



Issue 85

Newsletter

February 2021

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

This month we are celebrating our Silver Jubilee. It's 25 years since Sir Cliff Richard, OBE, officially opened our Heritage Room in Byfleet (Community) Library. We expected to be able to celebrate on the anniversary date itself, but the present Coronavirus restrictions mean that we cannot do so. We can, however, look back on 25 years of activity, mainly centred on our monthly talks, which became so popular that we had to move out of our Heritage Room in order to accommodate the increasing attendance numbers. Over the years we have had a wide variety of talks and speakers; these have, I believe, built up our reputation for ensuring that members have an interesting evening out, even in the depths of winter when we'd far rather stay indoors.

Some of our members have been with us since the beginning, under the Chairmanship of Doug Bright, who was supported by Howard Cook and Joan Mackintosh in setting up the Society. We owe these founder members a great deal of thanks for liaising with Surrey County Council on establishing our Heritage Room. Particular thanks are due to Tessa Westlake, our secretary since the inception, for putting together the various display boards and the timeline. Tessa has also produced each one of our newsletters, which are a valuable resource, recording our meetings contents and posing/resolving queries on local history.

I must also record the work of the Oral History Group, on recording many of our inhabitants who remember bygone Byfleet. This group received the Help the Aged "Not Old, Just Older" award for Technological Development for its work.

As you will see from the letters of congratulation that we have received, our Society has established a good reputation in the area. It has been my privilege to have been your Chairman for 20 years, during which I have been supported by a strong committee and a loyal membership. I hope that we will all be able to meet to celebrate our Silver Jubilee later this year, by restarting our regular meetings and our monthly 'drop-ins' in the Heritage Room, and running more coach trips to places of interest.

Here's to the next 25 years!

Jim Allen.

Byfleet Fire Station needs your help..!!

As members will know, we have long been concerned about the Fire Station in High Road. The Byfleet Fire Station Trust is in the process of creation, which will initially aim to repair and restore the neglected building. Secondly, we will further consult local residents about how best to use this rare historic building in our village. The long term plan is to use it as a heritage-based community resource, ideally including educational activities for all ages and abilities and hiring some space out to community groups. Forming the Trust will help us to keep it safe for Byfleet's future generations and protect this Victorian Listed building.

First we need to persuade the fire station's owners, Surrey County Council, to let us take over and restore the building which will need a lot of local support, funding and help! The proposed Trustees have applied for this 'Your Fund Surrey' grant and WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT to get the Surrey County Councils attention and show them that we mean business!

Please follow [this link](#), and click the "Agree" button and enter your email address Then make sure to check your email and click "Confirm Agreement" to make your vote count. Remember, everyone anyone in a household with a valid email address can vote.

Please also share news about our project and how to support it using the Facebook and Twitter buttons if you use social media, or by good old fashioned word of mouth. We would all love to see the Fire Station brought back to life, and we hope we can rely on your support. Very many thanks.



For the Record...



We can hardly believe that this year it is 25 years since the Society opened the Heritage Centre at Byfleet Library. Normally, this would be an excuse for a bit of a party, but sadly this is not to be at the moment, although we hope to be able to celebrate properly in the future. To mark the occasion, there are some display boards in the windows of Byfleet Community Library, but in case you are unable to get there to see them, here is a quick tour of some of our highlights from the last quarter of a century!

As Jim mentions on our front page, it was Parish Councillor Doug Bright who first had the idea to create a Heritage Room to display Byfleet's history. He approached Surrey County Council to ask if there might be space at Byfleet Library, and they agreed to convert the little-used meeting room, with half creating extra space for the library, and the other half to be used as Doug's new Heritage Centre. The Society was founded to support the venture, and work began on filing the empty room with displays and artefacts.



Sir Cliff Richard unveils our plaque

Getting the room ready for the official opening was truly a work of collaboration, with help from Byfleet Parish Council, Elmbridge Museum, and local residents. A dozen or so display boards on topics of local interest were created, and a time-line put up along one wall, showing events in British history compared with events in Byfleet. Then the big day arrived when Sir Cliff Richard came to perform our opening ceremony, and we were off.

We have taken part in many activities since then. In our first year, Doug entered the Heritage Centre for the Surrey County Council Interpret Surrey Award. We were surprised and delighted not only to be short-listed, but to actually win the 1996 award, which was a real feather in our cap. The Society then decided to try to reprint the essential village history book, *Byfleet, A Village of England* by L R Stevens. This thoroughly researched book formed the basis of many of our displays, but had not been in print since 1972. We obtained permission for the project from Roger Parsons, Mr Stevens' grandson, and produced the reprint in 2001. We hope to produce a revised

edition in our 25th anniversary year.

To mark the millennium, the Society set up the Byfleet Oral History Group. This was ably headed up by Paddy Holroyd, who collected a group of volunteers to record memories and stories from long-term residents of the village to preserve them for posterity. The Group were the proud winners of a Help the Aged Not Old Just Older (NoJo) Award for Technological Development as a reward for their efforts.

For our 10th anniversary in 2006 we joined forces with the Woking Community Play Association who produced the wonderful play *Byfleet – Kings, Heroes, Villains* and which

Left: The performance of *Byfleet—Kings, Heroes, Villains* in progress



Doug Bright and Sir Cliff Richard at the opening ceremony



The committee with the newly reprinted book *Byfleet A Village of England*. Roger Parsons far left.



took a dramatic tour through Byfleet's history. The play was performed twice, once outside Byfleet Library, and once in the Village Hall, and a great day was had by all.

In 2007 the Society mounted an exhibition on the life and work of Howard Cook, who had been the driving force behind the Byfleet, West Byfleet and Pyrford Residents' Association for nearly 30 years, as well as involving himself in countless local causes. We were very grateful to receive photographs and items from Mr Cook's daughter with which we were able to create the displays. These went on show at Byfleet Bowls Club where Howard had been a keen member. This was followed up in 2010 by the unveiling of a commemorative plaque at Byfleet Village Hall to mark Howard's service to the community. In 2015 the Society organised a blue plaque to be erected on the outside of the Village Hall to Mr and Mrs F C Stoop. The Stoops lived at West Hall and were very involved in village life, donating land for the cricket club, and paying for the building of the Village Hall itself, among many other charitable acts. We were very pleased that so many members of the Stoop family were able to attend the ceremony on a beautiful sunny day.



Kathleen Allen unveils a plaque in memory of her father Howard Cook.

As well as these special occasions, the Society has continued its regular activities too. We try to provide a varied selection of speakers for our monthly meetings, and we held monthly drop-in sessions at the Heritage Centre until covid restrictions interrupted us. We regularly attend Parish Day in the summer, which is always a great day and a chance to meet people interested in the history of our village. We have been allowed to hold open days at Byfleet Fire Station on several occasions and continue to be interested in the building's future. And in 2011 we produced the first of our now traditional calendars which feature pictures of the village both old and new.

So it's been a busy 25 years. We have had a lot of fun and continued to learn about the history of Byfleet. We have also increased our archive and our knowledge mainly thanks to the generosity of our members and others who have shared their memories, photographs and objects with us. Conditions at the moment mean that our activities have been a little restricted, but we look forward to returning to our meetings and drop-in sessions soon. In the meantime, if you should be passing the library while taking your daily exercise, do have a look at our displays in the front and side windows (pictures below), which we hope will bridge the gap until normality resumes. We can't wait to see you all again and

carry on investigating our village's long history.



Members of the Stoop family beneath the newly unveiled plaque to Mr and Mrs F C Stoop at the Village Hall





**SOME MESSAGES OF
CONGRATULATION ON OUR 25TH ANNIVERSARY**



Congratulations from Woking History Society to Byfleet Heritage Society on its Silver Jubilee. We may be an older society, but Byfleet is very much a distinct community, attaining its first authoritative history and its first museum well before Woking. Let us go on in friendship and co-operation through the present difficult days and for many years hence.

I am surprised you are only 25 years old, as you have achieved a great deal in those years. Byfleet and district has always seemed to me to be a useful unit for research.

Richard Christophers
President, Woking History Society

I write on behalf of the committee and all the members of the Send & Ripley History Society to congratulate the Byfleet Heritage Society on the occasion of your 25th Anniversary. What a shame that current circumstances prevent our meeting to celebrate. We have managed to keep our talks going on Zoom and to publish our bi-monthly journals but are all missing the human contact. The social interaction offered by societies like ours is perhaps as important as the scholarly contributions we make. I hope very much that life will return to some sort of normality before much longer.

With very best wishes to you and all your members
Cameron Brown
Chairman, Send & Ripley History Society

What a wonderful milestone for you and the Byfleet Heritage Society to be reaching next month. From the inception opened by Sir Cliff Richard back in 1996 to all the work that you as a society continue to do now I want to congratulate you all.

It is so important to value and share our historical roots with the local community and realise we have much to celebrate. I know that as a society you will continue to research and record everything so that generations to come have the benefits of your work, so celebrate all that you have achieved so far and I will be remembering you all on 1st February 2021!!

Best wishes
Yours sincerely
Councillor Beryl Hunwicks
Mayor of Woking 2020-2021

Warm best wishes to you all. Here's to the next 25 years!
Kind regards,

Jonathan
Jonathan Lord MP

I cannot believe it is 25 years since your wonderful group was formed – one of the best and most active local history societies in the area.

I have had the pleasure to visit your room at the library on many occasions, and to speak to your members, both there, in the village hall, and lately at the St Mary's Centre. Hopefully we will all be able to meet up again soon.

We are all living through historic times (which I am sure your society is actively recording for future generations), and I hope your organisation prospers over the next 25 years as much as it has done up to now.

Indeed, I look forward to sending my best wishes again in 2046!

Iain Wakeford
Heritage Walks

Twenty-five years ago today Sir Cliff Richard officially opened the Heritage Room of Byfleet Heritage Society in Byfleet Library. I have great pleasure in writing to you on this important anniversary to congratulate you and all of your members on the tremendous work you have done over the past quarter of a century to uncover and celebrate Byfleet's rich history.

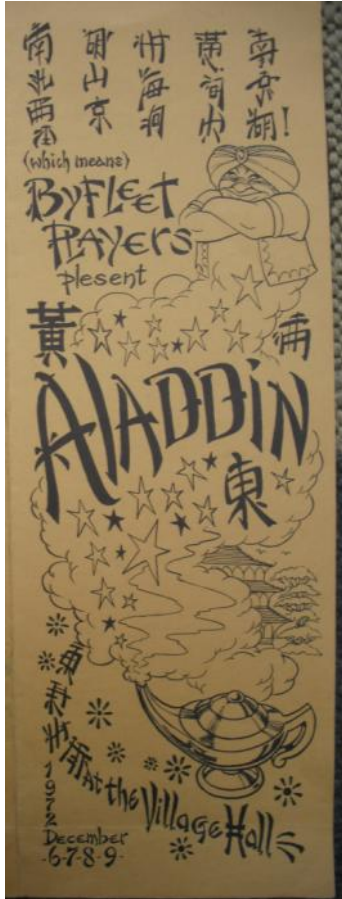
The Society's mapping of nearly 3,000 burials in St. Mary's churchyard, the histories of Byfleet's people and places on your website, alongside studies of the parish's war memorials, blue plaques and fire station, annual calendars and your own research on Byfleet and the Great War all testify to the enthusiasm, interest and committed support of your members since your foundation in 1996.

On behalf of everyone at Surrey History Centre I thank you for the Society's contribution to the understanding of our county's history and look forward to the post-pandemic resumption of your excellent programme of meetings, Saturday drop-ins and coach trips and to the next twenty-five years of championing Byfleet's heritage.

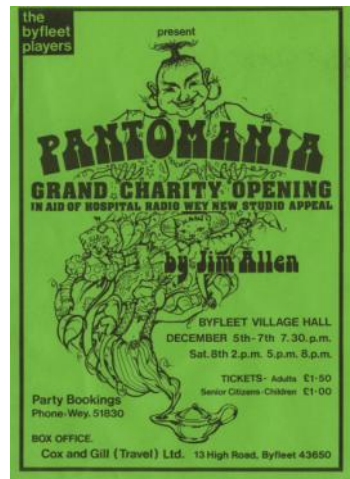
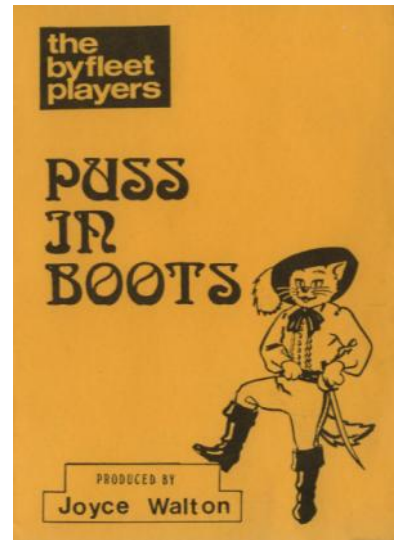
With all good wishes,
Julian Pooley F.S.A.
Public Services and Engagement Manager
Surrey History Centre

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**MORE FROM
 OUR ARCHIVE**
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Sadly the traditional panto by The Byfleet Players was unable to happen this year. So we thought it might be nice to take a look back at some past productions with some photos and press articles which can be found at Surrey History Centre. How many do you remember?



Puss in Boots from 1982. Left—a photograph from rehearsals. Below: the programme cover



Above: Aladdin was performed in 1972
 Above right and far right: a photograph from rehearsals and programme cover for Pantomania performed in 1984



These three black and white pictures are from unknown productions. Does anyone remember these? The nearer two are undated, but the picture far left is from the newspaper of 1959. The cutting on the right has the headline "Comedy and Drama Provided Grand Entertainment. Byfleet Players Chose An Old Favourite."

SOCIETY NEWS,
AND QUERIES

Margaret Howe has been very busy transcribing the recordings of local residents made by Byfleet Oral History Group. It is a fascinating collection, and we are very glad to have Margaret's help. Can any members help with a couple of queries thrown up by the interviews? Does anyone remember a Mrs Maysham, who had three nursery school in the village; the one in Binfield Road was called the Willingdon. Also does anyone remember the Village Pound, which used to be in the area where the War Memorial is now. Any stray animals were rounded up and kept here until the owners came to claim them, and paid a fine. Does anyone know if the Pound was owned by the Parish or the Manor? And who collected the fines? If you think you can help with these queries, do please get in touch—contact details are at the bottom of this page. Thank you.

You might be interested to know that Surrey County Council has received an application to divert Public Footpath 94 from A-B on the map to an alternative route shown as A-C. Surrey states that the application has been made in the interests of the owners and the public. The proposed route will be surfaced and instead of crossing in front of the Manor House, the path will take the present route round from Manor Farm into Mill Lane. "The Council can make a diversion order if it is satisfied that the new path would be substantially as convenient as the old one. The Council must also consider the effect that the diversion would have on public enjoyment of the path as a whole."



If you have any comments on this application, please write to Anne Woods, Countryside Access Team, Surrey County Council, Whitebeam Lodge, Mero Lane, Guildford GU4 7BQ. Tel: 020 8541 9342 or email anne.woods@surreycc.gov.uk by 22 February 2021

If you are still looking for somewhere to write down all those lovely plans you are going to make for when we come out of lockdown, we still have a few copies of the Byfleet Heritage Society 2021 calendar! These cost £5.



For your copy, email info@byfleetheritage.org.uk letting us know how many copies you would like (and if you would like an envelope). We can deliver within the village, or postage and packing is an additional £2. Payment by cash or cheque (cheques made to Byfleet Heritage Society) either on delivery, or sent to 8 Brewery Lane, Byfleet, KT14 7PQ.



We still hope to create our 2022 calendar from winning entries to our photo competition. The theme, "The Seasons of Byfleet", is open to individual interpretation, but must clearly show a location in the ancient parish of Byfleet.

We have had some great entries, but most are quite autumn-y, so if you have taken pictures of Byfleet looking lovely in the recent snow, or with all the Christmas lights, or are poised to start snapping as soon as the Spring bulbs come into bloom, we would love to see your photos. Details on how to enter can be found at byfleetheritage.org.uk/competition%202021.htm Please do spread the word to any budding photographers you know, and we can't wait to see your entries.

NEWSLETTERS VIA EMAIL

Just a reminder that if you would like to receive your newsletters and other Society news by email, do let us know. Just drop an email to Tessa@westlakesystems.co.uk to be added to our emailing list.

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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