



Issue 79

Newsletter

July 2019

Another AGM has come and gone, which was very well attended, and we hope those of you who came along enjoyed the talk about the Manor House. Subscriptions for 2019/20 are now due; many thanks to everyone who has already renewed and we have sent further reminders out with this newsletter. Please get in touch if you have any queries.

It will soon be time for Parish Day, and the Society will be there so do come along and see us—see back page for details. It is a really fun event with lots to see and do, so fingers crossed for good weather.

We hope you enjoy this newsletter and that we see you soon.

FORTHCOMING
EVENTS 2019



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

2019

Thursday 18th July: 'Apollo 11 by a Byfleet participant' by Pat Norris.

Thursday 19th September: Sue Jones comes to speak to us about Working the Wey.

Thursday 17th October: Chris Glasow returns to tell us more about the *History of St Mary's Church*.

Thursday 21st November: A talk on Dame Ethel Smyth, composer, suffragette, sportswoman and resident of Surrey. By Chris Wiley.

Thursday 19th December: Christmas meeting. For our final meeting of the year we once more welcome Mike Webber who will show some of the photos and items of interest that the Society has acquired throughout 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.

A DATE FOR YOUR DIARIES. St Mary's Church Women's Group have extended a kind invitation to our members to join them on **Tuesday September 10th** to hear a talk by historian, author and television presenter **Kathryn Turner**. Kathryn is very interested in coming to Byfleet, being an expert on **Edward II**. King Edward had connections to Byfleet, giving the manor to his favourite and he is possibly the figure featured in the wall paintings at St Mary's Church.

The talk will begin at 7.30pm at St Mary's Church & Community Hall, 124 Church Road, Byfleet. Entrance is £3 for non-members which includes tea and biscuits.

Everyone very welcome.

For the Record...



In April **June Davey** joined us to speak about the wonderful house, **West Horsley Place**. The house has been home to nine different families sometimes, unusually, being handed down through the female line. The present owner, the TV presenter **Bamber Gascoigne**, inherited the house from his great aunt, **Mary, Duchess of Roxburghe**. He knew he was to be the executor of **Mary's** will, but having previously only seen four rooms of the ground floor of the house as a visitor, this inheritance came as a complete surprise. The house was in very bad condition, and needed an estimated £10m of repairs. **Bamber** decided to take up the

challenge, raising £8m through three sales at Sotheby's of some of the house contents. The money was put into the newly formed **Mary Roxburghe Trust** to help the house. **Bamber** sees the house very much as a public asset, to be used for concerts, teaching of arts and crafts, performances and historical research.

In 2015 **West Horsley Place** gave permission for an opera house to be built in the woods. Within a year, this was complete enough to hold performances, and has proved very successful. The building is inspired by the famous opera house in **Milan**. Planning permission has also been obtained to convert the barn into a cafe and craft centre, which should open this year, and the stables are to become a history centre.

June then took us back in time to hear about some of **West Horsley Place's** previous owners. **West Horsley** has Saxon origins, and a Danish owner, **Thored**, left the property to the Archbishop of **Canterbury** for the good of his soul. **Thored** also rebuilt **St Mary's** church there in about 1030. The **Domesday Book** in 1086 records **West Horsley's** owner as **Brixi**. His fortunes suffered after the **Norman Conquest**, as he was brother in law to **King Harold**, and hence most of his manors were seized. However, **Brixi** was allowed to keep **West Horsley**. Later, the **Fitzotter** family owned the land for four generations— all of whom were called **Sir Hugh**, and the fourth of whom was mad! From 1360-1388 the owner was the remarkable **James de Berners**. He was a JP at 18, a member of Parliament, a ward of the **Earl of Hereford** and a ward of the **Black Prince**. He was blinded after being struck by lightning, but after a pilgrimage to **Walsingham**, his sight was miraculously restored. However, he came to a sad end. **James** was one of the three men deemed to have too much influence on the young **King, Richard II**, and he was executed by order of the **Lords Appellant**. But the **King** did manage to save **West Horsley Place** for **James' widow**, and her family controlled the estate well into the 15th century. **James' great great grandson, John Bouchier**, was brought up with **Henry VIII** and attended the **Field of the Cloth of Gold**. He became **Chancellor of the Exchequer** and a successful soldier, courtier and scholar. However, **Henry** later seized the estate, which was eventually given to **Henry Courtenay, Marquess of Exeter**. Under **Courtenay**, **West Horsley Place** became a pleasure palace with a live-in clown, musicians and beautiful gardens. But poor **Henry** later lost the **King's** favour, and also his head.

This time **West Horsley Place** was granted to **Sir Anthony Browne** (a family that also has connections to **Byfleet Manor**). **Sir Anthony** married **Elizabeth Fitzgerald**, known as "**The Fair Geraldine**". The **Geraldine Room**, kitchens and **Tudor staircase** still survive from this time. His descendant, **Viscount Montague**, entertained **Elizabeth I** there with a huge masque in the gardens. **Carew Raleigh**, **Sir Walter's** son, inherited the house in the 1640s, and he is probably responsible for the red brick facade which **Sir John Evelyn** mentions in his diary. Rumour has it that **Sir Walter's** widow, **Bess Throckmorton**, kept **Sir Walter's** head in a red velvet bag at the house and would show it to visitors. Interestingly, a red velvet bag from **West Horsley Place**, known as **The Raleigh Bag**, has been dated to the correct period. The **Carew** family died of a pestilence in the 1660s. When their tomb in the local church was later investigated, an extra head was discovered among the bones. Is this the last resting place of **Sir Walter's** head?



The house then passed through the **Nicholas** and the **Weston** families until it was purchased in 1931 by the 1st **Marquess of Crewe, Mary Roxburghe's** father. He installed modern comforts such as bathrooms and electricity as well as an extensive library. **Mary** herself married the 9th **Earl of Roxburghe** in 1935. She was one of the four maids of honour at **George VI's** coronation and became a close friend of the **Queen Mother**. The **Roxburghe's** divorced in 1953 and **Mary** neither had children or remarried, and hence she bequeathed **West Horsley Place** to her great nephew.

Today guided tours are given around as many rooms as possible. The house is also used as a location for television and film, being used in **My Cousin Rachel** starring **Rachel Weiss**, the recent TV production of **Vanity Fair**, and the new TV comedy **Ghosts**. We thanked **June** for such a comprehensive tour of **West Horsley Place's** fascinating history.

After the business of our AGM in May, we settled back to hear an update on the work being carried out at Byfleet Manor. Martin Sumpton has been project manager there for four years, overseeing and working with an extensive team on the house and grounds.

The site has an extensive history. Neolithic remains have been found close by, and in 1906 an ancient dug-out canoe, dating from about 50BC, was discovered in the River Wey. Byfleet and the Manor House are on a sandy ridge, raising it above the river and making it good for settlement. There have been several high status owners. Edward, the Black Prince, eldest son of King Edward III, owned the manor for 40 years and spent a lot of money on renovations. Brick and plaster of paris dating from the beginning of the 14th century have been found there. At the time, Geoffrey Chaucer was Clerk of Works for the area and would have visited Byfleet to check on the renovations at the Manor. King Henry VIII hunted here and he gave the manor to Catherine of Aragon as part of her divorce settlement. Another of his queens, Catherine Parr also visited. Queen Anne of Denmark, wife of James I, rebuilt the manor as an extensive house. She was interested in architecture and a patron of Inigo Jones. Anne's palace is now gone, but Palace Cottage to the side of the present house is built within one of the palace's chimney stacks. Previous excavations have found Valencia tile, which



showed that Anne spared no expense. The gate pillars at the front of the house are also from Anne's time. A photo from the 1950s show these in very good condition, with clear carvings. Sadly, these have now deteriorated badly, mainly due to incorrect repair with cement-rich mortar, which has caused the stone to weaken and corrode. The pillars have now been dismantled; it is a condition of the planning permission that the stones be kept in case they can be re-used. Sadly, their condition is so bad that this is not possible, but replicas will be made and put back into place.

The current house was built by William Sutton, who obtained the necessary permission from Sir Christopher Wren. Sutton built the central portion as we see it today, with the wings being added at the end of the 19th century by Mrs Rutson. A photo from her time shows that she had a tennis court in the front courtyard. She also remodelled the gardens, which she opened to the public on Sundays. A new planning application has been submitted to recreate her lagoon, which will not only look pretty, but provide welcome flood relief. Old maps show a "subterranean passage" running from the Manor, under the Wey to St George's Hill. In the basement the beginnings of a tunnel have been found going into the garden, along with a staircase which now goes nowhere, and a fireplace and oven behind a wall. What the passage might be is unsure; some say it is a secret passage, but it probably forms part of the drainage system from an earlier house.

Some interesting features remain inside. Wood panelling in the hall has probably been re-used from Queen Anne's palace. There is more panelling in the front room. In some places the panelling has been painted, but this will be stripped back to the original wood. There is a fireplace with a fine Delft tile and limestone surround; another fireplace has a Stuart coat of arms above it.



The basement is being underpinned and waterproofed to provide another room. During this work, a silo was discovered, possibly for grain storage, along with a well and a kiln, all in very good condition. An interesting hidden passage was also uncovered by electricians. Such passages and hidden places are due to the additions and alterations made to the house over the years, sealing bits off and uncovering others.

It is planned to rearrange the interior to reconnect the Edwardian wings to the original house and to restore the original features. Windows along the front elevation will be extended down to ground level to recreate the ballroom.



Outside, an avenue of limes has recently been planted. Many old or out of place trees have been cleared or thinned, and many more will be planted in due course. The river inlets have been dredged and the lagoon, when recreated, will be stocked with fresh-water fish.

Martin acknowledged the hard work of the whole project team and said that the work would probably continue for another couple of years. But the prime aim of the project was to ensure that this historic house will continue to stand for many years to come.

THE HERITAGE SOCIETY'S FLOTILLA



This year we brought forward the date of our annual boat trip to June, so as to take advantage of the lighter evenings. On 20th, three boats full of our members and friends set off from Parvis Wharf and headed towards Weybridge. It was a pleasant warm evening, although the sun rarely shone.

Along the route we passed a couple of gardens where the occupants' dogs barked to make it clear that we were approaching their territory. After passing under the railway line close to the Basingstoke Canal junction, we passed under the

M25 where one of the supporting columns was graced with an amazing painting of an animal, possibly a wild cat? This stood out amongst a collection of graffiti.

We then passed through New Haw lock, and encountered a number of canoeists from the local club. The next lock was at Coxes Mill, which we passed through and headed for Town Lock, Weybridge, where we turned around, and headed back. Just beyond Coxes Lock on the return journey we met a large flock of Canada geese, some with their young. Then more canoeists were met.



We were afloat for three hours, and it appears that everyone enjoyed the evening, with opportunities for many reminiscences. Many thanks to Stewart, his wife and daughter for safely steering the boats and operating the locks.

Society members enjoying a midsummer's evening on the canal. The boats are shown at Coxes Lock, Addlestone.



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NOTES AND QUERIES
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COACH TRIP TO KEW GARDENS



On 23rd May, 48 of us visited Kew Gardens on a bright, sunny day. Everyone enjoyed the day, although unfortunately the land train was sometimes difficult to use, as they had taken one out of service for a private hire. However, there was still much to see, including Kew



Palace, and throughout the gardens a number of stunning sculptures constructed of glass. Our coach driver was fortunate in that he was able to park by the Elizabeth Gate, which he is not normally permitted to do, so we were dropped right by the entrance, and collected from the same point. It was interesting to discover that the gardens are cashless, so only cards can be used for purchases, even ice creams!

We received the following from Bob Boylin, an "ex resident of Rectory Lane, Cornwall Avenue and Winern Glebe."

"I would be pleased if you could enquire among your members if anyone can remember a huge military parade held in the Byfleet rec. during WW2.

I lived on and off in Byfleet from 1937 until 1963, and can remember a massive parade, I can't remember if it was at the end of the war or maybe leading up to the Normandy invasion.

I seem to recollect that Montgomery could have been there, reviewing the troops.

I know the rec. was closed for the occasion, and that me and a friend, one of the Wiltshire twin boys, got into the rec. but we were then escorted out by two very large soldiers complete with rifles!!

I would be interested to hear if any of your members who were living in Byfleet through the 1940s have any recollection of such an event.

Regards and best wishes,
 Bob Boylin."

Does anyone remember this? If so, do please get in touch using any of the ways listed on the back page. Many thanks!

A tale of Byfleet citizens upholding the law from *The Surrey Advertiser and Surrey Times*, Saturday April 4th, 1874—:

NOVEL ROBBERY, CHASE, AND CAPTURE

On Saturday last, a man named Whattingham, dropped a pound's worth of silver at Mr Holroyd's brewery. The cash was picked up by a newsboy named Legg, but a couple of tramps passing laid claim to the money, and made the lad hand it over to them. The fellows hastened off with their booty in the direction of Chertsey, but they were not long in possession, for as soon as the brewery employees became aware of what had happened, three of the most stalwart started off in a cart in pursuit, and overtook the men at New Haw Bridge, and shortly after handed them over to the Chertsey police.

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**SOCIETY NEWS,
 AND QUERIES**
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PARISH DAY 2019 will be on Saturday 20th July on Byfleet Recreation Ground. As ever, the Society will be there with some of our displays, so do come along and see us.

If anyone could help either setting up beforehand, or by manning the stall for half an hour or so, we would love to see you. Please let us know if you can help. See you on 20th for another great day.

Reminder.

Subscriptions for 2019/20 became due at our AGM in May, and reminder forms are included with this newsletter. Many thanks to those who have already renewed. Please let us know if you have any questions about your renewal, and we hope to see you at a meeting or drop-in soon.

At our AGM we received a subscription from someone called Stubbs, but we have no other details. Would anyone be able to identify who this might be? Please give Tessa a ring on 01932 351559. Thank you



The summer has been a bit hit and miss so far, but when the temperature really rises, what could be better than a quick dip. This is Addlestone Swimming Club giving swimming lessons in the canal. We think it is at New Haw Lock near the White Hart. Whatever the location, it looks really inviting!

Does anyone remember doing this—or swimming in any of the other local waterways?

Would you do it now?!

THE KINGS OF OCKHAM
NEW EXHIBITION AT RIPLEY MUSEUM
Open every Saturday from 10 -12.30

The new exhibition tells the story of the King family who owned Ockham Park, and much of the land around it from the 18th century until the estate was sold in 1958. Come and learn more about Ada Lovelace, the wife of the 8th Baron King and first Earl of Lovelace. Ada is now heralded as a computer pioneer but her mother was also a remarkable innovator in the field of education – this and much more... The exhibition is on until the end of July at Ripley Museum, next to Ripley Village Hall (GU23 6AF)



If you need to contact the Society, we can be reached in the following ways:
 Leave a note at Byfleet Library, email us at info@byfleetheritage.org.uk or ring our Secretary, Tessa Westlake on 01932 351559

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