

We are already half way through the year, and it's time for subscription renewals again—details are on the back page.

Also, please note we have made some changes to the dates for the September, October and November meetings. Please amend your diaries, as we'd hate for you to miss out! We also have an additional event for our calendar, which is a visit to the Bowls Club—details at the bottom of the page. I'm not going to refer to the weather this time, as when I mentioned Spring last issue, it promptly turned freezing cold, so I'll just leave you to enjoy this copy of the newsletter whatever the weather! See you soon.

FORTHCOMING
EVENTS 2008



2008

SUNDAY 20TH JULY: A Walk on Wisley Common with Heath Ranger James Adler. After our talk last year, come and see Wisley Common in the flesh! Meet at the Wren's Nest Car Park, Wisley Common, 2pm

AN ADDITIONAL EVENT:

Thursday 7th AUGUST

We have been invited for an evening at the Byfleet Bowls Club. See below for details.

Thursday 11th SEPTEMBER: Unrest in Surrey and the Swing riots 1830-32 with Dr Judy Hill. And you thought Surrey was so peaceful! Find out how the Swing Riots affected the Byfleet area. **Byfleet Heritage Centre, Byfleet Library, 8.15pm.**

Thursday 9th OCTOBER: Jeff Sechiari on the Byfleet Inclosure Act. You may remember Jeff set up a project to transcribe the Byfleet Inclosure. Come and hear what the Act meant for Byfleet and see how Byfleet used to look. **Byfleet Heritage Centre, Byfleet Library, 8.15pm.**

Thursday 6th NOVEMBER: Haden Williams on Wisley Gardens, Past and Present. We've all visited Wisley's lovely gardens—now come and hear how it all started. **Byfleet Heritage Centre, Byfleet Library, 8.15pm.**

Thursday 4th DECEMBER: Christmas Social. Come and join us for our annual Christmas gathering—have a mince pie and raise a glass. **Byfleet Heritage Centre, Byfleet Library, 8.15pm**

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

A VISIT TO BYFLEET BOWLS CLUB

We have been invited for a visit to Byfleet Bowls Club, to have a go at the game and then have a talk on its long history.

If you fancy having a go, or hearing about it, please join us on **THURSDAY AUGUST 7TH, 6.15 for 6.30 at Byfleet Bowls Club, Rectory Lane, Byfleet.**

If you are planning on coming, could you just let us know so that we can give the Club an idea of how many to expect. It should be the perfect activity for a summer's evening! Please call Tessa on 01932 351559 if you fancy coming along. See you there!

For the Record...

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

In March we were visited by some familiar faces. Members Mike Webber and Jeff Sechiari spoke to us about their other interest, the Byfleet Oral History Group.

The group started off with a group of 10 or so interested individuals, most of whom are still involved in the project. This initial group were given training in the equipment they would use, procedures to follow and the techniques to use to get and preserve good interviews. Funding came from the National Lottery via Help the Aged, and from the Awards for All scheme which provided lottery grants for local groups.

Equipment consists of microphones, both clip-on and table top, and originally tape recorders. Technology has moved quickly on, and tape recorders made way first for CDs and then digital recorders. The tape recorders allowed you to get half an hour per side. But the latest digital recorders can capture 16 hours or recording, with no need to check the tape isn't running out, and all contained in something the size of a mobile phone. Several copies of the original tapes are made, with different colour coded labels. A master set has gone to be preserved at the Surrey History Centre, the Group retain one copy and one copy is made for lending out.

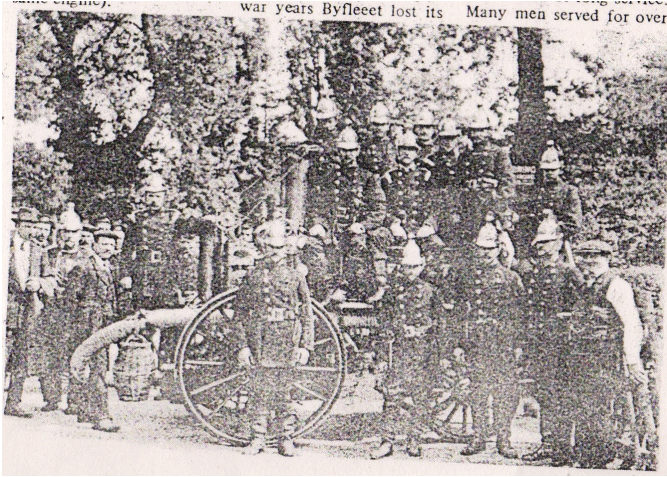
At the interview, a relaxed atmosphere is aimed for and sometimes is so well achieved that people have been known to forget they are being recorded and say "just between you and me...". Sometimes the BOHG member would turn up to find they had been pre-empted. One person had pre-recorded their interview, and another had it already written out! To go with each interview, BOHG collect together any photos or memorabilia to make a portfolio.

We were then treated to some snippets from the collection of interviews. Leonard Leech recalled the reopening of the Clock House in 1967 by the Queen Mother. Tom Hughes recounted walking to school along the fields in Chertsey Road, Ebenezer Mears' steam wagons, Berrys Woodyard and the Fire Station which had just stopped using horses to draw the fire engine. Howard Cook remembered seeing Mr Vaquier looking worried outside the Blue Anchor pub. He had good cause—a few days later he was arrested and later hanged for the murder of the landlord, Mr Jones in 1924. Two different interviews described the Sanway Laundry and how they would wash all the linen from the local big houses, as well as the maids uniforms. The washing was collected and delivered in a cart, and the lady at the Manor House would personally go through every item.

Interviewers learned to expect the unexpected. An interview about the Rowley Bristow turned up the fact that the interviewee's brother was a friend of Ian Allen, who wrote the ABC trainspotting books. Ron Paine revealed that the first leg callipers made of duralimin were made and tested by Vickers' apprentices before being taken up by Roehampton.

The Oral History Group were proud to win the Not Old Just Older Award (NOJO) in 2001. They came top out of 120 entries, and Paddy Holroyde and Mike Webber went to receive the award in London from Heinz Wolff.

The Group is still active and always looking for new members. You can either contribute as an interviewee, or interviewer or the Group is still hoping to make written transcripts of each tape. Tapes of the first 16 interviews are also available for loan. If you would like to know more, or would like to see how you could help, or if you would like to borrow a tape, please contact Jeff Sechiari (01932 341084).



Byfleet Fire Brigade with their steam engine

In April the Society headed out of doors for a quick look inside the old Fire Station. The rooms which housed the vehicles could be seen and the development of the fire station could be picked out.. The rooms were brought to life by ex fireman Peter Hancocks, who shared his memories of his time with the service. Of course, what could also be seen was the large amount of "tlc" the building will need to make it habitable again.

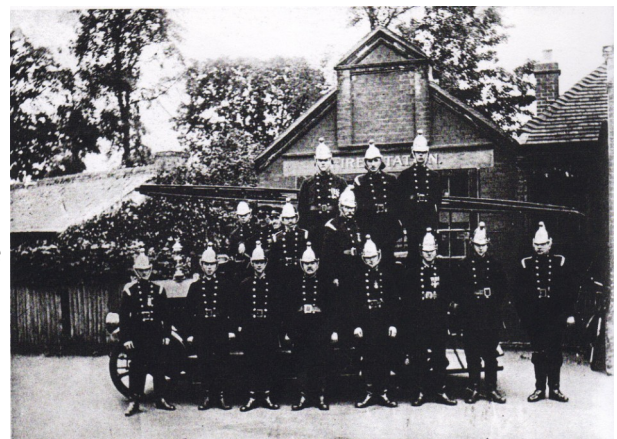
After our tour, we retired to the Heritage Centre where Julian Temple told us about the building's history. When the plot of land went up for sale last year, people were afraid developers would buy the plot and demolish the

station. So the Friends of Byfleet Fire Station was formed to try to prevent this. There was a huge amount of public support, and at the end of August, Julian applied to English Heritage to get the building listed. He discovered that Byfleet has one of the oldest brick built fire stations in Surrey, which is in a remarkably unaltered state. There is a similar one in Shere, but this is now a public toilet! At the end of February this year Byfleet Fire Station became a Grade II listed building, but public support is still vital, as is finding a use for it which is both sympathetic to the building and of benefit to the community.

The station was built in 1885 and opened in 1886 with an 11 man fire crew. After a fire at his own hoom, Sir John Whittaker Ellis of Petersham House (now Lloyds Bank), gave his gardeners some hose and a hand pump, which was kept in his garden shed. Later, Mr Stoop donated some land, and a proper fire station was built. The brigade had a horse drawn Monarch steam engine from around 1908 until 1923, when £1,780 was paid for a motorised Dennis engine. At this time the section on the left of the building was added to take the larger tender.

Byfleet almost lost its fire station when the Dennis engine broke down on the way to a hangar fire at Brooklands. An enquiry was held, and plans were made to demolish the old fire station and rebuild one in Oyster Lane. However, the war intervened, and the building survived. The brigade were probably on hand when Vickers was bombed during an air raid in 1940, and the tender had been sent up to Coventry to help with the bomb damage there.

Julian showed several old pictures of the station, including the old hose drying tower and siren. In one picture, you could see there had once been a chimney and a street lamp on the front of the building, and the windows were not bricked up. Many Byfleet men served many years at Byfleet Fire Station, including Bert and Harry Denly, and Frank Polley. Peter Hancocks, who had been sharing his memories earlier, had started there in 1946 aged 16, gone away to do his National Service, and then returned to the Fire Service.



The Brigade outside Byfleet Fire Station, 1930s

There is a great deal of renovation to be done.

The exterior's pink paint is actually damaging the bricks and will have to be removed. And a new use still has to be found for the building. But it will be a very exciting project, with lots still to find out. Discoveries are still being made, such as an original window frame which was found behind some hoarding. The building is in a bad way, but things are not as bad as they look. However, there is still a lot of work to be done, and the fire station will need our support. to make sure that it survives into the 21st century.

For our AGM we welcomed back **Chris Glasow** who continued his fascinating history of our church of St Mary's. On his last visit, Chris had covered the early history of the church. This time we travelled from the 15th century to the modern day

First we looked at some of the church furnishings. The reredos behind the altar was made of inlaid glass in 1882 by J Powell & Sons of Whitefriars, London, a fashionable firm who had done similar pieces for many London buildings. Our piece in Byfleet cost £24.

Coming down the aisle, we reached the pulpit, which is inscribed with the date 1616, and the initials "RS", but who they belong to has never been discovered. It was once a huge, three level structure, with a clerk's desk at the bottom, a desk for reading the gospel in the middle, and on the top a place for preaching the sermon complete with a canopy. The pulpit was broken up sometime in the mid 19th century and the different pieces spread around the church. The reader's desk was recorded until the 1950s, but what happened to it after that is not known.

One of the oldest items in the church is the font, which dates from the 15th century. It would originally have had a cap of carved wood which could be locked on—to stop witches stealing the holy water! The cap is shown in drawings of the church from the mid 19th century, but where it has gone since is again one of St Mary's mysteries. The font is octagonal, each side decorated with shields and angel's heads, each one being slightly different. It originally stood in the north aisle at the west end, but when the church was enlarged it was moved to its present position in the south aisle.

Many memorial plaques adorn the church walls. Some of these were originally on the south wall, but when this was removed to enlarge the church, the plaques were moved to the west wall. One of note is to Joseph Spence, a famous poet and Professor of Poetry at Oxford University. He was great friends with Stephen Duck, a fellow poet and also rector of Byfleet in 1754. At the other end of the church is a memorial to Frederick Egerton of HMS Powerful, who died of wounds at Ladysmith in 1899. The Powerful gained a great reputation during the Boer War and her crew came to be regarded as heroes. There are four memorials to the crew in the country, including one at Portsmouth. The oldest memorial in the church is the 15th century brass to Thomas Teylar, rector from 1454-1489. He is shown wearing an almuce, or fur hood, which was only worn by clergy of the higher orders, and was to help keep out the chill during the hours of prayer. A moving memorial to the men of Byfleet killed in the First World War can be seen behind the font. Their grave markers were collected from the burial grounds in France, and brought home to their church, where they form a lasting reminder of their sacrifice.

Using some old prints, Chris explored how the church had changed over the years. A picture from 1834 shows a small window in the belfry, and to the left of the north door, a small mound leading to a door. This led to private inside galleries on two levels, where you could worship above the ordinary folk! Alterations were made in 1841, when access to the church was from the west end. The three decker pulpit stood on the opposite side of the aisle to now and the font was moved to the new south aisle. By 1875, a plan showed that the church had roughly taken the form we see today. The galleries had all been removed and a window replaced the former west end entrance. Iron posts that had originally separated the north and south aisles had been replaced with today's pillars.

Chris finished his talk with a word about the church bells. St Mary's has had three bells since at least 1552, the biggest weighing 6 cwt. In 1853 3 new bells were hung, the biggest showing an inscription asking the Blessed Virgin to protect the worshippers it has called. Chris announced that the St Mary's Bell Appeal planned to get the bells ringing again, and aimed to hang 6 bells in all. A bell ringing team was already being trained, and another 5 or 6 people were needed, so volunteers were very welcome. Fund raising would begin in earnest on Heritage Day in September, and it was hoped to have the bells in place by Summer 2009.

We thanked Chris for showing us how the church had developed, and looked forward to hearing the bells ringing out next summer.



BYFLEET FACES AND PLACES

Jeff Sechiari was talking to someone who mentioned she recalled “another” aeroplane crash during World War II. She said it came from the Wisley Common direction and hit a tree at the west end of Sanway Road just opposite the school.

Jeff had heard of the crashing of a Warwick, possibly after the war, but was not sure if this crash was the same one or a different occasion. Does anyone have any details of these events, or can anyone confirm whether these were different events or the same story? Do you have any information on any other local crashes or other wartime mishaps?

If so, please let us know. Either leave us a note at Byfleet Library, or drop a line or ring (8 Brewery Lane, Byfleet, 01932 351559)

Thanks very much.

The White House at the bottom of Church Road (next to the Clock House) is one of Byfleet's oldest houses. L R Stevens says that possibly it was a Dame School in the 1800s, and before that it might have been a lodge belonging to the Manor House. But the Society has very little information about it. The present owners have been making enquiries, and we wondered if any of our members has any information they might like to pass on. It seems a shame that we know so little about such a distinctive building, so perhaps this should be the Society's next research project.

If anyone has anything they would like to pass on, please contact Tessa Westlake on 01932 351559. Thanks very much.

Half of The White House (left) in the floods of 1968



Who remembers Evans' shop in Chertsey Road? This has now been converted into a house, but was previously a post office and then briefly a second hand furniture shop. Here we see it in its heyday, selling haberdashery as well as shoes and, behind the little girl, picture postcards of the local area.



Byfleet Fire Station

You may have read in the local press that the Friends of Byfleet Fire Station have succeeded in obtaining Grade II listed status for the building. This will hopefully provide some protection, and negotiations are still underway to find a new use for the building. Congratulations to the Friends on this result.

The Friends would like to thank everyone for their support in helping to try and make sure one of Byfleet's few remaining old buildings remains to grace the village for years to come.

Watch this space for more details, or go to www.byfleetfirestation.com for the latest news and to see how you can help.

SUBS RENEWAL TIME!

It's that time of year again—it seems to come around quicker each year!

If you were not able to renew your subscription at the AGM, you should find a renewal slip inside this newsletter.

If you managed to get to the AGM, or have joined since January 2008, then you do not need to renew.

We'd like to thank you for your support over the last year, and hope you decide to join us for 2008/9.

Full details should be on the form, but if you have any questions, please contact Jeff Sechiari on 01932 341084

Parish Day!



We are going to be at Parish Day again, which this year will be on Saturday 19th July. We would really appreciate your help to man the stand for half an hour or an hour. You don't have to be an expert in anything, just sit in the sun (hopefully), look friendly, and watch the world (well, Byfleet anyway) go by. If you can help, please ring Tessa Westlake on 01932 351559. Thank you!

H. S. Cawsey

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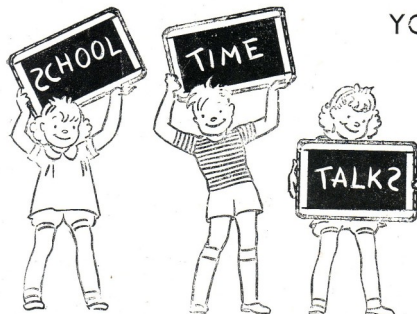


A couple of adverts from yester year from West Byfleet

Children know best

They know what they like — especially in the confectionery line, that is why they always ask fond parents to take them to Bailey's, where there is a good selection of toffees, candies, chocolate — in fact all the nice things to eat. In addition there is always a large selection of the best brands of cigarettes, tobaccos, together with quality smokers' requisites, stationery, etc.

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