

Hello again all. It's AGM season again, and we hope to see you at our May meeting, when we have an interesting look at Byfleet through the electoral roll. There will also be a chance to renew your subscription, and we hope you will join us again for the coming year.

You may have heard about the new churchyard map website—or even had a go on in—where you can search for the graves of any ancestors you may have. We had a lovely launch at St Mary's church hall, details of which are on the back page.

We hope you enjoy this edition of our newsletter, and don't forget, we can be found at Byfleet Library on the first Saturday of each month between 10.30-12.30 if you have any questions or would just like to stop by to browse our archive.

FORTHCOMING
EVENTS 2015



Thursday 21st May: Society AGM, after which Jeff Sechiari will give a talk about the information to be gleaned from **The Electoral Roll for Byfleet**. *Please note earlier start time of 7.30pm, St Mary's Day Centre, Stream Close*

Thursday 25th June: A discussion evening dedicated to **The history of the Sanway Area**. Come and find out about Sanway, or add your own memories. *St Mary's Day Centre, Stream Close, 8.15pm.*

Thursday 23rd July: Join us for a relaxed and entertaining evening as our very own Jim Allen hosts another of his celebrated **Quiz Nights**, testing your local history knowledge. *St Mary's Day Centre, Stream Close, 8.15pm.*

Thursday 10th September: Join us as John Clarke tells us all about "**The History of Brookwood Cemetery**". *St Mary's Day Centre, Stream Close, 8.15pm.*

Thursday 8th October: An Evening of short talks by members. Our own members take the floor this evening to give short talks about their particular interests. *St Mary's Day Centre, Stream Close, 8.15pm.*

Thursday 12th November: Martin Cutler returns to continue his talk about the **Second World War**. *St Mary's Day Centre, Stream Close, 8.15pm.*

Thursday 10th December: Christmas Social. Nibbles and drinks, together with Mike Webber's annual **Collection of new Photographs** that the Society has come by throughout the year. *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.

PARISH DAY 2015

Don't forget that this year's Parish Day will be extra special, as it celebrates 150 years since the first Parish Festival was held on the lawns of West Hall.

The event will be on **Saturday 18th July** on Byfleet Recreation Ground. The fun starts at 12.30pm.

The Heritage Society will be there, so come along and join in the fun.

For the Record...

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

We kicked off the new year by welcoming Sarah Bunce, a Wildlife Ranger on Chobham Common, who took us on a virtual tour of the military history of the common, signs of which are still very much in evidence.

Chobham Common lies to the north-west of Byfleet. Although in medieval times heathland covered large parts of Surrey, it has since declined. Five hundred hectares are now managed by the Surrey Wildlife Trust, forming a rare habitat for many heathland species from invertebrates to birds.

Sarah has researched the military history of the common and now gives guided walks around the sites, the main bulk of which are in the northern part. She began her virtual tour in the Roundabout car park, which, looking at Luftwaffe aerial reconnaissance photos from the 1940s, has possibly been a parade ground. The photo showed a small settlement nearby, but Sarah had not been able to confirm its use; it had possibly been an Italian prisoner of war camp. There had definitely been prisoner of war camps in the area, and people had moved into them when housing was short after the war.

Some photos had been taken of the area using lidar imaging, where images were taken using a laser. This reveals the underlying land forms, and has revealed the footings of many buildings on the common.

We moved on to Memorial Cross, which was the site of the Great Camp of 1853, where soldiers were housed before going to the Crimean War. The camp was 2 miles across, with 8,000 troops there at any given time. Three hundred kilos of meat and 800 sacks of corn were delivered a day, and there were 1,200 horses to feed. The camp built its own slaughterhouse, and they had their own hospital in Chobham village. The camp attracted up to 100,000 sightseers, and Queen Victoria came twice to review the troops, with the commemorative cross being set up after she died. The cross stands north of the M3 near Sunningdale, although the Queen would probably have been nearer the Chobham side; legend has it that the Sunningdale people donated more funds and so decided its location. A canon was presented to Chobham village, although this was melted down in the war, but later replaced by one dredged up from the Thames.



Across Ship Hill is an area covered by trenches, possibly dug as practice trenches during the First World War. There are also several bomb craters, and there are records of 13 high-explosive bombs dropped on 23rd September 1940. Just beyond the bomb craters is a feature with several concentric banks. This remains unidentified, but is possibly something to do with the Crimean camp.

Sarah carried on to Burma Road, where there stands a large installation known locally as the Tank Factory. It never was an actual factory, but an armoured vehicle research and development facility from 1941 until 2005. It is currently leased to a film studio. Some of the areas of bare ground that show up in aerial photos can be explained as vehicle testing areas. The Universal Carrier (1953) and Conqueror tank (1955) were tested here, and the plated armour known as Chobham Armour was developed here, still used on Challenger II tanks. English Heritage have been to the site to see what architectural heritage remains; there is a "portable" aircraft hangar, offices with air raid shelters, a climatic lab for testing vehicles in desert or freezing conditions, and a televisual tank turret testing rotunda. It comes as no surprise to find that developers show a great deal of interest in the land, but would need to seek planning permission to change the use of the land to a Site of Alternative Natural Greenspace or SANG. Debris from the military days still turns up; a flail used for detecting mines was found last summer.

More World War One practice trenches are to be found on Oystershell Hill, so called because of the amount of fossil oystershells in the area. There are some mystery concrete structures on the south side, with some buried wire nearby, so the site possibly had electricity. A teapot, milk bottle and chocolate wrappers have also been found there, along with a hand gun. It was possibly part of the tank factory, or a searchlight station, or perhaps a listening station to catch the first signs of any attack on the tank factory.

Questions from the audience reminded Sarah of the so-called treacle mine. The Great Camp had buried some of their food supplies, including a stash of barrels of molasses, which later decayed and started to leak, giving rise to the imaginative story of there being a vein of treacle waiting to be mined.

Sarah takes guided walks to explore the military sites of Chobham Common. Details can be found on the Surrey Wildlife Trust's website ww.wildlifetrusts.org/events/2015/05/16/chobham-common-parade. Her next walk is scheduled for 16th May, but are carried out on other occasions too, and you do not have to be a Surrey Wildlife Trust member to participate.

In February we welcomed Andy Fielder who recounted the long, rich history of Windsor Great Park. Andy started life in Farnham Road, Slough, but once his father became a woodsman on the Royal Estate, the family went to live in the park, and Andy found he had 5,000 acres of woodland to play in.

In the 1240s, Windsor Great Park was created within Windsor Forest, which once included Byfleet. The lands were designated for deer hunting, and were therefore covered by harsh forest law; the deer were sacrosanct as belonging to the monarch, and there were very serious penalties for anyone touching them. Hunting could be quite dangerous. Yeomen Prickers forced the deer into an ever narrowing trap which ended with a net. The noblemen then dismounted and slew the deer by hand, although Elizabeth I killed her deer by crossbow instead, as they ran past specially built stands. The resulting venison was very valuable and prized as currency or gifts. The red deer were not indigenous to Windsor, but brought in from Germany. Standing at 6ft, and weighing 400lbs of muscle, they are mostly placid until the rut in October/November each year.



Forest Law was very unpopular, and residents around the fringes of the park begrudged the harsh conditions it set up. There were armed insurrections before the Civil War and again in the 1720s near Winkfield and Englefield Green, and people were killed. When Sir Robert Walpole's estate was invaded by raiders and all his deer killed, the Black Act was passed and those held responsible were hanged if they were men, or transported if they were women.

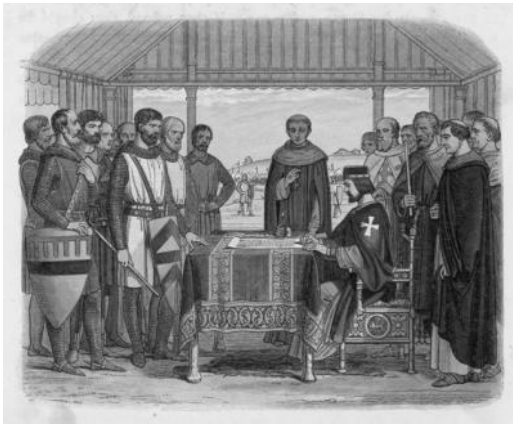
A house had stood on the site of Cranbourne Lodge for many years; now only a tower remains, used by the Royal Family for lunch on shoot days. Princess Charlotte, George IV's daughter, was kept here virtually under house arrest, to keep her away from an unsuitable suitor. The famous racehorse, Eclipse, was foaled here c1754. Unbeaten in all 17 races of his career, other owners refused to send their horses to any races in which Eclipse was competing. Ninety-six percent of all thoroughbred horses in the world today can trace their ancestry back to Eclipse. The wonderful King Offa's Oak stands nearby. Estimated to be 1300 years old, it needs ten adults to encircle its trunk.

After Charles I's execution, the park was split up. Captain John Byfield built a house for £5,000 in 1650, later called Cumberland Lodge, the oldest surviving building in the park today. After the Restoration the house became home to the Ranger of the Great Park, appointed by the monarch, the position filled today by the Duke of Edinburgh. Monarchs started to make their mark on the park, with Charles II installing the long walk of 654 elm trees, later replaced by horse chestnuts and London planes. Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough was the only woman Ranger and held the post for 46 years. She was considered a good incumbent, caring for the estate workers. Later William Augustus, "Butcher" Cumberland, became Ranger. Originally hailed as a war hero, after the truth of his exploits at the Battle of Culloden were revealed, he fell from favour. He remained in the park as a recluse, extending the house and tending a menagerie of exotic animals, including a lion and tiger on chains.

Unfortunately the tiger ate one of the children from the house. He also built the lake at Virginia Water, the largest man made piece of water until the reservoirs at Heathrow. Sadly the second Duke let all go to ruin, and in 1768 a large storm washed everything away. George IV spent a long time—and an enormous £1.5m - renovating the castle and grounds, but never lived there as it was too cold. He also had all the locks changed on the boundary and kept the keys himself. He built the Royal Lodge and brought in the Roman ruins from Leptis Magna, which were later installed at Virginia Water. He also erected the large copper horse at the top of Snow Hill, dedicated to "the Best of Fathers", even though he and his father famously did not get along.

William IV opened the park to the public, and Queen Victoria and Prince Albert took a keen interest in the estate workers, setting up a school for the estate children. More modern additions are Smiths Lawn where polo is played, and a Second World War airfield, where Vickers had a secret factory. The York Club is contained within the framework of a Vickers hangar, filled in with bricks from London bombsites. It forms a club for the estate workers, who also have their own post office (opened in 1948). There is also a totem pole, a gift to the Queen on the centenary of the province of British Columbia in 1958. The Royal Family remain visible, using the Royal Chapel next to Royal Lodge, and performing the Change in Ascot week, where the Royal party changes from cars to open carriages within the park.

The park is open to the public, and their website has a range of leaflets on how to make good use of it, by cycling or walking. The Savill Gardens website also keeps track of which blooms are at their best, so that you can time your visit to perfection. For more details see www.theroyallandscape.co.uk and www.thecrownestate.co.uk/windsor/windsor-great-park. Many thanks to Andy for an interesting evening.



To celebrate the anniversary of the signing of the Magna Carta, we were pleased to welcome Dr Matthew Smith, Curator at Egham Museum. Matthew took us on a fascinating trip following the history of this iconic document.

King John is known to us now as a most unpopular monarch, especially when contrasted with his hero brother, Richard the Lionheart. Matthew attributed this to John's treatment of his nephew, Arthur, a rival candidate for the English throne. Arthur had rebelled against John, been captured and then disappeared; John was implicated in his murder. The church, who wrote most of the histories of the time, also disliked John. During a dispute over who should succeed the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Pope put England under an interdict, closing all the churches and barring John's subjects from the sacraments of the church. John promptly seized church property, which led to his excommunication; he was only

reconciled with the church when, at the threat of French invasion, John promised to accept Stephen Langton as Archbishop and accept the Pope as England's temporal overlord as well as spiritual, in return for the Pope's help.

John had a reputation for cruelty, and harsh taxation. He increased the fee for inheritance, and court rulings could be bought. Even then, all this could have been forgiven if John had been any good in battle, but unfortunately he wasn't; the Battle of Bohune in 1214 put paid to any chance of recovering Plantagenet lands in France. When John tried to raise more money to fight some more, the barons had had enough. Rebellion broke out in the North and East. John declared he would go on crusade to gain the protection of the church, but in May the barons renounced their allegiance and marched on London, who opened their gates without argument. John fled to Windsor, and with the barons camped at Staines, it was agreed to meet at Runnymede. An agreement was finally drawn up, the Magna Carta.

Despite popular belief, the Magna Carta was not concerned with the average citizen. It was a list of redresses for particular grievances, and the aim was to gain control for the barons. But it was also a peace treaty. There was no obvious rival with which to replace John, so an agreement was needed. The Magna Carta has become an icon of liberty, but as a peace treaty it failed miserably. After it was signed, John sent agents to Rome, claiming the document was signed under duress, and the Pope duly pronounced it null and void. Civil war resumed, but at a crucial moment, John died of dysentery and was buried at Worcester Cathedral. The 9 year old Henry III was crowned, and William Marshal made regent. He re-issued Magna Carta, although with most of the radical elements removed, and this, combined with a new monarch, stopped the hostilities. From this point, the Magna Carta begins its career as a talisman of liberty and the rule of law.

As Magna Carta was reissued on the accession of each new King, subtle changes in language crept in. At Edward III's accession, "no free man" became "no man", so it encompassed more people than originally intended. At the rise of the Tudors, it fell out of focus altogether, as it did not fit in with Tudor policy—it is not even mentioned in Shakespeare's play, *King John*. But with the beginning of tensions between monarch and people in the Stuart era, Magna Carta began to be noticed once again. Sir Edward Coke started to use Magna Carta against the King, saying that the country wanted the old liberties back. The 1628 Petition of Rights echoes some of the Carta's key passages; this was the first legal shot in the Civil War, although Magna Carta was used by both sides. A cartoon, *The Royal Oak of England*, shows Oliver Cromwell pulling down a tree with Magna Carta attached to its branches. Later Parliaments used a picture of Cromwell surrounded by emblems of England with Magna Carta as the foundation of a pillar. However, Cromwell himself referred to it as "Magna Farter", not wishing to be limited by it like the Kings before him!

During the 18th century, Magna Carta was used by the radicals and its image became part of the symbolism of reform. It was used against the establishment during the American War of Independence and invoked during 19th century British parliamentary reform. In many key moments in the struggle for the advance of liberties, Magna Carta was used for its symbolic weight, and it became part of the iconography of what British liberty meant. It was used by many varying causes. William Davidson, one of the Cato Street conspirators who wished to assassinate the Prime Minister and the Cabinet, argued that Magna Carta guaranteed his right to rebel against arbitrary government. The Chartists cited it, as did those against German authoritarianism in the First World War, and the Suffragettes. In 1944 the US Air Force, at Runnymede for an exchange of flags, cited it as a symbol of what they were fighting for—although internment without trial was going on at the time, which was expressly forbidden in the same document.

Magna Carta even turns up at a Black Power trial in 1970. The Mangrove Nine were part of the movement, meeting at the Mangrove restaurant in Notting Hill, which was continually raided by the police. Darcus Howe, one of the nine arrested for riot, affray and assault after a particularly violent raid, demanded an all black jury at their trial, arguing that the white, middle aged jurors in front of him did not constitute trial by his peers. He did not get it, but the trial attracted huge attention and all defendants were acquitted.

Matthew pointed out that the Magna Carta is a document more appealed to than read, and is significant not for what it was, but for what it was made to be. The idea of what Magna Carta stands for is bigger than the document itself, and contains many ideas that the original barons would have been horrified by. Matthew ended by suggesting that the anniversary of its signing should be used to extend discussion of what can be done to continue its story.

Egham Museum will be getting the public engaged during the anniversary year, with events and educational material on their website (www.eghammuseum.org). There will also be exhibitions at the museum and local church, community projects and a ceremony at Runnymede on 15th June.

We thanked Matthew for a look at not only the origins of this world famous document, but also its subsequent history and development.

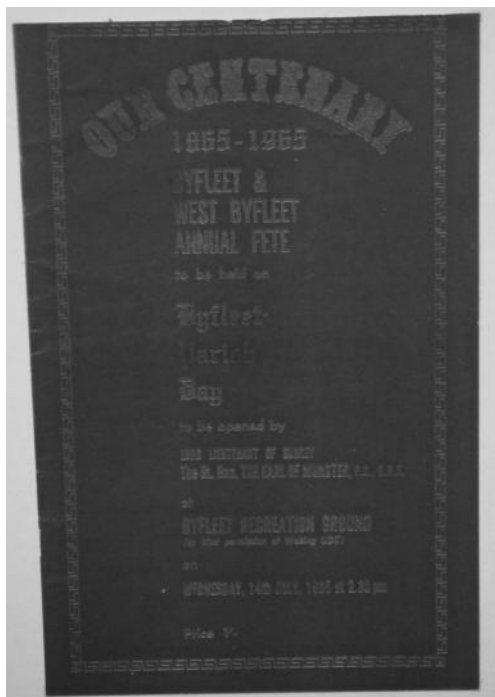
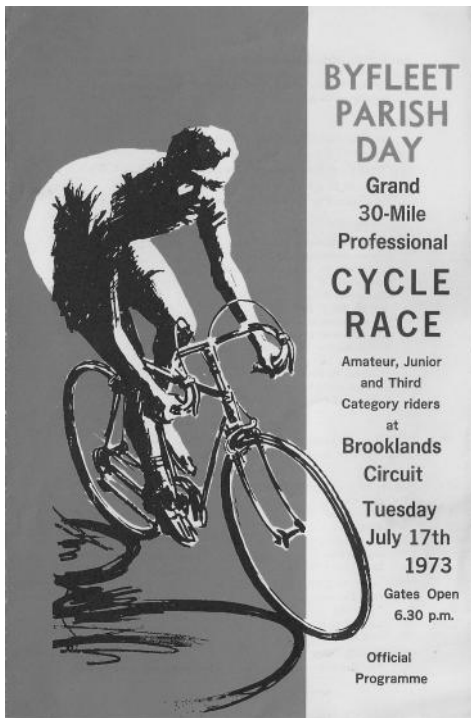
From our Archive



With the 150th anniversary of Parish Day coming this summer, we thought a look back at some previous events might be in order. The first Parish Day was held in 1865 on the occasion of the reopening of St Mary's Church after extensive renovations. From its beginnings as a parish tea, held on the lawns of West Hall, the event grew to include fun fairs, horticultural shows, craft competitions and cycle racing. It was originally held on a Wednesday afternoon, not moving to its Saturday slot until the 1980s.

From the top and moving anti-clockwise, we have a postcard of an early Parish Day (postmarked 1911); a programme from 1935 coinciding with the Silver Jubilee of King George V; a 1973 programme for a 30 mile cycle race held at Brooklands; the programme from Parish Day's centenary in 1965; and the programme for the 1953 Parish Day, which of course was the year of the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II.

A local event with a long history that is held in great affection.



The Byfleet Heritage Society St. Mary's Churchyard project.

On 29th March, the Society, in association with St Mary's Church, launched its interactive map of the 'closed section' of St Mary's churchyard. This map shows information on all the known graves, together with their inscriptions and location. There is a total of about 2,500 known graves or places where ashes have been deposited, and these have all been mapped for easy access by searchers.

In addition, the Society holds records of burials which have taken place, even though the precise locations are unknown, for example where no memorial was placed or where memorials have become illegible. The earliest identifiable grave dates back to 1702.

Several of our members attended the launch at St Mary's Church Hall, along with the Deputy Mayor and Mayoress of Woking, Cllr Derek and Mrs Rosemary McCrum, Jonathan Lord MP, County Councillor Richard Wilson, Borough Councillors Esther Watson Green and John Bond, the Rev John McCabe (Rector of St Mary's), the Rev Dr Peter Howson (Methodist minister for Byfleet) and the Rev Chris Hollingshurst (Priest-in-Charge, St John's West Byfleet)



The project was funded by a Local Councillor's Allocation Grant from Surrey County Council and has taken five years to reach fruition. Thanks are due to former County Councillor Geoff Marlow for arranging the funding, to pupils from the American School at Cobham who carried out the survey of all the graves, to West Surrey Family History Society for carrying out an earlier survey of the area around the church, and to the Rev John McCabe and John Ogden of St Mary's Church for their encouragement and co-operation. The interactive map was devised and executed over several months by Paul Davis from Hull.

The map can be accessed at our website: www.ByfleetHeritage.org.uk
 Information regarding burials not located on the map is available from Jim Allen.

Byfleet Manor House

Members may have heard or read that Byfleet Manor House is up for sale. Anyone with a spare £3.95 million can snap up the historic site! I guess the rest of us will have to content ourselves with seeing it on Downton Abbey! But Byfleet has even made the national press with the news, with an article in the Daily Mail, which can be read here: www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3075579/A-price-make-Downton-Abbey-s-dowager-countess-curse-House-doubles-home-Maggie-Smith-s-character-sale-3-95million
 Or you can dream by viewing the estate agents' details here: www.search.savills.com/property-detail/gbwyrswes090049



The 150th Parish Day will be held on Byfleet Recreation Ground on Saturday 18th July. The fun starts at 12.30pm.

The Heritage Society will be there, and we would love to see you, so come along and drop by our stand.

If you could spare half an hour or an hour on the day to help man the stand, we would be very grateful. If you fancy a pleasant afternoon at Byfleet's summer event, then just let us know. Thank you.