

For the Record...

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

For our AGM we were delighted to welcome Gemma Grant, the Surrey Wildlife Trust Ranger for Wisley, Ockham and Chobham Heath. Surrey contains many different geologies which in turn dictate the diversity of wildlife habitats. The Trust manages over 22,000 acres of Surrey countryside, working with local schools and groups, offering land management advice and managing the wildlife habitats to maximise biodiversity.

Heathland is a very rare habitat—Gemma revealed that there is less lowland heathland in the world than tropical rainforest, and the UK holds 20% of the world's resource. Aerial photography allows us to see how the heathland has changed over the years. There was a serious decrease in 1988 compared to the photo taken in 1948, but by 1999 it had increased again. This was due to clearing the land, which allowed the heather seed to grow again. Heather seed seems to be very resilient and can last for up to 100 years. Now the Trust is working on linking the remaining heath areas via corridors to allow the wildlife to travel about. Many heathland species are returning, including the rare nightjar, which have increased from 3 males to 7 last year. Surrey has 5% of the UK population of nightjars. These unusual birds, with their unique, purring call, can best be found at dusk, and the Trust organises nightjar walks.



The Nightjar

The area has a long history. There are bronze age barrows nearby, and a wood henge, wooden posts in a circular ditch, has been discovered on the north east section near Painshill. There is also the 1822 Semaphore Tower, and the Hatchford Mausoleum, built in 1921 to commemorate Sir Bernard Samuelson.

The variety of sites contain a variety of wildlife. At the moment, Gemma revealed, there was a swan at Boldermere Lake nesting right by the A3. Terns are sitting on the nesting rafts and the hobbies are returning from Africa to nest on the common. In late winter, the site of the Hut Hill Hotel is covered with snowdrops, and recently in the Pond carpark Gemma discovered an enormous bee bank, made by solitary bees. The common is home to all three types of UK lizard—the slow worm, common lizard and sand lizard, whose males go a fluorescent green in the Spring.



The Sand Lizard

Habitat management relies on manpower, as a lot of the area is too sensitive for this to be done mechanically. Clearing and other jobs are done by volunteers on the first Sunday of the month in winter. On the Wisley side, you can see the Belted Galloway cattle, a hardy, all terrain breed whose grazing creates a mosaic of different ages of structures and plants, which in turn supports more wildlife. A recent addition is a herd of goats, who are contained within an electric fence. They were grazed on Wisley Common in the past and are excellent at eating the scrub.

Many visitors use the common, including walkers, cyclists and dog walkers. Families come to picnic by Boldermere to celebrate the Iranian New Year, and once Gemma found a group of Chinese families harvesting bracken shoots, which are considered a delicacy. Work continues to improve the site for visitors, including keeping the paths and car parks clear, waymarking, checking trees on the paths, maintaining noticeboards and taking guided walks. There are problems too. Flytipping is unfortunately all too common, as are fires and broken fences, and an eye has to be kept on off-road cyclists.

The wildlife is carefully monitored and surveyed, and the Trust's future aim is to continue to conserve this unique habitat and the creatures within it, and to educate the public and the next generation about the wonderful resource we have on our doorstep.



For our June meeting **Richard Savage** updated us on the archaeological methods used and the discoveries made at **Woking Palace**.

The palace site is in the fields east of Old Woking, near to the original Saxon settlement and placed to take advantage of the area's good hunting. The palace sits within a moat and the whole site covers 8 acres. This is considerably larger than the average moated site in Surrey,

which is 1.25 acres. A house is first mentioned on the site in 1272, but it is thought that it was first settled in about 1189 when Richard I granted the manor to Alan Bassett. The palace was later owned by the Despencers, advisers to Kings Edward I and II, and then by the Dukes of Kent. Between 1416 and 1421 the Duke of Clarence, younger brother of Henry V, lived there, later followed by Margaret Beaufort, mother of Henry VII. The palace remained in royal ownership until James I found he had too many palaces for his purse. He demolished it in 1618, and the manor was sold.

Richard pointed out that archaeology is basically looking at the rubbish of the past, using excavation, remote sensing (as regularly used on Time Team), the study of artefacts including old documents, all aided by science. However, excavation is by its nature also destruction. Once a site has been dug, it is gone. There is only one chance to investigate, which is why the choice to excavate is not taken lightly and the recording and publication of findings is so important.

Aerial photography has not proved very effective at Woking; the moat was filled in in 1580, and covered with a layer of clay, so aerial photography does not pick it up. Magnetometry and resistivity surveys are better at recording that sort of ground disturbance. LIDAR (light detection and ranging which measures the height of the ground surface very accurately) has been used to map the area, and clearly shows how surrounded by water the area has been. Geophysics has also been difficult at Woking. There is so much rubble over the site that it is difficult to distinguish what might be a proper wall and what is rubbish from the palace's demolition.

Early excavations were carried out in 1912, but there are no excavation notes, so they did not give much guidance to recent digs. During Richard's first season there he discovered what was probably the foundations of the 13th century Great Hall. These were dated from the type of stone and the style of the buttresses, but also from two coins dating from 1200-1215. Henry VII later demolished this Hall to build his own new Great Hall.

During his second year, Richard found 14th century feasting deposits, including pottery and bones, showing what was eaten at the great feasts given by the Despencers. The collection of bones is so extensive that it is possibly one of the most significant finds to come from the site. The large size of the Tudor Royal apartments and the kitchens was discovered, including one of the three great staircases, and also Henry VIII's personal bedroom. One thing is certain—Woking Palace is a very complex site.

Richard showed us pictures of some of the most interesting finds. A quantity of blue and white Valencian tiles were found. These are extremely scarce. There are only about 150 known in Britain, 130 of which come from Woking. Richard thinks they may have all been part of one single import between 1460-1490. There was a pottery toy horse from the 1350s and the "Woking jewel", the end of a hat pin consisting of five rubies in a fleur de ly. This is a very high status piece, almost certainly royal dating from 1450-1550.

Every dig uncovers something new but the wider area of Old Woking has its own puzzles. St Peter's church contains Roman building tile, but no domestic pottery has been found nearby, suggesting that the tile was raided from elsewhere when the Saxon church was rebuilt.

For those who want to see more of this fascinating site, there will be Open Days on July 13th and 14th and September 14th and 15th. Community excavations will take place between 18th September - 4th October, excluding Mondays and Tuesdays. There are opportunities for amateur archaeologists to take part, but you will need to book in advance. A special open day will be held on Sunday 6th October to view the season's work. All details about these opportunities and open days can be found on the Friends of Woking Palace website at <http://www.woking-palace.org>. We thanked Richard for a very interesting update on this fascinating site.

You will remember that we enjoyed a talk by Byfleet Boat Club back in November. After this, the Boat Club extended an invitation for Heritage Society members to come to the Boat House by Parvis Bridge on a Friday evening in May.

We were shown inside the workshop, where members can repair and maintain boats up to 30 feet long and eight feet high.

We then moved through into the comfortable Club House, where there was a brass band playing a selection of tunes, and the chance to browse some of the Club's photograph albums, containing pictures of some of the Club's many activities and boating events. Then, to top it all off, tea and cake were provided, providing the chance to chat to boat club members.

During the summer the Boat Club hires rowing boats on Saturdays, Sundays, and public holidays starting at the Easter weekend, through until the final weekend of September. The first boat out is at 10am, and all boats must be back by 6pm. Advance booking for one or two boats is not usually necessary. Boats can seat up to five people, with one set of oars, and lifejackets are available on request. The cost is £10 per hour per boat (seats five). A £20 returnable deposit also applies. If you have a group of people wanting to hire several boats you can book in advance. Boats for groups can sometimes be provided during the week by arrangement beforehand. Further details at the Club's website at <http://www.byfleetboatclub.co.uk/> or on 01932 340828. So why not make the very most of the lovely weather we seem to be having while it lasts and take a peaceful trip along the canal.



Harry meets some fans (above),
with Julie Walters as Nan (below)



The film crew in front of the Mowbray Avenue bungalows



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QUESTIONS AND QUERIES
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Ebay is a strange and wonderful place, but just occasionally something turns up that is of interest to us in Byfleet. Jeff Sechiari noticed this rather lovely gilt medal, struck in



the reign of George III to give thanks for the King's escape from an assassin.

Byfleet has a direct connection to this story, as the King's rescuer was John Holroyd, owner of

Byfleet Mill at the time. John lived from 1772-1840, and was apprenticed as a plumber to his father, George, in London in 1786. In 1789 he succeeded his father as Plumber at Hampton Court Palace.

It was on 15th May that John carried out his heroic deed. He was attending a performance of Cibber's comedy *She Would and She Would Not* at Drury Lane Theatre. George III was also there, and as he came to the front of the royal box to acknowledge the cheers of the crowd, a man called James Hadfield stood and fired two pistol shots at him. John Holroyd, who was in the next seat, knocked Hadfield's arm up and the shots missed the King by inches. George III ordered the performance to continue and was so calm he actually fell asleep during the interval. The King offered Holroyd a pension, which Holroyd refused, but he enjoyed royal patronage for the rest of his life. Some of the King's gifts included two stone flower containers and two lead garden statues from Hampton Court Palace. These remained at Byfleet Mill until it was sold in 1957, although unfortunately the statues were used as target practice by Canadian troops billeted there during World War II.

Sadly the price was rather high on this medallion, so we did not bid. But does anyone out there—any collector or coin historian—have any information on who would have issued it, or how many might have been struck?

If you know anything more, please get in touch by one of the usual methods.

Members might like to have a look at the website "All Things Crime", where an entry by Bob Couttie focuses on the Blue Anchor Murder in 1924.

One interesting fact to come to light in Bob's article is that Mrs Jones ran a successful catering business, but this ran into trouble when a venture to provide catering for The Paddock cafe at Brooklands failed. You can read the whole sorry story of Mr Jones and his sad demise at <http://allthingscrimeblog.com/my-first-murder-the-blue-anchor-scandal/#more-3881>



SOCIETY SNIPPETS

YOUR LIBRARY – USE IT OR LOSE IT!

Byfleet Library is now up and running on volunteer power, and going very well, but this does not mean we can relax! The library still needs our support to stay open, and to convince the powers that be to keep it running.

The library is now open for a part of every day of the week except Mondays, and there are plenty of activities apart from borrowing an excellent selection of books. You can book one of the computers, or bring your own laptop to use the free Wi-Fi available.

The library is open:

Tuesday 10am-4pm
Wednesday 6pm-8pm
Thursday 3pm-5pm
Friday 10am-4pm
Saturday 9.30am-3pm
Sunday 2pm-4pm
(closed Monday)

So hopefully you can find a time to suit you. Do pop in and find out about all the activities and resources available.

The 148th Byfleet Parish Day

will take place on Saturday 20th July 2013 on Byfleet Recreation Ground from 12.30 to 5pm. There will be lots to see and do on the rec and also the annual Horticultural Show in Byfleet Village Hall from 1.30pm.

The Heritage Society will be there, so do come along and see us, and if you could spare half an hour or an hour to help man the stand, do let us know.

Fingers crossed this weather holds, and hope to see you there!

Opposite: the Parish Day programme from 60 years ago in Queen Elizabeth II's coronation year.



Don't forget—following the success of the Olympic cycling, this Sunday **August 4th** will see a repeat as the Prudential London-Surrey 100 and London Surrey Classic rides will follow the Olympic route.

We will be opening the fire station on the day for anyone interested to have a look around, so after you have waved the sportsmen through, do drop in for a look and a chat.

