

For the Record...



In July we were very pleased to welcome back **Iain Wakeford** who took us through the history of West Byfleet.

While much of West Byfleet has been built relatively recently compared to its neighbours, Byfleet and Pyrford, some familiar placenames appear on a mid 17th century map of the manor of Pyrford. Fullbrooks and Sheerwater were marked, as well as Byfleet Common. A 1729 map showed the Wey Navigation Canal, built in the 1650s, with Ham Haw Common and Woodham off to the north. Iain pointed out that Roques map of 1768 did not show Dodds Bridge. This bridge was built after the canal was completed, when a landowner complained that the canal had cut his land in two. The Basingstoke Canal was built much later than the Wey Navigation, first

being planned in the 1780s. It was hoped it would carry 30 tons of goods per year, but in reality rarely reached that figure. Ironically one of its most successful years was when it was used to carry materials to build the railway that would eventually replace it as a form of transport. It was never a real success and had no real impact on the development of West Byfleet. The name Camphill Road could be named after a navvies' camp, and as the name existed before the coming of the railway, it is possible that the navvies were building the canal. Scotland Bridge is named after Robert Fitzpatrick Escott who lived at Ongar Hill House and owned the land where the bridge was built.

After the 1811 Inclosure, much of the common land around West Byfleet was sold off and only a small section of the original common remained for the public to use. The coming of the railway station is commonly said to be a catalyst for development in West Byfleet, but in fact several large houses were built before the station arrived. West Hall was built in the 18th century, and in the 19th century Broadoaks was built on the site of Shepherds Farm on Parvis Road and Sheerwater Court stood on Sheerwater Road.

Iain then focussed on two establishments that interested him. The Sun Inn, now Sun Cottages on Pyrford Road, appears on successive census returns under the ownership of Henry Hill, Thomas Carpenter and Edward Oakley. Carpenter and Oakley also ran other businesses at the same time. When the station opened in 1887, Oakley believed that West Byfleet would develop to the north in a similar way to Woking. He gave up The Sun and built Byfleet Hotel (sometimes called The Station Hotel) which still stands today, although in the end the main development took place to the south.

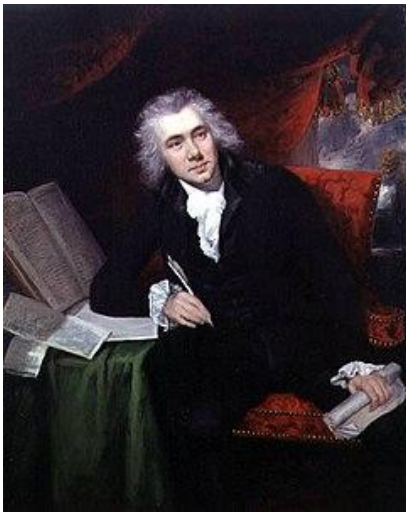
The second institution was the essential oils distillery. This appears on maps as early as 1823, and the 1832 electoral register lists James Collins as owner of a house and distillery near Byfleet Corner. The distillery was probably a large local employer. Lavender Park Road and Rosemount Parade commemorate the fields of lavender and roses from which the oils were distilled. The distillery buildings were later bought by John Leyland for the Surrey Certified Industrial School for Destitute Boys Not Convicted of Crime, which housed 200 boys. Surrey History Centre holds a scrapbook kept by Alfred Wells, head of the school in 1874, which has drawings of the school, including the original kitchens. In 1886, Major and Mrs Collis Browne of Broadoaks treated the boys to an amazing day including a fair, a band, Zulus (!) and "an almost unlimited supply of sweets". Providence Place in Pyrford belonged to the school and was where Mr Wells and other school employees lived. The school moved to Mayford in 1887, although the distillery site was still owned by John Leyland. Iain believes that the Church of England Women's Missionary Association High School used the site between 1891-1893, and then the St Nicholas Home and the Byfleet Receiving Home used the buildings. In 1906 a new St Nicholas Home was built in Pyrford on land donated by the Stoops.

The 1880s saw the development of the Dartnell Park estate, providing a boathouse and tennis club for its resident. Mr Stoop provided a boathouse on the Byfleet side of the canal for the Byfleet villagers, which still stands. More large houses appeared along Station Approach, Old Avenue and Madeira Road, and in 1911 the Birchwood Tenants Company, set up by Mr Stoop, opened an early example of social housing in Birchwood Road. This is now a conservation area as one of the first workers' estates in the Woking area.

The Tarrant-built Rosemount Parade was started in 1906. St John's church began life in 1872 in a tin hut at Broadoaks named "the Tin Tabernacle". By 1900 this was too small; plans were made for a church for 400 people, but fundraising faltered. However, in 1906 W G Tarrant was hired to build a 600 seater church at a cost of £9,908 and Mrs Stoop laid the foundation stone in June 1912. As well as supporting the building of the new church, Mr Stoop and Mr Charrington of Broadoaks paid £660 for a 21 year lease on 12 acres of land from Byfleet Charities—now West Byfleet Recreation Ground.

Recent plans for development in West Byfleet continue to cause debate, but Iain showed that things could have been worse. The 1928 North West Surrey development plan, formulated before the introduction of the Green Belt, shows Pyrford Golf Course, Broadoaks and other open sites as designated for housing. In 1964 Sheer House office block was built on the site of the Sheer House Hotel. This tower block itself is now up for redevelopment and the cause of much discussion.

We thanked Iain for a look at the development of our next door neighbour over the years and look forward to welcoming him again soon.



In September we welcomed **Martin Sumpton** who told us of the life of **William Wilberforce**, most famous for his long campaign to abolish slavery.

Wilberforce was born in Kingston upon Hull on 24th August 1759, in a house on the High Street which is now a museum. On a school visit to this museum Martin was impressed by the huge portrait of the Brookes slave ship, and the actual chains and manacles used on its poor passengers. These sparked Martin's interest in Wilberforce's fight against slavery, a fight that was long and hard, particularly as he would be taking on many powerful people whose wealth was based on the use of slaves.

Wilberforce attended Hull Grammar School where he was noted for his good speaking and singing voice, and he was often placed on a table to read to the class. After the death of his father, Wilberforce moved to Wimbledon to live with his uncle. At 17 he went to St John's, Cambridge where he made firm friends with William Pitt the Younger. Together they used to go to the Houses of Parliament to watch the debates, and this inspired them both to pursue a life in politics. After

graduation, Wilberforce became MP for Hull at the age of 21. He later became the MP for Yorkshire, a real achievement at a time when counties were usually represented by a nobleman. He also became enthralled by a group of Quakers, particularly Thomas Clarkson and Granville Sharp, who were very vocal against slavery, and Wilberforce took up their cause.

Thomas Clarkson was well travelled, particularly in North Africa and he gave illustrated talks using a box of artefacts from his travels. These showed the high levels of skill and artistry and made the point that the people of Africa were not savages but skilled and cultured. He also used the illustration of the Brookes slave ship, which drew gasps of horror from his audience. Granville Sharp was a skilful lawyer who tried to obtain the freedom of slaves who had either escaped or been granted their freedom but prevented from taking it. He berated Wilberforce for not condemning slavery as evil and immoral.

Pitt the Younger recognised that his friend Wilberforce had set his mind on supporting the Abolitionists. Although he never offered Wilberforce any office of state, Pitt supported him in Parliament whenever he could. However, even with this support, Wilberforce was defeated every time he brought the abolition bill to the house. But his persistence eventually paid off. The Slave Trade Act was passed in 1807, although this did not abolish slavery itself.

Surprisingly to us today, the Abolition movement and Wilberforce had many powerful enemies. Both King George III and William IV supported slavery. Many members of the nobility and MPs were slave owners or had fortunes based on the products of slave labour. The major ports of Liverpool, Glasgow, Bristol and London relied to a large extent on slavery for their income. Political cartoons of the time portrayed Wilberforce as a do-gooder, more concerned with African slaves than with the British poor, despite the fact that the Abolitionists also campaigned to improve the conditions of the poor at home.

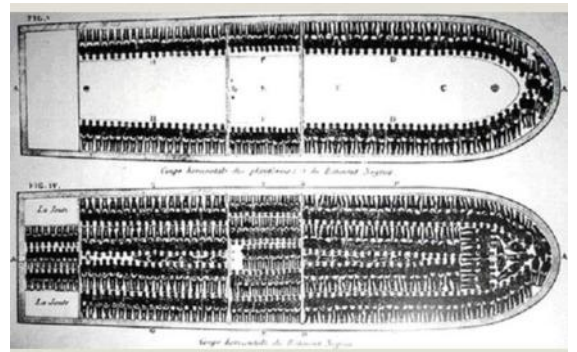
Slavery supported a large part of the economy of the time. Slaves worked the plantations and quarries producing many of the prime goods such as cotton, sugar, spices and minerals. The slaves themselves were treated very much as property and more like livestock than human beings. Many prominent public buildings were built with the proceeds of slavery, and the idea of the slavery as normal was so ingrained that even the decoration referred to it with no shame. For example, Martins bank in Liverpool had a carving of two African boys in chains carrying a pot of money.

However, after the 1807 Slave Trade Act, public opinion gradually responded to anti-slavery campaigning. The case of the Zong, where a slave syndicate threw 130 slaves overboard in order to fraudulently claim insurance highlighted the terrible treatment of slaves. Finally slavery itself abolished in 1833, although Parliament still had to promise £20 million compensation to slave owners. Wilberforce only just managed to live to see the culmination of his work, dying a few days later.

However, the job was far from done. When slaves were granted their freedom, where could they go? Sierra Leone was selected as a place where slaves could be taken from America and from captured ships that were carrying on the slave trade illegally. Its capital city, Freetown, is twinned with Kingston upon Hull in memory of Wilberforce, and many of its streets, buildings and villages are named for him and other Abolitionists.

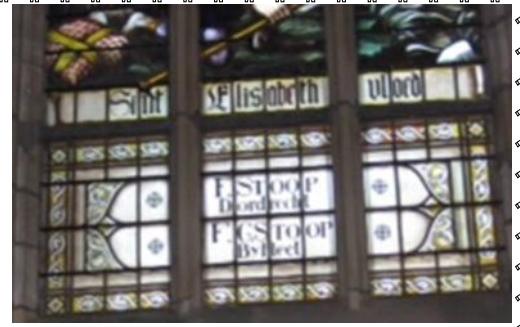
Sadly, human trafficking still occurs today, and the world is far from completely free of slavery, but William Wilberforce will always be remembered as a great humanitarian. He was buried in Westminster Abbey, close to his friend William Pitt and on the day of his funeral, both Houses of Parliament suspended their business as a mark of respect.

We thanked Martin for an interesting talk on the life of a great man.



We changed our format slightly for **October's** meeting to a series of **Short Talks from Members.**

Jane Bond got us underway by telling us how she discovered a window dedicated to the Stoop family in the Grote Kirk in Dordrecht. They noticed the word Byfleet on a stained glass window, and the name F C Stoop. Three further Stoop names were included, A Stoop of Bloemendaal and F Stoop and J A Stoop of Dordrecht. Jane was intrigued to know why Mr Stoop of Byfleet's name should turn up in Holland. Heritage Society records showed that Byfleet's Stoop family had originally come from Dordrecht, but the church window was mentioned only in passing. Jim Allen suggested asking some Stoop relatives who are still connected with the Village Hall, and they in turn put her in touch with Daisy Stoop back in Dordrecht. Daisy invited Jane to visit and showed her many old family documents, many in Dutch which Daisy helped to translate. The Stoop family have lived in Dordrecht for over 600 years. Adrian Stoop founded the Stoop bank there, and in 1872 his son, F C Stoop, came to England to work in the London branch. He set up a broker bank in London and helped to finance his brother's oil business. The window had been commissioned by four Stoop brothers, two from the Stoop bank and two from the oil business. Dordrecht contains other Stoop landmarks including the Stoop bank building and the Stoop coat of arms which featured on the town gate. The coat of arms is a pun on the family name and shows a boar's head above three pitchers, the old Dutch for which is Stoop. The window portrays three Dordrecht disasters from the 1400s, a flood of 1421, a fire of 1457, and the "Dordrecht surprise" when, during a civil war, two ships sailed in full of English mercenaries hiding in the cargo of willow. The church complained that the window held no religious content, so to make amends, the family dedicated a further three more religious windows in the Stoop chapel nearby.



Next, Pat Andrews told us about the brave villagers of Eyam in Derbyshire who prevented the spread of the plague in 1665 by voluntarily quarantining themselves. George Vickers, the tailor, was the first victim, as his consignment of cloth from London had contained plague carrying fleas. The rector, William Mompesson, arranged for the villagers to remain apart, holding church services outdoors at nearby Cucklett Delph. Food and medicine was purchased in exchange for money soaked in vinegar left on the Coolstone, and the Earl of Devonshire himself donated supplies. The outbreak lasted 14 months, ending on 1st November 1666 and killing 260 villagers. The selfless villagers had shown great courage and a remembrance service was planned at Cucklett Delph in 2001, but a different plague, foot and mouth, meant that the service had to be held in the church at Eyam. Today the villagers' story is told in a small visitor centre.

Our third speaker was Anne Roberts, who told us of a Byfleet coincidence. In 1974 a Byfleet man booked a holiday at Cox and Gill's travel agent, randomly choosing Kos as his destination. There he met Anne, who was working as a holiday rep and the two hit it off. At the holiday's end, the gentleman returned to Byfleet but he and Anne kept in touch. Then Horizon Holidays went bust, and Anne lost her job. Her gentleman invited her to come and visit him in Byfleet—and the rest, as they say, is history. Anne is originally from Devon, but recently found out that her great aunt Kate had long ago also lived in Byfleet and been involved in a disastrous fire. Aunt Kate had been born in 1887 in Colyton and later went to work as a maid for Mr Edward Peregrine Gueritz in Paignton. Gueritz later became Postmaster General and then Governor of Borneo. On his retirement in 1911 he moved to Byfleet, and it was here that the disastrous fire occurred in May 1916. A newspaper reported the destruction of the 7-bedroom house and many native Borneo artefacts such as masks, carvings and the remains of a native girl who had been swallowed by a crocodile! The family and their three servants escaped, although one servant wanted to go back into the house to finish her toilet. The location of the house is unsure, but Howard Cook suggested Old Orchard. The house had originally been called Selbourne, but Mr Gueritz renamed it Sabah, the native name for Borneo. Aunt Kate later returned to her family in Devon. Anne is amazed at the coincidence that she should end up living in the same village in which her Great Aunt had had such a terrifying experience.

Finally, Dick Alder told the story of Arthur Doricourt Roberts, MC, who is buried in St Mary's churchyard. The grave inscription says that Roberts had been in the Scottish Rifles and the Royal Flying Corps and been awarded the Military Cross. This seemed a strange combination and Dick started to research and was greatly helped by Cheltenham College, which Roberts had attended. Roberts was born in 1894 in India. His father was commissioner for Allahabad, but died in 1903. The family returned to Cheltenham where Roberts won a scholarship to Cheltenham College, becoming a prefect and captain of the gym team. He moved on to Queens College, Oxford but on the outbreak of the First World War he joined the Scottish Rifles. He won his Military Cross on the Western Front in 1915 as section commander of a machine gun unit. He then became an Observer with the Royal Flying Corps. He was posted back to England in June 1917 and came to live in Granville Cottages, Byfleet (now the site of Granville Close) while he learnt to fly at Brooklands, and obtained his flying licence at Northolt in July 1917. While carrying out a bombing test at Hounslow Heath airfield his aircraft caught fire and crashed, killing Roberts, aged just 22. The Heritage Society held a commemoration in the churchyard on the 100th anniversary of his death on 31st August. Tribute was also paid to Richard Harold Barnwell, test pilot at Brooklands, who was killed at Joyce Green aerodrome on 25th August

1917, but his story will be told at another time.



FROM THE ARCHIVE

It was a bit of a shock to hear on the news recently that it has been 30 years since the Great Storm in 1987. Here are some photos of that memorable day, taken by David Chapman. If anyone has any pictures of their own, we would love to see them and add copies to our archive.



Top left: St Mary's lych gate. (somewhere under the tree!)

Bottom left: the top of Rectory Lane near the church

Right: clearing up in Mill Lane behind the Clock House
Below: Rectory Lane



Above: Parvis Road by the West Hall entrance
Right: Parvis Road near Dartnell

