



Byfleet Heritage Society.

**Issue 22**

**Newsletter**

**June 2003**

Summer is here already and another AGM has come and gone. That means it's time for membership renewals. Thanks to those of you who renewed at the AGM. If you couldn't make it then, a form is enclosed. Members joining after December will not have to pay until next year.

You may have heard that Pat, Janet and Margaret who have been keeping us supplied with refreshments at our monthly meetings have decided to stand down. I'm sure you will join me in thanking them very much indeed for all their help. They will be a hard act to follow, but we don't want to stop serving teas and coffees. **So if anyone could help out by joining a rota, please give Tessa Westlake a ring on 351559.**

We are **also in need of some more committee members** to help carry the load. Meetings are about every 6 weeks, and not too onerous, so if you feel you could help out, or would like to know more about it, please give Tessa a ring.

**FORTHCOMING  
EVENTS 2003**



**2003**

**Thursday 12th JUNE**

**Researching the History of your House with Julian Pooley from Surrey History Centre.** Uncover the history of your house whether 30s semi or 16th century cottage.

**Byfleet Heritage Centre, Byfleet Library, 8.15pm**

**Thursday 24th JULY**

**Stephen Duck, Poet and Rector of Byfleet with Ivan Duck.** Come and find out about our 18th century celebrity Rector with Mr Duck, who is himself related.

**Byfleet Heritage Centre, Byfleet Library, 8.15pm.**

**Thursday 18th SEPTEMBER**

**A Transport Workshop with Surrey History Centre.** The History Centre will guide us through how to find out about the historical development of the transport network in and around Byfleet.

**Byfleet Heritage Centre, Byfleet Library, 8.15pm.**

**Thursday 16th OCTOBER**

**Doug Smith on The History of the Pillar Box**

Just what are the origins of this everyday object that we take for granted.

**Byfleet Heritage Centre, Byfleet Library, 8.15pm**

**Thursday 20th NOVEMBER:**

**Mike Webber** continues his trip round Byfleet through David Chapman's old photographs. This time from the 1980s up to 1995

**Byfleet Heritage Centre, Byfleet Library, 8.15pm**

**Thursday DECEMBER 4th: When St Mary's School**

**moved house.** Come for our annual Christmas get-together and also to view film of the day St Mary's School moved from the old school (now the Day Centre) to the new building in Hart Road.

**Byfleet Heritage Centre, Byfleet Library, 8.15pm.**

**Members free. Non members £2**

**Everyone very welcome.**



**Parish Day is almost here again.**

We are having a stand at Parish Day, which is on Saturday 5th July on Byfleet Recreation Ground opening at 2pm. But to avoid one or two people being stranded on the stand all afternoon, we would like your help. If you could man the stand for half an hour or even an hour we would be very grateful. Duties should involve just keeping an eye on the displays and (hopefully) sitting in the sun! Please ring Tessa Westlake on 351559 if you could take a shift. Many thanks

## For the Record...

Did you miss a meeting? Find out how it



On *March 13th*, Ross Baker from *the Surrey Bat Group* spoke to the Society about bats, their lives and some of the problems facing them in the modern world.

The fossil record shows that bats have been with us for about 50 million years (whereas we have been around for a mere 5 million), and evolved along their own unique line. There are about 16 species in this country and about 30 in Europe. They vary in size from the biggest with a wingspan of about 2 metres, to the bats recently discovered in Thailand which are no bigger than a bumble bee. Diet is equally varied, with different species eating insects, fruit, nectar and even fish, birds and other bats as well as the Vampire Bat which famously drinks blood! A bat's average life span is usually 7-8 years, although they have been known to live 30 years.

Ross corrected two famous myths about bats—they are not blind, neither will they get stuck in your hair, thanks to their excellent echo location techniques. They emit a very high frequency, which bounces back off any obstacle (whether it be an insect or your head!) and the time the signal takes to come back tells the bat how far away his dinner or the obstacle is. It works very well—as can be seen by the fact that a Common Pipistrel bat, most common in our gardens, can catch 3,000 gnats or midges in one night.

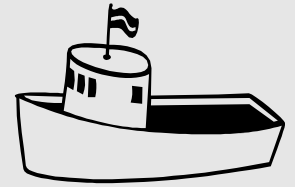
They breed once a year and usually have a single baby, therefore population growth tends to be slow. They generally mate in Autumn, but the females won't actually become pregnant until after hibernation. There is no set gestation period, as bats go into torpor, or shut down all bodily functions, to save energy. Therefore if the weather is wet and cold, they are less active and the pregnancy is longer. Likewise if spring comes early, the pregnancy is shorter. All the females collect together in May or June to give birth, and the babies will take their first flight after about 3 weeks. Smaller bat species will be fully weaned after about a month, although larger species can take 3 or 4 years to mature.

Bats need somewhere cool to hibernate, with no fluctuations of temperature and a high humidity. Cave and mine shafts are ideal, also places like church porches. The Grotto at Clendon has provided bats with a winter home, and 500 Natterer bats have been counted in the Greywell Tunnel on the Basingstoke Canal.

Modern forestry techniques have caused problems for the bat population of Britain. Many bats roost in trees, but many damaged trees are now cut down rather than left, and coniferous woods are replacing the preferred deciduous trees. Also large fields are removing much of the woodlands and hedgerows by which bats navigate. The decline in hay meadows has also removed the cockchafer beetles, which are food supply for larger bats. Bats will roost in modern houses, but Ross reassured members that they cause no damage—they don't stay long, probably from June to August, and don't breed rapidly, make nests or gnaw cables. However, timber treatment in modern timber has also caused bats problems. British bats have been protected since 1981, where under the Wildlife and Countryside Act you can be sentenced to 6 months in prison for destroying or harming bats or bat roosts.

We joined Ross in hoping that the pipistrels, natterers, noctual, whiskered and horseshoe bats would be in our skies for many years to come.

In April, Bernard Boys came to tell the Society about his trip along the Basingstoke Canal. As both a keen cyclist and an enthusiast of the Thames and all waterways, Bernard combined both loves and cycled the length of the canal.



The Basingstoke Canal was completed in 1794, costing a total of £154,000, and supplied by local springs at a rate of 2.5 million gallons a day. It was originally 37 miles long, and starts at the Wey Navigation between Byfleet and New Haw and travels to Basingstoke. It was built for boats to transport timber, flour and chalk to London, returning with coal and fertilizer. You cannot get as far as Basingstoke now, as a bus station has been built over the canal's finishing point. Its limit is now the Greywell Tunnel which was built in 1792. Boats would be taken through the tunnel by the bargemen lying on their sides and pushing the barge through the tunnel by walking along the walls. It was last used in 1914, and is now blocked by a fall. It now forms a protected habitat for bats who roost there.

Bernard's next stop was King John's Castle at Odiham, which was built in 1207 by King John as a hunting lodge, and it was said he stayed here before travelling to Runnymede to sign the Magna Carta.

We saw pictures of several picturesque bridges, many of them brick arch bridges. Broad Oak Bridge was built in 1792 and rebuilt in 1980. Chequers Bridge stands by an attractive house which was originally the canal company office. Crookham swing bridge is of a different type, which, as the name suggests, swings round to let the barges pass. The bridge over the canal by Farnborough airfield gives access to the famous air shows, and to accommodate the crowds, the bridge becomes one way only, with a bailey bridge being built next to it to provide another lane.

The Basingstoke Canal Centre at Mytchett was an ideal stop halfway along the canal. There is an exhibition about the canal, boat trips, a picnic area and tea room, as well as camping facilities if you want a longer stay.

There are 29 locks on the canal, and at Frimley Lock teas are available from the Lock Keeper in the summer. At Pirbright Lock the tow path changes sides, and here the Rangers House can be seen. Rangers are hired to look after the canal, and one particular Ranger, Pete Bickley, is an expert on the many dragonflies and damsel flies that populate the canal. Indeed the population is so diverse that the Basingstoke Canal is internationally recognised for it as a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

At Arthurs Bridge, just before Woking, one of the old winding holes has been integrated into the modern landscape. As the canal was narrow, and the boats were long, it was impossible to turn the boats around in just the canal. So the canal was widened in special places to allow the boats to turn round. Now modern houses have been built around the pool, keeping a historic feature of the canal in the new housing estate.

At Woodham Lock the Basingstoke canal is almost at an end and soon to join the Wey Navigation. Here all forms of transport meet—water with the canal, the railway, the M25 motorway and aeroplanes overhead.

This brought Bernard to the end of his tour, and members thanked him very much for sharing his journey with us.

The speaker for the AGM this year was **Mr Gordon Hadfield**, former surgeon at the **Rowley Bristow Hospital** in Pyrford.

The first orthopaedic hospital was set up in Baschurch in Wales, by Agnes Hunt. The home for cripples at Pyrford was set up by the Waifs and Strays Society in 1907. 27 acres of land was donated by Mr Stoop of West Hall, and the two hospitals of St Martin's (for girls) and St Nicholas (for boys) were built—with a large area in between to keep the boys and girls separate. Mr Rowley Bristow was an orthopaedic surgeon at St Thomas' Hospital who lived in Pyrford. He visited the hospital at regular intervals, carrying out operations on the kitchen table! After his death in 1947, the hospital was renamed in his honour.

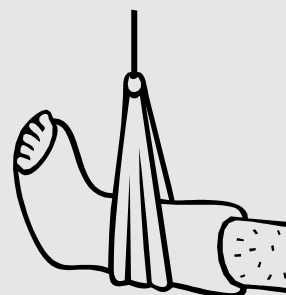
At the start of the Second World War, Pyrford became an offshoot of St Thomas', taking orthopaedic patients and air-raid casualties from Lambeth. By this time the hospital had a proper operating theatre, paid for by the proceeds of viewing Queen Tatiana's Palace, a dolls house at Hamleys. Mr Hadfield arrived at the Rowley Bristow in 1955 as a registrar, rising to Chief Assistant at St Thomas', coming down to Pyrford every Friday for a ward round and operating the following Saturday. After a year at the hospital, the hospital offered Mr Hadfield a hospital house in Woodlands Avenue—which was big enough for a registrar with three children, but too small for the hospital accountant with one child! Later the family moved to a house in Maybury owned by Lord Iveagh, who paid for rates and repairs to the house, and Mr Hadfield could have any pheasant which got into the garden. Lord Iveagh gave six dozen bottles of Guinness a week to the hospital, as it was thought that Guinness was good for you; particularly TB patients. The Anchor pub at Wisley was considered to be part of the hospital, so housemen could be on call there and the hospital telephonist would ring through if they were needed.

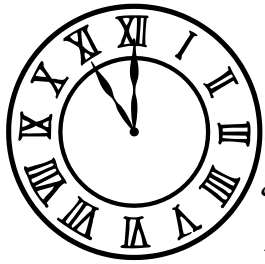
In 1955 the wards were cowsheds with a roof, back and sides, but the front open to the elements, as fresh air was a vital part of the cure. Canvas blinds could be dropped if it started to snow! Patients were wheeled out onto the terraces in all weathers, under a canvas cover if it rained. Mr Hadfield was told that the nurses all wore three pairs of drawers for warmth. There were seven wards in all, VG, after Dr Vere Godsolve, Stoop, Rudolf, Leila, Perkins, Roberts and Beatrix. Transports from the bottom part of the hospital to the top for Xrays, physiotherapy or operations was by trolleys towed in a train by electric tractor.

The patients when Mr Hadfield arrived were mainly long stay, many with tuberculosis of bone or joint, or polio cases. By the time the hospital closed, TB and polio patients were virtually nil, with osteoarthritis forming the majority of cases. There was a physiotherapy department with a pool kept at 103 degrees F, and an occupational therapy department. It was also a teaching centre for nurses and orthopaedic surgeons, teaching over 6,000 surgeons. Vickers made a special lightweight mirror for the lecture room so that everyone could see, made of stressed polyester on a balsa wood frame, sprayed with aluminium in a vacuum, and was so light that an 8'x4' mirror could be lifted by one person. Notes from the lectures were essential reading for potential surgeons. There was also a photographic department, where photographic records of patients were taken, and the appliance workshop where all splints and calipers for the patients were made. Barnes Wallis assisted in the design of calipers, and a corset maker was on the premises to make and alter the spinal and limb splints and surgical boots. The workshop also made any special tools designed by the surgeons. Because of Mr Hadfield's motorcycling experience, any instruments designed by him all used threads found on motorcycles. He designed the Pyrford or Hadfield bed, which allowed patients to be sat up by one nurse instead of two.

Notable patients included Gordon Richards, the Queen's jockey. Lord Iveagh became a patient at the hospital he supported so much aged 92 with a broken ankle. He elected to stay at the hospital rather than Pyrford Court, as "there were too many bloody relatives hanging about waiting for him to die" at home! Cranleigh Onslow had three hip replacements there, and many World Championship motorcyclists were treated there.

The Rowley Bristow was always a happy place to work, and Mr Hadfield put this down to it being a single speciality hospital. If you were not interested in orthopaedics, you would not work there. Sadly, closure was inevitable. Very major surgery was being done without adequate back up, but Mr Hadfield delayed closure for as long as he could be insisting that adequate facilities were made available at St Peters. Sadly many of the xrays which would have been invaluable for research were lost in the transfer. The name of the hospital lives on as the Rowley Bristow unit at St Peters, and is a very good functioning unit.





## *An Answer to last issue's Queries*

*Members may remember that we received a clock dedicated to Mr Luff. Thanks to member Mary McIntyre for giving us the following information.*

*Mr Luff was under-gardener to Mr Stoop at West Hall. When Mr Stoop died and the Swiss Bank took over the house, he took up market gardening, on ground at West Hall and also the field to the right of Murrays Lane, known as King Clarks. He would borrow one of the Derisley's horses, Duke, to help work the land on the understanding that the Derisleys would have Duke back for haymaking and harvest time. After the war Mr Luff retired and started seedsman sales. He married one of the young ladies at West Hall. If anyone else remembers Mr Luff, please give us a ring.*

**ALSO** *members may remember an appeal going out for information about Jim Jarrett or the testing of the Peress articulated diving suit in Tarrant's Yard in 1930. Mr Tom Welch from Yorkshire believes that his grandfather, William James Jarrett, is the same Jim Jarrett who did the diving. We are still trying to find out anything at all about the man or the event to help Mr Welch confirm that this is true. Does anyone remember the testing or the suit being spoken about? Or Jim Jarrett being spoken of as working for Tarrant's? Or even—does anyone recognise the man himself (right)? Or does anyone know where any staff records or reports on projects for Tarrant's company may have ended up? If you can think of anything at all, please let us know. Many thanks.*



**DON'T FORGET!** *If you think you could help out by joining a rota to help provide the teas and coffees (and biscuits!) at the end of our monthly meetings, or would like to help out on the committee please give Tessa Westlake a ring on 01932 351559. Help lighten our load!*



### **A Further question**

We have been given a receipt for payment made in 1932 against **Queen**

#### **Anne's Bounty.**

A quick internet search seems to show that it is some sort of charity or tithe, but if anyone knows any more details about what Queen Anne's Bounty actually is, please let us know. Either ring Tessa on 351559 or leave us a note at Byfleet Library. Thank you!



## SOCIETY NEWS

Members may remember **Admiral Wonham's sword** which went for restoration some time ago. This was under a scheme financed by the Surrey Museums Service which paid for a team of conservators to assess objects from museums all over Surrey. Our sword was taken, and has now been returned, looking fantastic. The hilt has been cleaned and the blade stabilised to prevent any further rusting. Considering it had been buried in a garden for some years, the results are amazing. We hope to be able to put it on display in the near future.

We were given some information about Mrs Wonham by David Chapman, who remembers her well. If anyone else had any memories of the Wonhams, please let us know. Many thanks!



Saturday May 3rd saw our special exhibition at Byfleet Library of prints and photos of St Mary's Church and the old Rectory which had been kindly given to us by Monica Ransom, daughter of former Rector of Byfleet, Rev Callendar Wake. We were delighted to have these pictures and to be able to show them off in one go. Pictures such as the one here (the church at the beginning of the 19th century) were shown alongside modern day pictures to show how things

had changed. And not only did we have photos from the 40s and 50s of the Rectory before the present one, we even had copies of sketches of the Rectory before that.

Many people came into the Heritage Centre to view the display and also to share their memories of the old Rectory and former Rector. We were delighted that Monica Ransom was also able to come down and join us, despite some recent surgery on her back. We would like to thank her once again for her generosity.

As the exhibition was so successful, we are considering showing the pictures again sometime in the future.

Jeff Sechiari would like me to pass on his thanks to all those who sponsored him for his beard shave just before Christmas 2002. This was done in aid of Milly's Fund, set up in memory of Milly Dowler. The total raised by Jeff for baring his chin currently stands at an amazing £8,300.



Members might like to know that on **Saturday 26th and Sunday 27th July** Woking Community Players will be leading a **walk to Woking Palace** during which the audience will see a series of scenes telling the story of the Palace in Jacobean times.

Performances take place at 12.00, 3.00 and 6.00pm and tickets are £3.00 each.

Meet at the car park at the roundabout in Old Woking opposite the turn off to Send, where Iain Wakeford will give an introductory historical talk.

The walk will end up back at the White Hart pub in Old Woking where the final scene takes place.

For further information or tickets contact Anna Moleworth on 01483 832089.