

With the nights drawing in and a distinct nip in the air, why not sit by the fire and enjoy the latest newsletter. You might be thinking of Christmas shopping, in which case why not check out about our Heritage Society calendar for 2011—details on the back page. Perhaps, on a cold day, you might pop into the library to warm up. If you do, make sure you take a look at our newly laid out display cabinet in the Heritage Centre.

Next, just a quick word about subs. Thank you very much to everyone who has renewed their subscription. For those of you who have not quite got around to it yet, you should find a reminder form inside this newsletter, and we hope you will decide to continue your membership. If you have already renewed, please let us know so that we can correct our records.

Finally, may we wish you all a very happy Christmas and a happy new year.

FORTHCOMING
EVENTS 2010



2010

Thursday 2nd December: Christmas Social. Nibbles and drinks. Speaker to be confirmed.
St Mary's Day Centre, Stream Close, 8.15pm

2011

Thursday 13th January: Newark Priory by Jeanette Hicks. Find out the history of one of our local landmarks.
St Mary's Day Centre, Stream Close, 8.15pm

Thursday 10th February: Communications and Community Along the Wey—Part 2. Come and join Iain Wakeford for the continuation of his talk on how our roads and village layouts have developed over time. **St Mary's Day Centre, Stream Close, 8.15pm**

Thursday 10th March: To be confirmed.

Thursday 21st April: Memories of Byfleet in the 1950s with Roger Clover. Unfortunately this had to be cancelled last year, so we are delighted to welcome Roger again for a trip down memory lane. **St Mary's Day Centre, Stream Close, 8.15pm**

Thursday 19th May: Society AGM. Speaker to be announced, but please note the earlier start time of 7.30pm. **St Mary's Day Centre, Stream Close.**

Thursday 16th June: Join Jim Allen on a Churchyard Tour as he explains about the project to record the memorial inscriptions and shows us some of the interesting residents. **Time to be confirmed.**

Other dates for your diary:

Thursday 14th July

Thursday 8th September

Thursday 6th October

Thursday 17th November

Thursday 8th December

Members free. Guests £2 Everyone very welcome.

JEFF SECHIARI IS WORKING HARD TO FILL THE REST OF OUR CALENDAR WITH INTERESTING TALKS SO WATCH THIS SPACE FOR FURTHER ANNOUNCEMENTS. IF YOU HAVE AN IDEA FOR A TALK OR A TOPIC THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO HEAR ABOUT, JEFF WOULD BE DELIGHTED TO HEAR FROM YOU.

Just a quick reminder about subs! Very many thanks to all those of you who have renewed your subscription for next year. If it has slipped your mind, you should find a renewal slip inside this newsletter, which can be posted to Avreil our treasurer or dropped in at Byfleet library. Many thanks for your continued support.

For the Record...

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

A last minute change to the published talk in **September** gave us a chance to catch up on some Society news.

Jeff Sechiari showed some photos from the handing over of Manor Farm to the Surrey Wildlife Trust in May. Geoff Marlow performed the opening ceremony in front of a new information board, with the Chief Executive of the Trust, Nigel Davenport. The information board contains details of which wildlife you might see and of Wildlife Trust events, along with a map and a history of the site. Jeff also showed photos of the unveiling of the Howard Cook memorial at the Village Hall (which was reported on in our last issue) and the inauguration of a new notice board on Plough Green, which had been provided by the Byfleet, West Byfleet and Pyrford Residents' Association and erected by the Byfleet Amenities Group.

Julian Temple then took the floor to bring us up to date on activities at Brooklands Museum. He showed some fascinating photographs from the second world war, as the 70th anniversary of the bombing of Vickers was fast approaching. One, from the beginning of 1939, showed the expansion of the Vickers factory and also the Hawker Aircraft assembly shed on the Byfleet banking in about 1935. Recently Julian had discovered a series of about 10 photographs taken during two passes by an RAF reconnaissance plane only three hours after the Vickers air raid on 4th September 1940. The craters left by the bombs could clearly be seen and the machine shop was obviously very badly damaged. Two days later there was another raid on Hawkers, and a large crater could be seen in the area of what is now Sopwith Drive. Julian said that traces of war time activity still survive, with gun positions and towers still survive in the area and are now scheduled ancient monuments. The discussion prompted one member of the audience to remember that Brooklands track had been covered with camouflaged netting to hide the distinctive outline from enemy aircraft. The netting, stretched above the track on poles, had quickly become known by the local boys as The Bouncy, and provided hours of fun as a massive trampoline!

Work was continuing the clear Brooklands track of weeds and undergrowth, and it was hoped to carry out restoration on the old restaurant buildings at the top of Members' Hill. Eventually it was hoped

for these buildings to be used by a commercial company restoring old cars. And one final development was the news that Cobham Bus Museum would be moving to Brooklands Museum along with their collection of 25 buses. This would allow Brooklands to redevelop the Redhill Road site, and provide better access to the bus museum's collections.

Next Jim Allen reported on the St Mary's Churchyard Survey. This had been carried out by a group of American Scouts from Cobham. The details had been put onto a spreadsheet of just over 1,000 entries, giving details of location of the grave, and the name, date of birth and copy of the full inscription. You can search on name, date or search a particular section of the graveyard. About 60 graves were recorded as unmarked, as the inscription was illegible, or there was no headstone. These 60 would be investigated as far as was possible. Jim noted a couple of interesting graves in the light of Julian's talk. Of the 83 victims of the Vickers bombing, only 3 were buried at St Mary's. Irene Coleman was only 17 when she died in the bombing, and there was also a memorial to Edward Eastwood which had been paid for by his workmates at Vickers.

Jim finished off the evening by showing some of his photos of the Society's trip to Loseley, which had taken place in the summer. The house had been built because Elizabeth I had expressed a wish to visit—but the existing house was not considered to be up to standard! It took seven years to build—and even then the family and staff had to move out while Elizabeth was in residence. And, to cap it all, she only stayed for a few days before moving on. But at least the event had left us with a wonderful place to visit.



In **October** we welcomed local vet **Carl Boyde** who shared his reminiscences of his life and times in his vet's practice in Chertsey.

Carl entered the Royal Veterinary College in 1947, in an age when horse drawn vehicles were still very much in use. England was still on petrol rationing, and half of the 1947 harvest was brought in by horse. When he graduated in 1951 he received a call asking if he could go to Staines as an Assistant Vet. His interview consisted of two questions—did he have a driving licence? And could he start on Monday. The answer to both was “yes”, and he started a week long appointment which has lasted until the present day! He stayed with the practice until he “retired” at the end of the 1990s, but then started as a one man practice the very next day, as his old practice had taken the decision to give up treating large animals. So Carl decided he would fill that gap.

When he first joined the practice, it treated pets and large, farm animals in equal amounts. It was the large animal element that kept him out of the Royal Veterinary Corps, as he did not have to sign up if he was doing work of national importance. Looking after the nation's farm animals qualified as very important.

There were a lot of farm animals in the area at that time. In Staines there were about 20 small dairy herds, the largest being owned by Colonel Chatham. The largest beef herd was kept on what is now Foxhills Golf Course. Four hundred barley beef cows used to roam there, fed intensively on barley which meant they reached slaughter weight by the age of one year.

Pigs were also widely kept. Southall Borough Council had a large piggery and they bought in pigs to be fattened up on waste food. This actually made a profit for the rate payers. Unfortunately this practice ended, something that Carl regretted, and he pointed out that without pigs to be fattened, 20% of landfill was now made up of edible food.

By 1959 Carl had moved to Chertsey, where he attempted to start a mink farm. He also collected the runts from the pig litters he visited and took them home to raise. He then moved to Hardwick Court Farm, where he still lives today. With twelve acres at his disposal Carl could now keep 50 sows. He also joined the committee of the Chertsey Agricultural Association, of which he has been Chairman since 1968. At the time, agricultural shows were fast disappearing, but Carl had an idea. He saw two large white mares in a field, and he wondered if they might be able to plough. As tractors became more widespread during the 1950s, horse ploughing had begun to die out. Carl borrowed the horses, the necessary harness and a plough. Luckily his next door neighbour had been a pre-war ploughing champion, and with his advice Chertsey show held its first ploughing competition in 1968. The event grew and then other associations began to hold their own competitions.

In 1970 Carl was appointed to Southall Market, which was, at that time, London's main horse market. However, many of the horses were being slaughtered as there was a large export market for horse meat. Carl started a crusade to find homes for retired plough horses, which led to him becoming a horse contractor. It all started with Jaffa. There was a custom that the first fruit to be imported had to be delivered by horse to the Lord Mayor of the relevant city. Whitbread were asked if their horses could be used, but they refused. Then someone thought of Carl. He made up a four horse team and toured from London to Liverpool, Glasgow, Newcastle and Cardiff. The following year Edinburgh, Hull, Bradford and Leeds were added.

Carl was also asked to run a horse drawn bus. The last one had run in London in 1911, and it was planned for this to tour from South Kensington to Parliament Square. Unfortunately this only lasted for ten weeks as the businessman ran out of money, but the scheme led to a commission from London Transport in 1979 to celebrate 150 years of the bus in London. The first route was established in 1829 and ran from Paddington Green to the City. Carl was commissioned to provide three buses daily between 10am and 6pm to go between Regent's Park and Bow Street Station. He used his horses in shifts, and veterinary students provided the workforce.

In 1974 the British Persheron Horse Society asked Carl to represent them at Buckingham Palace where the King of Afghanistan was being entertained. A riding school display was provided, with four heavy horse breeds represented. Carl said it was a wonderful event, but unfortunately, about six weeks later, the King of Afghanistan was assassinated.

Another aspect of Carl's life as a vet has been the opportunity to treat circus animals. He had Rani the elephant on his farm for about a year, and she even came to St Mary's church once for a charity tea party. Other exotic guests on his farm include a llama, a camel, an African cow and two Spanish donkeys. Hardwick Court Farm has only had two owners in the first centuries of its existence. Originally the land was owned by Chertsey Abbey. Then, following the Dissolution of the Monasteries, it passed to the Crown until 1827, when it was sold by the Duke of York to pay his debts. The beams of the barn have been dated to 1445 using dendochronology.

We thanked Carl for letting us share his memories of his long association with the animals of the area and also for telling us about the other directions his involvement with animals have taken him.





On a chilly evening in **November Jeff Sechiari** took us on a virtual tour of some of the old houses that used to stand in the village. Nikolaus Pevsner once described Byfleet as a “shattered village” to the south of Weybridge, but, as Jeff showed, there was once a variety of large and interesting houses that stood in the village.



Jeff mentioned many houses that are now only remembered as street names, such as Grasmere and The Cedars. Here is a selection of the houses that Jeff had found out about.

Weymede had been built by Joseph Stevens between 1885-1887. He lived there until his death. Leonard R Stevens, his son (and author of *A Village of England*), says it was demolished in 1944, but it is still shown on the 1964 map, and a member of the audience remembered that the house had been turned into flats, as they had visited a friend there.



Weycote was built in about 1903 by Joseph Stevens for his son, Leonard. Leonard and his family lived there from 1907—1944 when he moved to London. The original house stood until fairly recently, but has now been rebuilt as a larger house on the same footprint.



The Clock House was once known as Byfleet Lodge, and we think might have once been the home of Joseph Spence. A 1946 press cutting claims that it was once lived in by Cardinal Wolsey and James I, but the house is not that old, and the writer was probably putting Woking Palace, Byfleet Manor and the Clock House all into one! Mr Hines, a resident in Victorian times, built a

greenhouse there, planted a banana tree and grew the first banana to ripen in England. This was duly sent to Queen Victoria at Osborne House.

Next door to the Clock House is **The White House**. In 1849 this was owned by 6 Francis sisters who allegedly started a small school for girls. Three sisters married and moved away, and three stayed to run the school. It was possibly also once known as Chelsea Cottage, and is reputed to have been the home of Leslie Hoare Belisha, Minister of Parliament, Minister of Transport and the man after whom the beacons as zebra crossing are named. The house has been dated to the first half of the 18th century judging by the method of building.



Vanners Farm stood on the corner of High Road and Brewery Lane, where Vanners Parade is now. A Thomas Vanner is listed as living in Byfleet in the late 18th century, although we do not know exactly where. The farm had 76 acres. In 1825 Henry Dennett brewed beer there, and his son later established Byfleet Brewery on land opposite the farm house. He died in 1841, but his widow carried on the business which lasted until about 1908. The brewery buildings then became the Sanway Laundry, which was itself demolished in the 1960s. **The Beeches**, which stands on the corner of High Road



and **The Willows** used to be the Brewmaster’s House. Other notable houses included Lake House, Royston Chase Hotel, Old Lodge, The Briars (later Arden House or The Tower House) and, of course, Byfleet Manor and Mill House. We thanked Jeff for a tour of some of Byfleet’s hidden or even lost treasures.



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Byfleet's Finest!

We were lucky enough to acquire a copy of this lovely photograph of Byfleet Fire Brigade c 1910, and we wondered if any members might be able to spot an ancestor among the men. We know that the man in the middle front row sitting on top of the engine is Captain Vivian Howell, who lived at Ferney Court in Chertsey Road. He was the Fire Brigade's captain and also the local Scout master where he was affectionately known as "Spotty". He arranged activities for the boys such as weekly visits to the rifle range at Foxwarren. The basket device on the front of the engine is apparently to put over the end of the hose when taking up water from the river, to prevent weeds and leaves (and even fish) from being sucked into the engine's tanks.

Can anyone name any of the fine firemen present? Or does anyone have a clue as to the location? If so, please let us know.

Winkfield Cottage, Highfield Road, West Byfleet

We received an email from Hazel Gantley, who is curious to find out about Winkfield Cottage.

She says, "My paternal ancestry is being traced and it is known that one of my forbears lived at the above address in the 19th century. The current Land Registry plan and photographs show the present dwelling but I am curious to know how it looked at that time.

Could you advise me, please, as to any publications available which mention the history of the property? If there is anything within the Library Service my local library here in West Sussex could probably obtain it for me."

Does anyone know anything about Winkfield Cottage, or can advise Hazel in her search? If so, please let us know either by calling Tessa Westlake on 01932 351559 or dropping a note in at Byfleet Library. Or if you are online, you could leave a message on our website forum (www.byfleetheritage.org.uk)

SOCIETY SNIPPETS

BYFLEET



Byfleet Heritage Society
Calendar 2011

Visit us at
Byfleet Heritage Room, Byfleet Library, High Road, Byfleet, KT14 7QN
Email: info@byfleetheritage.org.uk Web: www.byfleetheritage.org.uk

Byfleet Heritage Society has compiled this calendar free entry to its 2011 photographic competition. We are proud to be the focus of the Society and its members and visitors. The Society serves the Ancient Parish of Byfleet and West Byfleet.

BYFLEET HERITAGE SOCIETY CALENDAR!

The results of our Photographic Competition are now available as a rather lovely calendar for 2011. Congratulations and thanks to:

Nancy Savage, Marie Louise Francis, Anne Roberts, Grahame Larter, Sheila Fairmaner, Graham Hedges, Margaret Simmons, Bob Stace and Jeff Sechiari.

The calendars now available at Byfleet Library, or at our

Christmas Social and cost a very reasonable £5 each. If you are unable to get to either of these locations, please ring Jeff Sechiari on 01932 341084.

Thank you to everyone who entered, and our best wishes for an excellent 2011 to everyone.



The Wey Navigation and Byfleet Boat Club

Sheila Fairmaner

June 2011

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

DISPLAY CABINET REINSTATED

Recent visitors to the Heritage Centre will have noticed that our display cabinet has reverted to its original use. We originally had to take the glass out as it did not conform to safety standards, and so the cabinet for a time became a reconstruction of the cobblers shop that used to be in Chertsey Road.

After the library refurbishment, it was felt it was time to ring the changes. We were able to buy some safety film to bring the glass up to standard and now we are able to display some of the lovely objects we have acquired for everyone to enjoy.

So next time you are at Byfleet Library, why not pop into the Heritage Room and have a browse at the items newly on display.

Newsletter now available by email!!

Remember, we have now cracked the technology (!) and can send you your newsletters or any other Society communications by email. It's quick, easy and cuts down on those piles of paper we all have.

Some members have already taken this option., so if you would like to join them please drop an email to Tessa Westlake at tessa@westlakesystems.co.uk and she will add you to the mailing list.

If at any time you decide that you would like to revert to "snail mail", just drop Tessa another email and the switch can easily be made.

Thank you.