

We were very pleased to see so many of you at our recent AGM, and for those of you who could not make it, an account of the talk about Brooklands appears later on. The AGM means, of course, that it is subs renewal time. Thank you to those of you who have already renewed. If your subs are due, there should be a renewal slip enclosed with this newsletter and we hope that you will consider joining us for another year.

In the meantime, we hope you enjoy our latest newsletter offering.

FORTHCOMING
EVENTS 2007



2007

Thursday 21st JUNE: James Adler, Ranger for Wisley and Ockham Heaths will speak to us about his work on the heaths. **Byfleet Heritage Centre, Byfleet Library, 8.15pm**

Sunday 22nd JULY: Iain Wakeford's Heritage Walk around Pyrford. A gentle walk exploring the history of our neighbour Pyrford. Meet by **Pyrford Lock (near The Anchor)** at 2pm.

AUGUST—no meeting

Thursday 13th SEPTEMBER: A Members' Evening. Come along and hear some of our own members give short talks on their special interests. **Byfleet Heritage Centre, Byfleet Library, 8.15pm**

Thursday 11th OCTOBER: Ian Franklin on Kew Palace and its Restoration. Ian returns to tell us about the work that restored Kew Palace after many years of closure. **Byfleet Heritage Centre, Byfleet Library, 8.15pm**

Thursday 8th NOVEMBER: The Lightbox by Rib Davis. Tonight we will hear all about Woking's new museum and art gallery, how it started and what is in store for the future. **Byfleet Heritage Centre, Byfleet Library, 8.15pm**

Thursday 6th DECEMBER: Byfleet Oral History Group return to share snippets from some of their interviews **Byfleet Heritage Centre, Byfleet Library, 8.15pm.**

**Members free. Guests £2
Everyone very welcome.**

A PLEA FOR HELP FROM TESSA!!

We have now reached the halfway point in the year, and it is time to organise events for 2008. This is where you come in! Chris Glasow, as you know, has had to stand down from the job and I have been trying to fill in for him, but to be perfectly honest, I'm finding it to be one job too many, and it's all getting a bit stressful! **Please** could some kind soul take the job on. Our monthly meetings are a large part of what the Society is about, but I really don't have enough time to devote to it and I would hate for the quality of our events to drop because of it. The job itself doesn't take much, I just can't fit it in with everything else—as you can see by the lateness of this newsletter. We already have some ideas and contacts to start the ball rolling, and once the initial bookings are done, all that is required is a phone call once a month to confirm arrangements.

I'd be extremely grateful if someone would come forward very soon. I would say it was vital for the Society. If you fancy giving it a go, or would like to discuss it some more, please give me a ring on 01932 351559. Thank you very much.

For the Record...

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

In February Iain Wakeford treated us to “Wells, Woking and the Real War of the Worlds”, showing us Woking as Wells would have known it through old pictures and postcards. Wells wrote this famous book from his house in Maybury Road in 1895. At that time there were only three houses at his end of the road. The house is now marked by a blue plaque, although it was greatly altered in the 1960s.

The narrator in *War of the Worlds* strongly resembles Wells himself—they are both writers, have a brother called Frank and live in Woking. However, in the book, the narrator lives on Maybury Hill which had a view to Horsell Common. Wells’ house in Maybury Road would have looked out onto the gas works and the railway!

The first Martian cylinder was found in Horsell Common Sandpits. However, the piece that we see today was dug in the 1960s. What Wells would have known is now further into the woods. The area was more open in Wells’ time, and some of the best descriptions of Horsell Common at this time come from Wells’ writing. Wells actually leant to cycle in the sandpits and he would cycle round the town looking for people and places for his Martians to destroy. Iain said he liked to think that any shopkeeper that short changed Wells or anyone that annoyed him would be added to the list to become a Martian victim.

As the crowds gathered, the army was called in from Inkerman Barracks to protect the Martian cylinder from the crowd. Of course, once the attack began, the army had a different role, and Wells describes how they took over Horsell and Chobham church towers. The deadly Martian heat ray cut through the central tower of Oriental College and hit the narrator’s chimney. The dome of the mosque was also destroyed along with St Paul’s Church, Maybury. This was only being built in 1895 but Wells chose to do away with it. This description allows us to place Wells’ house in the book as standing on Maybury Hill just in front of Halfords on the industrial estate there.

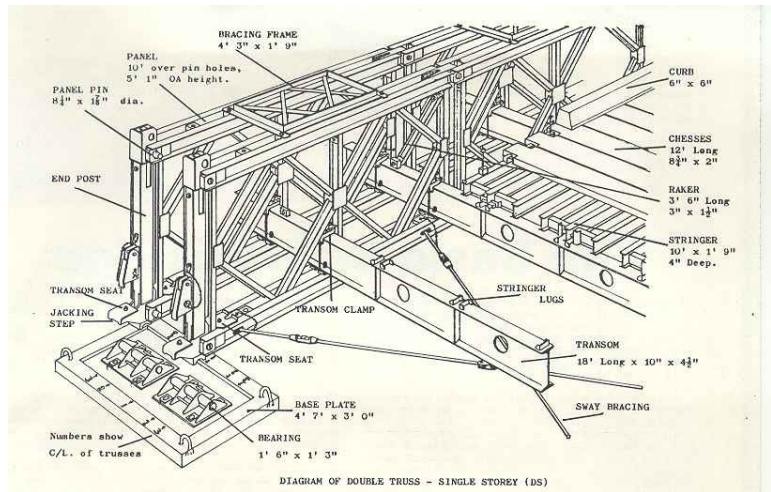
Wells added local flavour to his story. For instance, as the narrator escapes from the Martians he crosses the Six Crossroads (although then only containing 5 exits) and reaches Maybury Hill. He then describes looking down and seeing all the street lights on in Woking. Iain wondered if this was a dig at the local council. In 1895 Woking was having trouble with its electrical supply. Electricity was only on from 6pm to 12pm in winter and not at all in the summer, and even when it was on, it kept failing. Although it was one of the first towns to have electric street lights, the electricity supply was so unreliable that Woking reverted to gas—just as many other towns were changing to electricity. So there wasn’t much chance that Wells could have looked down onto a Woking blazing with light in 1895!

As the narrator escapes through Pyrford, the book says he passes Pyrford Church at midnight. Iain pointed out that Wells had probably heard of the local legend that says that if you pass the Pyrford Stone as the church clock strikes midnight, the stone will turn and you will turn to stone. Of course, anyone living in Pyrford would know that the church does not have a clock, so it was probably a tale to catch out strangers. But Iain thought that Wells had probably heard the legend and put his own reference to it in the book.

Finally Iain said that although Wells changes the names of the places and people in his book, he leaves clues as to where and who they were in real life. For example, a sweet stuff dealer from Chobham Road sends a boy up to Horsell Common to sell apples and ginger ale to the people thronging to see the cylinder. This must have been from Henry Flowerday’s shop. When the narrator gets to Byfleet he meets a “shrivelled old gent” who insisted loading his cart with his precious orchids despite being told that the Martians were coming! Iain wondered if anyone knew who this orchid grower was—so far his identity remains a mystery.

We thanked Iain for a fascinating tour of the book and a glimpse into the Woking that had inspired Wells to write one of his most famous books.

In March Pablo Haworth filled us in on **the history of the Bailey Bridge**. The army had previously used designs by Captain Hopkins and Charles Inglis. However, while the Inglis bridge was expensive to produce, the Hopkins one was slower to build. Also during the 1930s the larger Churchill tanks were introduced which caused the Inglis bridges to buckle. A new design was needed, and luckily Donald Coleman Bailey, a civil engineer with the War Office, had been tinkering with a new design, which he had been trying to interest people in since 1936. He finally had his chance while on a car journey with his bosses, drew his design on the back of an envelope and the rest is history.



A page from the army instruction manual

The Bailey Bridge was a prefabricated bridge which could be adapted for almost any circumstance. It was made of separate panels which could be carried by 6 men. These panels were connected by transom beams. All parts came with the slots, dowels and lugs ready drilled and were able to be fixed together using only a special transom clamp, saving the need to look for separate nuts and bolts while under fire! Different configurations could be assembled depending on the strength needed. A “single single” was one panel high with one panel along the sides, whereas the strongest bridge was a “triple triple”, three panels high with three panels along the sides. The baseplates that the bridge stood on could also be adjusted depending on load and the type of soil it would stand on.

In May 1941 the Bailey Bridge was given its first test. Sixty tons of tanks were driven on. A picture of this was sent to London—where those in charge refused to believe it! They came out to see for themselves and saw an army group assemble a 70ft bridge in 36 minutes including driving a truck across it. Once the bridge had passed testing, production began in earnest. 650 firms were used to make the various pieces using the best weldable steel available. Women were trained in large numbers to do the welding. Army instructions manuals were produced giving all the mathematical formulae and diagrams needed to produce bridges almost anywhere and for any use. In Italy alone some 2,800 were built, many having to be rebuilt when the summer dry valleys gave way to winter raging rivers. The Germans knew that once a Bailey Bridge was across the obstacle, tanks and heavy artillery would soon follow, so every effort was made to stop them being built. At Monte Cassino 15 sappers were killed and 57 injured taking three attempts to put a Bailey bridge over the Rio Rapido under heavy fire from German artillery.

The design was also adapted to provide different bridges. There was a mobile bailey where a bridge was assembled and rested on a turretless Sherman tank. Another tank would push the bridge from the rear as the first tank drove into the river or gully that was to be crossed. Some Baileys in Italy were used for railway lines, Bailey pontoons were built, such as across the Thames at the Festival of Britain in 1951, and there were even Bailey suspension bridges in Ripon, Italy and Burma, although these were usually for communications rather than heavy tanks.

Pablo pointed out that we have our very own Bailey bridge nearby, at Brooklands. Visitors walk across it from the car park into Brooklands Museum. One is also built across the canal at Farnborough every two years to take the large numbers of visitors to the air show. We thanked Pablo for a fascinating look at what is considered one of the greatest examples of military engineering.



A “single triple” bailey bridge

For our AGM we were pleased to welcome Anthony Hutchings, a volunteer at Brooklands Museum and archivist for the Brooklands Society. He came to speak to us about Brooklands Track, its origins and its centenary.

In mid 1905 Hugh Locke-King and his wife Ethel, who owned and ran a hotel in Cairo, saw a motor race in Italy. This made Locke-King realise that England had nothing to compare, and he started to dream of a British based race track where car manufacturers could not only race their cars, but in the process test and develop them too. Plainly this would be a huge undertaking. Nothing like it had been attempted before, and the Locke-Kings had to sell several of their London properties to finance the plan. Their home at Brooklands House became the project headquarters. A siding from the railway was built to the site, 2,000 navvies were hired, with horses and carts and even steam cranes. A standard gauge rail track was laid all round the site to enable heavy machinery to move about. Part of Caens Hill was demolished and the spoil used to build up the Byfleet Banking. The amazing thing was that this innovative and unique project began in Autumn 1906 and was finished in June 1907.

Locke-King approached designers Donaldson and Holden, who came up with the idea of a banked track, constructed in concrete. The banking was such that apparently you can take your hands off the steering wheel of the car and it will carry on round of its own accord! Two entrances allowed spectators into the track. The Members' Bridge went from Locke-King road to Members' Hill. The other entrance went via a tunnel from Locke-King Close, through the woods, under the track to the Club House. The track had to cross the River Wey in two places. Towards the South, this was no problem as the track was flat, but at the other bridging point, the track was already banked and curving. Local engineering firm, Mouchel and Partners came up with the Hennibique Bridge, slim concrete piers capped with 4.5" of concrete. However, the substrates of the river bank were unstable, causing the piers to sink slightly, causing a kink on the surface. This became known as the "Brooklands Bump" and could cause a racing car to become airborne for about 20 feet.

Spectators could view the racing from various points around the track. Prices ranged from two to five shillings on the hill, and from 10/6 to £1 to go into the enclosure. The Members' Area was for the Brooklands Automobile Racing Club members. This area contained a restaurant, cafe and grandstands. The area is now quite covered in trees, but during the racing era there was a clear view of the track all round. The clubhouse also had a special viewing gallery

Racing took place at the weekends, but the track was also used during the week for testing. The Test Hill was built in 1909 and is the only hill in Surrey with a 1:4 to 1:3 section. Cars had to ascend the hill to a line on the road, stop and then start again to the top against the clock. No 24 hour races were held, to avoid complaints from residents of Byfleet. Instead they held the Double 12, with 12 hours of racing on Saturday and 12 on Sunday. Racing and testing meant a whole village built up to care for the cars, with workshops and petrol stations. BP, Shell and Castrol all had stations by the track, and some still remain today.

Brooklands became as much a part of the social scene as Henley and Ascot, and attracted all the famous racers and, with the arrival of the Flying School, all the famous aviators too. At its peak, there were 15 flying schools at Brooklands. Race days at Brooklands would bring spectators from all over, and the days happenings were reported all over the world. In this its centenary year, Brooklands Museum has arranged for a huge array of cars from around the world with a Brooklands history to come back to the track. For some this would be their first return since the racing days. It was hoped that everyone would enjoy the celebrations for the centenary of the first purpose built race track in the world.

BYFLEET FACES AND PLACES

A couple of questions this time.

Does anyone know anything about number 17-19 Church Road? The present inhabitant is curious about the houses and wondered if anyone in the Society had any information about them.

We have also had a query from someone researching his family. He has traced his ancestors Edward and Isaac Oakley (a blacksmith and a broom maker) to an address in the Chertsey Road area called Rudlands Rookery. This is in 1851. Looking at the order the census was taken in, it would seem that this area was between Wintersells Farm and Frenchs Farm (which was where the old Britax works was). Does anyone know more exactly where Rudlands Rookery might have been?

As ever, if you have any answers, or questions of your own, please either give Tessa Westlake a ring or an email (01932 351559 or tessa@westlakesystems.co.uk), or leave a note for us at Byfleet Library. Thank you.



From our archive. This time we have a picture of Weymede kindly sent in to us.

Not the modern Byfleet street, but a picture of the house from which the street gets its name. The picture is labelled "Built by Joseph Stevens" who was the father of L R Stevens, author of "Byfleet A Village of England".

PARISH DAY

Parish Day this year will be on Saturday 21st July and we will be having our usual tent on the recreation ground. We could do with some help to mind the stand on the day, starting from about 1.30pm, so if you could spare an hour or even half that would be great. You don't have to be an expert on local history, just keep an eye on the stand and enjoy the day. If you can help out, please give Tessa a ring on 01932 351559. Thank you.

THE HOWARD COOK MEMORIAL EXHIBITION

In March the Society, together with the Residents' Association and Byfleet Bowling Club held an exhibition on the life and work of Howard Cook, patron of the Heritage Society, long serving Secretary of the Residents' Association and keen bowler. Howard gave long and selfless service to the village, and we hope that the exhibition paid tribute to his efforts. The exhibition was quite well attended and we hope to have some of the boards available to view at this year's Parish Day, so if you missed them in March, maybe you can come along and see them then.

Here are some pictures of the opening, kindly taken by member Mike Webber.



The opening ceremony. Jim Allen, Richard and Kathleen Allen (Howard Cook's daughter and son in law), Mayoress Linda Kemeny, Mayor John Kingsbury, County Councillor Geoff Marlow, and Ladies Bowls President Elsie Hoaen. On the table is a selection of Howard Cook's personal items, such as his army cap and his Woking Eminent Citizen medal.

Some of the display boards up in the Bowls Club pavilion. There were boards on Howard's childhood and family life, his war career, and on his involvement in all aspects of Byfleet life from the building of the M25 to the Lisa Bush appeal. There were also boards displaying his pen and ink drawings of Byfleet scenes, which Howard sold for charity.



Kathleen Allen, Howard Cook's daughter, gave a speech at the opening in which she paid tribute to her father.