

A Happy New Year to all our members! We hope to meet many of you at our meetings and library drop-ins over 2017. Details of our meetings are below, and you can also come and see us at Byfleet Community Library on the first Saturday of every month between 10.30 and 12.30 where we will be displaying items from our archive that don't often get the chance to see the light of day. We also hope to be at Parish Day once again in the summer. So it looks like a busy year ahead and we look forward to seeing you all.

FORTHCOMING
EVENTS 2017



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

Thursday 19th January: Quiz Night! How well do you know Byfleet and the surrounding parts of Surrey? Our Chairman, Jim Allen, conducts another of his quizzes.

Thursday 16th February: Julian Pooley from the Surrey History Centre on "Making Archives Matter."

Thursday 16th March: "The Work of a District Registrar". Sally Hodson will give an insight into the work and procedures of the Registrar when dealing with births, marriages and deaths.

Thursday 13th April: "From Wembley to Big Daddy." A personal journey through the "boom years" of ITV Sport by Michael Archer.

Thursday 11th May: AGM followed by *Jim Allen* speaking on his 2016 tour of the Anglican Cathedrals of England. (Please note—the AGM will begin at our normal meeting time of 8.15pm)

Thursday 15th June: Speaker to be announced

Thursday 20th July: Speaker to be announced

Thursday 17th August: No meeting, but we plan another *Evening Boat Trip* from Parvis Wharf. Details to be announced.

Thursday 21st September: Speaker to be announced

Thursday 19th October: Join us for another of our popular evenings of *Members' Short Talks*

Thursday 16th November: Speaker to be announced

Thursday 14th December: Our Christmas Meeting. Mike Webber will show a collection of photographs and other items of interest that the Society has acquired during the year.

**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.

For the Record...

Our October meeting was hosted by a variety of speakers from our membership, who gave short talks on topics from trains to planes to naval exploits.

Jim Allen took the floor first to show a short film of trains running through our local stations in former years. There was a warship diesel, Southern electric trains (some the old non-corridor type) and even a three coach Royal train. Some of the stations had changed; for example, the central platform at Walton is no longer in use, and the Oatlands sidings with their attached signal box closed in 1970. At Byfleet & New Haw the signal box has also gone, and the gantries across the tracks replaced by electric signalling. The layout of Woking, however, was still the same.

Our next speaker, Dick Alder, revealed a wonderful letter written by Robert Forbes and dated Byfleet, 6th May 1785. It lists various items of ironwork going by Eade's barge.

Robert Forbes was one of four brothers from an Aberdeen family of copper-smiths. William, Robert and David left their brother George to come to London, where they set up business in Primrose Street, Bishopsgate, to where the letter is addressed. The business did extremely well, because at that time the Navy were copper-bottoming their ships, and William had invented an alloy for the bolts beneath the water line, where iron could not be used due to the chemical reaction of iron and copper in salt water. This made the family's fortune. The Forbes brothers put some of their business to Byfleet Mill to speed up production. Dick had looked up further papers concerning the business at Byfleet, including cash books, leases and wages. Returning to Dick's letter, the total tonnage of items being sent by Eade's barge was 16 tons 19 cwt, and the rough total of goods sent from Byfleet Mill via Parvis Wharf totalled 45 tons, all bolts of various sizes. This was amazing enough, but Dick also pointed out that as well as goods out, there must have been raw materials coming in by the ton. Many thanks to Dick for sharing his amazing find.



William Forbes

Next Julian Temple gave an update on Brooklands Museum's redevelopment of the far corner of the site, which involves building a new flight shed and the relocation of the Wellington hangar which currently sits on part of the finishing strait. This should be finished in 12 months, freeing up the race track and providing a larger area for events and activities. The Wellington hangar, built in 1940 for production of Wellingtons and Warwicks, was closed on 1st September 2016, and the team had two to three weeks to empty it before handing over to the developers on 21st September. The new flight shed would be completed in August 2017, with a workshop beneath and a bridge to connect it to the new Wellington hangar. The building of a separate building for the Vimy will require the Concorde to be moved. Some of the aircraft have had to be



moved to virgin ground, a task involving some 30-40 volunteers and some staff. To release the Wellington, the wings had to be removed. Julian revealed that this was the first time the bomber had been moved on its wheels since its final flight. The contractors are now dealing with asbestos removal in the hangar. Then they will remove the cladding, take down the framework, and paint and clean it before reassembly in its new position.

Finally, Martin Cutler shared more of the amazing stories behind his medal collection. Ernest William Allright was awarded the Sea Gallantry medal, awarded for the saving life at sea. In 1911 Allright was aboard the HMS Edinburgh, escorting the SS Delhi taking a royal party to India. On 13th December the ship ran aground near Cape Spartel in Morocco, and a distress signal went out to help the Princess Royal, the 1st Duke and Duchess of Fife, and Princess Alexandra. The Duke of Edinburgh put out a boat to take off passengers, but on the way back the boat was swamped, and Princess Alexandra narrowly escaped drowning. They made it ashore, and had to walk four miles to Cape Spartel, where the Moroccan authorities were not sympathetic. Allright was awarded the Sea Gallantry medal for his exploits. He then joined the HMS Natal, but while this ship was at anchor in the Cromarty Firth, disaster struck. Most of the crew had gone ashore, but a party was being held on board to entertain local dignitaries and many children. Just before 3.30pm the boat exploded, leaving only seven survivors. Allright was amongst those killed. At first it was thought to be sabotage, or a German submarine, but it was actually found to be the result of some faulty cordite in the magazines.

Martin also told the story of the Pargust, a Q ship, whose role was to lure German submarines to attack and surface, exposing themselves to the hidden guns of the Q ship. Once the German sub had released its torpedoes, a "panic party" would set out—a boat containing men in sou'westers with a stuffed parrot in a cage for authenticity—to fool the U boat that the ship had been abandoned. Sure enough, the sub surfaced and the crew of the Pargust fired two shells into its conning tower. Two Victoria Crosses were awarded by ballot, the first time that this method, outlined in article 13 of the statutes of the Victoria Cross, was implemented. This ordered that the medals were to be allocated by ballot, one to an officer and one to the ranks. The crew nominated the men and the officers nominated the officer, and VCs were duly awarded to Lt Stewart and Seaman William Williams.



Seaman William Williams



In November we were very pleased to welcome **Michael More-Molyneux**, Lord-Lieutenant of Surrey and head of the Loseley Park estate.



Michael's family are the 14th generation to live at Loseley. Sir Christopher More bought the house from the Sidney family in 1508, but it was his son, Sir William, who is largely responsible for the house we see today. Sir William lived into his 80s, becoming a highly respected man who was active in local affairs. Queen Elizabeth I herself is said to have commented that if Sir William had been twenty-five years younger, things could have been very different. The Queen had also voiced her opinion that the house she had visited was not big enough, so Sir William rebuilt the house to please her. The rebuilding took place between 1562-68 at a cost of £1650. Her Majesty must have approved, as she stayed there four times – although she sent ahead clear instructions that she would be bringing her own staff to clean before she arrived, and that naturally she would be taking over the family's rooms.

All the panelling in the Great Hall was brought from Nonesuch Palace – Sir William was friends with Henry VIII's Master of Revels who gave him a deal! When the roof of the house was redone two years ago, three panels were found in the loft that were believed to have been displayed in the sumptuous pavilions at The Field of the Cloth of Gold. When King James I and Anne of Denmark came to stay, the drawing room ceiling was completely gilded in honour of the visit, although the family only had three weeks' notice. The grateful monarchs presented the family with two full length portraits as thanks.

Michael mentioned another ancestor, George, who took over at Loseley on Sir William's death. George's daughter, Anne, fell in love with the poet, John Donne, and married him in secret. When George found out, he was livid and Donne was sent to the Tower for a spell. But all was eventually well, and the couple were reunited. Anne died aged only 33 after her 11th child, and Donne never got over her death.

The family fortunes had their ups and downs, but they managed to hang onto their house and land, and Michael considers the last 100 years to be the most significant since the house was built. Michael's grandfather, who fought at the Somme and was mentioned 13 times in despatches, started the famous Jersey herd in 1916. . During the Second World War there was no electricity or central heating at the house, but his grandfather and grandmother stayed put and saved the house from crumbling away. Their son, Michael's father, went to Merrist Wood to learn how to take care of the estate. When he inherited, the place was very run down, and all the windows at the front had been knocked out by bombs landing nearby. He realised agriculture was not going to be enough to sustain the estate, so branched out into making flagpoles for the coronation. Then he developed a business in pre-fab houses and was among the first to open his house to the public in 1951 before finally turning to diary products in 1968.

The farm is around 1500 acres, with 400 jersey cows. Michael's grandfather began a milk and cream round, which left a good supply of skimmed milk, with which he decided to make soft cheese. He sold this cheese to the firm Cranks, who specialised in wholefoods and vegetarian dishes, and they then asked if he could also provide yoghurt. Then the Jersey Cattle Society asked the dairy to provide ice-cream for the Ideal Home Exhibition. This was a huge success and by 1985, the year the business was sold to Booker, the company was supplying 1400 outlets throughout the South East and processing 7 million litres of milk a year. At present, the farm is still extant, but now let out. Visitors continue to visit the house and gardens, and many of the redundant farm buildings have become offices and workshops. Soon Michael and his wife will move out of the house and his son and his family will take over. Michael feels it is important for the house to be in the care of a young family, and that he has been just one in a long line of family taking care of the house for the next generation.

Michael also spoke to us about what he called his biggest honour and great privilege, the office of Lord Lieutenant of Surrey. He took office in August 2015 – and then broke his ankle six weeks later. He has an impressive uniform that goes with the office, but thanks to his broken ankle, he could not get the boots on. He was then expected to be in attendance when Prince

William was coming to Deepcut to present medals – and as the Prince would be in uniform, Michael was expected to be in uniform too. What to do? Michael's quick-thinking wife took the offending boot and had a zip inserted so that Michael could wear it. At first it took Michael 45 minutes to get his uniform on with his wife's help, but now he manages on his own in 11 minutes. He has found his office both uplifting and humbling and enjoys meeting the people of Surrey and hearing about their achievements. He feels very fortunate to hold the post and hopes to stay in post until the required retirement age of 75.

We thanked Michael for sharing his stories about his family home and his interesting position with us.



Once again, in December we were indebted to Mike Webber, who performed his now traditional task of reviewing some of the Society's acquisitions over the year. Some items we have been donated, and others we have been lent, or we have been shown at our monthly library drop-ins. We are very grateful to everyone who shares their interesting items with us.

Below is a small selection of the pictures and items that Mike displayed.



Left: The entrance to the footbridge across Brooklands Track in Oyster Lane, opposite the end of Chertsey Road. We were given a copy of this photo by Brooklands Museum from their archive.

The photo to the right came from a Byfleet group page on Facebook and shows a lady standing by a coal cart.

However, it is the house in the background that is of interest, as this is the Sheer House Hotel that used to be in West Byfleet, a view not often seen. The Sheer House office block and car park is now there.



Above left: The parade of shops that stood on Plough Green, including Stephanie Fashions, Home and Colonial and Linella babywear and household linens. This was previously the site of the Royston Chase Hotel and is now where Laurel Grange flats now stand.



Above right: The Binfield Bakers and looking along Oyster Lane. The Hovis sign is still there, but the door on the corner is now a display window.



Members might like to know that we now have a Byfleet Heritage Society group on Facebook.

We hope that people will post their memories or—even better—perhaps their own old photos or postcards of Byfleet, and that we can get some good discussions going about the history of our village. We will also post Society notices and news.

You can find the group here:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1622474314445694/>

If you already have a Facebook account, you will be able to see it, otherwise you may have to register. Then simply click the “Join Group” button at the top of the page. We hope you will come on over and join the fun.



An advert for Chuter’s Garage, from a little booklet we have in our archive called “Byfleet and its Environs”. The booklet has no date on it, but looking at the adverts and some of the clothes on people pictured, it is possibly from the 1920s or 1930s.

Chuter’s Garage, later Roscoe’s, stood in High Road where Chuters Close was later built.

“Byfleet and its Environs” is a lovely little booklet, giving a brief history of the village as well as listing the present day amenities, with a wealth of adverts for all the local shops.

Motor & Cycle Engineers. : : Cars for Hire.
 Dunlop Tyre Stockists. Overhauls and Repairs.
 Vulcanizing by “H.F.” Process.
 Accumulators Charged and Repaired.
 Underground Petrol Installation. Phone: BYFLEET 270.
CHUTER’S GARAGE,
 High Road — BYFLEET — Surrey

At our last library drop-in we had a visit from Bob French, a keen cyclist who is researching the life and history of Dan “The Wizard” O’ Donovan who worked for the Norton motorcycle team at Brooklands. He lived at a house called The Stunt which was on Oyster Lane near the entrance to Track Gates.

Although he knows roughly where this house was, he is trying to pinpoint its exact location. Does anyone know which house this was? If so, let us know! You can either contact Tessa Westlake (01932 351559 or Tessa@westlakesystems.co.uk), or speak to a committee member at one of our meetings, or leave a note at Byfleet Community Library. Thank you.



We received an email from Emma Goodwin, Walsham Lengthsman on the Wey Navigation Canal, who was very complimentary about our Society website. She also mentioned that members might enjoy the official National Trust pages for the Navigation, which give lots of information about what’s on and even how to volunteer to take care of the canal. The website can be found at: www.nationaltrust.org.uk/river-wey-and-godalming-navigations-and-dapdune-wharf

