

*The Great British Bake Off has ended and Strictly Come Dancing has begun, which means it must be Autumn. If, as the nights start drawing in, your thoughts are turning to Christmas then you may like to know that we are once again producing a calendar for the new year—see the back page for details.*

*Thank you very much to everyone who has renewed their subscriptions for 2014/15—and welcome to our new members. (If you haven't quite got around to it yet, there should be a reminder slip with this newsletter.)*

*Finally, we hope you enjoy this edition of our newsletter, and don't forget to let us know if you have an idea or suggestion for an event for the coming year.*

FORTHCOMING  
EVENTS 2014



**Thursday 9th October:** *Eileen Perryer tells us all about 'Marc Brunel - the first tunnel under the Thames'. 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!**

**Don't forget**—if you have a topic or an idea for a talk, please let us know.

## YOUR HELP AND SUGGESTIONS NEEDED

As we head into the last few months of 2014, it is high time to be thinking about a diary of events for 2015.

We have some ideas that we are following up, but we would like to know what you would like to see, hear or do.

Is there a particular topic that you would like to hear about? Or have you heard about an interesting speaker that you would like to come along to one of our meetings? Or would you like to try a research evening or discussion group on something like family history research?

If so, we would love to hear your suggestions. Please have a chat to a committee member at one of our meetings, leave a note at Byfleet Library, or give Jeff Sechiari a ring or drop him an email (01932 341084, [jeff.sechiari@btinternet.com](mailto:jeff.sechiari@btinternet.com)) Thank you.

## For the Record...

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

In July we welcomed Martin Cutler who kindly brought along some of his wonderful collection of medals and told us of the stories behind them. Martin has been a keen collector for many years and researches the medals' former owners. Every medal is unique and all have stories behind them.

There are a variety of medals which were awarded during the Great War of 1914-18. Martin showed a set belonging to Squadron Leader G Baker, who had enlisted into the Royal Flying Corps in early 1912. His medals included the 1914 Star and bar, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal. These three were popularly known as "Pip, Squeak and Wilfred". The bar meant that he had served under fire between August and November 1914. Mr Baker had also served in the Second World War, and went on to receive the RAF long service good conduct medal.

All First World War medals were engraved with the individual's name, but due to this process still continuing into the Second World War, the practice was not continued for the 1939-45 conflict. Each ribbon for the Second World War medals was designed by King George VI himself. The green symbolises the fields of England, black stands for the blackout and orange commemorates the Blitz.

In early 1914 the only medals for gallantry were the Victoria Cross and the Distinguished Conduct Medal for the Army, the Distinguished Service Medal for the Navy and the Distinguished Service Cross for the armed forces, Royal Fleet Auxiliary and the Merchant Navy. There was also the Distinguished Service Order which was for officers only. Acts of gallantry that were deemed not of the "required standard" could qualify for one of the lower medals, which were the Military Medal or the Military Cross. If a recipient of a gallantry medal should later fall into disgrace, his medal cannot be taken away, although the name of the offending soldier can be removed from the register. Martin purchased his first Military Cross in his collection at the age of 16, for which he paid £14. It had belonged to Lt Sidney Smith. Then, 27 years later, the rest of Lt Smith's medals came onto the market, which Martin was pleased to add to his collection. He had served in the Machine Gun Corps and, during the Second World War, in the Dorset Regiment, where he protected airfields. His Military Cross was for holding his position under fire.

All Victoria Crosses were made from bronze from cannons brought back from the Crimean War. This stock of bronze ran out after the Boer War, but more was obtained in 1900 from cannons captured during the Boxer Rebellion in China. The bronze is held at Woolwich, and you can tell which medals are made from which bronze as the patina is a slightly different colour.

There were many wonderful stories connected to the medals Martin has brought along, but one that stood out was the tale of W C A Meade. Joining the Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve Armoured Car section in early 1915, he later became an armaments officer in a sea plane squadron in the East Indies. On patrol with Guy Smith in the Indian Ocean, they were caught in a storm and separated from their aircraft carrier. They tried to land on a small island, but punctured a float. Pushing the plane into a lagoon, they managed to tie it safely to a palm tree, spreading their clothes over the engine to keep the plugs dry. By morning, the tide had gone out, leaving the plane high and dry. They tried to repair the damage, but had only 2 compressed air cylinders left with which to start the engine, and only 1 hour's fuel. They attempted to fly, but sustained more damage and they had to land in the sea. Unable to get the plane ashore, they swam the three miles to land, Meade swimming with the Lewis gun. On shore, they found a boat and shot down coconuts to eat, although it took them three hours to break the husks. By luck, a storm blew the plane nearer to shore, so they secured it, covered the engine with their clothes again and went to sleep. They were rudely awoken by three natives, but as Meade and Smith stood up naked, the natives fled in terror from the "white devils". However, Meade and Smith later found that the natives had stolen the boat, so they had to make a raft to reach their plane. They used the final cartridge to start the engine and managed to take off—but as their clothes had still been on the engine and blown away, they had to fly naked. They managed to stay airborne for a short time, landing on another small island, where that night they were taken prisoner by twenty natives. The natives took them to the Sultan of the Maldives (having first given them loin-cloths!) where they were received as celebrities, dressed in the uniform of the Sultan's personal body guard and royally feasted. On finally returning to their unit, they discovered themselves listed as missing, believed drowned.

We thanked Martin for sharing his collection with us, and for revealing some of the wonderful stories behind each and every medal.



"Pip, Squeak and Wilfred"

## BOAT TRIP



On 14<sup>th</sup> August, 23 members spent a leisurely afternoon on a boat trip along the Wey Navigation canal from Parvis Wharf to Walsham Lock.

Initially, we encountered bad weather; as we got on board the two boats, the heavens opened and there was a minor thunderstorm. This meant that we had to keep the side screens of the boats closed.

However, by the time we entered the lock at Pyrford, we were able to open the screens, and from then on we were close to nature, looking at close quarters at the flora and fauna of the canal banks. We even saw a heron!

Just beyond Walsham Lock, where the canal joins the River Wey, we turned round, and headed back. The whole cruise lasted about 2½ hours – the



boats usually go only as far as the Anchor at Pyrford – and it was generally agreed that it was a great way to spend an afternoon.

It is hoped to repeat the outing next year, possibly going in the opposite direction to New Haw and Addlestone.

Jim Allen





Our first Autumn meeting welcomed Robin Hollingsworth, Orthopaedic Registrar, who worked at the Rowley Bristow Hospital for fifteen years until its closure in 1990.

Orthopaedics was first outlined in 1741 by French Professor of Medicine Nicholas Andry in his book *Orthopedia*. The book was concerned with the prevention and correction of deformities in children, the name coming from *Orthos* meaning straight, and *paidion* meaning child.

The story of the Rowley Bristow begins with Edward Rudolph. Born in Lambeth in 1852, he became his family's main wage earner in his teens. He started work as an office boy, but schooled himself in his spare time and managed to enter the Civil Service in the Office of Works. In 1881 he founded the Waifs and Strays Society (later The Children's Society) to provide medical care and homes for poor children, becoming its first paid Director in 1890. In 1888 he had opened the St Nicholas Home for Crippled Children in Tooting, which moved to Byfleet in 1893. However, the building soon became too small, and an estate at Pyrford was purchased with generous donations from Mr F C Stoop of West Hall, among others. The foundation stone was laid in 1908 by the Duchess of Albany, Queen Victoria's daughter in law, with Edward Rudolph and the Bishop of Winchester in attendance..

The hospital could take 120 children—boys up to age five and girls up to age 16. Outdoor treatment for TB was provided in special open air wards. As there was a school on the site, the place was known as St Nicholas Home and Special School. A dedicated chapel followed in 1911.

In 1915 St Martin's hospital was built on the lower part of the Pyrford site. This opened in 1917 and took 50 boys, aged between 5-16, from a home in Surbiton. St Nicholas and St Martin's were administered separately until 1923, when they were amalgamated.

In 1922 Mr Walter Rowley Bristow, who had established the Orthopaedic Department at St Thomas' Hospital, London, was appointed Honorary Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon. He was a talented sportsman, and had been mentioned in dispatches at Gallipoli. He lived in West Byfleet and attended St Nicholas once a fortnight, sending any children who required surgery up to St Thomas, while the hospital at Pyrford continued to grow.

The operating theatre was opened in 1928 by the Duchess of York (later Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother). The theatre cost £4,000, and more money was later raised for another ward. Fundraising was helped by the exhibition of *Titania's Palace*, a beautiful dollshouse containing 3,000 components. It was carried out by Sir Nevile Wilkinson, a painter, and took thirty years to complete. Many of the contents are small art treasures collected from around the world, and everything in the house works. The house is now on display in Denmark.

In 1930 a heated swimming pool was installed, along with another 40 bed ward and an X ray room, and by 1933 the hospital was nationally known, and its reputation spreading internationally. But then the Second World War broke out, during which the hospital was used by the Emergency Medical Service, caring for injured servicemen, and, after St Thomas was bombed, evacuated patients. By the end of the war the hospital contained 183 beds, and 102 Emergency Medical Service beds.

Mr Rowley Bristow died in 1947, and in the following year the Children's Society renamed the hospital the Rowley Bristow Orthopaedic Hospital in his honour. In due course the NHS was born, to which the Rowley Bristow transferred in 1950. They were able to negotiate installation of a new clean air system, and operating theatres with windows. The hospital was administered by the Rowley Bristow Group Hospital Management Committee, which continued until 1974, when the North West Surrey District Health Authority was set up and the committee dissolved. The hospital remained in Pyrford until 1990, when it moved to St Peter's in Chertsey. The League of Friends, who supported the hospital between 1961-1993 with vital fundraising, had made sure that their last purchases were mobile, so they could be transferred to the new site.

The temporary site at St Peters was in the old hutted accommodation, which meant that the hospital could continue to work while the new interior was designed. Money was raised for the new Rowley Bristow Orthopaedic Unit by the sale of the Pyrford site—now St Martin's Mews and St Nicholas Crescent, built in 2000. The new unit cost £8.5m and opened in 1998, two years ahead of schedule. In 2003 a memorial stone was unveiled at the old entrance to the original hospital.

We thanked Mr Hollingsworth for an interesting look at the history of the world renowned hospital in our neighbourhood.



*From our Archive*

Here are two photographs we were recently sent showing well known local resident Ebenezer Mears.

To the right are some of his workmen with one of his vans at his works which used to stand on the bend in Chertsey Road before it comes out onto Oyster Lane.

Below are Ebenezer and his wife, Mary, relaxing in their garden. The couple are on the 1911 census as living at Ivy Cottage, Chertsey Road.



This lovely picture of Boundy's store was kindly sent to us by Mike Gathercole.

The shop stood on High Road, next to the entrance to Binfield Road, across from the Binfield Bakers.

This photo dates from the early 1930's. In front of the shop are Mr Boundy and his assistant, Mike's mother, Aileen Gathercole (nee Berry). Mike believes that his mother worked in the shop before she married in 1936.



## 2015 CALENDAR



The Society is about to publish its annual calendar. For 2015, we are featuring paintings by the well-known local artist, the late John Brangwyn, who lived in Petersham Avenue. He was a prolific and talented painter, and we are pleased that his family has given us permission to reproduce twelve of his local scenes.

The calendar will go on sale in November, and can be purchased at Byfleet Community Library and at St Mary's Centre for the Community. There will be further opportunities to buy copies at our November and December meetings, as well as at the Byfleet Village Christmas Fayre in the Village Hall on 22<sup>nd</sup> November, and the following week (29<sup>th</sup> November) at St Mary's Centre for the Community's Christmas Fair. Watch out for the posters which will announce when they are available.

The price remains at just £5 per copy, but the print run is limited so early purchase is advised.

We would like to thank Mary McIntyre, Joyce Polley and St Mary's School for their help in making the paintings available to us, and to Alan Balharrie and Jeff Sechiari for photographing them.

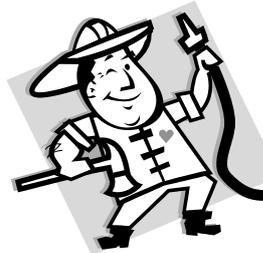
### ***Don't forget...***

If you haven't yet paid your subs for 2014/15, there should be a reminder with this newsletter (if there is no form, that should mean you have paid your subs). This can be dropped into the library, posted to our Treasurer or passed to a committee member at one of our meetings—whichever is easiest for you! Full details will be on the enclosed form.

***Thank you***

Byfleet Fire Station was open again for the Heritage Open Day weekend in September.

We had a very successful day, with probably the largest number of visitors yet. We are still organising raising funds for further maintenance, and following up a couple of offers of help we received on the Open Day.



We will be having further open days next year, so watch this space for details.



The first few days in August saw two services of remembrance to mark the centenary of the outbreak of World War One. There was a moving service at St Mary's Church, where crocheted poppies were distributed among the congregation, one for each person named on the war memorial. These were collected up during the service and taken to the altar. Then on the evening of the actual anniversary there was a short service at the War Memorial in High Road. Both events were well attended and provided a fitting tribute to the men of Byfleet who had lost their lives.

There was also a small exhibition of war memorabilia at Byfleet Library—very many thanks to all those who very kindly donated valuable family heirlooms for display.