

Spring is here and we hope will bring some lovely weather. With another photographic competition planned, we look forward to seeing all your pictures of Byfleet bathed in sunshine!

However, there are some dark clouds. As you will know, Byfleet Library is under threat once more. Please read below for details and if you have any comments please write to your councillors. The library is more than just a place to borrow books, and its loss would leave quite a hole in our village, so please continue to use and support it to the best of your ability. Thank you.

Byfleet Library

As you will no doubt be very aware, Byfleet Library is once more on the endangered list. Byfleet, along with ten other Surrey libraries, is facing closure. A very well attended public meeting was held on the 19th February at Byfleet Village Hall where the matter was discussed in a lively fashion. Things looked hopeful when a Surrey County Council select committee recommended these plans be abandoned pending further consultation. However, Cabinet Members later voted unanimously in favour of continuing with the proposals.

As a result of the public meeting, Byfleet Library Action Group has been set up to coordinate fighting the closure. They meet at Byfleet Library and their next meeting will be on Wednesday March 30th at 8pm. Any help you can offer with the campaign will be gratefully received. They have a website at www.byfleetlibrary.org, or you can ask at the library for more details.

The library is a central part of our village community, and provides much needed free resources for many in the village, young and old. Please take a minute to voice your comments and write to:

PETER MILTON
HEAD OF CULTURAL SERVICES
SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROOM 356
COUNTY HALL
KINGSTON
020 8541 7679

JONATHAN LORD (MP FOR WOKING)
CHURCHILL HOUSE
CHOBHAM ROAD
WOKING GU21 4AA
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Due to events concerning the library, for this edition the Society diary has been moved to the back page.

PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION. Our 2011 calendar has sold out, so due to this success, and because there are still so many lovely pictures of the area to be taken, we will be holding another competition. Look out for further details and in the meantime take advantage of the coming of Spring to exercise your photographic flair!

For the Record...

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

There was a record attendance to welcome **Jeanette Hicks** in January to hear her talk about **Newark Priory**. The priory, dedicated to was founded St Mary and St Thomas the Martyr, has a founding date of 1291. The name Newark comes from the Latin "novo locus", meaning that the priory was a "new work" - a refounding or a rebuilding of what had been there before. The priory remained until it was dissolved by Henry VIII in 1539. The buildings and land were given to Sir Anthony Browne, and tradition says that he took the best of the building stone down the river to Byfleet to rebuild Byfleet Manor. The place soon became a local quarry, and much of the stone and other materials was robbed until Lord Onslow stopped this in the 1750s.



The priory stands on an island on a natural gravelled terrace and even during very bad floods the priory remains dry. At one time a causeway ran from the priory to Woking Palace and on to Woking church. When royalty was not in residence at the palace, the Prior of Newark was its steward, so quick and easy access between the priory and the palace was essential. Parts of the causeway still exist, but not as well as it used to.

The large building that you can see from the road is the crossing of the church and the high altar. The outlines of 2 roofs can be seen on the walls. One possibly belonged to a small chapel which predates the main church. The other roof was to a corridor. The walls are of flint rubble which would originally have had a stone facing, but of course all the facing stone was taken away for other projects.

The OS map of 1872 shows the priory gatehouse and a moat which was fed from the eel trap stream. There were 2 weirs which could be opened or closed to lower the level of water and make it easy to cross the River Wey by a ford. An earlier map of 1700 shows bridges leading onto the island. There is no sign of these now, but when the water level is very low there is some stone showing that is not of natural formation. Could this be all that remains of these bridges?

A topographical survey has shown the possible remains of a garden and also of a very deep pond. The priory is known to have farmed swans, and farming methods included keeping the cygnets in a deep pond that they could not get out of, making them easier to catch. A magnetometer survey, which responds to the chemical traces left in the ground by, for example, something burnt, found spots which might have been kilns. Deposits of slag and bits of decorative tiles suggested that tiles may have been made on site, so did these spots back up that theory? The priory did have a clay pit and a chalk pit and also waster tiles have been found in the river, indicating the presence of tile production.

Despite years of studying Newark, Jeanette found that there were still many puzzling things thrown up. An aerial photo showed a very strange, square bend in the river. This could not be a natural feature, so what had happened? Did the priors change the course of the river to make an island for their priory? Many monastic foundations are surrounded by water, which had an allegorical meaning. The island was the heart of the Virgin Mary which never yielded to evil. The moat signified her protection or her meekness, and was filled with the tears she cried at the crucifixion.

Some discoveries were made in surprising ways. Ferdinand the bull scraped up a medieval roof tile on the old gatehouse site, and also dug up some slag that may indicate a working site for a process which needed water power, such as metal working. Newark Prior did provide all the metal fittings for Woking Palace. When a tree fell down on the site, a medieval roof tile was spotted in the hole left by the roots. In the end 3kg of tiles was excavated. Was this a dump or had the spot once been near a kiln?

Jeanette handed over to her colleague Margaret to tell us more about the tiles. Most of the artefacts found at the priory were at Guildford Museum, and included many inlaid tiles. A pattern would be stamped onto a wet clay tile, and the pattern filled with a more liquid, lighter coloured clay. It was left to dry slightly, levelled off, left to dry a bit more and then fired. Three types of tile have been found at the site—Westminster, Chertsey and a Newark version of each. The tiles from Newark are very finely made, with quite intricate patterns, but the Westminster ones do not weather as well and sometimes the pattern work is quite badly done.

We thanked Jeanette and Margaret for an insight into this lovely local landmark.

In February we were pleased to welcome back a long standing friend, **Iain Wakeford**, who continued his fascinating exploration of **Links in the Landscape—Medieval Routes to Modern Roads**.

Iain guided us through the villages along the River Wey, comparing each location on a series of maps. An overview of the general area showed that some of the oldest routes still exist as footpaths, or even main roads, but that some have disappeared. A map from 1594 showed only a few main roads including Guildford to London and London to the South West (now the A3 and A30). Iain noted that the road from Chertsey to Send did not go via Ripley, which still seemed to be the case in 1690. By 1794 the road from Weybridge to New Haw now went via Old Woking, but by 1823 the layout of the main routes was looking quite similar to today.

Iain then went through each village in more detail using maps from 1729, 1793, 1823 and the modern day and it was fascinating to see the roads develop and change into what we now know and use.

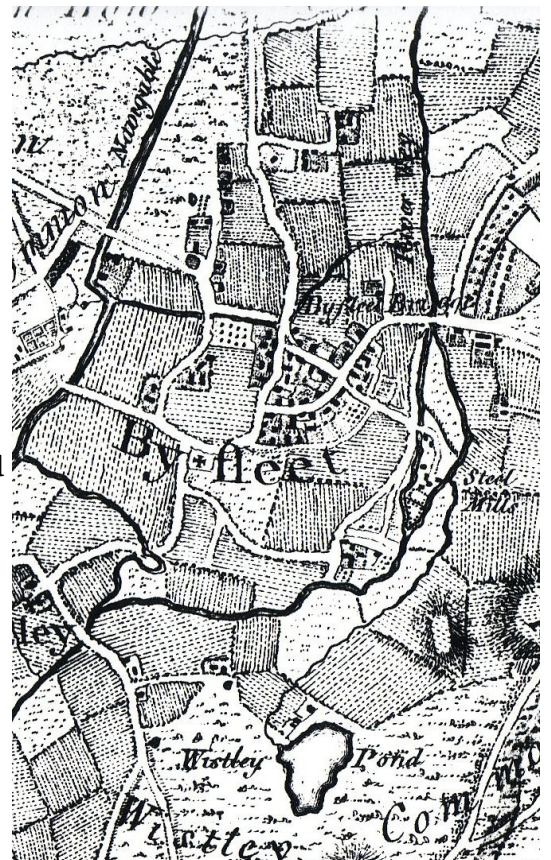
Sometimes features on the landscape dictated what happened. For instance in Send the 1793 map showed that the road at Penny Green was much wider and probably the main road, whereas now Send Road is a more important route. This might be because the original road was on land on the edge of the common which was later enclosed. Wisley was also surrounded by common land, and as a result the roads on the map are not shown as permanent, perhaps because they changed as people took a slightly different route across the common over time. On the 1729 map Muddy Lane is clearly marked as it was an important route between Byfleet and Wisley churches. The 1729 map also showed Wisley Ponds feeding Byfleet Mill, the extra water providing extra power. In West End the early maps show paths and road all over the place, but then Bisley Camp was built. The roads on the land enclosed by the camp were no longer used, and as the road network changed to find new routes around the camp, once important roads were lost.

Sometimes the maps showed that old legends might have an element of truth. In Old Woking there has always been a theory that Church Street originally carried on all the way to the river, where a ford would take you across to Broadmeads. The maps do seem to suggest this, and there is still today a turning just before the bridge which would line up with Church Street. Of course, there are still puzzles. For instance the 1729 map showed that Pyrford had lots of roads that are now just footpaths. Why have some villages kept the majority of their roads, but others not? There are also some surprises. It might be assumed that the road that runs outside Wisley Gardens had been built when the Gardens opened in the early 20th century, but a look at the 1793 map will show that it existed then.

It was interesting to see what a difference the roads made to villages. Ripley benefitted greatly by being situated on the main London to Portsmouth road and soon grew to be larger than Old Woking. The centre of Addlestone had noticeably shifted, with the main village once being by the Crouch Oak and its main roads coming across the common. The coming of the railway shifted the town centre and the roads changed with it. Ottershaw is not even mentioned on earlier maps, with the area covered by a road called Chertsey Lane. The development of the village did not come until later.

And what of Byfleet in all this? The 1729 map showed that the main road out of Byfleet went out over Plough Bridge, as today. Iain thought it was possible that the Plough Pub, which originally stood there, might once have been a coaching inn. Church Road and High Road with their odd bends are clearly visible and the streams that gave Stream Close its name and fed Foxlake are shown. It seems that Byfleet's roads were recognisable in the 18th century and have retained much the same layout today, although Parvis Road now bypasses the village centre.

As ever Iain had given us plenty of food for thought and ideas for some research of our own into our landscape.



Our March meeting was a chance to belatedly hold our Christmas meeting which had to be cancelled due to the snow. Mike Webber showed us a variety of pictures which the Society had collected over the last year. These covered such topics as the Church, the fire brigade, Parish Day, the Old Comrades Club building and house sales. It was a fascinating evening, and some of the photos stirred up memories among the audience. We are collecting any names we can and in future issues hope to publish what we have discovered. A small selection of the pictures that Mike showed are shown here. If you remember anyone pictured or have a story about one of them, please let us know.

Below: Two pictures from Parish Day. We think the team in the top picture might be Vickers Tug of War team—can anyone confirm this? Below is a rather fine flying saucer. Does anyone remember when this made an appearance?



Byfleet Fire Brigade outside the fire station in 1963



Above: Byfleet Coronation Celebrations June 3rd 1953. The choir is present. Is this Vickers Sports Ground?



Left: St Mary's choir May 22 1949. We have quite a few names to put to the faces—do you know any more?

Above: A collection of choirs but we do not know the event or the venue. Several people thought it might be the Royal Albert Hall—can you tell us where/when/what this might be?



SOCIETY RESEARCH PROJECTS

The Society has a number of research projects underway looking at various buildings or areas of life within the ancient Parish. Topics that people have already started delving into are:

* Byfleet Brewery, Oral History, Byfleet & Weybridge Inclosure, West Hall, Air raid shelters and defences, Aircraft crashes and bombings, Byfleet Tithe.

Possible future topics might include:

Archive sources (creating a catalogue of all known sources referring to Byfleet), Broadoaks, Brooklands connections, Byfleet Boat Clubs, Byfleet Mill, Byfleet Wharf, Churches, Clock House, Entertainment, Farming, Film sites, Fire Service / Station, Foxwarren Park, Graveyards – MIs, Manor House / Byfleet Park, Parish Day, People, Plaque Project, Poets - Spence & Duck, Pubs, Royal Park connections, Sanway area, Schools, Scouting, Shops, Tarrant, Transport (road / water routes), Vickers housing, Village Hall, Wartime, Work & Industry

If you are inspired by any of these topics, or indeed have already done some research of your own that you would like to share, please let us know and perhaps we can pool resources and information.

Also, if you have a query on any of these topics, please let us know. We will forward your query to the relevant researcher and hopefully provide you with an answer!

Please leave a note at the library, or call Jeff Sechiari (01932 341084) or Tessa Westlake (01932 351559) if you would like to join in uncovering some more Byfleet history. Thank you.



Addlestone Historical Society Calendar 2011

Meetings start 8.00pm in the Muriel Wise Suite, Addlestone Community Association.

April 5th The History of Chobham Richard Devonshire

May 3rd—Oaklore—Why do the English like their oak trees so much? Chris Howkins

June 7th—AGM—Members' Evening

July 5th—Waynefleete Tower—Its History and Residents—Penny Rainbow

August—No meeting

September 6th—4 Years of Plotting in the WAAF—Helen Mills

October 4th—Ottershaw—The Continuing Story—Hannah Lane

November 1st—Ottershaw Park Estate 1761-2011—John Athersuch

December 6th—Social Evening

Visitors welcome—£2 at the door

Woking History Society Calendar 2011

Mayford Village Hall. Doors open 7.45pm for 8.00pm. Visitors £2

4 April—The Spike, the Guildford Workhouse casual ward—John Redpath at The Lightbox (pre booking via The Lightbox essential 01483 737800)

6 June—Isambard Kingdom Brunel—Peter Bosworth

4 July Visit to The Spike (members only)

5 September Shalford Mill—Geoff Mihell

3rd October—History of the London Bus from Shillibeer to bendy bus—John Wagstaff at The Lightbox (pre booking essential—see above)

7 November—Newark Priory—Jeanette Hicks

5 December—AGM and Members' Evening

SOCIETY SNIPPETS

FORTHCOMING
EVENTS 2011



2011

Thursday 10th March: Mike Webber looks at new additions to the BHS photograph collection. **St Mary's Day Centre, Stream Close, 8.15pm**

Thursday 21st April : Memories of Byfleet in the 1950s with Roger Clover. Unfortunately this had to be cancelled last year, so we are delighted to welcome Roger again for a trip down memory lane. **St Mary's Day Centre, Stream Close, 8.15pm**

Thursday 19th May: Society AGM. followed by a talk on **Brooklands Archaeology** by Julian Temple, General Manager of Brooklands Museum. Please note the earlier start time of 7.30pm. **St Mary's Day Centre, Stream Close., 8.15pm.**

Thursday 16th June: Join Jim Allen on a Churchyard Tour as he explains about the project to record the memorial inscriptions and shows us some of the interesting residents. **Meet in the Church Hall car park (opposite St Mary's Church) for 8.15pm start.**

Thursday 14th July: To be arranged.

Thursday 8th September: Coins, including local finds such as **The Brooklands Hoard,** with Norman Clarkson & Brian Wood.. **St Mary's Day Centre, Stream Close, 8.15pm**

Thursday 6th October : To be arranged

Thursday 17th November: To be arranged

Thursday 8th December : Christmas Social. Nibbles and drinks, together with Mike Webber's annual collection of new photographs that the Society has come by. **St Mary's Day Centre, Stream Close, 8.15pm.**

Members free. Guests £2 Everyone very welcome.

In Memory of P C Choat

The 16th December 2010 marked the centenary of the Houndsditch Murders in which three Metropolitan Police officers were killed while investigating an ongoing robbery at a jewellers. The three officers were Sergeant Robert Bentley, 36, Sergeant Charles Tucker, 46, and PC Walter Choat, 34, from Byfleet.

Sgt Bentley was shot dead as he investigated the house from which the burglars were trying to enter the jewellers. Sgt Tucker and PC Choat were killed as the gang tried to escape. The burglars then hid in a house in Sidney Street, where the police discovered them two weeks later, leading to the infamous Sidney Street Siege. Two of the suspects and a fireman died during this

To mark the centenary a memorial plaque was unveiled in Cutler Street, London E1 by the Commissioner of the City of London Police with the Lord Mayor in attendance. Representatives of the policemen's families were also there.

Later that day wreaths were laid at the policemen's graves, including PC Choat's in St Mary's churchyard. The wreaths were laid on behalf of the National Police Roll of Honour, the City of London Police, Byfleet Heritage Society and representatives from the Choat family.

More about the siege and PC Choat in our next issue

