

**FROM THE CHAIRMAN**

Having established an interesting programme for 2020, including 10 meetings, 11 'drop-in' mornings, three coach trips and one boat trip, our plans have been brought to a shuddering halt by the Coronavirus pandemic. Everything is on hold for the foreseeable future, and who knows when we'll be able to restart? Hopefully it won't be too long.

Another casualty is the photographic competition for our 2021 calendar. As the topic is 'The Seasons of Byfleet', it has obviously become difficult for photographers to get out during the spring and early summer. We have decided, therefore, to postpone the closing date of the competition until the end of May 2021, when we will judge the entries we have already received, plus those yet to come, in preparation for our 2022 calendar. Many thanks to those who have already entered.

We normally hold our Annual General Meeting in May each year, but again this is a casualty of the current lock-down. We will reset the AGM as soon as we are able; this will probably be our first meeting of the revised talks programme for this year, but it could yet be some time away.

Renewals of subscriptions are due at the AGM, and we are happy to extend your present subscription until then. However, if you wish to renew sooner, then please do so by sending your cheque to Avreil Fabb, 6 Birchdale Close, West Byfleet, KT14 6QA or by dropping it, in a sealed envelope marked Byfleet Heritage Society, to Byfleet Community Library, High Road, Byfleet, KT14 7QN. Although the library is closed, the letterbox is checked on a weekly basis.

Finally, some good news. The next edition of our occasional Journal has now arrived from the printers. We are considering how we can distribute these in the present circumstances, so please bear with us. We will get your copy to you as soon as we can.

On behalf of the committee, thank you for your continued support. We all look forward to meeting again. In the meantime - keep safe and well!

Jim

FORTHCOMING  
EVENTS 2020



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

**2020**

**Thursday 21st May—*postponed***

Society AGM, followed by a talk by **Ian Franklin**, State Apartment Warder at Hampton Court Palace, **'Hampton Court—Behind the Scenes.'**

**Thursday 18th June**

Our annual boat trip along the Wey Navigation canal, setting off from Parvis Wharf and heading towards Pyrford—details to follow.

**Thursday 16th July**

**Martin Sumpton** will speak about **'Capability Brown—How He Made His Mark Upon the English Landscape from Wimbledon Park to Blenheim.'**

**August—no meeting**

**Thursday 17th September**

**'A Members' Evening'** when we will reminisce about Vickers/British Aerospace aircraft factory.

**Thursday 15th October**

For fans of *Downton Abbey* or *Upstairs Downstairs*, **Judy Hill** will tell us about **'Misdemeanours Below Stairs in Victorian Britain.'**

**Thursday 19th November**

**'The Bishops of Winchester—Their Place in our History'** by **Tony Paice.**

**Thursday 17th December**

Our annual **Christmas meeting**, at which **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!**

## For the Record...



Our February speaker was **Mike Swaddling**, a volunteer with the National Trust at **Clandon Park**. After visiting the house, he then attended talks by the Clandon project team. These inspired him to get involved, and he is now at the site twice a month.

Before the devastating fire in 2015, Clandon attracted fewer visitors than nearby properties like Polesdon Lacey, so there were worries that the house might not reopen. However, since then, visitor numbers have actually increased. Mike's talk explored how this has happened, as well as why the National Trust are spending an 8-figure sum on the restoration, making it their single biggest restoration project ever undertaken.

Clandon Park is associated with the Onslow family. Richard Onslow raised the family to prominence when he became Speaker of the House of Commons under Elizabeth I. It was his grandson, Richard, who bought the original Jacobean manor at Clandon in 1641, and his son Arthur who set up home there. The estate was a convenient distance from London, Hampton Court, Richmond and Merrow Downs for the horseracing. This Richard was also a Parliamentarian; Oliver Cromwell called him the Red Fox of Surrey because of his cunning. Arthur's son, another Richard, was the one who laid out the formal gardens. He became Speaker of the House of Commons and rose to the peerage as 1st Baron Onslow. His son Thomas married Elizabeth Knight, the richest heiress in England. Thomas knocked down the Jacobean house and, using his wife's money, built a new one in the latest Palladian style. Thomas' cousin, Arthur, became the Onslow family's third Speaker of the House of Commons; he held the position for 33 years through five successive parliaments, earning him the nickname the Great Speaker. In the late 1800s the 4th Earl Onslow further transformed the house, bringing in the Maori meeting house, a souvenir from his Governorship of New Zealand. The house was taken over during both World Wars, first as a military hospital and later as part of the Public Records Office. The 6th Earl returned in 1945 but found he could not afford to run the property and retired to a smaller house on the estate. Clandon was finally donated to the National Trust by Lady Iveagh in 1956.

Clandon Park was designed by Leoni, an Italian architect who had translated Palladio's four books on Architecture into English. The house is believed to be one of only five surviving Leoni houses, and the Marble Hall was considered one of the grandest 18th century interiors. But on the afternoon of 29th April 2015 a fire broke out in the basement, caused by an electrical fault. The fire spread up a liftshaft, catching quickly as the house had been empty for some time and the timbers very dry. The timing was quite lucky as, although visitors had begun to leave, there were still many people on site and, with a well rehearsed emergency plan, 600 items were rescued from the house. Also, although it took until September to clear the debris, a further 2,000 trays of salvaged material such as plaster, ceramic and metal was removed. A salvage village of 8 polytunnels and 11 cabins was built. There were some miraculous survivals, such as some Chinese vases, a painting of the Great Speaker and a 600 year old South Korean plasterwork duck which had been on the first floor. The State Bed, originally brought from the previous Jacobean house, was badly damaged and important decisions will need to be taken about its restoration. However, the bed had protected some tapestries and hangings that had been taken down and stored underneath. Also, two fireplaces in the Marble Hall have survived better than expected.

Although devastating, the fire has allowed the Trust to learn far more about the house than would have been possible otherwise. For example, dendochronology on the timbers revealed that the new house had been built from trees felled on the Swedish/Finnish border in the Autumn of 1729. But what of the future? Dame Helen Ghosh stated that the aim is to "return parts of the house to its 18th century glory whilst at the same time creating a building of beauty and relevance for the 21st century." The unusual decision was taken to keep Clandon open throughout the restoration, to involve the public, and to acknowledge that Clandon is not just about the fire.

An International Design competition was held, and 60 designs for the restoration were submitted. The 6 shortlisted designs were displayed at Clandon and the winner, Allies & Morrison, announced in December 2017. The plan is to reinstate the architecturally significant state rooms, restore the Marble Hall, and use the first floor for exhibition and meeting spaces; a roof top cafe will provide stunning views over the estate. As some rooms on the South side were totally destroyed, a staircase will be installed there giving access from basement to roof. Possibly some walls will be left as bare burnt brick, to acknowledge the fire as part of Clandon Park's history.

Since the fire, Clandon has welcomed almost 60,000 visitors, many coming for the first time. Almost 100% of visitors appreciated being allowed to come and see the progress being made. Huge fundraising efforts are being made, as not all areas were covered by insurance. Any building contracts offered have to include apprenticeships to ensure the skills needed for this sort of work do not die out. £133,000 had been raised by the end of 2019, with a larger fundraising campaign to follow once plans are finalised.

Phase 1 of the project is planned to begin in the second half of 2020. Almost one third of the collection has been saved, of which 67% can be fully restored, 25% can be stabilised and only 8% counted as a total loss. However, money is short, so tough decisions on which work to carry out have to be taken. So the battle to restore Clandon Park is still very much ongoing. You can check how things are progressing on the National Trust website [www.nationaltrust.org.uk/clandon-park](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/clandon-park)



Arthur Onslow, the Great Speaker

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**NOTES AND QUERIES**  
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Can you help? We received a query from Brian Judson about the Sheerwater Estate. Brian says, "back in the early 50's my family were housed by Woking Borough Council in West Byfleet Camp, Sheerwater Road, West Byfleet. The camp was built on the southern side of West Byfleet Golf Course and I believe it was an old military camp. There were about 20 half round black Nissan Huts, they had one main room and two bedrooms with a toilet outside of the main door at the front.

I have been trying to find photos of the camp for quite some time, I contacted Iain Wakeford to see if he could help a few years ago, however he had heard of the camp but could not find any evidence of it anywhere. It was as if it was a well kept secret by the council, as the living conditions were pretty horrible...I just wondered if you had heard of the camp and if so did you know of any photographs."

Has anyone heard of this camp, or even know of any pictures? If so, please let us know and we will pass the information on to Brian. As the library is shut at the moment, you can reach us at [info@byfleetheritage.org.uk](mailto:info@byfleetheritage.org.uk), or give Tessa a ring on 01932 351559. Thank you.

Can anyone help Dick Bird, who is writing a book on West Byfleet? Dick wrote to us saying, "I have a faint recollection of being told that no pubs were allowed in West Byfleet due to Quaker influences. I have been advised that I should include this aspect of West Byfleet but I can find no references to this...There always appear to have been something about a hotel or eating establishment being ok but not a public house." We haven't been able to find anything in our collection, but if anyone knows anything about this, do let us know.



**Byfleet Wanderers Bowls Club**

Jeff Sechiari found this little badge on Ebay and wondered if anyone knows the story of Byfleet Wanderers Bowls Club?

The Byfleet Bowls Club web site says "Another interesting snippet from the past is an extract from **The Who's Who and Encyclopedia of Bowls** published in 1959, which mentions the Byfleet Wanderers Bowls Club who were based on our green." (<http://byfleetbowlsclub.co.uk/history.html>)

We think that there were three bowls clubs in Byfleet in all—the one in Rectory Lane, a Vickers-Armstrong club and the Wanderers who had not official home and presumably toured the different grounds—and hence their name.

Was anyone a member of the club, or remember anything about it?

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An advert for H&W Howard's garage from 1909. The garage stood near the Queen's Head pub

BYFLEET IN DAYS GONE BY

Recently our Society Facebook page was considerably brightened by a lovely batch of old postcards of Byfleet posted by Tim Notley. Tim has kindly said that I can reproduce some of them here for those of you who are not on-line. Hope you enjoy this look into the past, and if you would like to see more then do come and join us on Facebook. You can find us at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1622474314445694>



Clockwise from top left:  
 Byfleet Post Office (looking along High Road towards the Blue Anchor pub) with an old phone box in front  
 Lake House with its ornamental pond. Lake Close is now on the site  
 Church Road. Godley Road now heads off to the right just in front of the black and white gable  
 Chertsey Road. Parvis Road now goes past the front of this card. Lake House is behind the wall on the left  
 Old Parvis Bridge with the Byfleet Boat Club boathouse on the left.



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](mailto:info@byfleetheritage.org.uk) or ring our Secretary, Tessa Westlake on 01932 351559

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