hear so much about dwindling butterfly numbers.

Dr Reeve made our walk both interesting and fun, and we were very lucky with the weather. We found out just how much you can find on the river banks once you start to look closely.

Woking Palace was the subject of the talk given to Byfleet Heritage Society by *Mr Steve Dyer* on *17th September*. Mr Dyer is a freelance archaeologist and is also a consultant to Woking Council on how best to preserve and interpret what remains of the site.

The palace is tucked away in the fields next to the River Wey about halfway between Pyrford and Old Woking. Only a few Tudor walls still remain and the site is a scheduled Ancient Monument. The palace has a long history featuring some well known figures. It was formerly a Norman manor house, until Henry VII's mother, Lady Margaret Beaufort developed it into a palace. It became one of Henry VIII's favourite places to spend the late summer. Thomas Wolsey was with the King there when he learned that he had become a Cardinal and it is possible that Mary Tudor was born there. With the end of the Tudor dynasty the palace was no longer used by royalty, and in 1620 James I passed it to local landowner Sir Edward Zouch. However, by then the palace was becoming waterlogged and its gradual decline began. Woking Palace is shown on Norden's survey of 1608, which also features Byfleet. Modern work has shown that the layout of the buildings is as shown on this map, although only a couple of walls and one room with a vaulted roof still exist above ground. The fact that the palace had a moat showed that royalty favoured the owners, as to build a moat required royal consent. Archaeological work has shown that a right angled bend in the river had been constructed as part of a dock for boats coming to the palace by river.

There was still much work to be done and much to be discovered at Woking Palace. Any future plans had to be approved by National Heritage and were limited by practical considerations. If further walls were excavated and exposed they would be eroded by the weather and possibly vandalised. It was proposed to mark where walls were below the surface by laying strips of coloured gravel on the surface. The barrel vaulted room required a new roof and it was proposed to incorporate a viewing platform to allow the site and its surroundings to be seen as a whole. Reports on work done and future plans were being written up and would be ready in due course.

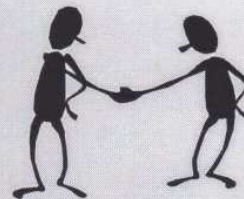




SOCIETY
NEWS

ADDLESTONE HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

As Secretary of the Addlestone Historical Society and a new member of the Byfleet Heritage Society, I bring you fraternal (or should that be sororial?) greetings from Addlestone! Jeff Sechiari has asked me for a few words on what our Society does and I oblige below, in the hope that some of you might like to join us some time and hear some of our monthly talks. We also arrange visits to local places of historical interest when we can, as you do. I have passed our two most recent Newsletters and our programme of talks for this year to Jeff, in case anyone should want to know more. We are always delighted to welcome visitors and new members.



Addlestone Historical Society was founded in 1984 to foster interest in the history of the Addlestone area, which for our purposes included New Haw, Woodham, and Ottershaw. It maintains close liaison with Chertsey Museum, whose Curator, Stephen Nicholls, is an Honorary member of the Society.

We hold our talks, with visiting speakers, monthly at 8.00pm on the first Tuesday of every month (except August) in the Addlestone Community Centre in Station Road (just down from the late lamented Duke's Head traffic lights and next door to Runnymede BC Council Offices) – parking available on site. We publish a quarterly Newsletter and welcome articles and research reports by members and others. The society endeavours to encourage research projects, no matter how small, and historical recording by individuals or groups, though naturally we have many members who are happy just to belong and come to the talks. I believe we are some 60 strong at the last count.

Like you, we have been endeavouring to become involved in the local oral history project recently; and we have members engaged, among other subjects, on research into blacksmiths, maps, a local street index – and, of course, Coxe's Lock Mill, on which our Chairman, David Barker, is the local expert. (David and his wife Jocelyn are co-authors of the well known series of books of local historical photographs, the most recent of which is "Hark Back to Hersham", and I know that a new book is undergoing gestation even as I write). Our President, Stan Eaves, is a walking directory of local historical knowledge, having been brought up in Addlestone and lived here for more years than he will probably admit to.

I have been very pleased to see the range of subjects you Society covers, the lectures and visits that I have unfortunately missed in the past and the talks arranged for the coming months. I must come across and see the Heritage Centre at your Library – to my shame, I haven't managed to do that yet, but intend to remedy this omission in the very near future. I look forward to meeting Byfleet Heritage Society members at forthcoming meetings and visits and to extend my knowledge of your fascinating village and the surrounding area while so doing. Maybe I'll see some of you in The Plough from time to time...?

PAT BROWN



As you may remember, we are attempting to publish a Society journal at least once a year. We hope this will contain longer and more detailed articles on our heritage which don't really fit in the newsletter. We would be delighted to hear from you if you have something you would like to see in the journal, if you have a query you think someone might be able to help with, or perhaps you would like to share some memories or research on a Byfleet topic. All articles gratefully received.

Please contact Jeff Sechiari on 01932 341084

Video History Update

As you may have seen in the local press, Doug Bright has won a Millennium Award (channelled through Help the Aged) to fund a video of the history and natural history of Byfleet. The end result could be used by local schools or organisations, or possibly for viewing at the Heritage Centre.

He is looking for a team of volunteers to help out with the project. Doug would especially like to hear from anyone with experience in video shooting and making, but there is a variety of ways to get involved. So if you could help in any way, large or small, please contact Doug on 01932 346283



Oral History Update



You will remember from previous newsletters that this is a project that is dear to our hearts. Two of our members have attended a one day seminar on the hows and whys of recording people's memories, and we are now looking into the equipment we need, how much this would cost and, the perennial question, where we can get the money from! We are looking into applying for various grants and hope to be successful.

Once funding is in place, we will be hoping to collect volunteers either to interview people, be interviewed or help with transcribing the resulting tapes. So watch this space for more news!

Research Information News

A file has been started which will contain information to show researchers what is available and where. The file, with a bright red cover and the title RESEARCHING BYFLEET, has been put in the Society's cabinet at Byfleet Library. Members wishing to see it should ask the library staff for access. Some items which are double sided or folded will have to be taken out of the file for viewing or writing on, but please replace them before returning the file to the cabinet so that it is all there for the next person to see. The first items placed in the file are mainly leaflets from local museums - Elmbridge (Weybridge), Chertsey and Brooklands together with news about the Surrey History Service and the Public Record Office at Kew. I will look for further sources and add information as I get it. I do not expect any one member of the Society to have knowledge of all available sources and we do not employ professional researchers. The amount of information contained in the file will depend on the members sharing their knowledge by adding what they know to the file. There are some blank pages for you to do this. I have also included a section where members can declare their particular interests with a view to sharing their researches with others.

Surrey History Service

The new Surrey History Centre at 130, Goldsworth Road, Woking GU21 1ND (Tel: 01483 594594) will be opening for business on Tuesday 3rd November 1998. There will be a chance to look around on Saturday 31st October when they are holding an Open Day. This will include guided tours "backstage" to show how Surrey's heritage is preserved for future generations. There will be NO facilities for study on that day. I hope to have the Open Day timing at the Society's next meeting on 23rd October. From 3rd November the Centre will be open from Tuesday to Saturday (closed on Mondays). The new improved opening hours will be: Tuesday 9.30-5.00, Wednesday 9.30-5.00, Thursday 9.30-7.30, Friday 9.30-5.00, Saturday 9.30-4.00. Telephone bookings for study can be made from 20th October. Up-to-date news on the Surrey History Service is on their website at

<http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/libraries-leisure/shs>

This site has links to other sites of interest.

Mike Webber



Just a reminder..

If you haven't yet renewed your membership, we have enclosed another form, in case you have mislaid the original. Thank you for your continued support, and we hope you enjoy the coming year with us.

Coming Soon!!

We hope very soon to bring you some new displays for the Heritage Centre. Topics include St Mary's Church and the London and Southampton Railway amongst others. Watch this space for more news!



From Our Archive

This time taken from The Review, Vol 18 No 218 July 1955

Royston Chase Hotel and Licensed Club

Restaurant Open for
LUNCHES and DINNERS (3/6)

Available for
PRIVATE PARTIES, WEDDING RECEPTIONS, etc

RESIDENTS WELCOMED FOR
FOR LONG OR SHORT STAYS

OLD AND NEW MEMBERS WELCOME

Under Personal Supervision of Lieut-Com. G. A. WHITTAKER, R.N. (Retd.)

HIGH ROAD, BYFLEET, Telephone Byfleet 3251

BIG BEETLE BILL

Treatment of House Longhorn Beetle in
Oyster Lane, Byfleet houses will cost
Woking Council £599 5s 0d.

Showing at the **Ritz ABC Cinema** in
Woking (restaurant and free car park):

*Ethel Merman, Donald O'Connor,
Marilyn Monroe and Johnnie Ray*

in

There's No Business Like Show Business

Byfleet

PARISH DAY

BYFLEET RECREATION GROUND

*

WEDNESDAY
13th JULY
at 2.0 p.m.

- * 100 STONE INVITATION TUG-O-WAR
(Organized by New Haw and Woodham Club)
- * CHILDREN'S SPORTS AND FANCY DRESS PARADE
- * PUNCH AND JUDY
- * CHILDREN'S DANCING DISPLAY
(by the Joyce Durnford School of Dancing)
- * HORTICULTURE AND HOMECRAFT EXHIBITIONS
- * BUFFET REFRESHMENTS AT REASONABLE PRICES - Set Teas at 2/6
- * WHITTLE'S FAIR - LICENSED BAR - WHIST DRIVE
- * SPECIAL BUS SERVICE BETWEEN BYFLEET AND WEST BYFLEET
- * ADMISSION: Tickets purchased before the day: Adults 6d., Children 3d.

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