



Byfleet Heritage Society.

Issue 28

Newsletter

June 2005

*Summer is here, and we have an extra event for your diaries. We have arranged **a visit to West Hall** to have a look round Mr Stoop's former home on Saturday July 23rd, meeting at West Hall at 10am. Please see the back page for more details.*

We would also appreciate your help at Parish Day, which this year will be on Saturday 16th July. We are very dependent on your help this year, as three of our committee cannot be there, so if you could give up even just half an hour, this would be greatly appreciated. Again, more details on the back page. Thank you.

Please note:

The date for **June's meeting** has been changed.

The new date is **WEDNESDAY 29TH JUNE**

Chris Glasow will speak about how to investigate your family tree.

Please put the new date in your diaries, and sorry for any inconvenience.

FORTHCOMING
EVENTS 2005



2005

Wednesday 29th June: *Chris Glasow asks **Who Do You Think You Are?** An investigation into how to discover your family tree. **Byfleet Heritage Centre, Byfleet Library, 8.15pm***

Thursday 21st July: *An insight into the glamorous world of early motor racing and aviation with the **"History of Brooklands"**. **Byfleet Heritage Centre, Byfleet Library, 8.15pm.***

Thursday 15th September: *The **History of Woking Palace** by Philip Arnold. **Byfleet Heritage Centre, Byfleet Library, 8.15pm.***

Thursday 13th October: *Alan Winn on **Aviation at Brooklands.** A look at the flying history of Brooklands, past and future. **Byfleet Heritage Centre, Byfleet Library, 8.15pm.***

Thursday 10th November: *Jim Phillips on **the Wey and Arun Canal.** Come and find out about our local waterways. **Byfleet Heritage Centre, Byfleet Library, 8.15pm.***

Thursday 8th December: ***Society Christmas Get-together.** Mike Webber will present some of the more modern pictures in David Chapman's collection. Christmas cheer and the odd mince pie is assured. **Byfleet Heritage Centre, Byfleet Library, 8.15pm.**
Members free. Non members £2
Everyone very welcome.*

For the Record...

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

In **March** members welcomed **Judie English** from **Surrey Archaeological Society** who spoke about the wonders of **landscape archaeology**. She described this as taking a step back from a site and using documents, aerial photos and landscape features to provide clues as to how the landscape has been used in the past, rather than getting stuck in with digging. There are often problems with dating landscape structures, but occasionally documentary evidence such as a court case or reference to landscaping in manor rolls will provide a date.

Their first project, to look at the Mole Gap between Dorking and Leatherhead, provided some examples of the sort of discoveries that can be made. There was so much to find that, although the survey was originally scheduled to take three years, now, five years later, it is only one third done!

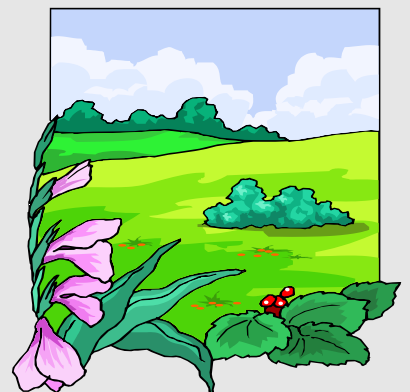
Various strategies are used to examine the landscape. Aerial photography can show things that cannot be seen so clearly on the ground. Near Bocketts Farm, an aerial photo showed fields with a curious stripey effect. This was where dark silt had built up in ditches in the lighter chalk soil. These ditches were the remaining signs of a prehistoric field system, dating from the early bronze age. Boundaries of prehistoric fields were also found on Fetcham and Michelham Downs. The remaining boundary fragments can be pieced together, and these fields were found to be on a common alignment of just over a mile long. These traces show that someone both owned and organised the land, giving clues to not only how the land was used, but how society was organised long ago.

Clues to how the land was used can also be found in place-names. Again in the Bocketts Farm area, a ring-ditch was found in a field called Horsehead Furlong. Saxon meeting places were often named after animal heads. Barrows were also present in this field, and these were often used by the Saxons as speech mounds. So putting these pieces of evidence together, possibly this was a Saxon meeting place, the memory of which still existed in the name.

Signs can also be found in the plant life and trees that grow in an area. Most of Surrey consists of marginal farming land, which gradually became deserted. Some big barns remain, indicating that large farms used to exist. On close inspection, old field boundaries in the form of ditches or banks can often be found, and pollarded trees can still be seen. Pollarding was where the top of the tree was removed to encourage younger shoots to sprout from the base. These shoots were then harvested when needed for fences, brooms or other uses. These trees were often placed on field corners. Similarly, a strangely shaped tree, especially if it is one of the species used for hedging, can indicate a grown out hedge, and former field boundaries can be deduced. Differences in vegetation in an area can also give indication of the length or type of usage. For instance, we were shown a slide of a path with bluebells on one side and woodland with no bluebells on the other. Bluebells take a long time to colonise an area, so the path probably bordered an arable field which had since been abandoned. Woodland had then started to move in, but the abandonment had not happened long enough ago for the bluebells to have moved in. The primary regenerator in woodland is the silver birch. This is the first tree that tends to grow on abandoned land, so an area with a large population of silver birch shows that this is land in the process of changing from one use to another.

Surrey was predominantly a rural economy, but it was a long way from the idyllic pictures of country cottages and prosperous farms. Life was hard, especially in the 19th century when agriculture was in decline in Surrey and machines were replacing manpower. Many farm workers were made homeless, and there is evidence of many squatter settlements appearing on the heathland during this time, and signs of people having to make a living on the worst of the land. As agriculture declined, there was a shift to residential use. Most of the big houses in Surrey date from the 18th and 19th centuries, as people wanted to move out of the big cities and into the country. For example, the manor of Norbury was built in 1731, a lovely new house right on the top of the downs. Previously no-one would have wanted to live on that spot, as there was no water and no road to it. But the views were marvellous, and its high position meant that the house could be seen as a show of wealth. The working environment gradually changed to an environment for pleasure.

We thanked Judie for her guide to what could be found hidden in the landscape, and all resolved to walk in the Surrey countryside with our eyes open to see what could be discovered.



In April members were treated to a talk by **David Barker** about the history of our neighbour, **Addlestone**. Evidence has been found at Wey Manor Farm that suggests the area was inhabited as long ago as 12-13,000 BC.



However, the oldest living inhabitant of Addlestone today is the Crouch Oak. This ancient tree has a hollow trunk, and very knobbly bark. The story goes that, at the beginning of the 19th century, maidens would strip the bark to make love potions, and the bark's regrowth over the damage gives it its particular texture. A piece of branch trimmed by Woking Borough Council was sent away for dating, and this showed that that particular branch had started to grow in about 1670. It has been calculated that the tree dates from the late 14th or early 15th century, and was pollarded, hence the tree's odd shape and the growth of the limb at a later date.

Norden's map of Surrey of 1607 shows Addlestone included in James I's hunting grounds. Previously, Henry VIII had created the Honour of Hampton Court, gradually acquiring many local manors such as Walton, Oatlands and Byfleet, so that he could hunt from Windsor, through Hampton Court and all the way to Nonsuch on his own lands. Many tenants of Sayes Court in Addlestone were connected with hunting, or maintaining the land for hunting purposes. Hunting was a very serious business, and a gunpowder mill proposed for Virginia Water was moved to Chilworth, as it was deemed that it might frighten the King's deer.

Many things are older than they appear. Sayes Court is now a cul-de-sac of houses built in 1931, but is the site of an ancient estate dating back to the 13th century. Important local landowners, such as Anthony Reed, Master of the Mint in 1505, and Arthur Mainwaring, a Lieutenant of Windsor Castle in 1626, lived there. Similarly, Crockford Farm (also known as Pyles Farm) had a gable supposedly dating from 1630-40, but which contains an earlier core of 15th century timbers. This farm was listed in 1650 as a dairy and cheesemaking place.

Industry has also existed in Addlestone for some time. Coxes Lock on the Wey Navigation was rebuilt in the 1770s and the site became an ironworking mill, similar to Byfleet and Weybridge. The mill building is now flats, but the mill pond still exists. Alexander Rabey, who came from an iron family in the Weald, realised that iron ore and the completed products could be easily transported on the Wey Navigation, and set up the iron mill, which brought a huge amount of traffic to the canal. The main product was iron hoops for barrels, which in an age when everything was transported and stored in barrels, was a lucrative trade. The mill later changed use to a silk mill, but this died out in the 1840s, when it became a corn mill.

The Veterinary Research Laboratories started in 1915 and have expanded on the site ever since. It is now one of the major facilities in the world for animal research. A different industry was served by Louis Bleriot's factory which opened in 1916. Fighter planes were made there during the first world war, and later from 1919 the Bleriot Whippet. Mr Bleriot himself would visit the factory, and would often remove the rose from his buttonhole and present it to one of the girls doing war work in the factory. The site later became Weymann's bus works, until taken over by Plessey in 1966, and later by Marconi. Alas, the site is now empty office blocks. Even the oil industry had a home in Addlestone. A series of flat-topped houses in School Lane was built by the Tarrant company in the 1920s for the employees of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company who had a depot at Blackboy Bridge.

Once the railway came in 1848, and the connection made with Weybridge and the main line, Addlestone attracted commuters, and by the 1920s, Addlestone's layout was largely set. Addlestone bus garage, now sadly gone, offered three bus routes to add to Addlestone's transport network. We thanked Mr Barker for his fascinating insight into our near neighbour.

At this year's AGM **Barry Davies** spoke about Cobham's **Painshill Park**. Charles Hamilton, the Park's creator (born 1704), was the 9th son and the youngest of 14 children. He developed Painshill from 1738-1773, when he was forced to sell the estate due to financial problems. Although never wealthy, he managed to go on two Grand Tours, at the ages of 21 and 28, and the wonders he saw influenced him throughout the rest of his life. He also became a pioneer plantsman, at the forefront of introducing new plant species to Britain from America and around the world. After selling Painshill, he settled in fashionable Bath, where he died aged 82.

Painshill was a wonderful example of an 18th century English landscape park. As a reaction to the very formal and geometric gardens previously fashionable, the landscape garden was influenced by the art of Poussin and Claude Lorraine, which showed idyllic rural scenes of nature in perfection. Hamilton tried to emulate this at Painshill.

After he left in 1773 the succession of owners made no major alterations, but the park gradually settled into a state of decline.

However, enthusiasts from the Garden History Society persuaded Elmbridge Council in 1980 to buy 160 acres out of Hamilton's original 200, and in 1981 the Painshill Park Trust was formed. A condition of the lease was to restore the Park as nearly as possible to Hamilton's original concept for the benefit of the public. However, the problem with trying to restore the gardens to their original state was that Hamilton left no blueprint, and his plans have had to be painstakingly pieced together from a great variety of sources, such as visitor's letters describing the park, plant lists, invoices and maps and engravings.

We were shown slides of how the garden appeared in 1980, and it was plain from the hugely overgrown state that a great deal of clearing of trees and scrub had to be done before restoration could begin. The garden is replanted today using only species that would have been available to Hamilton.

The garden was carefully constructed to surprise the visitor, carefully hiding and then revealing views and vistas, and creating different moods in different areas of the park. From the stunning view from the Gothic Temple, the first building to be restored, the visitor takes a winding path to the lake and the Chinese Bridge, leading to the fabulous man-made grotto. This was a brick shell covered with Gloucestershire limestone on the outside, and covered on the inside with stalactites made from calcite and gypsum chips. From this glittering scene, the visitor walked on to the more melancholy atmosphere of the Mausoleum, built as a ruin surrounded by sombre evergreens and purposely overgrown with weeds. This and three other scenes of Painshill appeared on a Wedgewood 952 piece dinner service for Catherine the Great, featuring scenes from English parks and gardens.

Since its opening in 1997, a huge amount of work has been done to lovingly restore the park to its former glory. The next building for renovation will be the Temple of Bacchus. Here Hamilton stored some of the statues and stone carvings he brought back from his Grand Tours, including a 7' statue of Bacchus himself. This disappeared in 1773, but is believed to have been recently rediscovered at Anglesey Abbey in Cambridgeshire. The temple will be a particular challenge, as while the outline of the temple has been found still in the ground, there are very few other clues to the temple's appearance. One photo exists from 1948, showing the pediment of the temple held up by a prop due to the columns going missing, but no other pictures have so far been found.

We thanked Mr Davies for speaking to us, and it is wonderful to think that Charles Hamilton's pride and joy has been restored to such an extent that if he should return today, he would be quite at home.



Questions and Ponderings



Recently spotted on Ebay was this miniature vase with a coat of arms and a banner saying “Byfleet” underneath. I have not seen this coat of arms used for Byfleet before, and wondered is it actually

Byfleet’s official badge? Is there anyone out there who knows about heraldry and might be able to explain the meaning of this coat of arms to us?

If you can help us with this, or if you have any other questions, something that has been puzzling you, or any interesting information, you can contact us in the following ways:

- ring Tessa on 01932 351559
- email Tessa on tessa@westlakesystems.co.uk
- leave a note for us with the staff at Byfleet Library.



A blast from the past. A nice picture of a Sanway Laundry truck from the laundry in Byfleet, I think from the 1920s, but if anyone knows for sure, please let us know.



This badge was spotted (again on Ebay—not that I’m addicted or anything!), and I wondered if anyone could tell us anything about the Byfleet Motors Manors Works.

SOCIETY NEWS

Extra event!

Jeff Sechiari has arranged a visit for the Society to West Hall on Saturday 23rd July. We propose to meet at West Hall at 10am and to take a tour round the house and gardens (weather permitting!), and we should be done by lunchtime. This is a lovely old house, and perhaps will hold memories for some of you who used to work there when it was used as offices. But we should also be able to see glimpses of when it was the Stoop family home (and from the pictures we have in the Heritage Centre, a very comfortable home it was too). It may also be our last chance to look around, as there is a proposal to convert West Hall into apartments, so it might be as well to take this chance!

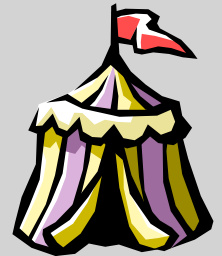
If you wish to go, please ring Tessa Westlake on 01932 351559 so that we have some idea of the numbers attending. Thanks very much

PARISH DAY

This will be held this year on Saturday 16th July on Byfleet Recreation Ground.

This year the committee will be a bit thin on the ground, so we need you members to rally round and help man the stand. All that is required is half an hour or an hour of your time on the day. All you need to do is keep an eye on the displays and perhaps sell the odd book, if we are lucky. No other skills are required!

So if you fancy an hour or so hopefully sitting in the sun, please ring Tessa on 01932 351559. Thanks very much.



You may remember the Society copied some pictures for a recent book on Adrian Stoop, son of F C Stoop of West Hall, and a famous rugby player, playing for Harlequins and England.

"Immortal Harlequin—The Story of Adrian Stoop" has now been published, and if anyone wishes to buy a copy, we can get some from the author at a discount (normal price £17.99). Anyone interested should ring Tessa Westlake on 01932 351559. Thank you.

Don't forget

If you would be able to join a rota to help with providing the teas at the end of our monthly meetings, please let us know. Many thanks.

