



Byfleet Heritage Society.

Issue 11

Newsletter

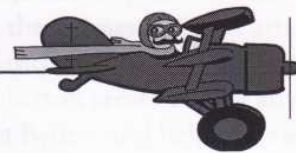
October 1999

These newsletters seem to come round quicker every time, and I hope you have found a peaceful spot (out of the rain!) to read this latest edition.

Perhaps you are thinking of taking up something to occupy the winter nights ahead? We might have just the thing! You will see from the item below that we are asking for a new Events Organiser. Paddy is working hard on other projects, so we are looking for a volunteer to keep up her good work.

If you missed any of our talks, you can catch up as usual in the "For the Record" section.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS



Evening of Wednesday 20th October: An invitation to the mediaeval festival of the Assizes of Bread and Ale. (see below). Park in the grounds of Croxteth Hall, Ripley (room for 90 cars). At 7pm follow the Morris dancers in procession to The Saddlers Arms, Send Marsh. Everyone in Victorian or country dress is entitled to a free supper in the pub.

Friday 5th NOVEMBER: Guy Fawkes Night Gathering. Come and spend the evening in the company of friends. We are sure there will be many a happy memory of other Bonfire Nights. Enjoy a little food, a hot toddy or two, a soft drink or a cup of tea. Byfleet Village Hall, Room A, 8.15pm.

Friday 17th DECEMBER: Christmas Customs - Older Than You Think. An illustrated talk by Pat Elliot

Wanted!!

NEW EVENTS ORGANISER PLEASE.

Due to other commitments, our events organiser, Paddy Holroyde is having to give up the post. I'm sure you will want to join me in thanking her for all her hard work over the last year or so in keeping us entertained.

Events are organised up until the end of the year, and as usual, us committee members are available to help out the new volunteer.

So come and join the committee. Paddy has built up a lovely calendar of regular interesting and varied events which we would love to continue.

So, if you would like to know more about it, or are willing to give it a go, please ring:

Tessa Westlake on 01932 351559

**Assizes of Bread and Ale
Wednesday 20th October**

We have been invited by the Lord of the Manors of Papworth and Dedswell to attend the Assizes of Bread and Ale on **Wednesday 20th October**. Follow the Morris dancers to The Saddlers Arms, Send Marsh to see the fun and have some supper (everyone in Victorian or country dress gets a free pub supper!).

We have to let them have some idea of how many folk to expect, so if you would like to see the re-enactment of an ancient custom, **please ring Tessa Westlake on 01932 351559** by October 13th. See you there!

MEMBERS FREE, GUESTS £2

SOCIETY NEWS

HOWARD COOK

As some of you will have read in the local press, our Patron and Village elder, Howard Cook has moved from Byfleet. After a stay in hospital, Mr Cook has moved to Lancashire to be near his family. I'm sure you will join us in wishing him all the best for the future.



Membership Renewals

Renewals were due after the AGM, and thanks for those received so far. Thanks also to those of you who were kind enough to include a donation along with their renewal.

Some of you will find reminder renewal forms enclosed with this newsletter, which we hope you will use to continue your membership. Many thanks.

HELP WANTED!

As we get more members (not that I'm complaining!) the newsletter delivery round is getting more far flung. Most areas are covered by a trusty band of deliverers (thanks to all!), but could anyone else help deliver a few copies of the newsletter, three times a year? Particular areas are Chertsey Road, and the upper Church Road/Sanway/Fullerton areas? Also if anyone can help out in West Byfleet and help us save on postage, that would be great.



If you can help, please give Tessa Westlake a ring on 01932 351559. Many thanks.

HELP WANTED - PART II

Are you out there thinking about taking up some rewarding, yet fun and stress free spare time occupation? If so, then we might be able to help you!



From time to time the committee thinks of a possible fund raising idea. Could you come and help us co-ordinate these ideas into action?

Also, there are a couple of annual events which the Society attends, such as Parish Day and the Woking Local History Festival. Organising our attendance at these would be very much easier if we had someone to sort out who does what in good time. Could you give us the benefit of your organisational skills?

Either job would not take up too much of your time, and the committee meets once every six weeks or so.

So if you would like to help out, or if you would like to talk to someone to see what might be involved, please ring Tessa Westlake on 01932 351559. Thanks very much.

Mr Shettle of the Fire Brigades of Surrey Preservation Trust took us through 2,000 years of *The History of Firefighting* on the 9th September. Mr Shettle started with a brief overview of Byfleet's own fire brigade. In 1871 Sir Whittaker Ellis purchased a manual pump, which was kept in his potting shed along with three lengths of hose. By 1885 a proper Fire Station had been built. A steam fire engine was purchased in 1908. The Brigade was taken over by Woking in 1933 and then by the National Fire Service in 1941. The station closed in the 1960s. Mr Shettle then went on to put these events into the context of firefighting history.



The first organised firefighters were the Roman Vigiles. Each man had his own specific duty, such as forming bucket chains, working the squirts or using firehooks to pull down burning debris or even whole buildings to form firebreaks. Slaves could gain citizens rights after two or three years' service in the Vigiles. The squirt, a bit like a large water pistol, was still in use in the last century.

The first fire engines were recorded in about 1518 and consisted of a large tub on wheels, with pumps fixed to metal pipes. Hosepipes were invented in the 1670s. Made of leather in 40ft lengths, tallow and fish oil were used to keep them supple. Steam engines came in in the 1830s, giving way to motor engines at the beginning of this century.

After the Great Fire of London, Dr Barbon started fire insurance. Each company recruited their own brigades and had different badges. Despite the stories, brigades from different companies did work with each other, if only to prevent fires spreading to their own insurers' properties. The insurance companies later gave money or equipment for brigades in smaller villages. Each company had a different coloured fire engine, not just today's standard red. Engines and firemen's uniforms were adverts for the company.

In 1833 the London Fire Engine Establishment consisting of ten insurance companies was formed. It was headed by James Braidwood, considered as the father of British fire fighting. He saved Westminster Hall when Westminster Palace burned down, although he had only 90 firemen and 17 engines for the whole of London. He and others campaigned for an organised fire fighting force with more equipment, but the government did not act until a disastrous fire at the Tooley Street docks in 1861 cost Braidwood his life. Massey Shaw, a friend of the Prince of Wales who was a keen volunteer fireman, succeeded Braidwood. The firefighting cause became fashionable, and many local volunteer brigades were formed.



During the First World War, women were recruited, although women had been keen volunteers for many years, being on record in the 1700s. The Fire Brigades Act in 1938 made it compulsory for local authorities to have a fire fighting force. Before this all brigades had been voluntary. The Auxiliary Fire Service was formed just before the war, and the many recruits acted selflessly and bravely in defence of the country. Over 1,000 members were killed in the Blitz, and many medals were earned for brave acts.



The National Fire Service was formed in 1941.

Mr Shettle finished his talk with a reminder that over 2,000 years the main object of the fire fighter, ancient or modern, has remained the same - the protection of property and the saving of life from that ancient enemy, fire.



The rain held off on **Sunday June 27th** to allow us to view **Cobham Mill**. The picturesque red brick building by the river dates from the 1820s, but the Domesday Book lists three mills in Cobham. This one belonged to Chertsey Abbey in the 14th century, and was still milling corn until the 1920s. It was originally much bigger, and old photos on display inside the mill show the buildings spreading halfway across the road. This part was demolished in 1953 to widen the road because of increasing traffic.

The remaining mill buildings and water wheel have been lovingly and painstakingly restored by the Cobham Mill Preservation Trust. With help from local volunteers and the Environment Agency, the Mill opened to the public in 1993. As you cross the enclosed bridge, you can see the water wheel. Then you enter the main body of the mill, where you can view the cast iron wheels and shafts. These drive not only the mill stones, but also clever devices for lifting the heavy flour sacks to the storage bins in the loft, and also a sieve to separate the fine white flour from the bran.

The land beside the mill has been prettily landscaped with help from the Environment Agency and also prisoners from Send Prison. A walkway of bridges takes you over the sluices and overflows which allow the mill to control the flow of water past the wheel. The river is home to pike, perch and eels, as well as many birds, flowers and butterflies. The mill is a little oasis of peace by the river and is well worth a visit.

On **Thursday 22nd July** Members of Byfleet Heritage Society recently gathered round for an **evening of storytelling by Tina Cockett**, Education Officer at Woking Museum. Tina transported us back to the days of the Saxons to tell us the dramatic story of St Edward, King of Wessex and his wicked stepmother, Elfrida. She also showed how the re-telling of old myths and legends could get history across in a very direct and strong way.

The story goes that King Edgar of Wessex wished to remarry to provide a new mother for his young son Edward. He sent his best friend Ethelwald to see if Elfrida, the daughter of the Duke of Devonshire, was really as beautiful as people said. As soon as Ethelwald saw Elfrida, he fell in love with her. He sent a message to the King saying that she was unfit, and then married her himself. He took his wife back to his manor at Harewood and kept himself away from court. The King, hearing that Ethelwald had a beautiful new wife, grew suspicious and decided to take a hunting trip to Harewood. When the King saw that his best friend had married his potential bride, he fell into a jealous rage, and killed Ethelwald, pretending it to be a hunting accident. Edgar then married Elfrida.

But Edgar died suddenly, and his son Edward was crowned at a young age. There was a struggle for power. Queen Elfrida and her son Ethelred invited Edward to visit them at Corfe Castle. As the King was welcomed into the courtyard, he was stabbed in the back. The horse fled, dragging the body of the King behind him. The body was taken into the hovel of a blind old woman. That night she became aware of a light that came from all around the body of the King. When the King was buried at Wareham Abbey, a healing stream bubbled up from his tomb. It was decided to rebury the King with full honours at Shaftesbury, and when they opened the tomb to move the

body, it was found to be without corruption. Elfrida tried to follow the funeral procession, but her horse refused to move, and when she tried to follow on foot, invisible hands held her back. Miracles also took place at the new tomb. Edward was finally canonised in 1008.

Many years later, Henry VIII dissolved the abbey. But he was a superstitious man, and believed that if he damaged the shrine, then something might happen to his own son, also called Edward. So the abbey received a warning and hid the relics, so well that they were not found for over 400 years. In 1931 archaeologist John E Wilson found the bones of a young man aged between 15-25 who had died after a fall, probably from a horse. They were kept within the Abby ruins, and later deposited in a bank vault in Shaftesbury.. Both the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church were happy to honour the bones, but did not want to make a shrine. The Orthodox monastery at Brookwood cemetery said they would enshrine the bones, but due to a Court dispute they lay for two years in the vault of the Midland Bank in Woking. The shrine is still there in Brookwood today.

Tina finished the evening by inviting us to wonder if Elfrida was so wicked after all? The historical facts are that Ethelwald and Elfrida did marry, Elfrida did become Edward's stepmother, and Edgar was generally considered responsible for Ethelwald's death. But how did Elfrida go from being the innocent bystander to the wicked stepmother? Elfrida was not even at Corfe Castle or the funeral procession at the time. Who was telling the story, and to what advantage? It is possible that Archbishop Dunstan spread the rumours, as he was Elfrida's enemy. The tale of Elfrida's dramatic life was a lesson to us to bear in mind the reasons why someone would want to present the facts in a certain way.



For the Record...

Did you miss a meeting? Find out how it went.

On **May 21st Steve Dyer**, freelance archaeologist, gave a talk on **Explaining and Understanding Surrey's Historic Landscape**. Reading the clues in a landscape is a relatively new branch of archaeology. Where there is no direct threat to a site, efforts can be made to try and understand the area around it, as every site is part of a wider landscape. Clues in the landscape can tell you much about the development of a site.

Landscape archaeology is particularly suited to local voluntary organisations. As there is no immediate threat to the land, you can take your time, and it is suited to all abilities and interests. There are three main methods of gathering information. The first, field based data gathering, can be done using technical equipment such as theodolites or just by using simple methods such as tapes and sticks. Results are recorded onto a plan or sketch. However, this method is not so easy in Surrey, where 17% of the land is under trees.

Field walking is the second method. A line of people walk across a ploughed field to collect any surface artefacts which may give an indication of what lies beneath. Unfortunately modern farming techniques, which keep farmland in use for longer periods, are making this method more difficult to carry out.

The third method is to look the environmental evidence. Outgrown coppices and hedges can indicate that woodland was managed, and the size of the tree can show how long ago the management stopped. Also the local flora can show evidence of land use. Dogs Mercury and bluebells can indicate old woodland. English Nature give a list of 100 species. If you can find half a dozen or more on your piece of woodland, then that is considered to be good evidence of ancient woodland. However, this does not mean it has been untouched by the hand of man! Primeval woodland from about 1800 BC would have been gradually cleared, and what was left would have been managed to provide timber for fencing, housing and buildings.

Looking at the buildings can provide a fourth method. Buildings can be deceptive, and what looks new from the outside can prove to be very old on the

inside. Roof timbers can be particularly revealing, as these are often the last thing to be altered or modernised, and their construction gives a good clue as to their date. Desk based work at the local library, records office or museum using old documents and maps can back up your field work. Aerial photography can sometimes pick up patterns of old buildings or ditches on the ground. Again, the trees in Surrey cause problems with this method, as well as the proximity of Gatwick and Heathrow airports.

Steve demonstrated the use of these methods with a "walk" around Hindhead Common. The National Trust were trying to record the history of their lands, and also it was proposed to cut a dual carriageway through part of the Common. Therefore the area was studied. An earthwork was found which proved to be the ancient Hundred Boundary between Farnham and Godalming. Also a medieval field system and ancient roadway running between the fields came to light. In the forest charcoal burning hearths were found, along with saw pits for cutting up timber before transporting, and fish traps in the river. Field systems must be farmed from somewhere, and large amounts of rubble and building features were found in one area. What was now a rural area was shown in an old postcard of 1911 as a large group of farm buildings, Broomsquire Cottages. Keepers Cottage, a mid 16th century building, still existed. Ironically, traces of a medieval dual carriageway were found - the original London to Portsmouth road. A memorial stone stands on the common commemorating the murder of an unknown sailor. The stone is supposedly cursed, and the workman who moved the stone in the 1930s when the A3 was altered attributed his survival to the fact that he carefully wrapped the stone in cloth and didn't actually touch it!. In all 416 sites or groups of sites were recorded for Hindhead Common. This was a prime example of just how much information there was to be gathered just from looking at the surrounding land.

The Society thanked Mr Dyer, and I'm sure we will not go out and about into Surrey again without looking very carefully at the landscape around us.

Here's an article from the Byfleet Review of October 1967 - it just goes to show that in a changing world, some things never change!

From Our Archive

After heavy rains the locals call it - "BREWERY RIVER"

The drainage system in certain areas of Byfleet does not function efficiently after heavy rain. Readers have complained to the "Review" about the state of several roads, and we have been handed many photographs of Brewery Lane when it has been more like "Brewery River".

Mrs. D. Champion, of 19 Brewery Lane, stated that the road floods to a considerable extent after every heavy downpour, and in the three years she has lived in Brewery Lane, the road has been flooded every winter.

"Earlier this year," she said, "floods blocked the entrance to Eden Grove Road and I let people in the back way and through my house so that they could avoid being soaked." Mrs. Champion's house is on a corner, she says that flood-water covered the road in front of the corner stores and, on occasions, had covered the road at both the back and front of her house.

"I have told council workmen about it, but they don't take any notice," she complained. "Also, the roads are filthy, we are always sweeping them ourselves."

"Floodwater has come up to my gate," said Mrs. W. Frawley, of 26 Brewery Lane. "Directly in front of our house it has been quite bad."

Mrs. W. Dee, of 21 Brewery Lane, agreed, saying: "The floods have come up to the garden steps and children have paddled in the road. Earlier this year flooding occurred from the pumping station at the bottom of Hart Road to the corner stores.

"This morning I also tripped over a "water hydrant" cover and hurt my hands and knees. Others have done the same. Another complaint concerns the infrequency of the road sweeping. We all sweep the road in front of our homes every day."

BREATHALISER SERVICE

The Byfleet Hotel, West Byfleet, may be the first public house in the area to install its own breathalisher bags. Mrs Rosa Clay, wife of the licensee, said that they are seriously considering providing the bags so that customers know whether or not they are "legally drunk" or safe to drive. If people who have drunk in excess of the legal limit breathe into the bags the crystals in them change colour.

The breath test law has been a big talking point at the Byfleet Hotel and many regulars are wondering how they are going to cope with it. If they pass the hotel's own breath tests at least they will know they are safe if stopped by the police.

Maximum penalties for offenders under the new law are a £100 fine, four months imprisonment, OR BOTH, plus automatic disqualification for a year.

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PLEASE DON'T
FORGET...

If you can help with any of the jobs mentioned in this newsletter, or would like to find out about becoming involved "behind the scenes", or if you would just like to find out what's involved before committing yourself, please give Tessa Westlake, or any committee member, a ring. Very many thanks.