

For the Record...

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

In March, we were delighted to welcome **Julian Temple, Curator of Aviation at Brooklands Museum**, who told us about the **History of Aviation at Brooklands**.



The pioneer A V Roe was the first man to design and build his own plane at Brooklands, and the museum has a replica of what his plane and shed looked like in 1908. He flew his plane along the track, travelling 150ft at a height of 3ft! But unfortunately, a few months after this his plane was written off after being dashed against the railings surrounding the track.

1909 saw the first flying display at the track, followed by the first air travel ticket office. A Mr Pigoud was the first to loop the loop in 1912 in a strengthened Bleriot, and another daredevil flew his plane under the Byfleet footbridge! Hilda Hewlitt, the first British woman to become a qualified pilot, flew at Brooklands and started one of the many flying schools there.

Soon afterwards, aircraft manufacturers followed. The Sopwith company started off in sheds at Brooklands, before moving to the disused ice rink at Kingston. They produced the Pup in 1915/16, a state of the art fighting plane, and later the Camel. Sopwith attracted Harry Hawker to work with him as his test pilot, but sadly he was killed at Hendon in 1921. When Sopwith went bankrupt at the end of the first world war, Hawker, along with Sopwith, set up the Hawker Engineering company. This later produced such famous models as the Hurricane and the Supermarine Spitfire.

Vickers was the longest lived of Brooklands' factories. It began in 1911 as a flying school, but in 1915 it took over the Itala Car Works, and by 1918 had a big assembly shed by the racetrack. The famous Vickers Vimy was produced here in 1917, which not only made the famous Alcock and Brown first flight across the Atlantic in 1919, but also made the first England to Australia flight and the first England to South Africa. During the Second World War, Barnes Wallis developed his famous geodesic aircraft body construction used in the Wellesley and Wellington bombers, and also worked on his famous bouncing bomb. To minimise damage from bombers, manufacture of aircraft was shared around many sites, including Burhill Golf Club and what is now Cobham Bus Museum in Redhill Road. This was just as well, as the Vickers factory suffered a direct hit in 1940. After the war, Vickers continued to produce models such as the Varsity, and the Viscount, Britain's most successful airliner.

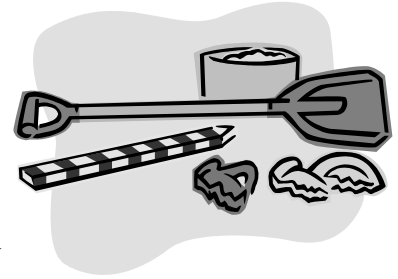
Other companies in the area used Brooklands for testing. Bleriot had their factory at Addlestone, built by government funding in 1917/18 to build their SE5 fighter. Times got harder for aircraft manufacturers after the end of the first world war, and Bleriot tried to diversify into light aircraft for the private market, but the market was not there. Martinsyde in Woking had similar problems, and went bust in 1925.

Some aircraft who began their life at Brooklands have come home to the Museum. The Wellington bomber R for Robert was recovered from Loch Ness and has been lovingly restored by volunteers. And perhaps the most glamorous product of Brooklands, Concorde, has also returned. Brooklands were lucky to obtain an aircraft, albeit in a stripped down state, for the museum. Luckily they were able to obtain plenty of spares, and after a mammoth effort to transport her, cut into three pieces, by road, she has now been restored to at least some of her former glory. She is now open for the public to sample the high life, and further exhibitions are planned.

We thanked Julian for his insight into the aviation heritage on our doorstep.



April's talk to the Heritage Society was from **Rob Poulton** of the **Surrey County Archaeological Unit**. He traced the history of Surrey's archaeology since the early 19th century.



In the 1840s, Martin Tupper excavated at Farley Heath, between Cranleigh and Dorking. Tupper was an interesting character, a best selling author of “proverbial philosophy” and a poet. He was also a keen amateur archaeologist. His work at Farley Heath uncovered a huge variety of objects from brooches, coins and a large amount of miniature altars, which Tupper classed as “miniature stools” because of their shape. He also traced the walls of a compound, and decided the site was some sort of military complex. However, in the late 1990s, the site was again explored in order to record everything before the archaeology was damaged by treasure hunters. They found that the site was in fact some sort of religious complex, with a temple in a polygonal enclosure. They also found priestly headdresses and a number of incantations and curses carved on pieces of lead. Although Tupper had in effect just been digging to collect artefacts, he did catalogue his finds and try to interpret the site, procedures which developed further into today's archaeological practices.

Surrey had many gentlemanly amateur archaeologists, such as A W G Lowther, who carried out work at Ashted Roman Villa. After the Second World War, archaeology took on a more professional basis, and archaeologists like Brian Hope Taylor were employed by the Ministry of Works to excavate sites, especially those in danger of being covered by new developments. This drive to record archaeological evidence before it was swept away forever gathered pace in the 1960s and 1970s, with digs such as those at the Friary shopping centre in Guildford in the 1970s. This uncovered huge amounts of information about the Friary that had stood on the site, information which would otherwise have been lost once the building work began.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, as development increased, many more sites were in danger of being swept away, a problem which was named the “Rescue Crisis”. Then in 1991 the Government introduced the Planning Policy Guidance Note 16. This was a big leap forward for archaeology. The Note said that archaeology had to be a material concern in the application for planning permission. The onus was on the developer to pay for an archaeological survey of the site before building, so that any information could be discovered and recorded. This led to a huge increase in the amount of archaeological digs across the country.

In Surrey, one such dig took place at Tongham in advance of quarrying. This used the techniques that had developed since Martin Tupper and his digs in the 1840s. First a desktop assessment is done, using maps to decide what might be on the site, and, if available, aerial photographs. These are a great resource, but sadly, the proximity of Gatwick and Heathrow greatly limits the opportunity to gain these aerial photos in Surrey. Once a potential area has been identified, a trial trench is dug to test if there is anything there. At Tongham, over 1,000 of these trenches were dug. As the top soil is removed very carefully, the different colours of the soil are revealed, giving clues as to the history of the area. At Tongham, the digging discovered an iron age village, and traces of a very sophisticated society, with social stratification, and the ability to farm and build complex hill forts. Also at Tongham a wooden log ladder was discovered in a water hole, the only such ladder discovered so far in England.

Over the last ten years, much has been done to bring the results of archaeology to a wider public. TV programmes have done a lot to raise archaeology's profile, and permanent exhibitions such as the one at Clackett Lane Services, where some of the finds uncovered during the building work are displayed, raise public awareness. Sometimes the public are allowed to help out, such as during excavations at Guildford Castle where a training excavation was held.

We thanked Mr Poulton for his look at the development of archaeology in Surrey over the last century or so.

For our AGM this year we heard from **Judie English** who told us about the **Hidden Signs in the Byfleet Landscape**. The problem with trying to find out the origin of many of Britain's settlements is that most of them were founded before records were kept. Therefore the landscape can provide vital clues to a village's history. The term "village" actually refers to the largest in a hierarchy of rural settlements, ranging from a sheiling (a seasonally occupied area) to a hamlet (several farms and houses).

Maps and the geology of the area can indicate why a settlement grew up where it did. There needed to be a water supply close by. Fertile arable land, and more importantly good grazing land to support vital livestock was necessary, as was woodland to provide wood for building materials, tools, fences and fuel. One way maps can particularly help is in tracing how the roads develop in an area. They can show where the people in an area were trying to go to or come from, for reasons such as trade, and help show how the development of an area can also be shaped by economic as well as geographical elements.

Roads can also show how an area has changed over time. For instance, the village of Charlton has a staggered crossroads. There is usually a reason for a road pattern being disturbed in this way, and on further investigation it was found that the road route had been changed because the church changed location. Up to the 10th century, the church sent priests out into the community, rather than having the community come to them. The priests would gather their congregation at an outdoor cross, which stood in an oval enclosure that still remains. When the present church was built in a different location, the course of the road had to be changed.

More clues as to the origins of a village can be found in the place name. The Saxons were particularly meticulous on how they described the land, having many dozens of words for "hill" alone. Names like Cranleigh (clearing where herons were) or Farnham (the water meadow) describe landscapes. Other name endings show that people lived there, such as ham, cot, worth, ton and wic. Byfleet means "by the river" but Judie suggested that the use of the Saxon word "fleot" in Surrey was actually quite unusual. More specifically it meant creek or tributary. Other "fleot" place names are situated on major rivers or around the coast, especially the east coast. So why was Byfleet so particularly named?

Byfleet is odd because no-one particularly lived here. It was land owned by Chertsey Abbey, apparently since the 7th century. Chertsey Abbey created many planned settlements to make the maximum profit from the land by attracting people to live and work there. Great Bookham, Egham, Effingham and Chertsey itself are all examples of these planned settlements. But Byfleet is not one. Modern development disguises much of Byfleet's original pattern, but old maps show that it does not have the same layout as the planned settlements. Cluster of houses appear around Petersham House and the Binfield area. The mid 19th century tithe map shows there was still no real development of a village as such, but some development around the road junctions. Research into why and when these roads developed, and where they were going to or coming from would answer some questions about Byfleet's early history.

However, it was the place of the river in Byfleet's past that intrigued Judie. The importance of river transport in the Saxon era, especially the 9th century, is only just becoming understood. Byfleet is on the River Wey, and the Domesday Book entry for the village in 1086 states that Byfleet has a mill, a manor, a church and a large fishery. Fisheries are unusual in the Domesday Book, but marked as important, as fish formed a large part of the medieval diet. Chertsey Abbey would have needed one, so is this the reason for the origin of Byfleet?

The next question is where would it have been? A mill on the river plus a fishery would block any river traffic, but in Byfleet the River Wey divides around the mill. Judie wondered if one part was a man-made barge gully, dividing the river so that one stream would be used by the mill and fishery and the other by barges and boats. The Saxons used their words precisely, and the term "fleot" could refer to the river being navigable. If a date could be proved for the formation of the split, possibly this would be at the core of Byfleet's development.

Unfortunately Judie did not have time to ponder more on this fascinating problem, but members were inspired to find out more in the future.



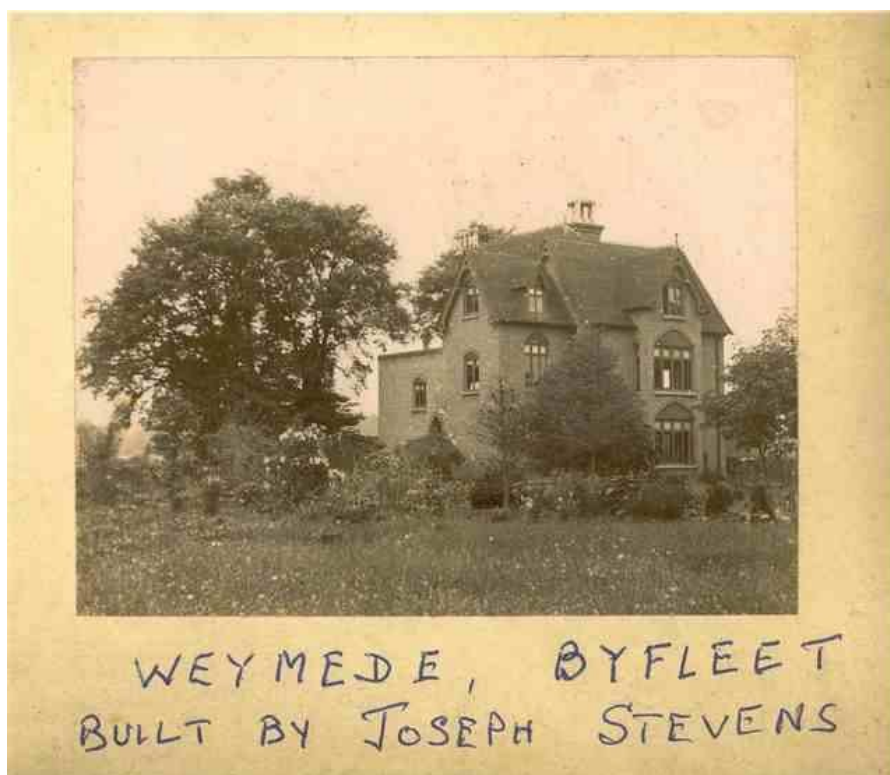
BYFLEET FACES AND PLACES

A Query—Can You Help?

Do you know the whereabouts of **GOLDING COTTAGE**? Some descendants of the Choate family have found that a Mrs Choate lived at Golding Cottage in Byfleet, but have been unable to find out where exactly this was. They have checked census records, and it appears on the same sheet as Dawson Road, but can't find out whether it was in fact in Dawson Road, or in one of the roads nearby.

If anyone can enlighten us as to where Golding Cottage was, or if it still exists, we would be very glad to hear from you. Please give Tessa Westlake a ring on 01932 351559, or drop a note in at Byfleet Library. Thanks very much.

We were very pleased to receive this picture of Weymede, forwarded to us by Jim and Marje Harris. The builder, Joseph Stevens was the father of L R Stevens, author of "Byfleet, A Village of England". Joseph built Weycote for his son to live in when he married. Weycote still stands at the junction of Green Lane and Parvis Road, but Weymede House has gone and the Weymede estate now covers the site.



St Mary's Church Choir, circa 1949. Thanks to Alan Griffiths for this picture of the choir. Rev Callendar Wake sits next to Mr Arrowsmith, the organist and choirmaster. Mr Derisley, church warden and also local farmer and butcher, stands on the far right. The lady seated furthest right is Mrs King, Mr Griffiths' first school teacher.

Mr Griffiths stands third from the left. If anyone else recognises themselves, then let us know!.

Anniversary cake

Our 10th Anniversary

By Jeff Sechiari



The day started with a welcome by chairman, Jim Allen, and a look at the many displays on show devoted to the history of the ancient Parish of Byfleet. Snippets from the Byfleet Oral History Group's collection of recordings of memories of life and work in the Village were playing in the background. During its lifetime the Society has won the Interpret Surrey Award and the Oral History Group has won the Help the Aged, Not Old Just Older national award for a series of recordings. Key members in the founding of the Society, particularly the late Doug Bright and Howard Cook, were remembered, along with all those who had made it happen, especially Tessa Westlake, who has been the secretary for the whole 10 years and created the display boards on show, as well as the fascinating time line which relates events in Byfleet's history to those on the national and world stage. Tessa was



Jim's speech and Tessa's flowers

presented with a bouquet of flowers. Cllr Bryan Cross, the Deputy Mayor, then kindly cut the splendid anniversary cake made by members Gordon and Janet Fludder.

The Woking Community Play Association then performed **Byfleet – Kings, Heroes and Villains**, a play looking at some of the famous individuals associated with the Village. There were a surprising number of people to consider, including a large number of monarchs, and a selection was explored by discussing who deserved to grace a statue on the Green. Geoffrey Chaucer, Edward II and his favourite Piers Gaveston, Winstanley and the Diggers, poets John Spence and Stephen Duck, John Holroyd, owner of Byfleet Mill, who saved the life of King George III at Drury Lane, PC Walter Choate, the local hero who was murdered in the Sydney Street siege and even Jean Pierre Vaquier, murderer of Alfred Jones at the Blue Anchor in 1924 were all considered in a lively and fun performance. Star of the show? Probably Willow the Collie who stole the show, joining in to help her master in the Sydney Street siege.



The audience

The weather held for the first, open air, performance which created a great atmosphere. This was followed by the splendid Anchor Folk Club, who had also featured during the play with a traditional song about the Diggers, but sadly their set was cut short when the rain arrived and drove the audience indoors.



Winstanley's Diggers

Not to be deterred, we all upped sticks to the Village Hall to watch the Susan Robinson Dancers perform a lovely Sailors' Hornpipe. This was then followed by a second performance of the play in front of a good audience, and then a return to the Heritage Room for more tea and cake for the rest of the afternoon.

On the Sunday the Society's other theme of natural history was explored when Richard Alder led a four hour circular walk from St Mary's Church. This explored the Church Yard and continued through Manor Farm, past the Manor House and bridge – what beautiful views there are of the river here, and on along the Wey to Plough Bridge and then through Weymede towards Brooklands and back through the Village to the Church. We saw a lot of interest, enhanced by the number of people able to give expert opinions on many of the interesting plants spotted. These included a number of unusual

trees, ferns and even orchids. It was particularly interesting to try and speculate on some of the old field boundaries by looking at the evidence of the tree and plant growth, and lovely to hear the sound of the water, the insects and the birds, including the Skylark.

It was wonderful to have a Village event that used the Heritage Room and Library, and the Village Hall, and included a collaboration of many people from a number of local organisations. Our thanks to the Woking Community Play Association, the Anchor Folk Club, the Susan Robinson School of Ballet and the Brooklands Air Training Corps who joined in the day with a display of photographs of their history and activities, as well as to those individuals who did so much to make the day happen.



Edward II and Piers Gaveston