



Byfleet Heritage Society.

Issue 26

Newsletter

November 2004

Another year is coming to an end and it will be Christmas before we know it! Hope to see a great many of you at our Christmas talk and annual get together. In the meantime, please note our change of plans for our November meeting, and we hope to see you there for a chance to look around our church. As yet, we have no firm bookings for 2005, but keep an eye out for a separate notice about next year's diary in the near future. Thanks and see you soon!

FORTHCOMING
EVENTS 2004



PLEASE NOTE:

**Thursday NOVEMBER 18th:
CHANGE OF EVENT.**

Unfortunately Eleanor Grady of the Byfleet Oral History Group will be unable to speak tonight due to illness, and we all wish her well in her recovery. Instead, by kind permission of the Rector Rev Roger Trumper, we will be meeting at **St Mary's Church**. Members can view the church and also the pictures given to us by Monica Ransom, daughter of Rev Callender-Wake. Members can park in the Church Hall car park opposite the church, but unfortunately there will be no refreshments available tonight. **St Mary's Church, 8.15pm.**

2004

Thursday DECEMBER 16th. Mike Webber will revive some memories of the shops and businesses that have been in the village. As usual, mince pies and Christmas cheer assured! **Byfleet Heritage Centre, Byfleet Library, 8.15pm.**

**Members free.
Non members £2
Everyone very welcome.**

We are coming to the end of the events booked for 2004, which means that a whole year has gone by since we first asked for someone to take over organising our diary of events and talks. Needless to say, we are still hoping one of you lovely members will help us out, especially as it is now very much time to be getting ready for 2005.

I know that many of you are busy enough as it is, or maybe don't want to volunteer only to find you've loaded yourself with one thing too many. But this really needn't be too onerous. The committee all chip in with ideas and contacts and last year the process from the initial sending of letters (or emails if you have the facility) to confirming 90% of the speakers and booking the library only took a couple of weeks. After that it is one phone call a month to check the speaker has everything they need and that's it.

In which case, I hear you ask, if it's so quick and easy, why do we need someone else to do it? To be honest, it's not hard, but I already have enough on my plate with the newsletter, minutes and school visits, and ad hoc visits to the library when someone has popped in with a query or something to show us. This year, in my off-time from the Open University, I would really love to put some new display boards together with all the information that has been kindly collected or donated by our members. If someone could step up and help out, it would be greatly appreciated, and of course, it goes without saying that the committee will be on hand to help out. Please call Tessa Westlake on 351559. Thanks very much.

For the Record...

Did you miss a meeting? Find out how it

In **June**, **Trudie Cole** from the **Surrey County Archaeological Unit** came to tell us about **life in Surrey during the Bronze Age**. She started off by pointing out that the people we call Celts never actually called themselves that. This was actually an insult made up by ancient Greek historian Herodotus. Also the term “Celtic” implies that these people were all the same race, which was not true. So now the term Iron Age is used.

The Iron Age ran from approximately 700BC to 43AD. In the region later known as Surrey (the county was a later Saxon invention) there were three tribes—the Atrebates around Silchester, the Regni to the south and the Canticiati towards Kent. What little we know of these people, who left no written record of their own, comes from digs done quickly before the developers move in. The meaning of some of the features found is still elusive, such as the rubbish disposal pits, where the items of rubbish appear to have been carefully placed, but no-one knows exactly why.

However, it has been discovered that these people lived mainly on farms or in hill forts. Hengrave Farm near Staines lasted from the Bronze Age until medieval times, and pigs were kept at Hanworth. Here quern stones that had been deliberately broken were found in the ditches—was this part of some ritual at a sacred meeting place? Farms have also been discovered at Holmbury near Shere and Ainsterbury near Dorking, where banjo enclosures for holding livestock have been discovered. Brooklands race track offered another type of site, as iron smelting equipment was found.

Traces of ancient hill forts still exist at St George’s Hill, Weybridge and St Anne’s Hill in Chertsey. St Anne’s Hill shows signs of intensive activity and diverse uses, but St George’s Hill produced no artefacts—does this mean that it was only used for sacred meetings? Also high quality artefacts have been found in the river, such as the Battersea Shield and the Chertsey Shield, the Mortlake Dagger and the Shepperton Sword. These were not items of broken rubbish, but good quality goods, perhaps put into the river as an offering to the gods.

A dig at Tongham Nursery between Aldershot and Farnham led to an interesting discovery about everyday life inside an Iron Age Roundhouse. 18 roundhouses were discovered on the site, all built to a standard pattern within a horseshoe shaped ditch, designed to catch the drips off the sloping roof. There were no chimneys, with the smoke escaping through the roof (this was discovered by building reconstructions of roundhouses at Butser Ancient Farm and finding out that those houses built with chimneys soon burnt down as the roof caught fire!). It was noticed that all the doorways faced the same way—south-south east. This was not to get away from the wind, as the prevailing wind in the area came from that direction. Was it to respect the sun, as early temples were oriented the same way, or a practical use of the best of the light. A study of houses across the Tongham site and elsewhere showed that remains of pottery, furniture and everything to do with daily life tended to appear on the south side of the house, so it would seem that day to day activities took place on the light side of the house, and the inhabitants would sleep on the darker north side. This pattern is still found in some tribes in the developing world.



We were very grateful for Trudie for showing us a glimpse of the lives of our elusive ancestors, and for showing us the ongoing attempts to use the clues to uncover Surrey in the Iron Age.

On Friday 9th July, the Society joined **Iain Wakeford** on one of his excellent historical walks around Byfleet. Luckily the rain held off and we set off into the pleasant summer evening.

We stopped outside the fire station, where we heard how the horses that used to pull the original fire cart would know what to do as soon as they heard the fire bell. They would rush to the gate of their field, and dash to the fire station on being let out, getting there before the firemen. However, they would only pull the fire engine so far—being afraid of fire, the horses would only go so close, and the firemen had to detach the cart and pull it themselves the rest of the way!



We passed the Day Centre, once St Mary's School built in 1856, and the Village Hall, built to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria in 1897. Local landowners had joined together with the villagers to produce the building which is still the centre of village life today.

We stopped at the Plough pub (although only outside!) and heard how it had originally stood at Plough bridge but had moved to its present site to avoid constant flooding. And just around the corner, on the corner of Brewery Lane, we heard how the Byfleet Brewery supplied the locals with beer. The buildings later housed the Sanway Laundry.

We carried on towards Mill Lane, passing the Blue Anchor, scene of the infamous murder of the landlord Mr Jones in 1924, and the Clock House, now only one of many large houses that used to stand in Byfleet.

By great good luck we were able to go over the private bridge at Blue Gates Hole for a quick look at the Mill and the Mill House, a fine 18th century building. It is a lovely spot, and the swallows and house martins were busy catching insects. The Mill has been there since at least 1086 as it is mentioned in the Domesday Book. We also went down to the Manor House. The present building dates from the 17th century, with later 19th century additions to either side, but before that Queen Anne of Denmark built herself a palace. Only the chimney stacks of that palace now remain, one in the garden of the Manor House to the left, and the other forming what is now called Palace Cottage to the right.

We made our way back through the village, passing Quince Cottage, which although it appears to be made of brick, is actually a timber framed house with a brick cladding, done to "modernise" it in the 18th century.

From there we made our way back to our starting point by the war memorial. Thanks to Iain for letting us join him, and if you see more of his walks advertised, I'd advise giving it a go.

On September 13th members were given a brilliant workshop at **Surrey History Centre** by **Maggie Vaughan-Lewis**. Maggie had very kindly stayed late to show us how to use the Centre's databases of information and had retrieved articles from the archive for us to look at.

We started off on the Centre's computers. A list of the Centre's records is available via the internet, so if you are connected at home, or can use the local library computers, you can search for the items you want and order them so that they are ready for when you go to Woking. Not everything they hold has been listed yet, but they are working on it. Also you need to know your way around the system to get the full use of it. There are also several very helpful information and topic sheets on the website to guide you on your chosen topic, such as finding the history of your house, or to tell you exactly what information certain documents will contain. There are also links to other sites such as the National Archive (the old public record office site). For those of you who want to try it right now, the address is www.surreycc.gov.uk/surreyhistoryservice.

For instance, if you were researching about the inclosures in Byfleet, you could click the "Search for Archives and Books" link on the History Centre page. This gives you access to their Archive Index, which has basic information about a record. If Byfleet didn't appear in the title of a document, even if it was contained within the document, then it would not appear on the search. Also you have to be very careful with your spelling. I always thought it was "enclosure", but a search on this reveals nothing, as it is actually "inclosure" - which brings up 6 documents!

The Collections Catalogue is more wide ranging and will search the text of the entry, but you have to be quite careful about what you ask it to search for. For instance, entering "Byfleet murder" to try and find out about the Blue Anchor murder brings up 4 collections of documents. However, the words "Byfleet" and "murder" appear within them, but not necessarily connected! You can refine your search by entering "Byfleet + murder". Then click on the box to the right and choose the "adjacent to" option. This means it will look for Byfleet and murder and only give you documents where they appear together. However, this combination actually revealed no documents. But if this happens, don't give up! It is worth playing around with the wording, as an entry for "byfleet + poisoning" adjacent to each other brings up the Surrey Constabulary Records for 1851-1968, within which is our case. And take heart, it isn't as complicated as it sounds! Have a go on their website and it will be easier to see what I mean. The key is to be precise in what you ask for.

A Search Collections option is also available, but only on the computers at the Centre. When you find something that you might want to look at, TAKE DOWN THE REFERENCE as this is what you will need to order the document from the desk.

The Access to Archives link is also another useful tool as it gives you access to catalogues of records from all over the country. A search for Byfleet on this link gave 72 hits of miscellaneous documents, and the link has a very good help menu so you can get the best from your search.

Maggie recommended that whatever your topic or wherever you choose to search, the more information you have about the topic, the better you can refine your search and home in on the relevant documents.

We ended the session with a look at some actual documents. The Tithe maps come with a book recording the ownership and use of the field, and a copy of this would be great for the Heritage Centre if anyone is looking for an absorbing topic for the winter months!! Maggie also recommended the 1910 Finance Act books. This is like a mini Domesday book giving the valuation of every piece of land in the country. The set is not complete, and the one for Byfleet is not actually at the Centre, but it is a very good source. She also highly recommended Valuation and Rate Books, which the centre holds for a number of years. These list every house, their rateable value and also the owners and tenants, giving a real snapshot picture of an area at a given time.

We had a great time at the centre, and would like to thank Maggie very much indeed for staying behind to show us around. Now the only problem is finding the time to follow up everything she taught us and dig out the information about our village!

Questions and Ponderings

Two questions this time.

1. A Mrs Stevens from Lake Close came to Byfleet Library with an old brick which she had dug up from her garden. It was normal size, and grey in colour with George V 1910 inscribed into it. It looks like some sort of ornamental brick, but where it is from of what it was for we have no idea. Do you?

2. Also at the library were a Mr and Mrs D Reynolds who do not live in the area, but had acquired an old book of photos of a house, and had come to the Heritage Centre to see if they could identify if it still exists or where it might have been. The first photo is entitled Wykeham Hatch, Byfleet and the book is dated 1904. It must have been on or near the river, as other photos include a view of the house from the river, Three Way Bridge, The Old Bridge, Silver Birch Walk and Wisley Lock as well as a picture of (presumably) the family boating by Parvis Bridge. We thought the house might be over towards Wisley, but if anyone knows anything, please could you let us know (Tessa on 01932 351559 or drop a note at the library). Very many thanks.

Some answers to previous investigations

Continuing the debate about Juniper Cottage, where the funeral procession for PC Choate began, both Pam Starling and Maurice Alder have written to tell me that it is in fact number 65 Chertsey Road. A plaque with the name Juniper Cottages is set into the house, and Pam also says that running down one side is an alley leading to nos 67-77 Prospect Cottages which we were looking for in relation to our search for Jim Jarratt the diver.



Speaking of which, we finally had confirmation through a relative that Jim Jarratt the diver from Byfleet and the William James Jarrett we were looking for are actually not the same person. "Byfleet Jim" was Aubrey Jesse Jarratt, but always known as Jim. He tested the articulated suit and dived to the Lusitania, and died from chest related problems (probably to do with the diving) in 1964 aged 59. Unfortunately for Mr Welch who started our search, this means our Jim is not his grandfather after all, but many thanks to everyone who helped us get to the answer at last.

SOCIETY NEWS

Jeff Sechiari has been very busy at the History Centre, and has photographed each page from the **Byfleet Inclosure Act**.

This book lists every field and the ownership and usage details, and provides an amazing snapshot of Byfleet at a particular point in time. He thought it would be very useful to have a typed copy, not only making the material easier to read but easier to access, as it would save having to trek to the History Centre to study it. Is anyone interested in helping to type up a few pages of the book from Jeff's photos? Even just one page would be helpful, although if you felt you could do more, we would be very grateful. If you are interested, please get in touch with Jeff on **01932 341084**. Thanks very much.



Also to do with the History Centre, I have Maggie Vaughan-Lewis' handouts and notes from our workshop if anyone wishes to have a look.

Give Tessa a ring on 01932 351559 if you would like to borrow them. Thanks!

A photo from David Chapman's collection of Derisley's delivery cart from the early 1900s—much more environmentally friendly than a Tesco lorry!



Members who missed Mike Webber's display of David Chapman's photos of Byfleet might like to know that Mike is giving a talk comprising photos from all three of his talks on **2pm Thursday November 18th at St Mary's Day Centre**. If you missed out on these great pictures first time around, this is a great chance to catch up.



Please don't forget we still need your help! If you feel you could volunteer to take a turn making the teas at our monthly events, or would like to help organising our diary for 2005, please give us a ring (01932 351559) or drop a note in at the library. Many thanks.

