

Welcome to our first newsletter of 2014! We hope to see you at one of our monthly meetings, or at one of our Drop In Sessions at Byfleet Library on the first Saturday of the month.

We will also have some open days at the Fire Station, so if you haven't yet seen inside this historic building, or want to come and find out the latest on plans for its upkeep, or have any memories or photos, please come along.

And don't forget, as we commemorate one hundred years since the outbreak of the First World War, we are still collecting any information on the men from Byfleet who served. Enjoy this newsletter and we hope to see you soon.

FORTHCOMING
EVENTS 2014



Thursday 13th February: Speaker to be arranged. **St Mary's Day Centre, Stream Close, 8.15pm.**

Thursday 13th March: Join us as **Roger Cansdale** tells us of the "Basingstoke Canal Heroes and Villains". **St Mary's Day Centre, Stream Close, 8.15pm.**

Thursday 17th April: Speaker to be arranged. **St Mary's Day Centre, Stream Close, 8.15pm.**

Thursday 22nd May: Society AGM. Speaker to be arranged. Please note the earlier start time of 7.30pm, **St Mary's Day Centre, Stream Close.**

Thursday 19th June: Speaker to be arranged. **St Mary's Day Centre, Stream Close, 8.15pm.**

Thursday 17th July: Speaker to be arranged. **St Mary's Day Centre, Stream Close, 8.15pm.**

Thursday 11th September: Join us as former Rowley Bristow Consultant, **Robin Hollingsworth**, tells us all about 'The Rowley Bristow Hospital'. **St Mary's Day Centre,**

Stream Close, 8.15pm.

Thursday 9th October: Speaker to be arranged. **St Mary's Day Centre, Stream Close, 8.15pm.**

Thursday 13th November: 'November 1914 and the British Churches come to terms with the war'. Join us as **Revd Dr Peter Howson**, Byfleet's Methodist minister, tells us of his researches into chaplains during WWI. **St Mary's Day Centre, Stream Close, 8.15pm.**

Thursday 11th December: Christmas Social. Nibbles and drinks, together with **Mike Webber's** annual collection of new photographs that the Society has come by. **St Mary's Day Centre, Stream Close, 8.15pm.**

**Members free, Guests £2
Everyone very welcome!**

For the Record...

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

In November, Jim Allen took us through the centuries to examine the many Rectors that have served at St Mary's Church, Byfleet.

We do not know the exact date of the founding of our church, but a building existed at the time of the Norman Conquest, as it is listed in the Domesday Book. The oldest part of the present church dates from 1290-1310, and there are 62 Rectors recorded on a list which hangs in the church.

The earliest recorded incumbent was a William in the reign of Henry III, before the present church was built. The first Rector in the new building was Richard de Popegrave, who was also a Rector in Lincolnshire and Cornwall, and chaplain to King Edward II. The longest serving Rector was Richard de Curslowe who served from 1318-1360.

Thomas Teylar was in office from 1454-89, and is a special case as his memorial brass still exists in the church. It is now placed just beyond the chancel arch, but was originally on the floor in front of the altar. He is shown in the full robes of Lincoln Cathedral, but the exact date of his death has never been filled in. His grave was discovered in 1924.



Two Rectors in the church's history have been ejected from office. It is not entirely clear why Hope Gifford and Samuel Scudamore were removed, but as this was around the time of the Civil War and subsequent Restoration, it is thought that Rev Gifford was ejected for being a Royalist, and Rev Scudamore for being a Puritan.

A famous Rector was Stephen Duck (1753-56), the "thresher poet". Duck determined to educate himself to escape his poor background, reading Milton with the aid of a dictionary. He began to write poetry and eventually came to the notice of Queen Caroline, wife of George II. His friend Joseph Spence, another poet in Queen Caroline's favour, who lived in Byfleet, arranged for Duck to become St Mary's Rector. Sadly, following the death of his second wife, Duck died after falling from a bridge into the river at Reading. He is buried at St Andrew's Church, Sonning.

Another notable incumbent was Charles Sumner who was also chaplain to Queen Victoria. It is because of this office that a coat of arms of Queen Victoria still hangs in the church today. Under Rev Sumner the first major alterations were made to the church. A musicians' gallery and a private gallery were removed and a door put in at the west end of a new wing. The original three decker pulpit, consisting of the pulpit, clerk's desk and reading desk, was separated out. Further alterations were made under Rev Newton John Spicer (1851-1874) in 1864. Stone pillars built in the nave, and a new transept added. The new west door was moved to the new South wall instead. The 1835 organ was replaced (but only lasted until 1893) and remaining galleries removed. The church was reopened on 1st June 1865, with great celebration, which turned into the yearly event we now know as Parish Day.

Rev Granville Erskine Money served for 33 years (1884-1917). He decreed that weddings and funerals were not a spectator sport, and that no rice should be thrown inside the churchyard gates. He was in charge when Prime Minister Gladstone and his wife came to St Mary's in 1890 and again in 1893.

Rev Cheverton was a more infamous Rector. A consistory court was held at Byfleet Village Hall, where it was claimed that the Rector had made alterations to the graves and grave sites at St Mary's, removing 88 stones and destroying 17 without consent. The stones that now line the path to the church door are among those he moved, and the case caused quite a scandal at the time.

Jim finished by revealing that the small copse to the left of the church is being enhanced. Mr Tarrant donated the original trees, which are now being reviewed and tidied, with new trees and shrubs to be planted to create a new reflective garden.

It seems a whole array of interesting characters have resided at our little church.

Our usual Christmas get together featured Mike Webber's now traditional presentation of some of the pictures we have been lucky to receive for our archive over the year. We saw many lovely pictures, only a few of which we can show here. But if you would like to see more from our archive, do drop into Byfleet Library on the first Saturday of each month (the same day as the Farmers' Market) when we hold drop in sessions and bring out items from the archive for anyone to browse. Here is just a small sample of Mike's interesting presentation.

Graham Larter, former photographer for the Surrey Herald, forwarded us some photos of



Byfleet in the 1970s and 1980s, including these above showing work on Byfleet Village Hall and a section of Brooklands track in disrepair.

There was also this one of the shops in West Byfleet, we believe dated about 1905. This is an interesting one, as it looks towards Byfleet Corner, where St John's church has not yet been built.

And, below, pictures from Richard and Rosemary Richards found, by chance, tucked away in a guide book they had borrowed for a holiday. They found someone had written in it that Joseph Bech, Foreign Minister and later Prime Minister of Luxembourg, was in exile in West Byfleet during the war, and then by chance saw a reference to Grand



Duchess Charlotte's being at Byfleet too. Armed with these slight bits of information they visited the Luxembourg National Library while on holiday and found a book with this picture of the Grand Duchess at Byfleet. They later contacted the Luxembourg National Archive who sent a copy of a photo of her in the garden at Byfleet, but no information of actually



where she was. If anyone has any ideas, please let us know. She was in the area from 1943-1945.



We kicked off 2014 by welcoming David Hassard from the Kingston Aviation Centenary Project, which was set up to celebrate one hundred years of aviation history in Kingston.

The aim of the project was to build public awareness and pride in Kingston's aviation heritage. They have collected a large archive of pictures and also interviewed former factory employees. They have a portable exhibition for touring, and there is also a very fine website at www.kingstonaviation.org.

It all began in 1910, when Tommy Sopwith bought an aeroplane and taught himself to fly. Teaching yourself was common back in those days, and the person who had built Tommy's plane had

never actually flown himself. Sopwith was the 31st person in England to obtain a pilot's certificate.

After a stay in America in 1911, he returned to Britain in 1912 and set up the Sopwith School of Flying at Brooklands, near where Marks & Spencer is now. There he was joined by Fred Sigrist, a former yacht engineer who maintained the plane engines, and Harry Hawker who later became test pilot and co-designer at Sopwith.

Fred Sigrist thought that the flying school planes could be improved, and so produced the Sopwith Hybrid. The plane turned out to be so good that the Admiralty offered £900 for it (£90,000 in today's money). The team took that money and bought a roller skating rink in Canbury Park Road, Kingston. This was the widest span, ready made building that they could find, ideal for plane manufacture; the Kingston area was perfect for recruiting the necessary wood workers due to Kingston's boat building industry. As there was no airstrip nearby, all planes built in Kingston were towed behind Tommy Sopwith's car to Brooklands.

The new factory's first plane was the Bat Boat flying boat in 1913, the first British flying boat. This was followed by the Sopwith three seater land plane, in which Harry Hawker broke the height record, reaching 8,400ft with three passengers, and 12,900ft with one passenger. More success followed, with the Sopwith Tabloid, at the time 20mph faster than any other two seater. This was then put on floats, creating the Tabloid racing floatplane, in which Hawker won the Schneider Trophy.

By the end of 1914, 200 people were employed at Kingston, building the new Sopwith Schneider for the Navy during the First World War. The factory was expanded in 1915, and by 1917 covered 5.5 acres. Sopwith continued with technical innovation, building the war plane the Sopwith 1 1/2 Strutter, the first plane with the gun firing through the propeller in 1916, and developing the Tabloid into the Pup. Also in 1916 they produced a triplane, and the most successful First World War plane, the Sopwith Camel. Harry Hawker would often fly out to France to ask pilots their opinions, amending the aircraft to their comments. The war demanded a huge increase in production, and the government build National Aircraft Factories. No 2 was built at Ham, but from April 1918 Sopwith leased and ran this one himself.

However, the end of the war brought an end to the boom, and Sopwith had to let the Ham factory close. Sopwith tried to keep going with various prototypes, and activities such as trying to cross the Atlantic. He had to ditch his plane half way across, making sure he landed in the sea near a ship, who rescued him, although it was weeks before anyone at home knew that he was all right. However, this was not enough to keep the factory going, and when the government demanded the company's excess profit, the company was forced into liquidation in 1920.

But the team were not deterred. With only 20 workers, the H G Hawker Engineering Company was set up. Sydney Camm was hired in 1923 as a draftsman, rising to chief designer by 1925. The following year Sigrist and Camm patented a special steel tube construction. The planes kept coming—the Hawker Hart in 1928 and the Hawker Fury in 1931, the first 200mph aircraft. In 1935 Siddeley House was built in Kingston as an experimental workshop, where the prototype Hurricane was built, which went on to be the first 300mph aircraft in RAF service, and playing a vital part in the Battle of Britain. It was also used in every theatre of war, as it was a stable aircraft and easy to maintain. 3,012 Hurricanes were delivered from the Brooklands factory, which was handed over to Vickers in 1942.

The 1939 Typhoon was followed by the Tempest in 1943, the first 400mph aircraft. Then the company bought the old National Aircraft factory in Ham from Leyland Motors in 1948, when the Sea Hawk, with folding wings for storing on aircraft carriers, was built. The Hunter followed in 1951, which broke the world speed record at 727.6mph. Camm and Sopwith were knighted in the Coronation Honours List of 1953, and a new head office block and design office was built in Richmond Road, Kingston.

Hawker's last hurrah was the Hawker Siddeley P1127 vertical take off plane, which became the Hawker Siddeley Harrier, which was ordered by the USA in 1971, even though they rarely bought non-American planes. In 1974 the last plane designed at Kingston was the Hawker Siddeley Hawk, famously used by the Red Arrows.

In 1977 the aircraft industry was nationalised, and Hawkers became part of British Aerospace, creating the Sea Harrier in 1983, the Harrier II in 1988 and the Goshawk, before BAe closed in 1990.

The Harrier remained in service until 2010 when they were scrapped and the USA bought any remaining aircraft. Since 1912 45,000 aircraft were built. Another staggering statistic from David was the fact that since 1914 the Royal Flying Corps and the RAF have never been without a Kingston aircraft in service, and this will continue until at least 2025—an amazing record.

We thanked David for a most interesting talk about the amazing aviation heritage not only at Brooklands but in the surrounding area as well.

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SOCIETY NEWS
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The Society is sad to hear of the passing on 22nd December 2013 of 'Andy' Andrews, a long-time member, keen bowls player and one-time Clerk of Byfleet Parish Council, aged 78.

Members may also remember Dora Rice (widow of a well-known local press photographer, Frank Rice) who until recently lived in Winern Glebe. She died, aged 107 and 6 months on 3rd January 2014.

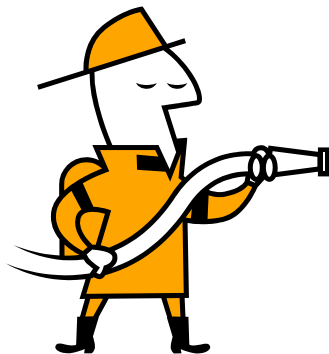
Dates for your diaries

Members might like to note that we will be having Open Days at Byfleet Fire Station on the following days:

- Saturday 12th April
- Saturday 9th and Sunday 10th August
- Saturday 13th September

Come along and see us and our historic fire station, and if you have any memories or photographs that you might like to show us, we would be delighted to see you.

All welcome. Free entry.



Sanway drop in session

As you may know, we have regular drop in sessions on the first Saturday of the month at Byfleet Library. These are sometimes on a specific topic, or more general, but they are an opportunity for us to bring out items from our archive that we cannot otherwise display, and for members who can't get to our evening meetings to come along and say hello.

This time we thought we might make the Sanway area our theme. This is an old and interesting area of Byfleet, and we would like to meet anyone with particular memories or family history in the area. So come along and see what we have, and share your memories.

The session will be on Saturday 1st February between 10.00 and 12.00. We look forward to seeing you.

Possible Second World War site on the Seven Hills Road

A planning application has been made for some land along Seven Hills Road, towards Walton, in the woods on the left hand side. We have heard that there was an ammunition store there during the Second World War, but we would love to know if any of our members have heard of it, or know what military establishments were in the area. If you know anything, please let us know. You can either leave a note for us at Byfleet Library, or call Tessa on 01932 351559, or catch one of the committee at a meeting. Thank you.

SOCIETY SNIPPETS

DON'T FORGET!

We are still collecting information about any Byfleet residents who fought in the First World War. We are trying to find out about the lives of the names on our War Memorial, but also about anyone who signed up and served at the front.

Do you have an ancestor who went away to war? If anyone has any family stories, or even photos or memorabilia, we would love to hear from you.

Please get in touch via Byfleet Library, or at one of our meetings. Thank you.



From our Archive



BYFLEET

"Plough" dart team circa 1920
starting from left,

F. Row: JACK CHOWNS, Alf Turner, Bill Elliot, SAMMY GULLIVER

M. Row: Harry Denly, ALF WARREN, Castleman (Landlord),
Ben Denly, Charlie Partridge, Tom Chapman, TICH
Worsfold.

B. Row: Dick Pullen, Fred Hines, Bert Bird,
Charlie Francis, BILL WELHAM, Wally Mabey.

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The Plough darts team c 1920. Does anyone have an ancestor among the fine gentlemen, pictured here outside the Plough pub. If so, do let us know!