



Byfleet Heritage Society.

Issue 13 **Newsletter** **July 2000**

Summer is here again, with the accompanying changeable weather! But if it stays fine, you might like to go and see one of the Community Plays taking place around the borough - see the article below for details.

It's also the time of year for membership renewals, and a form is enclosed for those of you who are due. We thank you for your support and hope that you will renew.

We are grateful to Beryl Marlow and Mr Elderkin for kindly volunteering to join the committee. If you feel similarly inspired, we would be very pleased to hear from you.

Lastly, I am sure you would like to join me in wishing Jeff Sechiari well after his recent illness. Our Chairman, Doug Bright is also unwell at the moment, and we all wish him and his family all the best.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS



JULY and AUGUST: Members might like to attend one of the Community Plays taking place around the Borough. See below for details.

Listen to extracts of some of the interviews carried out, and hear about the project over a cup of tea.
Byfleet Heritage Centre, 8.15pm

Friday SEPTEMBER 22nd: "Pictures of Byfleet in the 20th Century". Mike Webber will present a selection of photographs of Byfleet dating from the beginning of the century to the present day. The audience will be invited to pass on their recollections of the scenes shown.
Byfleet Village Hall, Room A, 8.15pm

Thursday 16th NOVEMBER: Vickers Evening. Did you or anyone you know used to work for Vickers? We would like to collect information for a display board. See article inside for more details.
Byfleet Heritage Centre, 8.15pm.

Thursday OCTOBER 19th: Come and see the progress made by Byfleet Oral History Group.

Thursday 14th DECEMBER: Jim Allen of Byfleet Players will give a talk with a Christmassy feel.
Byfleet Village Hall, Room A, 8.15pm

COMMUNITY CHRONICLES

During the summer break, members might like to go and see one of these dramatised guided walks which chronicle Woking's history. Dates for July/August are:

- Saturday 22nd July Goldsworth Park—Barge Poles & Brickbats
- Saturday 5th August Knaphill—Rough Justice -
- Saturday 19th August Sheerwater—The Eastenders (of Woking)

Tickets cost £2 adults, £1 children. To order, please send payment to The Woking Community Play Association, 39a Chobham Road, Knaphill, Woking, enclosing an SAE. Cheques to be made payable to The Woking Community Play Association.

For the Record...

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

Members of Byfleet Heritage Society enjoyed a *quiz evening* at the Heritage Room in Byfleet Library on *February 24th*. Forty questions had been set, with all answers to be found on the display boards around the Heritage Room. Fifteen members and friends spent an interesting evening reading the displays, and answering questions such as: What was the former name of the Queen's Head Pub? Who wrote about his visit to Byfleet Mill in his diary in 1678? What used to be on the site of Emergency Plus? and what did W G Tarrant build besides houses? (Answers below!)

Although the answers could be found around the Heritage Room, I don't think anyone found every answer. Everyone enjoyed themselves though, and expressed their thanks to Tessa Westlake for setting the questions, and to Pat Andrews for providing refreshments.

Answers to the questions are: The Leather Bottle, Sir John Evelyn, The Royston Chase Hotel and the Tarrant Tabor Triplane, which unfortunately crashed on its maiden flight.

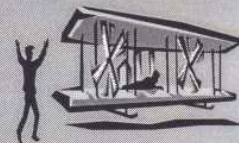
On **April 20th**, **Philip Johnson** gave members a historical tour of **Hampton Court Palace** from the comfort of Byfleet Village Hall. Originally a property owned by the Knights of St John, it was famously owned by Cardinal Wolsey, who turned it into a palace in grand style. There were 364 rooms with fireplaces, giving rise to a forest of decorated chimneys, some of which were lost over the years and subsequently restored. Visitors would arrive by the River Thames and disembark at the Water Gallery, since destroyed. They were housed in small lodges and apartments at the front of the building. Inside and out, the decoration was lavish and of the best quality. However, this ostentation soon caught the eye of Henry VIII, and in a desperate bid to regain the King's favour, Cardinal Wolsey gave him the palace as a gift.

Henry himself made even grander alterations. The famous Astrological Clock was put up in 1540. The Great Hall, with its wonderful hammer beam roof could hold 300 guests, although the King usually dined in his own apartments. The original stained glass in the windows was knocked out by Oliver Cromwell. The Chapel has a beautiful gold and lapis lazuli coloured ceiling, the only original one left. Outside the Chapel is the famous Haunted Gallery, where the ghost of Queen Catherine Howard is said to be heard begging for one last chance to see the King before being taken to the Tower of London for execution. Thomas Cromwell, the King's advisor, was arrested at Hampton Court and suffered the same fate. On a brighter note, the King's son Edward VI was born here (although his mother, Jane Seymour died a few days later), and Henry married his 6th wife Catherine Parr in the Chapel.

The Palace was rebuilt by William and Mary. Their architect, Christopher Wren, based his designs on the palace of Versailles. They had intended to rebuild the whole palace, but as so often happened, money ran out. Luckily for us, this meant that parts of the Tudor palace still survive. The gardens and the King's and Queen's apartments were completed though, including the Great Watching Chamber with 3,000 pikes, swords and other weapons arranged in patterns around the walls. In the fire in the 1980s these all fell to the floor, but all affected parts have since been lovingly restored.

Queen Anne, and the first three Georges all used the Palace, but it became less popular as a royal residence. Queen Victoria eventually opened the palace to the public and it has remained a popular tourist attraction ever since, especially the famous maze and the Great Vine. Recently the overgrown Privy Garden has been restored to its original style, so you can wander through the formal lawns and flower beds and see what King William III would have seen.

The Martinsyde Company of Brooklands and Woking was the subject of Ray Sangar's talk to Byfleet Heritage Society on *March 23rd*. Helmut Paul Martin and George Harris Handasyde were two trained engineers who met at the dawn of aviation history. They discovered a mutual interest in aviation and in 1908 formed "Martin and Handasyde Aeroplane Manufacturers and Aeronautical Engineers". Handasyde is said to have owned the third motorcar ever seen in Britain. Martin built his own motorcycle engine, attached it to a pedal cycle and toured Germany in 1901 – and he never met a single motor car the whole way! After studying the work of aviation pioneers they built the first Martin and Handasyde monoplane in 1908. The story says that it was built in the ballroom of the Old Welsh Harp Hotel near Hendon. When dances were held, the unfinished plane was hoisted up into the roof. In reality, the plane was built in a nearby shed. They accepted a challenge to fly the plane in Halifax. It was damaged in transit, and repairs were carried out in a large tent. Unfortunately, the night after repairs were complete, the tent blew down and the plane was destroyed.



The company moved to Brooklands in 1910, the first permanent tenants of the first sheds built for aeronautical use. There was a real community atmosphere, with tools and equipment gladly lent. In fact it was said that the best way to ensure the return of borrowed equipment was to borrow it back. Additional sheds were built in 1914, and early aviators were known to take time off to watch events on the track or swim in the river Wey. Further developments were made to the Martin and Handasyde plane. We can see how hazardous the life of a test pilot was in those early days, as three of Martin and Handasyde's pilots, Graham Gilmour, Gordon Bell and Edward Petre were all killed while testing planes.

On 1st April 1913 Lord Northcliffe offered £10,000 for the first non-stop flight across the Atlantic. Gustav Hamel was backed for an attempt, and he chose Martin and Handasyde to design his plane. The result was larger than any previous aircraft in Britain, with a wing span of 66ft. But before he could fly it, Hamel was lost at sea in May 1914.

In 1914 Handasyde designed a new sporty biplane, which the government bought for use in the war. It saw action in France, Mesopotamia and at home. The company also built 12 Royal Air Factory BE2c's and 272 "Elephants", so called because of their lack of agility. In 1915 the newly named Martinsyde Ltd bought the former Oriental Institute in Woking. They turned it into an ultra modern factory. There in 1918 the Raymor was built for another attempt to cross the Atlantic. A site was found for the take off in Newfoundland, but the undercarriage buckled on take off and the plane crashed. The final model to be built was the Semiquaver, which held the official British Speed Record in 1920 of 161.434mph. Martinsyde planes were used all over the world in Canada, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia, Spain and the USA.

After the 1st World War and the cancellation of war contracts, the company tried to diversify. First of all they made farm carts, but then manufactured motorcycles. The first model was the Martinsyde-Newman, which sold 6,000 in 1919. But there were manufacturing problems and the company suffered heavy losses. The second model, now named just Martinsyde, was put into competition and won the Brooklands 500 mile race and the Hour Record in 1921, and the Six Days Trial in 1922. This year also saw the introduction of a new model, the Quick Six.

Unfortunately, a serious fire broke out at the factory in 1920. Although every effort was made to keep the company alive, the works were never fully reopened. Motorcycle manufacture finished in 1923, and the business was offered for sale. James Walker occupied the site until 1994, and the site was redeveloped into retail warehousing in 1996.



The Society thanked Mr Sangar for an interesting talk about Woking's part in aviation history



Committee News

Welcome to new members, Beryl Marlow and Mr Elderkin. Many thanks to them for volunteering to come aboard. Many hands make light work, so if you would like to join our happy band, please ring Tessa Westlake on 351559. Thank you.

On June 22nd, Simon Fowler gave members some guidelines for local history research. As well as the places that first come to mind for research, such as your local library or bookshop, he suggested searching out specific libraries and record offices for the type of information you were seeking. For instance, Guildford Museum holds a series of County Histories written in the Victorian era, and also a good selection of maps. The Public Records Office holds evaluation maps from before the First World War, from which the new system of rates was later drawn up. If you are seeking information on the railways or canals, then the House of Lords library is the place for you. They hold all the bills that went through Parliament, and also the records of every person that worked either on the railways or the canals, including their job, where they were from and their wages. For anyone with access to the Internet, some research can be done without leaving home. The Surrey Local History Centre, and many other libraries and societies have their own websites, some of which let you access records and archives, or request searches.

When using libraries and records offices, he strongly recommended ringing to book an appointment and also being as specific as possible about the information you are looking for. This enables the staff to prepare the relevant material for your visit, and can save you a lot of time and travel.

As a way of making local history less dry, Mr Fowler suggested perhaps approaching it from a family angle. Why not research the history of your own family, not only tracing your ancestors, but also finding out about how they lived, what the town or village they lived in was like, what shops they used, where they went to school etc.

The Society thanked Mr Fowler for his tips, and looked forward to many happy hours of research.



Vickers Evening

Did you used to work for Vickers, or do you know someone who did?
Or do you remember some of the many social events they organised, or
did you play for one of their sports' teams?

Vickers played such an important part in the life of the village, even building a whole housing estate on Oyster Lane for its employees. But we don't yet have any displays about it. So we have decided to dedicate our meeting in November to an evening of reminiscences to collect information.

If you have any memories about Vickers, and especially if you have any pictures that you would be able to lend for copying, please join us for a fun evening at Byfleet Heritage Centre on Thursday November 16th. Who knows, maybe you'll catch up with someone you haven't seen for years!

If you can't get to the meeting, but you have some information, then please ring Tessa Westlake on 351559. Many thanks, and hope to see you there.

**SOCIETY
NEWS**

Membership Renewal

It's that time of year again, and renewal forms are enclosed for those whose membership is due. If you have already renewed, or if you joined the Society after February this year, you should not have a form, so if I have enclosed one, I apologise.

Thank you very much for your support, and we hope you decide to renew your membership.



*Parish Day is here again. This year it takes place on Saturday 15th July on Byfleet Recreation Ground. We would like to hand out some flyers to advertise the Heritage Centre, so if anyone could help for an hour or so on the day, please ring **Tessa Westlake on 351559.***
Thank You.

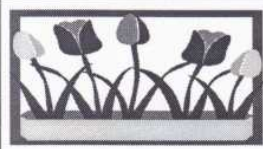


The **Friends of Byfleet Library** has been set up to support **your** library. In existence for only a month or so, they already have a lot of interesting ideas which they are beginning to get under way. They are looking into use of the library by adult education classes and women's aid groups. Other ideas include a homework class, and a scheme to provide books for the housebound is being set up. It is hoped to increase the story telling in the afternoon for the little ones, and the Friends'

youngest member has had the idea of forming a jigsaw library, and has been buying up supplies.

The Friends issue a newsletter, which will keep you up to date with their latest ideas. Copies of this can be picked up at the library. More helping hands are always appreciated, and information on how to join in can be obtained at Byfleet Library, or from Mr Paul Arkell on 01932 348262.

Even if you are unable to help on the Friends committee, show your support for your local library by looking out for their special events, and going along. Our library is a very valuable part of our village, and it is up to us to make sure it stays that way. As the saying goes—**Use It Or Lose It.** So, see you at the library!



VERY BEST
WISHES

to committee members Jeff Sechiari and Doug Bright who have been under the weather recently. We are all thinking of you.



RESEARCHING BYFLEET FILE

Leaving the file in the Society's cabinet in the library has not attracted many entries. In future the file will be available at the Society's meetings.

Members will be invited to enter their interests.

Many thanks.

Mike Webber



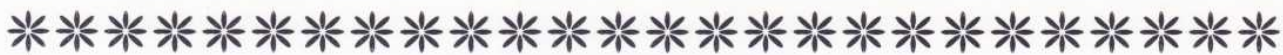
Pipers Hill

Members may remember hearing of a book entitled Pipers Hill by Oliver Holt. He spent his childhood at the house (when not away at school), which is still in Byfleet, off Murray's Lane (or Conker Arch).

He has a passion for the natural world, so most of the book, which is in the form of a series of brief chapters, covers birds, animals or flowers that he found during his childhood. Most are based at Pipers Hill, or along the Wey Navigation, with the rest on holiday or at school in the West Country. It has to be said that there is very little to indicate that Pipers Hill is in Byfleet, but I have thoroughly enjoyed reading the book, thinking of the garden and fields at the other end of the Village. The book is illustrated with a number of drawings by the author, whose skills have been recognised by the Royal Society of Miniature Artists and the Society of Botanical Artists.

We can get hold of copies via the publisher if the demand is high enough. The book is hardback and costs £12.95, and I think it is beautifully produced. If you would be interested in getting a copy, please contact Tessa Westlake on 351559.

Jeff Sechiari



Nurserymen to the World

Woking Museum and Arts and Crafts Centre is launching a major appeal for artefacts relating to Woking's historic plant nurseries, to display in one of its first exhibitions at its new museum.

For many years Woking was the centre of the UK's nursery industry and the contribution Woking nurserymen have made to gardening style both in this country and around the world has been considerable. From the middle of the 18th century, hundreds of acres of what had been waste land all around Woking were cultivated to meet the ever-increasing home demand for exotic "new" plants from North America. At first, these were to find their way into the extensive grounds of great estates and, later, into the increasingly fashionable conservatories and new suburban gardens of the Victorian middle classes.

In the Woking area, there were both large and small nursery gardens, many of international renown. Their ownership was handed down through family generations over many years.

If you have any objects or memorabilia relating to any of the nurseries (e.g. Goldsworth, Knap Hill, Jackmans or any others) such as seedpackets, clothing, tools, photographs, catalogues and publications (or even just memories), which you would be willing to donate to The Galleries, please get in touch with Katherine Sharp, Museum Officer on 01483 725517 or the.galleries@dial.pipex.com, or write to The Galleries, Chobham Road, Woking GU21 1JF.

