

*A Happy New Year to everyone; we hope 2013 will be a good year for all. We began our year with Jim's interesting talk on some of Byfleet's interesting residents; if you have a subject that you would like to hear about, please let us know and we will see what we can arrange.*

*We have some queries that have been sent in—details are inside, so do have a look and if you can help we would love to hear from you.*

*We also start the year with some sad news. We were very sorry to hear of the death of Peter Hancocks, long-time Byfleet resident and former fireman. He was always happy to share his wealth of memories and knowledge, and information about the fire station. There is further news on the back page and he will be sadly missed.*

FORTHCOMING  
EVENTS 2013



## 2013

**Thursday 10th January:** *Byfleet's "Heroes, Villains and Visitors". Join us as our own Jim Allen tells us about some of Byfleet's illustrious - and not so illustrious - residents* **St Mary's Day Centre, Stream Close, 8.15pm.**

**Thursday 14th February:** *Join us as Ian Kirby tells us about his life in aviation in general and with Concorde in particular. Ian was a flight engineer on both the VC10 and Concorde.* **St Mary's Day Centre, Stream Close, 8.15pm.**

**Thursday 14th March:** *The history of Whiteley Village, with Richard Exworthy.* **St Mary's Day Centre, Stream Close, 8.15pm.**

**Thursday 18th April:** *From Camera to Concorde. Former cameraman Rolie Luker recalls his life working in TV and now with Concorde.* **St Mary's Day Centre, Stream Close, 8.15pm.**

**Thursday 23rd May:** **AGM**, followed by a talk **TBA. St Mary's Day Centre, Stream Close, 7.30pm. (Please note the earlier start time!)**

**Thursday 20th June:** **TBA. St Mary's Day Centre, Stream Close, 8.15pm.**

**Thursday 18th July:** **TBA. St Mary's Day Centre, Stream Close, 8.15pm.**

**Thursday 12th September:** **TBA. St Mary's Day Centre, Stream Close, 8.15pm.**

**Thursday 10th October:** **TBA. St Mary's Day Centre, Stream Close, 8.15pm.**

**Thursday 14th November:** **TBA. St Mary's Day Centre, Stream Close, 8.15pm.**

**Thursday 12th 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!**

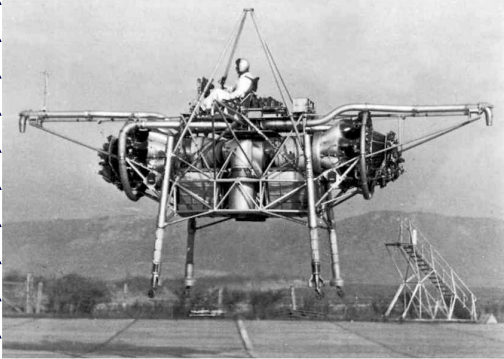
Don't forget—if you know of anyone who could give the Society a talk, or have an outing or visit that you would like to suggest, please let Jeff Sechiari know!  
(01932 341084)

## For the Record...

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

In October we welcomed Cpt Chris Roberts who gave us a very interesting talk on the history of V/STOL technology.

V/STOL stands for Vertical or Short Take Off and Landing. To develop a plane that would fly faster than a helicopter and take off and land vertically was the holy grail of 1950s aviation. There were 45 aircraft on what Cpt Roberts called the V/STOL “wheel of fortune”, some successful, some not. Only three out of the 45 made it into service (the Harrier, the Bell-Boeing V-22 and the Yakovlev Yak-38) with one more to come (the Lockheed Martin X-35 or Joint Strike Fighter).



The research was started in 1951 at the Royal Aircraft Establishment. Dennis Higton devised an experimental rig to test how you might control an aircraft with thrust greater than its weight. A larger Thrust Measurement rig was built in 1952, leading to the Rolls Royce Flying Bedstead which first flew in 1953. As no-one was quite sure how the aircraft would react, the Bedstead was tethered; the first free hover was performed in August 1954 by the Rolls Royce chief test pilot, who reported “I felt insecure”!

The next step was to combine the ability to hover with forward flight, and the Short SC1 helped to investigate the transition between the two. This achieved its first free vertical flight in October 1958, and the first transition between hovering and forward flight in April 1960. November 1960 also saw the first untethered hover of the Hawker P1127, a commercial project developed at the Hawker factories in Kingston and Dunsfold.

The idea for the P1127 came from Michel Wibault, in Paris in 1956. He took his plan for this Gyroptere to French aircraft industrialist Marcel Dassault. He was not interested, so he took it to Stanley Hooker in the UK. Hooker asked his design engineer Gordon Lewis to improve the design, and Lewis and Wibault took out a patent on the BE53 in 1957. The engine was never intended to fly, as it was just a concept.

Meanwhile, at Hawker, Sydney Camm was also pondering V/STOL, but he was not keen on the engine concepts being suggested at the time. Then Ralph Hooper, one of Camm’s engineers, having no other work to do and feeling a bit bored, drew an aircraft around the BE53 design he found in a brochure. He tried various air intakes, and then added split rear exhausts. Hooper saw this and rang Gordon Lewis to discuss taking his ideas further. One week later Lewis and Wibault had produced a new design, which Hooper further refined, leading to the definitive P1127.

The first truly military version of the P1127 was the Kestrel, which first flew in 1960. In 1962, the UK, US and Germany initiated a tripartite program, which conducted operational trials. The first person to damage one was a German. As he came away from the wreckage was heard to declare “67!”. When asked why, he explained that he had destroyed 66 British planes in the war!

By 1966, the Harrier had been developed, first flying on 31 August 1966 and entering the service of the RAF in 1969 as the world’s first V/STOL jet aircraft. In times of war it was planned that they would use supermarket car parks as airfields, with the supermarket becoming the hangar. In May 1969 a Harrier won the Daily Mail London to New York transatlantic air race in 6 hours 11 minutes. In 1970 it was decided to try and address the sideslip that could produce an uncontrollable roll, and a computer was put in between the pilot and the aircraft controls. In May 2005 this had been developed to allow the first ever automatic landing of a V/STOL aircraft on an aircraft carrier, and the USA have taken this software to use in the Joint Strike Fighter.

We thanked Cpt Roberts for an illuminating trip through the history of an important part of aviation technology.





In November we were very pleased to welcome Kathryn Dodington and Nigel Prior from our near neighbours Byfleet Boat Club. Kathryn is the present Commodore of the club.

Kathryn explained that the current boathouse housed the 6th incarnation of the boat club. Frederick Stoop of West Hall first set up a boat club for the residents of the new Dartnell Park estate, with a club house on the Dartnell side of the canal. Later Mr Stoop acquired some land from Mr Locke-King on the Byfleet side to build a new boat house in around 1912. The club steward moved across to the new boat house, and members could summon him to bring their boats over by either shouting across the water or ringing a bell.

After the First World War, Mr Stoop decided to start a boat club for the less wealthy villagers of Byfleet, in thanks to all those who had fought. This was called the Byfleet Village club, and run by trustees including representatives from Byfleet Parish Council. Byfleet Boat Club donated boats it no longer needed and the new club was housed in the boat house on the Byfleet side of the canal.

However, in 1933 Mr Stoop sadly died. Under the terms of his will, the boat club and boat house was to be given over to Byfleet Parish Council for the benefit of the villagers. However, that same year local government had been reorganised, resulting in the abolition of Byfleet Parish Council, and the setting up of Woking Urban District Council. Mr Stoop had been unable to change his will to reflect these changes, so the boat house was left in limbo. It could not be given to the people of Byfleet, as the Parish Council no longer existed, leaving Mr Stoop's executors with a problem. Eventually in October 1941 a Deed of Gift was arranged where the executors and trustees gave up their interests in the boat club and passed it onto Woking Urban District Council. However, due to the war, the boat clubs went into abeyance. The club house on the Dartnell side was converted into the house of Cllr Cawsey, known as Parvis House. This was eventually demolished in 1997.

Then in 1949 the council decided to reopen the club and begin hiring out boats to the public. They attempted to open every day, but soon found the costs too great for the council to meet. Several individuals tried leasing the boat house, but no-one was able to make enough money to cover all the costs. Under the lease of Jack Grace, the youth club arranged to keep their canoes at the boat house. At around the same time, John Jeremy asked if his group could form a club and use the boat house to repair their own boats. Thus two clubs began to use the boat house, and realised that if they combined forces they could take on the running of it themselves.

The new club was christened the Byfleet and District Boat Club in 1949. However, they soon became notorious for "riotous assembly", even coming to blows at committee meetings. In the end the Youth Club decided they would store their canoes at the fire station in High Road, where they stayed as the Woking Adventure Group.

Some years later the Boat Club became a company to guard against any one member becoming liable under court proceedings started by Cllr Cawsey. Mr Cawsey claimed that the club's mooring bay was his, but in 1977 the club were advised that they did have a right to it. Eventually the club asked the National Trust, owners of the Wey Navigation, to take over the moorings, and this is the situation today.

Kathryn showed the Club's Visitors' Book, where the first entry was dated July 19th 1904. There were also entries from the soldiers billeted there during the Second World War.

The boat house is expensive to run, and a lot of time is spent on maintaining it, but it can act as anything from a workshop to a party venue. The club has quite a high profile within the waterways movement, and they hold a club night on the third Friday of every month. The Club also hires out rowing boats to the public at weekends between Easter and the end of September from 10am till 5pm. Members take turns to be the boat hire steward.

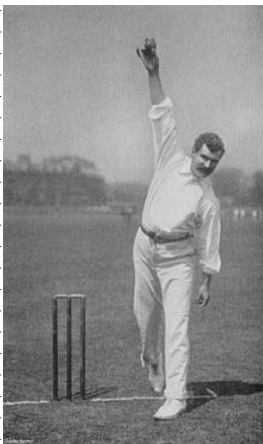
The club also has an active calendar of events, including a winter barbecue, interclub skittles, a St Patrick's Day supper and a Christmas dinner and carols. They also have regular working weekends with a gardening weekend in the Autumn, to keep up with maintenance of the boat house. And at the end of November each year there is an illuminated boat procession that leaves from Town Lock in Weybridge and finishes at Pelican Wharf in Addlestone.

Members of the club were lucky enough to take part in the Queen's Diamond Jubilee River Pageant, and the club also sold teas and coffees when the Olympic Cycling came through the village.

We thanked Kathryn and Nigel for coming along and telling us about their lively and active Club, which has been down by Parvis Bridge for over 100 years. If you want to know more about them, either pop along to the boat house on any weekend, and someone will be pleased to show you around. Or visit their website at <http://www.byfleetboatclub.co.uk> for all the details.



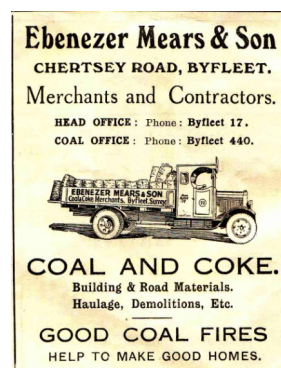
We kicked off the New Year with a talk from our Chairman, Jim Allen, who revealed some of Byfleet's Heroes, Villains and Visitors. And what a selection there were! There is not room here to recap all the personalities Jim revealed, but here is a selection.



Some of the heroes may be familiar to members—racing driver Parry Thomas is buried in St Mary's churchyard, as is PC Choate, one of the policemen gunned down in the Houndsditch Murders in 1910. There was also John Holroyde, who saved the life of King George III at an assassination attempt in Drury Lane Theatre. But perhaps it is less well known that cricketer Tom Richardson, who played for Surrey and England, was born in the village in 1870. He was a fast bowler who, in his first full season in 1893, took a record 174 wickets. He thought nothing of walking from the Oval after a match to his home in Mitcham, and apparently a regular lunch was a couple of bottles of stout and dinner was gin and ginger beer! In 1897 he was named Wisden Cricketer of the Year, but by 1898 his bowling had lost some of its quality, due possibly to too much touring. He played his final season in 1904 and then became the landlord of the Cricketers Arms in Kingston, before moving to

Somerset. He retired from cricket aged 35, and died in France while climbing a rocky hill path. There were rumours that he took his own life, but these were later disproved.

Many members will know the name of Ebenezer Mears as the owner of the Byfleet company which started off as coal merchants and expanded into demolition and haulage. However, before this he was a member of the City of London police, which he had joined at the age of 15. In March 1883, while on duty, PC Mears discovered a box of dynamite outside the Times Newspaper offices in Playhouse Yard. He dived in and removed the fuse and scattered the dynamite. He later worked in Smithfield market. On retirement he returned to live in Ivy Cottage in Chertsey Road and became Chairman of Byfleet Parish Council, as well as the first Byfleet resident to serve on Surrey County Council. He also started the library and served as a Justice of the Peace. He is remembered as a genial man, always willing to help.

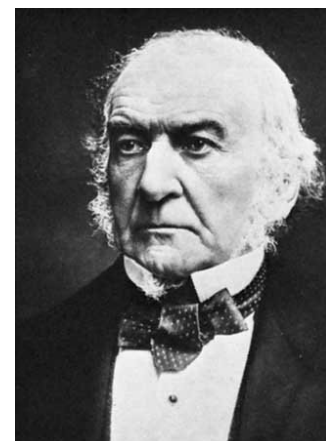


An unlikely villain turned out to be former Rector the Rev Lt-Col Francis John Cheverton. He



became Rector of St Mary's Byfleet in 1931, after serving in the army, attending theological college in Durham and also helping the Imperial War Graves Commission. However, while at Byfleet he became involved in controversy when he rearranged the churchyard, causing distress to his parishioners. A Consistory court found that Rev Cheverton had made extensive alterations to the graves, with 27 stones moved, 15 destroyed, 2 mounds levelled and 88 stones removed. Some had been broken up and used to pave a urinal, and 2 tons of stone was found in the Rectory garden. All this had been done without the consent or desire of the parish, and the case even made the front page of the Daily Mirror. Rev Cheverton retired to West Sussex where he died, but his ashes are interred in Byfleet churchyard.

Two important visitors passed through Byfleet (or the nearby area) in the 19th century. Queen Victoria went through the station rather quickly on the Royal Train, once on 4th April 1889 on the way to Windsor, and again in 1898 after a visit to a hospital at Netley. But in 1893 William Gladstone and his wife stayed slightly longer, visiting Admiral Egerton, and then attending St Mary's church for the morning service.



Other figures included Bert Le Vack (known as the "Wizard of Brooklands"), Sir John Whittaker Ellis (builder of the fire station) and Jean Pierre Vacquier of the infamous Blue Anchor Murder. We thanked Jim for such an illuminating look at former villagers.

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**QUESTIONS AND QUERIES**  
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Anyone who is an former pupil of West Byfleet Secondary School might be interested to see that there is now a website dedicated to its history at :

<http://westbyfleetsecondary.org.uk>.

Why not log on to find information on former head teachers, see old speech day programmes, find out sports day results and lots more.

We received a query from a resident of Sanway Close who is interested in the history of numbers 21 and 23. A previous owner thinks they were built in around 1867 and that they were the first two cottages built in what was known as "Sanway Fields". She believes there were pigsties in the area too.

Would anyone have any further information—or even photos—of the Sanway area in the past? If you do, please let us know. Either leave a message on our website forum

([www.byfleetheritage.org.uk](http://www.byfleetheritage.org.uk)), drop a note in at Byfleet library or give Tessa a ring on 01932 351559.



2014 will see the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War. The Society would like to commemorate this important date with a service at the war memorial and a small exhibition in the Heritage Centre. Do you or your family have any memorabilia or photographs of relatives who fought in the war, or of what life was like on the home front? If so, would you consider letting the Society copy them? If you can help at all, please let us know. Thank you.

Another query we received was about a former resident of Pyrford.

"In my research into the history of St George's Hill Golf Club, I have found in the Register an Honorary Member by the name of Mrs Pears - there is no christian name or address, but I put this information into Google and found an immediate match. A Mrs Edith Pears was a survivor of the Titanic; her husband, who was Thomas Pears of the Pears soap family, perished in the disaster.

Reading on, I found that, in the evening before the collision, Thomas Pears sent a message to the company (which was based in Isleworth) which said "All well here, telephone Hampstead and Pyrford". Her parents lived in Hampstead, but why Pyrford? I believe Thomas Pears' father had died some two years previously and his widowed mother would have had to move out of the company house in Isleworth; is it possible that she moved to Pyrford, and settled there at a time when Tarrant was living in Pyrford on the Ridgeway?

If my supposition is correct, it is quite possible that Tarrant met Edith Pears at some stage, and, true to character, invited her to be an Honorary member; it makes it sound like a publicity stunt, but that may be a small part of the truth. That would help explain why there is no address against the entry in the member's register, because after the Titanic disaster, Edith Pears also had to move out their marital home because it was owned by the Company

Probably the reason for the Company being so apparently harsh on its executives' widows is that the family had sold out to Lever Brothers (now Unilever) who still own the Pears Soap brand."

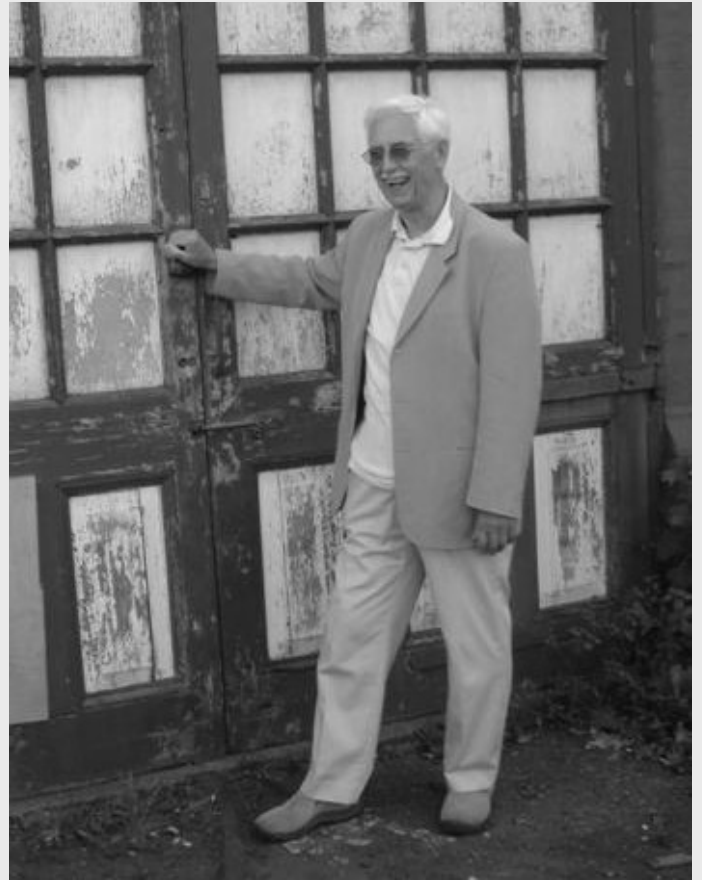
Does anyone know anything about Pyrford residents in 1912/3? If so, please let us know via the usual channels. Thanks very much.

# SOCIETY SNIPPETS

## PETER ARTHUR JOHN ('TONY') HANCOCKS (1930-2012)

Born in Maybury, Woking, on 27<sup>th</sup> March 1930, Peter was one of five children and lived in Byfleet for much of his life. Starting work aged 14 he soon trained as a plumber and in 1946 he joined the Byfleet fire brigade as a part-time messenger boy. In 1947 he became a fully paid retained fireman but left for National Service in the army in 1948 not long after Surrey Fire Brigade formed and took control of the county's fire stations from the war-time National Fire Service. Peter rejoined the fire brigade at Byfleet in 1953 then became a full-time fireman in 1956 and served at Guildford, Woking and Chertsey fire stations for the next 20 years. After suffering an injury, he joined the British Aircraft Corporation at Brooklands in 1976, working briefly as a fireman there too then as a Telecommunications Co-ordinator. BAC became part of British Aerospace in 1977 and when ideas for Brooklands Museum were proposed soon afterwards, Peter became one of its earliest supporters and was actively involved with its creation. As a member of the Brooklands-based Vintage Aircraft & Flying Association, he was part of the team that recovered Vickers Wellington bomber N2980 'R' for 'Robert' from Loch Ness in 1985 and the restored aircraft is now on public display at Brooklands Museum.

In retirement, Peter lived with his wife Dorothy in Whiteley Village, Hersham from 1996 and when local residents formed the 'Friends of Byfleet Station' in 2007, Peter attended their first press-call on 6<sup>th</sup> August and became a dedicated and enthusiastic supporter of the preservation campaign to find a new future for this popular historic building where he had worked in his youth. In



2009 he was reunited with two former NFS firemen colleagues John Burnham and Dennis Hough at a Byfleet Fire Station open day. He died in St George's Hospital, Tooting, on 19<sup>th</sup> December 2012, leaving five children, ten grandchildren and 15 great grandchildren. Peter's legacy includes many fascinating written and recorded memories of both Byfleet fire station and village life in general to the considerable benefit of Brooklands Museum and the Byfleet Heritage Society and he will be greatly missed.

© Compiled by Julian Temple,  
Brooklands Museum, 12/01/2013

Peter at the fire station on the far right

