

2009 is under way and as you can see below, Jeff has lined up some great talks to keep us entertained. Don't forget the Members' Evening in June. Our last one of these was great fun and very interesting. Please come along if you have an interesting object that you would like to show, or perhaps you would like to share some research you have done or ask for help for some that you would like to do. Whether you would like to hold the floor for a short time or would just like to listen, everyone is very welcome, so we hope to see you then.

You may have noticed the disappearance of the old Youth Club, but the Fire Station still stands. For an update on what's going on there, see our back page. Hope you enjoy the newsletter and hope to see you soon.

FORTHCOMING  
EVENTS 2009



## 2009

**Thursday 12th FEBRUARY:** This month **David Taylor** will tell us about **Cobham Park and Alexander Raby**.  
**Byfleet Heritage Centre, Byfleet Library, 8.15pm**

**Thursday 12th MARCH:** **Holloway Sanatorium** by **Joy Whitfield**.

**Byfleet Heritage Centre, Byfleet Library, 8.15pm**

**Thursday 9th APRIL:** Tonight **Trevor Harris** will speak about **The Veterinary Laboratories Agency** formerly known as **The Addlestone Institute**.

**Byfleet Heritage Centre, Byfleet Library, 8.15pm**

**Thursday 21st MAY:** **Society AGM** to be held at **Cawsey Room, Byfleet Village Hall. 7.30pm**

**Thursday 18th JUNE:** Following the success of last year, we've decided to hold another **Members' Evening** where the floor is open for short talks by members, questions, showing interesting articles or pictures.

**Byfleet Heritage Centre, Byfleet Library, 8.15pm**

**Thursday 16th JULY:** **A History of Byfleet Parish Day** (speaker to be confirmed). Come and hear about how our local fete got started. Then on Saturday come along and see us at the real thing.

**Byfleet Heritage Centre, Byfleet Library, 8.15pm**

**Thursday 10th SEPTEMBER:** **Julian Pooley** from the **Surrey History Centre** will show us **Artists, Antiquaries And Collectors: Illustrations Of Surrey Collected By Robert Barclay Of Bury Hill, Dorking, c.1800-1832**  
**Byfleet Heritage Centre, Byfleet Library, 8.15pm**

**Thursday 8th OCTOBER:** We are glad to welcome back old Society friend **Iain Wakeford** who will speak about **Byfleet in the 1960s and 70s**.

**Byfleet Heritage Centre, Byfleet Library, 8.15pm**

**Thursday 5th NOVEMBER:** **Entertainment in Byfleet** with **Jim Allen**, our Chairman and also long serving member of **The Byfleet Players**.

**Byfleet Heritage Centre, Byfleet Library, 8.15pm**

**Thursday 3rd DECEMBER:** **Christmas social**. Come and join in our end of the year event. **Mike Webber** will review some of the Society's pictures, and I'm sure there will be a mince pie or two around as well.

**Byfleet Heritage Centre, Byfleet Library, 8.15pm**

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

## *For the Record...*

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

# October

At this month's meeting **Jeff Sechiari** explained all about the **Byfleet and Weybridge Enclosure of 1801** and showed the accompanying map of 1811. The map shows a very different Byfleet to today. While the roads are recognisable, there are very few buildings from which to get your

bearings. Areas are marked in pink and blue. Pink areas show the land enclosed by the 1801 act, and blue areas land previously enclosed. Jeff has been studying the subject at the Surrey History Centre, and some of you will remember Jeff's project to transcribe the Byfleet Enclosure, and to put this transcription on a CD with a copy of the map. This will make research easier, the documents more widely available and save wear and tear on the originals.

The Enclosure was basically the fencing in of land to stop others using it. The 1811 map shows 780 acres of common fields at Byfleet Manor. Despite the name, common land was not open to everyone, and was usually used by landowning villagers or tenants. It became very difficult to define and control as customary rights to the use of the land evolved, such as the rights to pasture animals, collect turf and firewood for fuel or to harvest the fruits and berries.

The consequences of the Enclosure were that it saw an end to the old way of strip farming, where land was divided into a series of strips belonging to different people, to growing crops in enclosed fields belonging to one person. This changed the shape of the countryside and led to the introduction of hedges and ditches to mark boundaries and enclose animals. Opinion was divided at the time as to whether the enclosure was a good or bad thing. Some saw it as underpinning the economy, others as an act of theft from the poor. It inspired much debate and while some promoted and supported it, other famous writers such as John Clare and William Cobbett highlighted the plight of the poor. Jeff said it would be interesting to see if it had been a contentious issue locally. As yet he had seen no evidence, and Jeff thinks that the previous enclosures may have provoked more feeling. As with any innovation, there were winners and losers. Landowners and the Church of England were granted large areas, and food production increased as the decline of strip farming meant that the land was able to be farmed in a less wasteful way. The losers were those who previously had common rights, tenant farmers who lost their strips, the loss of some rights of way and, surprisingly, highwaymen as the enclosures took away some of the open spaces that enabled them to ambush unwary travellers.

Three commissioners came to Weybridge to carry out the business, meeting at the Ship in Weybridge, or occasionally at The Blue Anchor in Byfleet. Public notices were fixed to church doors and published in The Country Chronicle. Three days were set aside to walk around and define existing boundaries. Roads were classified—40ft wide were public roads, occupation roads 25ft wide, and public footways—and features such as gravel pits (for road maintenance) and rabbit warrens were investigated and noted if they existed. Byfleet's gravel pit was 2 acres in the Canada Road area. Expenses were defrayed by auctioning off common lands. A lot of attention was paid to making clear who had responsibility for maintaining ditches and keeping the waterways clear. The poor were not quite forgotten—the Byfleet poor were allotted 40 acres of land towards Woodham, and the poor house was awarded an allotment.

Jeff hopes to continue his research into what enclosure meant to the local community, as well as trying to uncover details of the earlier enclosure. The CD transcription of the Enclosure has gone for proof reading, and when it is ready will hopefully provide a useful resource for anyone who wishes to study the subject further.

# November

*A cold and dark night in November seemed a good time to think of the summer and look at some lovely slides of **Wisley Gardens**, and learn about their history from **Haden Williams**.*

*The 19th century saw a huge increase in new species of plants being brought to Britain by plant collectors, and the need was felt for a Society to promote horticulture, propagate these new plants and maintain a garden where they could be grown. John Wedgewood, son of Josiah, and Sir Joseph Banks, a plant collector, founded the Royal Horticultural Society of London in 1804. The first committee meetings were held in Hatchards bookshop in Piccadilly.*

*Their first garden was established on the Chelsea land of the Duke of Devonshire, but moved to Kensington in 1818. In 1861 the Society was granted a Royal Charter by Prince Albert. Then in 1903 Sir Thomas Hanbury bought a garden at Wisley to be used to try growing ericaceous plants on poor soil. The first sections of the lab buildings were put up in 1910, with the main lab following in 1915-18. The gardens themselves gradually took shape from 1915-31 and the first students in horticulture were trained. The famous trial gardens were also established.*



*Haden then treated us to a photographic tour of the gardens. We started with the house by the fish pond. This housed the first lab, the plant pathology offices and the Director's office. The building is Grade II listed, but the distinctive chimneys are the home of wild bees, and are full of honey. The large pond was the original site of the glasshouses. The water lilies are regularly tended to by students in waist high waders. The students also map out the surrounding beds and plant them up with tulip and daffodil bulbs. The temperature near the pond is several degrees lower than other parts of the garden, which has the benefit of producing more vivid autumn colour.*

*We saw pictures of the hornbeam hedge. The hornbeam has the odd characteristic that although the tree loses its leaves in winter, if it is made into a hedge, the leaves stay on. Haden also passed on the tip that if chrysanthemums are potted up and the soil packed in hard, the roots will struggle and prompt the plants to flower.*

*The new glass house was featured. Amazingly only one pane of glass was broken during the building. It stands overlooking a new lake which holds enough water to irrigate the gardens for two months. The spoil has been taken out and now forms a mound up at the fruit fields and has been planted with trees. Inside are three main planting zones—desert, tropical and temperate. Rainwater is collected from the roof and stored in large underground tanks for watering. The impressive rocks that you see inside are actually made of fibreglass, and if you look very closely you will see the outlines of the secret doors, which open to reveal spaces for keeping equipment. Everything in the greenhouse is automated, but one disadvantage of this is that it is not so easy for students to learn the rules of greenhouse maintenance, as they do not get to do it for themselves.*



*Haden showed slides of the students being tested in designing and planting a small plot. They are each given a plot and some tools, and in a given time have to plan their design on graph paper and then plant it out for real.*

*Haden also told us other little snippets, like fruit from the trees is sold in season at the garden gate, and also that when it was retired, the old Chelsea Flower Show marquee was cut up, made into waistcoats and sold.*

*We thanked Haden for a look both at the garden's history and for a colourful photographic tour around the grounds.*

# December

Our final meeting of 2008 was our Christmas Social, and once again Mike Webber displayed some of the pictures and items that we have been lucky enough to acquire over the year. This year Mike started with a lovely collection of photos of the Byfleet Broadsiders cycle racing team, given by David Barrett. He had also supplied a diagram of their track, which had started out on land where Weymede is now. Later, as the club grew in popularity, they moved to a new track in between Oyster Lane and Brooklands. There was also a photo of a race between the Broadsiders and Woodham Stars, who raced at Heathervale Park.

Also from David was a Byfleet Old Folks Good Companions Club card. They met at Byfleet Village Hall on the fourth Wednesday of every month at 2.30pm, and to join you had to be 60 or over. Membership was 3d per month (with tea 3d extra). David had also drawn plans of the types of air raid shelter to be found in Byfleet. A few still exist today, for example behind the Village Hall and in Petersham Avenue.

After a break for mince pies and Christmas cheer we were delighted to welcome Jill and John Ware, who very kindly presented a painting of the Manor gardens to the Society. Jill's grandfather had been Head Gardener there, and an artist had captured a wonderful view of his herbaceous border. He had attended St Mary's School, and notably got through the whole of his school life without being caned! On her mother's side, her grandfather had been a cabinet maker in Lincolnshire, but had moved to Byfleet with Vickers during the First World War. The family lived first in the Vickers houses in Dawson Road, and later at Devonshire Villa, next to Derisley's Butchers. Jill's mother remembers seeing the horses in a field at the back being harnessed up to draw the fire engine. Less happily, she also remembered the many losses Byfleet suffered during the 1919 flu epidemic, including two of her sisters. Jill's mother's first job had been sewing the canvas onto the planes at Vickers using a foot long needle. Jill's parents married in 1933, and Mrs Rutson, then owner of Byfleet Manor, allowed them to have their wedding photos taken on the Manor lawns. We thanked Jill very much for such a lovely picture, which would be a valuable addition to the archive, as it showed the gardens in colour.



Finally we were shown some paintings belonging to Mary McIntyre. The old wooden bridge by the Manor was remembered with affection, and members agreed that the modern metal one was a poor replacement. We saw Plough Farm by the old Plough Bridge and the ford across the river. Lastly one was shown that many thought was Digby's Stores by the Blue Anchor, but was in fact where Unity Motors now is. Previously this had been Lucas' Stores (the Lucas family were cousins of Mary's family), and the painting had been taken from an old photo taken in the 1840s. The shop had then been a potters, and Mary said that the original kiln used to be in the back of Lucas' shop, and quite possibly was still there.

All in all the evening was a very enjoyable trip down Memory Lane. We were very grateful to everyone who shared their pictures, to Mike for putting it all on display, and to Jill and John for their gift and for travelling all the way from Cornwall to be with us.



# BYFLEET QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

## Family history help

Mick Cooper is "researching the family of Edward Theodore Louis (or Lewis) Walsh and his wife Frances Ann who at one stage were described as "from West House, Byfleet." He died in 1802-3 in Savannah La Mar, Jamaica. His son Louis (Lewis) Edward was born in Byfleet between 1793-9, but subsequent children Frances and Angelina were born in Derbyshire and Chester. Edward's wife was born around 1776 somewhere in Surrey." We think West House refers to a property on the West Hall estate, and an eagle eyed member spotted a wall tablet in St Mary's church to a Mrs E Maria Walsh who died in 1790. The entry for her burial in the Parish Register reads "1790 August Hester Maria, wife of Theodosius Walsh Esq; a Roman Catholic was buried by desire in this church according to Act of Parliament in woollen and with due and proper form of the Church of England". But here the trail goes cold. If anyone either knows anything about the Walsh family, West House, or has experience in finding out about custom's officials or consulting Catholic records, please let us know and we'll pass it on to Mr Cooper.

: Raymond Friend  
from the United

## More family history help

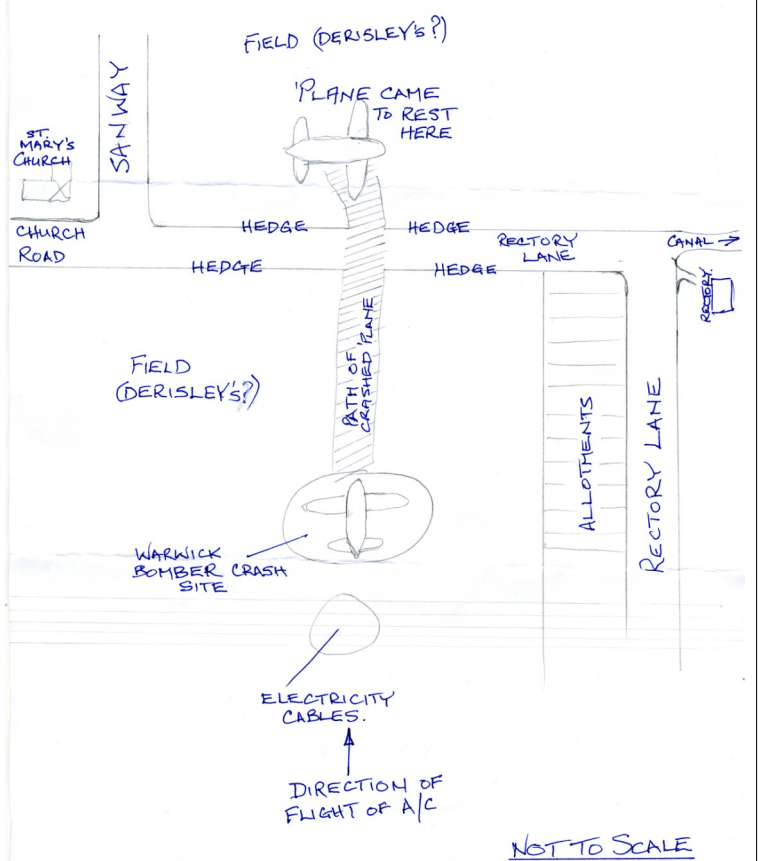
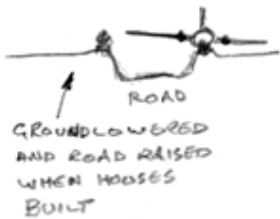
States is looking for information on a grocery shop called Friends Store, which was owned by his father in 1938-40 in Addlestone Road.

Would any of our members know about this, have an idea of its location, or even have a picture?

If you do, please let us know! Thanks.

**The Warwick Crash.** Another couple of memories about the Warwick bomber crash. Ken Wood says, "I was about ten years old at the time (so it would have been about 1945) and distinctly remember that the bomber crash landed (after hitting some electricity cables) in a field to one side of Rectory Lane (see rough sketch attached), its impetus carrying it through that field, across Rectory Lane (through two hedges) ending up in the field opposite... Along with a couple other lads, I went to the site and while two of us engaged the officer guarding the plane the other lad went round picking up broken pieces of Perspex from the cockpit windows as mementoes." Ken attached a map of the scene (right). We also

received a map from David Barrett, who also adds that "Church Road was in more of a hollow between the allotments and fields with very dense hedges on top of each embankment. These supported the plane to quite an extent, allowing us to pass easily under the wing. The plane's tail was facing the Church with the damaged engine next to the road." (see left).



**The Tarrant Bridge.** Mike Webber reports that "page 43 of the Richard Norris' book on Tarrant has a map dated c1920 with the bridge shown as a listed item on the opposite page. The text on page 41 says that expansion across York Road took place during WW1. There appear to be no details of the what happened to the site and when, but on a postcard of York Road which I believe is older than 1920, there is no bridge. I believe the view is looking east with a tall building on the left with a high beam and block and tackle for hoisting things to the upper floor."

Mary McIntyre says that the bridge was burnt down soon after the end of the Second World War. By that time the building was Byfleet Furniture, but before that it had been owned by Ewan Davies before Byfleet Furniture.

Ken Wood also remembers a fire. He says, "As children we used to play in a building in Tarrant's yard, where wood machining took place and large heaps of saw dust and wood chips were kept. One day a fire broke out in this building, causing much excitement among the local populace what with the flames, smoke, fire engines with their crews and water cascading all over the place. This may or may not have been when the bridge was destroyed or just maybe the fire made the bridge so unsafe that it had to be removed. My memory is not at all clear on the relevant dates." If you have any more information about this part of town, please let us know.

On Saturday 24th January a party of members was given the opportunity to have a look around West Hall. Jeff Sechiari thanked Ian Waterston for arranging access for us, and Roger Good for showing everyone around. He also dug out some stunning photographs for everyone to enjoy.

Jeff says "I know that a few of our members and their friends have worked there over the years, even back in the Vickers days, and I wonder if they can be persuaded to jot down a few memories of what it was like working there, or if they would be prepared to sit down with a group to reminisce over a cup of tea (with a tape recorder keeping them company)?"

We would love it if you would share your memories of West Hall with us. If you would like to help out, and preserve your memories for posterity, please give Jeff a ring on 01932 341084. Thank you.



## BYFLEET FIRE STATION UPDATE

After much 'behind the scenes' discussion and consideration during 2008, 'The Friends of Byfleet Fire Station' (informally representing Brooklands Museum, Byfleet Heritage Society and Byfleet, West Byfleet & Pyrford Residents' Association) agreed to pursue a partnership approach to the questions of the long term preservation and future use of Byfleet's historic Victorian fire station (officially Grade 2 Listed by the DCMS on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2008).

It was also agreed that Brooklands Museum, with its charitable status and track record in preserving historic buildings, was best placed to lead the project and a potential action plan was duly developed for further

discussion with the building's owner, Surrey County Council.

In February 2008 Brooklands Museum commissioned a Reconnaissance Report on the general condition of the fire station from a professional historic buildings surveyor. His advice included recommending that a full inspection be commissioned as the next stage in assessing its potential repair and conservation costs.

In May, plans were submitted to Woking Borough Council by Inland Homes for the redevelopment of the adjacent former youth centre site. We made contact with the developers, expressed our general support for this scheme which then obtained planning permission and construction of 13 apartments on three storeys began in January 2009.

Last Autumn, a £5,000 grant was secured via Brooklands Museum from Surrey County Council to fund a 'conservation survey' of the fire station. To facilitate this, an Access Licence was signed by Brooklands Museum with Surrey County Council just before Christmas. Among other things, this permits work parties of Museum volunteers to be deployed to tidy up the building (inside and out), for professional plans and surveys to be made and even public open days to be staged during 2009. Anyone wishing to join the project team's work parties will be welcomed and should contact Julian Temple for more information on 01932 857381 ext 240 or email: [juliantemple@brooklandsmuseum.com](mailto:juliantemple@brooklandsmuseum.com).

## PARISH DAY PICTURES AND MEMORABILIA

With our talk on the history of every Byfleetian's favourite annual event in July, we wondered if anyone out there had any memorabilia. Have you any photos taken of the event in years gone by? Have you hoarded any old programmes or did you win a prize in the craft, flower arranging or vegetable competitions?

If so, we would love to borrow them for copying for our archive. If you have anything, large or small, that you would be willing to let us copy, please either bring it along to a meeting, or give Tessa Westlake a ring on 01932 351559. Thanks very much.