

We hope you enjoyed the summer, and the warm Autumn days that we have experienced. Our monthly meetings have resumed at St Mary's Centre, and the committee are busy fixing speakers for next year, so if there is something you would particularly like to hear about, let us know.

There are still a few subs to be collected. Reminders have been sent out with this newsletter, and we do hope you decide to continue with us. If we have sent you a reminder in error, please let us know so we can update our records.

We look forward to seeing you at one of our meetings or monthly library drop-ins.

FORTHCOMING
EVENTS 2016



All talks are held at St Mary's Centre for the Community, Stream Close, Byfleet and will begin at 8.15pm.

Thursday 6th October: Member's Short Talks.

This month our members take the floor with short talks on their own subjects of interest. Come along for an evening of variety and interest.

Thursday 3rd November: Join us as we meet the ***Lord-Lieutenant of Surrey, Mr Michael More-Molyneux.***

Thursday 1st December: Christmas Social. Join us for a mince pie while ***Mike Webber*** reviews the new photographs the Society has come by throughout the year. Don't forget, we are always pleased to see your photographs and to take scans for our archives.

**Members free, Guests £2
Everyone very welcome!**

Don't forget—if you have a topic or an idea for a talk, please let us know.

If anyone would like to help us with organising our monthly speakers, we would be very glad to hear from you—either speak to one of the committee at one of our meetings, contact us by email on Tessa@westlakesystems.co.uk, or leave a note for the Heritage Society at Byfleet Community Library. Thank you.

DATES FOR 2017

The committee are working on booking talks for 2017 and would welcome your suggestions and recommendations. Here are the dates for your diaries.

All dates are Thursdays and meetings start at 8.15pm at St Mary's Centre for the Community. This will include the AGM.

19th January

16th February

16th March

13th April

11th May—AGM

15th June

20th July

21st September

19th October

16th November

14th December

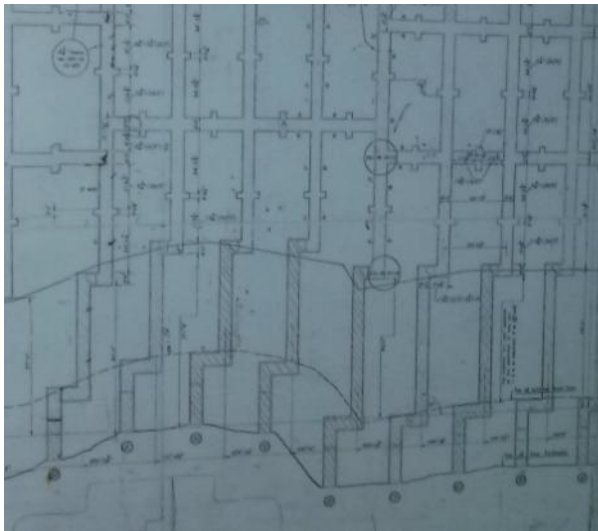
For the Record...

In **July** the Society took a tour around the old Vickers air raid shelter next to the David Lloyd gym. The shelter is now owned by Arc Wine Reserves, as the consistent temperatures underground provide an excellent place to keep your fine vintages.

The original gas-tight shelter door is still at the entrance, and once through you enter the grid of 17 tunnels, each a mile long, 2m high by 1m wide. A copy of the original plan on display showed that these tunnels were built with a dog leg so that any blast would not travel the length of the shelter.



Set into the wall at regular intervals were small alcoves, which the owners believe were the "conveniences" with only a curtain across for privacy. Distance inside

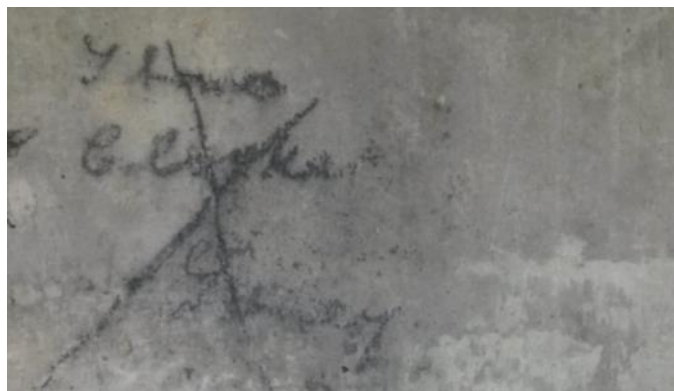
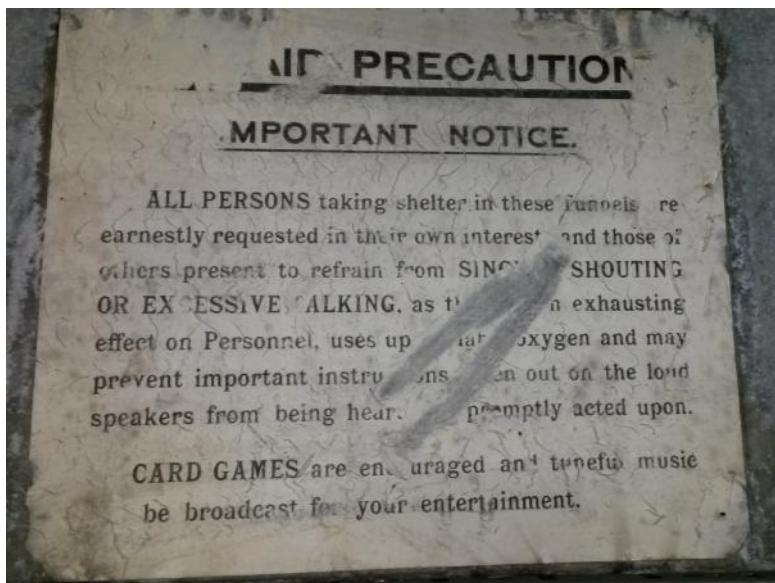


the tunnels was deceptive—we found we had walked the length of the car park and were underneath the David Lloyd gym before we knew it.

Much of the original signage was



still in place, including a few leavings by former occupants—are any members related to this graffiti artist? It was a most interesting tour, and



a sober reminder of the preparations that had to be made, and of what life was like during the Second World War. For more pictures and a more detailed history of the shelter, two websites give a nice account: Arc Reserves at <http://www.arcreserves.com/storage-conditions/history-of-our-cellar.html> and Subterranea

Britannica at http://www.subbrit.org.uk/sb-sites/sites/v/vickers_shelter/index.shtml

THE SOCIETY AFLOAT

On what is becoming a regular feature in our Society's calendar, a boat trip took place during the evening of 11th August. Having cruised to Pyrford on the previous two occasions, this year we headed in the opposite direction along the Wey Navigation canal. A full complement of 22 members and friends left Parvis Wharf on a pleasant, warm evening, and headed along the straight stretch of the canal leading to New Haw lock, passing under the railway line then under the M25 motorway, passing many and various moored boats. After negotiating the lock, we cruised along a more rural stretch, with many on board remembering the Addlestone Swimming Club when we passed their



former premises on the left



bank, now occupied by a canoe club. We had passed some of their members earlier near the junction with the Basingstoke Canal



After a few bends in the canal, with more memories of the

former watercress beds that used to occupy land on the right bank, we reached Coxes Lock Mill, now converted into apartments. We had a brief stop here, but unfortunately our time limit did not allow us to progress through the next lock. Our boats turned for the return journey, with occasional encounters with barking dogs living in some of the canalside properties making sure that we did not trespass on their domain.

All too soon, the two-hour trip was over, and we all safely disembarked at the end of an enjoyable evening. For some on board, this had been an interesting experience, as they had not visited this section of the canal previously. We expect to run another trip next August, so watch out for details in 2017.

By Im Allen with photos by Anne Roberts



★ Jim Allen entertained us in **September** with a star-studded talk about **Local Stars of Music Hall and Variety**.
 ★ Given its proximity to the London music halls and west-end theatres and to the film studios at Walton-on-Thames and Shepperton, Surrey was a popular and convenient county for entertainers to reside. However, apart from the actress Sarah Miles, none of these artistes lived in Byfleet.

★ However some were not far away, with two living as nearby as St George's Hill. The first was Richard Gilbert (Dick) Emery. Born in 1915 in Bloomsbury London, Dick went on tour at just three weeks old with his parents, comedy double act Callan & Emery, although his parents split up when he was 8 years old.
 ★ Dick tried a variety of jobs before serving in the RAF during World War 2. During the war, he played in the chorus of 'The Merry Widow' in London, and then in Ralph Reader's RAF Gang Show, to entertain at bases throughout the UK. For this, he created the character Vera Thin (the Forces Sweetheart), stating that he was "better in drag than in combat gear". On leaving the RAF he worked at the Windmill Theatre (although his name does not appear on the plaque of those who performed there), then toured his act around the UK. As well as making his TV debut in 1953 on "The Centre Show", he also appeared on popular BBC and Radio Luxembourg radio programmes, such as 'Educating Archie' (1958-59), and with his friend Tony Hancock on 'The Tony Hancock Show' and 'Hancock's Half Hour'. After the final series of 'The Army Game' (1960-64), he signed an exclusive contract with the BBC for 'The Dick Emery Show (1963-1981), creating his famous characters including Mandy, Hetty and Lampwick. He also appeared in films, including 'The Fast Lady', 'The Wrong Arm of the Law', and 'Ooh you are Awful!'. He was voted BBC Personality of the Year in 1972. Some little known facts were that Dick held a pilot's licence from 1961, enjoyed fast cars and motorbikes, and was one-time Chairman of the Airfix Modellers Club. He also suffered badly from stage fright which he tried to cure with hypnosis. He married 5 times, and lived at Warrener's Cottage, in Warrener's Lane, St George's Hill. He died in 1983, aged 67.



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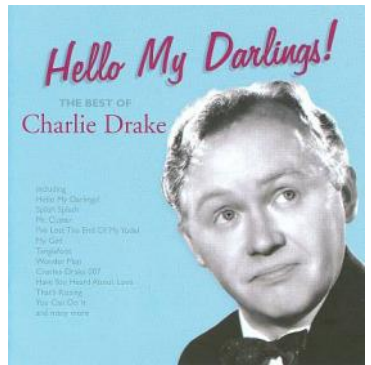




Dick's near neighbour was Eric Sykes. Eric also served in the RAF in World War II, serving in a Special Liaison Unit, where he worked with Bill Fraser and Denis Norden. In 1945, whilst searching for some stage lighting for a troop show, the three found themselves in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp which had recently been liberated by the Allies. Sykes, Norden and others organised a food collection among their comrades to feed the starving at the camp. After the war, Eric moved to London, met Bill Fraser by chance in the street and found himself writing for Bill and also for Frankie Howerd. Eric soon found himself in demand as a writer, and formed a partnership with Sid Colin, working on 'Variety Bandbox' and 'Educating Archie' where he first met Hattie Jacques. In the 1950s he shared an office with Spike Milligan in Shepherd's Bush, forming a long-lasting partnership, including work on 'The Goon Show' and also the scripts for his successful TV series, 'Sykes', featuring Hattie Jacques as his twin sister. He made two nearly-silent slapstick films: 'The Plank' (much of it filmed around Walton-on-Thames, and includes sequences with an Ebenezer Mears lorry) and 'Its Your Move'. He had success on stage with 'Big Bad Mouse' as Mr Bloom (a part Jim played with the Byfleet Players), in film as Frank Bryce in 'Harry Potter & The Goblet of Fire', and on TV in 'Last of the Summer Wine', 'New Tricks', 'My Family' and 'Poirot'. He published his autobiography, entitled 'If I Don't Write It, Nobody Else Will' in 2005. Eric had actually been profoundly deaf since World War 2, and his trademark glasses were actually a deaf aid. Later he became partially sighted and was ultimately registered blind. Eric lived for many years in White Knights Road, St George's Hill, moving to a house on Esher Green, where he died on 4th July 2012, the year of his 60th Wedding anniversary, aged 89.



Charles Edward Springgall, better known as Charlie Drake, was a resident in Weybridge. Born in 1915 at the Elephant and Castle, Charlie stood at only 5' 1" tall and made his stage debut aged 8, later touring working men's clubs. His TV debut came in 1953 as half of "Mick and Montmercy" with Jack Edwards. His first film was 'Fast & Loose' with Bob Monkhouse, and four more minor film successes followed: 'Sands of the Desert' (1960), 'Petticoat Pirates' (1961), 'The Cracksman' (1963) and 'Mr 10%' (1967). He also made several TV series including 'Drake's Progress' (1957-58) and 'The Charlie Drake Show' (1960-61), where he had a serious accident during a live transmission. The plan was for him to be pulled through a specially-constructed bookcase, then to be thrown out of an open window. Unbeknown to any of the cast, an over-enthusiastic stagehand had 'mended' the bookcase, with the result that, when he was pulled through it, he fractured his skull, and was unconscious for 3 days. It was another 2 years before he returned to the screen in 'The Charlie Drake Show' in 1963. It was a compilation of this show, featuring him playing all the instruments in the 1812 overture that won him an award at the Montreux Festival in 1968. His most successful TV series was 'The Worker' (1965-70). At one time, he owned 14 racehorses and 2 boats but was quoted as stating that he was "never vulgar, having only 2 cars at a time". He estimated that he gambled away some £3 million, including £112,000 in one night. He did some straight acting in the 1980s, including Touchstone in 'As You Like It', in Harold Pinter's 'The Caretaker', and as Smallweed in 'Bleak House'. He made a number of records, many of which were produced by George Martin, including 'Splish Splash' and 'My Boomerang Won't Come Back'. However, disaster struck when he engaged a non Equity actress for a pantomime. The union fined him, and banned him from appearing in all theatres for 18 months, which lost him some £100,000 in fees, just at the time he received an enormous tax bill. His final stage appearances were in 'Sinderella', Jim Davidson's adult version of 'Cinderella'. He married twice, both times to dancers, and lived in Hamm Court, Weybridge, for many years. He retired in 1995, following a stroke, and died in 2006 at Brinsworth, Twickenham, where there is a blue plaque in his memory. In his will he left just £5,000.



Staying in Weybridge, we move on Bernard Cribbins. After serving in the Parachute Regiment, he made his professional debut in the mid-1950s at Oldham Rep. His first west-end appearance in 'A Comedy of Errors' (1956) was later followed by the Ray Cooney farces 'Not Now Darling', 'There Goes the Bride' and 'Run for your Wife'. He made many films in the 1960s, including 'Two Way Stretch'; (1960), 'The Wrong Arm of the Law' (1963), as Tom Campbell, Dr Who's assistant, in the film 'Daleks - Invasion Earth' (1966) and the belligerent barman in Alfred Hitchcock's film 'Frenzy' (1972). He also appeared in three 'Carry On' films: 'Carry On Jack' (1963), 'Carry On Spying' (1965), and 'Carry On Columbus' (1992), and is fondly remembered for his role as Mr Perks in 'The Railway Children' (1970). On television he appeared on 'The Good Old Days', 'Fawlty Towers', and was a regular reader on 'Jackanory', appearing 114 times. He also made several comedy records, including 'Hole in the Ground', 'Right Said Fred' and 'Gossip Calypso', the first two of which entered the Top 10. He was awarded the OBE for services to drama in 2011, and lives with his wife Gill in Hamm Court, Weybridge.



A glamorous resident of Ripley was "Dessie", possibly the most famous British impressionist both here and in the USA in the 1930s and 40s. Born in Islington in 1905 as Florence Elizabeth Dawson (or Florence Desmond on stage), she first appeared in variety in 1920, joining C B Cochran in 1925 as one of his 'Young Ladies' in the revue 'On with the Dance'. She made her Broadway debut alongside Noel Coward and Beatrice Lillie in another revue called 'This Year of Grace'. In the 1930s she discovered her gift for mimicry, creating a radio act for the BBC, impersonating film stars of the day including Greta Garbo, Marlene Dietrich, Zasu Pitts and Janet Gaynor, leading to the release of a best-selling record (cont p5)



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called 'A Hollywood Party'. She toured the USA and returned to England to top the bill at the Victoria Palace in 1934. During the war she toured with ENSA to Gibraltar, Algiers and Italy, often with stars such as Flanagan & Allen, and also appeared in "Apple Sauce" at the London Palladium with Vera Lyn and Max Miller in 1941 for 462 performances. She also made films with George Formby and Gracie Fields. She took early retirement in 1954, although she made a comeback in 1958, appearing with Beatrice Lillie again, in 'Auntie Mame' at the Adelphi Theatre. Her first husband, Tom Campbell Black, was killed in an aviation accident at Speke Airport, Liverpool, in 1935, just a year after they married. Then in 1937 she married Charles Hughesdon and lived at Dunsborough Park in Ripley, looking after pigs, and where they frequently entertained. Every year they organised lavish parties, when celebrities, including members of the Royal family, would arrive by helicopter in the grounds. In 1963 she raised funds for a 'Betatron' electron therapy unit at St Luke's Hospital in Guildford, where a ward was named after her. 'Dessie' died in Guildford in 1993, aged 87.

A huge star who lived in Burwood Park was Thomas Edward "Tommy" Trinder. Born in Streatham in 1909, Tommy served his apprenticeship in Working Men's Clubs as a boy and, after leaving school, joined a juvenile troupe. He sailed for South Africa 1931, returning to the UK to star in revues. From 1934-1937 he appeared in summer shows at Clacton, Brighton and Shanklin, finally joining the cast of 'Band Waggon' with Arthur Askey & Richard Murdoch at the London Palladium, a scene of many subsequent Trinder performances. His first starring role at the Palladium, in 'Top of the World' in 1940, was cut short by the blitz after just 4 performances. More touring followed before he returned to the Palladium, during which time he kept his name before the public with an aggressive advertising campaign, using the slogan: 'If its laughter you're after, Trinder's the name'. He made several films including 'The Foreman Went to France', 'The Bells Go Down', and 'Champagne Charlie', and toured for the troops in North Africa and the Middle East. His next return to the Palladium saw Trinder impersonating Carmen Miranda in 'Best Bib & Tucker', and Jane Russell in 'Happy & Glorious'. He appeared in six Royal Variety shows between 1945 and 1980, and was the first compere of the popular TV show 'Sunday Night at the London Palladium'. On radio, he appeared on 'Does the Team Think?' with Jimmy Edwards, Ted Ray & Cyril Fletcher. Later in his life, he tended to appear in local pantomimes, at theatres such as Wimbledon & Richmond. He was King Rat in the Grand Order of Water Rats, and for years was the Chairman of Fulham Football Club. In 1975 he was appointed a CBE for services to charity and the theatre, and created an MVO by The Queen. He suffered a stroke in 1986, and died July 1989, aged 80, and is buried in Burvale Cemetery.

We thanked Jim for this glimpse into the lives of our famous neighbours.



Tracie Haworth recently put this photo on the Byfleet Facebook group, Byfleet Represent, and she very kindly let me put it into our newsletter.

It shows a rather fine Triumph Vitesse outside the Melody Cafe, now Cartronics on Parvis Road near the War Memorial.

The photo invited lots of comments on the Facebook page, including memories of the shop being a barber's shop before the cafe took over, and the cafe being full of Teddy boys in the 1960s.

The cafe later became Paula Marks music shop.

Do any members have any memories of the Melody Cafe?

SOCIETY NEWS

Byfleet Boat Club presents their annual Illuminated Boats Procession on Saturday 26th November from 5.30pm.

Starting from the junction with the Basingstoke Canal, a flotilla of decorated boats will travel upstream to moor at Byfleet Boat Club.

Live entertainment plus the fish and chip van will be available to cater for your needs.

For more information please see the Boat Club's website <http://www.byfleetboatclub.com/>



DON'T FORGET!

This year's Remembrance Sunday service will be on **Sunday November 13th**, beginning at 10.50am at Byfleet War Memorial.



T H Edmonds, confectioners

We were delighted when several members let us know that some old Byfleet shop signage had become visible, and sent us photographs. China Chef, on the corner of High Road and Hopfield Avenue, were replacing their shopfront, so for a while the old writing underneath the modern signs was visible.

Iain Wakeford supplied the following information from his collection of Street Directories: "T H Edmonds was a confectioner and tobacconist in Hopfield Parade probably from when it was first built (about the time of the Second World War) until the mid 1960's. The shops are not listed in my 1937 street directory, but evidently were built by 1947 (the next directory I have in my collection) – when mysteriously it

just lists his name and not what the shop does. The shop is recorded as a confectioner and tobacconist in 1957 and 1964, but not 1968 (when A E Bull had evidently taken over the business)."

Others have said they remember the "library" being a collection of books Mr Edmonds lent out privately to customers. The books were in a bookcase to the side of the door as you went in.

Does anyone else remember going into Edmond's confectioners? If so, let us know!

