

*Autumn is in the air, the nights are drawing in and Issue 56 of our newsletter has come around. Dare I mention that the Society will be at two Christmas Fairs in Byfleet? Details are inside, so add the dates to your diaries and come and see us.*

*You may also find a reminder form for annual subscriptions. If you are not sure about your membership, please let Avreil, our Treasurer know at one of our meetings, and she can check her records for you.*

*Finally, if you have any ideas for our 2014 calendar, Jeff Sechiari would be delighted to hear from you—see details below.*

*Enjoy your newsletter, and we look forward to seeing you at a meeting soon.*

FORTHCOMING  
EVENTS 2013



## 2013

**Thursday 14th November:** BHS Chairman, Jim Allen, tells us of the history of St. Mary's Church. Jim has just revised and updated the church's history booklet and copies are now available. **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!**

Jeff is booking the next round of talks for 2014.

If you have a topic you would like to hear about, or know of a speaker who would give us a talk, please let him know (01932 341084).

Or if you would like to help Jeff in organising our social diary (or give the job a go on your own!), please let us know.

All ideas and suggestions very gratefully received. Thank you.

**Can't get to an evening meeting?** Why not come and see us at Byfleet Library? We are in the Heritage Room on the first Saturday of every month (the same day as the Farmers' Market) from 10am until about 12 with a selection of items from our archive.

Come along and get a cup of tea and have a look.

## *For the Record...*

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

For our first talk for the Autumn we were delighted to welcome back David Taylor, who told us about Gerrard Winstanley and The Diggers, who occupied St George's Hill in 1649.

Gerrard Winstanley is named on a monument in Moscow as one of the world's most influential history makers, and his writings have been described as one of the starting texts of modern political thought, as well as being significant in the formation of the Quaker movement. However, the movement was not overtly political, like the Levellers who were active at the same time; the Diggers were more of a social and economic movement.

At the end of the Civil War the nation was in turmoil. The King had been executed and people felt the world had been turned upside down, and that the End of Days was coming. Many groups arose wanting social equality, but it was Winstanley who declared his aim was "To dig up George-Hill and the waste Ground thereabouts, and to Sow Corn, and to eat our bread together by the sweat of our brows."

Winstanley was born c1609 in Wigan. He came to London as a clothing apprentice, and later joined the Merchant Taylors Company. He married Susan King, whose father owned land in Cobham. While minding cattle on the Common, Winstanley claimed that it was here that he fell into a trance and God spoke to him, bidding him to create a community where all were equal and shared the results of their labours.

So a small group of likeminded people moved to colonise the wasteland on St George's Hill. Unproductive common land at that time belonged to the Lord of the Manor, who naturally was not best pleased at this intrusion. The locals were also afraid that these groups threatened society, and that a few people would soon turn into thousands. A complaint was sent in 1649 about the community to the Council of Estate, and soldiers were sent to disperse the Diggers. Winstanley and Everard, his co-leader, had to appear before General Fairfax, who was fairly sympathetic, even going to St George's Hill to visit the camp. Fairfax ruled that the Diggers were no threat and should be left to the local justices, but a few months later the Diggers were removed from the Hill and relocated at Little Heath, Oxshott.

Sadly the Lord of the Manor of Cobham, one Parson John Platt of West Horsley, did not approve. He organised a local meeting at the White Lion in Cobham and encouraged local tradesmen to boycott the Diggers, leaving them without supplies. Then in 1650 Platt led a direct attack on the Little Heath settlement. Some of the thugs even dressed themselves as women in order to get nearer to the camp before they produced their weapons. Despite this reception, other Digger colonies sprang up, and Winstanley wrote over 20 tracts outlining his beliefs; it was these writings that later inspired the fathers of the Russian Communist state.

After the Diggers were dispersed, Winstanley seems to have inherited some property in Cobham and become a churchwarden and overseer of the poor. He later remarried and died a Quaker in London.

His story has come down to us in various ways. A novel, "Comrade Jacob" was made into a BBC play and his tracts have been republished, along with numerous books. On the 350th anniversary a group of land activists squatted on St George's Hill, causing the residents to take out a writ against the occupants—and against Gerrard Winstanley! Michael Foot visited to lend the activists his support (although he was nearly not let through the security gate to access the estate).

Today the Diggers are remembered by a stone erected on a piece of common land opposite Weybridge Station, as the residents would not allow a memorial on the actual Hill. There is also a Digger Trail, a plaque on Barclays Bank in Cobham, and a plaque in Cobham Parish church where Winstanley was church warden.. David is also working on records for Cobham Park Estate, including Elm Farm on Cobham Tilt. This was owned by Thomas Smith, the same man who had previously owned Winstanley's Cobham land.

We thanked David for revealing the events of national importance that had gone on only up the road.

In October we were entertained by **Air Chief Marshal Sir Douglas Lowe GCB, DFC, AFC** who shared some of his memories in a talk entitled "**From TSR 2 to Typhoon; a career in Aircraft Procurement**".

Sir Douglas was born in London but later moved to Woodley Airfield, where his father worked for Miles Aircraft. Sir Douglas joined the firm himself when he left school, working on the RAF training plane, the Magister. However, the Battle of Britain pilots had inspired Sir Douglas so much that he obtained permission to leave Miles Aircraft and volunteer for the RAF, and was sent to the USA for training. America was not yet in the war, but offered to train pilots, but things were changed by Pearl Harbour, and Sir Douglas returned to the UK where he flew Stirling bombers from Newmarket racecourse. At the end of the war, he decided to remain in the RAF and became a Staff Officer at the Air Ministry. It was also at this time that he and his wife moved to Byfleet.

At the Air Ministry he worked for Operational Requirements, where it was his job to find out what aircraft design was needed. Aviation in warfare was not really taken seriously until the end of the First World War, but even then much of the design for new aircraft was still done through private enterprise rather than government. Sir Douglas' first job was to further develop the Canberra so that it could carry out bombing on the Polish/Russian border. There was not a suitable plane available, as many did not have the range, and the Canberra had the range but was not a fighter. He then had to define the Canberra replacement, and this saw Sir Douglas' involvement with what he called the Whitehall Jungle. He had to deal with rivalry between industry and the services, as well as inter-service rivalries. He had to fight for what he wanted while the Navy pressed for a new aircraft carrier and the Army petitioned for new tanks.

The Canberra replacement was the TSR2, which was designed to have the ability to fly low to go under radar, meaning it needed to fly both fast and a long way. It had a 1000m radius of action and a speed of Mach 0.9, as well as a short landing and take off. Sir Douglas explained that in aircraft design there are three elements—aerodynamics, the engine and the avionics. It was considered fatal to change all three at once, but this is what they did with the TSR2. The plane was very expensive and, although very much ahead of its time, the project foundered. The electronics were advanced, but still running on valves, and the heat generated in the electric bay could boil a kettle. Unfortunately Dennis Healy (the first politician, in Sir Douglas' opinion, to serve as Defence Minister who actually knew about defence) cancelled the TSR2 due to cost.

Sir Douglas then moved back to the USA before being sent back to Operational Requirements, where he worked on maritime, transport and training aircraft such as the Nimrod, C5 Galaxy and Hawk. He was then promoted to Assistant Chief of Air Staff Operational Requirements, where his main project was the Tornado, which was basically the TSR2 design brought up to date. This was developed via collaboration, trying to persuade other countries to join you in development to spread the cost. Then each country would buy some of the completed aircraft. This was a trying time. First Sir Douglas looked to France, but collaboration with them proved very difficult. The Germans did join the project, and not only received some technology that they would not otherwise have had, but the consortium also had to work from Munich.

Sir Douglas' next project—the Typhoon—showed what long timescales these projects involved. The need for a new fighter was identified in 1971. Collaboration with the USA was attempted, but this fell through, and the project went ahead between Germany, France, UK, Italy and Spain. The project was very difficult, and France left the consortium, and other political issues protracted the development, but eventually the Eurofighter was born in 2003.

Sir Douglas finished by pointing out the huge budgets involved. When he started the Eurofighter project the estimated costs were £3.3bn, with each aircraft costing £30m. The last time the costs were estimated, the total costs were estimated at £37bn!

Sir Douglas ended his career as Chief of Defence Procurement and was the first RAF Officer to occupy the post. On his retirement he was awarded the Order of the Bath.

We thanked Sir Douglas for his interesting insight into the difficulties and negotiations involved in bringing new aircraft into being.



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**QUESTIONS AND QUERIES**  
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On a lovely summer evening on 5th September, 21 of us visited Woking Palace for an interesting private tour of the site, led by Pete and Jean. Having assembled at the car park we were given a brief introduction, following which we walked around the site stopping at the relevant points of interest. We also had an opportunity to look inside the standing building. Following this, we ventured through the wooded glade area. This was an interesting evening which enabled us to put into context some of what we had heard in our June talk. Many thanks to the Woking Palace team for their hospitality.

Jim Allen



We have received the following query from Sonia Cayley who is looking for information about a maternity hospital in Highfield Road, West Byfleet.

“I was born in the above maternity hospital in 1945. At the age of 18 months I was adopted but I did not find this out until 58 years later on obtaining a full birth certificate as part of the process of immigration to Australia. Before leaving the UK I visited Highfield Road and realise that the hospital no longer exists. Surrey Heritage gave me the information that this hospital was a World War 2 ‘emergency’ maternity hospital ... and could also explain why I was born there as my Mum was a resident of Bognor Regis in Sussex in 1945. Obviously West Byfleet was considered safer than the Sussex Coast. Any information you could provide would be gratefully received.”

If anyone has any information about the hospital, please let us know. Either leave a note on the website or at Byfleet Library, or give Tessa a ring on 01932 351559. Thank you.

We have also received an interesting query from Eugene Dunphy about **Alexander Martin Gifford (1873-1951)**

“I am in the process of writing a book on the blind musician, Carl G Hardebeck (1869-1951). Hardebeck lived in Belfast from 1893-1919. Here he befriended the Surrey born organist Alexander Martin Gifford (1873-1951) who worked as organist in St Peter's Church of Ireland, Belfast.

Before Gifford moved to Belfast, he was organist at Byfleet. If you or members the local parish council have any information on Gifford, I'd be delighted to hear from you.”

Does anyone have any information? If so, we would love to hear from you. Let us know via the usual methods listed above.

Don't forget! The Heritage Society will be at Byfleet Village Hall Christmas Fair on Saturday 23rd November, and at St Mary's Centre for the Community Christmas Fair on Saturday 30th November. Come along and see us then!

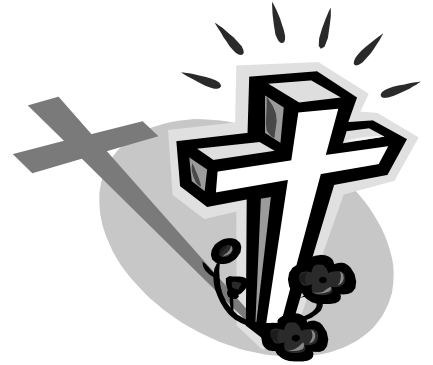


# SOCIETY SNIPPETS

## FIRST WORLD WAR COMMEMORATION

As members will know we have undertaken to try to find out more about the men of the Parish of Byfleet who died during the First World War. Whilst we have gathered quite a lot of information already, we have no information at all about the following:

Albert J Gregory  
John H Heath  
James Howard  
Harry Punter  
Herbert C Sibley  
Arthur Turner  
Robin Woodward



Any information, however small, about any of these should be sent to Jim Allen c/o Byfleet Community Library, by email to jimboallen46@yahoo.co.uk, or brought to our next meeting"

## Castlemaine Court

Over the last few months we have seen the demolition of Dunmow House in Rectory Lane and the building of Castlemaine Court. We wondered who the new houses had been named for, so Jim asked the developer.

The new houses are named after Barbara Castlemaine, 1st Duchess of Cleveland and notorious mistress of King Charles II, by whom she had five children. King Charles gave Byfleet Manor to Barbara in 1670, although two years later he granted it to his new wife, Catherine of Braganza. What Barbara thought of losing out to her rival is not recorded—perhaps just as well given Barbara's domineering character and fiery temper!



Jeff has found an interesting website that members might like to have a look at. Even if you already know of it, it is worth checking back from time to time, as they add new images all the time.

The site is <http://www.britainfromabove.org.uk/>

A search for Byfleet gives 4 images and Brooklands gives 70, so I'm sure people could spend hours exploring it! Why not have a look.





*From our Archive*

**Items by the 1st Byfleet Guides and Brownies**

**1. Cautionary Tales** *The Brownies*  
 MEDDLESOME MATTY  
 LITTLE SUCK-A-THUMB  
 HENRY KING  
 JIM

**2. A Forgetful Fairy** *The Guides*  
 Play in Three Acts.  
 Characters—

King Polyanthus .....	Joy Taylor	
Prince Geranium .....	Brenda Williams	
Queen Aurelia .....	M. Footner	
	D. Hull	
Countess of Campanula .....	Sheila Gilham	
Princess Verbena.....	June Gould	
Duke of Laburnum .....	Pam Trenchard	
Butcher Boy .....	Hazel Lomas	
Butter Woman .....	Daphne Williams	
Fairy Viola .....	Audrey Calvert	
Serving Men .....	J.Mitchell, V.Holmes, P.Brown	
Serving Women .....	M.Newton, P.Bateman, D.Hull	
	M.Footner	

*Action of the play takes place in the Hall of the Palace*

**Items by the 5th Byfleet Guides and Brownies**

**1. A Lucky Moment** *The Guides*  
 Sketch in Three Short Scenes  
 Characters—

Prudence, an orphan .....	Pamela James
Miss Orde, a misress .....	L. Clements
Matron .....	Pamela Heat
Mrs. Drummond .....	Doreen Green
Several Orphans	

**2. The Clock Fairies** *The Brownies*  
 A Musical Play  
 Characters—

Mary and .....	Beryl Humphrys
Betty, sisters .....	Jean White
Father Time .....	Audrey Quinn
Pat, a little boy .....	Betty James
Nightmare .....	Moira Emery

*Hour Fairies, Minute and Second Fairies, Tin Soldier and Bedtime Children*

Scenes 1 and 3 -	An ordinary room
Scene 2 -	Dreamland

**3. The Man in the Moon** *The Guides*  
 A Musical Play  
 Characters—

Man in the Moon .....	A. Seagrave
Old Woman tossed up in a Basket .....	Pamela Couldrey
Moonshine, their daughter .....	G. Higgs
Peter Piper, from Nursery Street, who cried for the Moon .....	Joy Prosser
Prince of Sunland .....	Pat Gilbert

*Action of the play takes place in a supposed room in the Moon*

This is a programme for a concert held at the Methodist Hall on June 22nd 1944 by the Guides and Brownies of the 1st and 5th Byfleet Companies and Packs. Anyone recognise anyone?



We believe that this is a photo of the unveiling of Byfleet War Memorial at the Junction of High Road and what is now Parvis Road.

Jim has recently found out that the Byfleet Memorial was not completed until as late as 1928, although other local memorials were unveiled much earlier.

The Byfleet Memorial contains 72 names, 36 from Byfleet and 36 from West Byfleet, and Jim is now working on finding out which names belong to which village.