



Byfleet Heritage Society.

Issue 2

Newsletter

November 1996

Welcome to the next edition of our newsletter. Time is flying - when we issued our first one back in July we had all summer to look forward to. Now it is almost time to wish you a Merry Christmas! We hope you managed to come along to some of our events over the summer. Geraldene Done is busy organising some more for the coming months, so put the dates in your diaries and tell your friends. Also, we are hoping to get a couple of new projects off the ground, but we need your involvement to make it happen. Both projects should provide a valuable archive for later study, but if no-one comes forward, it simply will not happen, so please get involved - see below for details. In the same way, the committee needs some new recruits to make up the numbers, following the retirement of some members. Please see the relevant article for details. We hope to see you at some of our events in the near future, and remember, if you would like to write any articles or letters or have any queries for the newsletter, please contact me, *Tessa Westlake on 351559*.

CAN YOU HELP??

*In February the Heritage Centre will be ONE YEAR OLD. To mark the occasion we would like to make up some new display boards. Could you help with any pictures or information that could go into a display on St Mary's Church, old Byfleet businesses and clubs, local racing drivers, Byfleet notables in the fields of literature, technology, etc. or Byfleet Village Hall? We will, of course, take the greatest care of anything that is lent to the Society for copying. Someone else can put the display board together, but what we lack is information to go into it. Jim Allen has already very kindly offered to contribute pictures and information for a board on the Byfleet Players, once he has finished his commitments there - don't forget to get your tickets for the Byfleet Players Pantomime! So, if you can help too, whether with one postcard, or a whole library of information, please ring *Tessa Westlake on (01932) 351559*.*

WE NEED A VOLUNTEER TO CO-ORDINATE A NEW PROJECT.

We are interested in collecting people's memories of Byfleet in the past. Memory is a valuable historical resource, and sometimes more interesting and revealing than dry history books. We would collect memories in written form, or conduct recorded interviews. We would be especially interested if anyone has any old diaries or letters that they would be willing to let people see. Remember, what may seem very dull and day-to-day to you is extremely interesting to the next generation and beyond. The co-ordinator would be the first point of contact for people interested in the project, and the aim would be to form a group of people who would collect interviews, and also compile a register of people willing to share their memories.

If you are interested in co-ordinating this project, or if you would like to tell us about what you remember, or know someone who does, or you would like to help in collecting the information, please ring *Tessa Westlake on 351559*



The other project that we would like to start is that of making a video of the history and other aspects of Byfleet, to show on completion in the Heritage Centre for school parties or interested tourists.

You may remember that we were very kindly sponsored with a camcorder by Sony last year, and we want to make the best use of it. We will possibly use the camcorder in our oral history project too. So, if you have video expertise, or are interested in joining a team to produce something for the future, please contact

DOUG BRIGHT ON (01932) 346283

The Society has been lucky enough to have been loaned or given a number of artefacts. However, we are not experts on how best to display them with the least chance of deterioration from light or other factors, or how to best preserve the things we have got. Is there anyone out there, or among your friends, relations or contacts, who could help the Society with conservation? We would be very grateful for any advice. Please ring *Tessa Westlake on (01932) 351559* if you can help.

WALK ROUND BYFLEET (29th

August). Woking Borough Council intend to produce a leaflet detailing a walk through each village in the borough, as long as someone will provide them with the text and route. Our walk followed High Road through the village, making a loop to take in the Manor House and coming back to Byfleet via the market garden.

Unfortunately, instead of the proposed route down Murrays Lane and along the canal to Parvis Bridge, we had to go down Rectory Lane due to night setting in! However, the route was usefully tested and many suggestions were collected to allow us to "fine tune" the walk. Thanks to everyone who came along and to Mr Howard Cook who has kindly allowed us to illustrate the leaflet with some of his sketches of the village. We found that Byfleet is quite pleasant to stroll round, especially in summer, when so many of the gardens are at their best. There was also quite a lot to include, showing how much there is in Byfleet once you start to look. Our next step is to produce a draft and send it to Woking Council. Watch this space!



VISIT TO PAINSHILL PARK

(7th September) As a follow up to the fascinating talk on Surrey Gardens in July, the Society got the chance to see some of the principals of the landscape gardening movement in the flesh. Geraldene even managed to arrange a beautiful late summer day for our visit! Mr Smith of the Painshill Trust took us through the gardens

explaining how Charles Hamilton had managed to incorporate the three main points - variety, surprise and concealment. Variety was achieved by the many different features in the garden, from a ruined abbey to a Turkish tent. Meandering walks through trees and shrubs concealed views that were dramatically revealed when you least expected. A high point was viewing the inside of the grotto, not normally open to the public and presently being restored. Light reflected from the water of the lake and coming in from above showed up the crystal covered walls to great effect. A very pleasant afternoon was had by all, even though my younger son (20 months) was determined to try and throw himself in the lake! If you haven't been to Painshill Park, it is well worth more than one visit. You really would not think that such a peaceful and beautiful spot lies just beside the A3.



Ian Platford, Assistant Curator of Elmbridge Museum, took us into the world of **FILM-MAKING IN WALTON** in a talk on **26th September**. In

1899 Cecil Hepworth and his cousin, Monty Wickes, opened their first film studio in a house in Walton, using different rooms for different parts of the film process. Thanks to the success of the film "Rescued by Rover" made in 1905 for the grand sum of £7 13s 9d, the studio was able to expand. The film starred Hepworth's daughter, wife and dog, who also starred in the follow up in 1907, "Rover Drives a Car". The studio's stable included Alma Taylor, the most popular female film star in Britain in 1915, and at the time bigger than Charlie Chaplin. Sadly, the lavish screen adaptations of novels and plays were out of touch with what the public wanted, although of very high quality. The studio, which had produced over 2,000 films, went

bankrupt and was sold in 1926 to Archibald Nettlefold.

The studio was rebuilt to allow the making of "talkies", and many B movies were made there in the 1930s. The studio was taken over by Vickers during the second world war, but reverted to making B movies once the war was over. It was also used for television series, notably Robin Hood starring Richard Greene, from 1955 - 1958.

However, competition with Pinewood and Shepperton eventually caused the studio to close in 1961. The site has now been largely built over by Hepworth Way, a shopping centre and a car park, but the Playhouse is actually the old engine house of the original studios, who used an engine captured from a First World War submarine. Ian rounded off his talk by showing a video which included Rescued by Rover plus some extracts from local newsreels taken by Clifford Spain, manager of the cinema in Walton in the early 30s. Very many thanks to Ian for taking us back to those early days of film-making, which went on our very doorstep.

For anyone who missed the talk but would like to see this video, it will be on display at Elmbridge Museum when they re-open in December, as part of their display on local film-making. It is highly recommended!

SOCIETY NEWS



New Acquisitions. In the last couple of months we have been very lucky to receive some items for our archives. We hope to use some of these items in new displays in the Heritage Centre, so that they can be shared by all. Firstly, Miss Phylis Stevens gave us a copy of a photo taken by her great-uncle in the 1880s or 1890s. It is called "Worn Out" and shows Mrs Bury in her dilapidated donkey cart, once a familiar sight around Byfleet and the nearby area. Miss Stevens is the

daughter of L R Stevens, author of "Byfleet, A Village of England". That well known Byfleet resident Mr Howard Cook also donated some interesting booklets, articles and pictures, including one of the Tri-plane built by the Tarrants, which unfortunately crashed before taking off on its maiden flight in 1919, killing the co-pilot! And lastly Mr David Chapman has donated a folder of papers, including copies of The Resident, the magazine of the Resident's Association, from the 1960s and other interesting papers. Very many thanks for these generous donations.



An award for the Heritage Centre?

The Heritage Centre is one of five finalists in the Interpret Surrey Awards. This purpose of the scheme, sponsored by Surrey County Council amongst others, is to recognise good

interpretation and presentation in respect of Surrey's heritage sites, facilities and services. The result will be announced on 18th November. Keep your fingers crossed and watch this space **And a mention for Doug** You may have seen in the local paper that our Chairman, Doug Bright, made

it to the final in the Help the Aged Golden Tunstall Awards in the Contribution to Society section. He was nominated by Elsie Stranks for all the work he has done with the various organisations around the village, and also for getting the Heritage Centre underway.

A Day in Victorian Byfleet. On 27th September two parties of school children from the Marist School in West Byfleet came to Byfleet on a field trip as part of their study of the Victorians. They visited West Hall and then came to Byfleet to look at the old fire station, the Plough pub and other Victorian buildings, and finished off with a visit to the Heritage Centre to look at the old map of the village from 1896, the West Hall display, and other postcards and photos showing Byfleet as known to the Victorians. The children seemed to enjoy their visit, and a good many signed our new visitors' book



On the 18th July the Society welcomed Mr Bill Tomlins of the Painshill Trust who gave his talk on "**FIVE FINE GARDENS OF SURREY**". In a very informative and interesting talk Mr Tomlins explained the origins of the English Landscape Gardening movement, which has been considered by some to be the greatest English contribution to European art. The five important gardens, Claremont, Esher Place, Oatlands Palace, Woburn Farm and Painshill Park, were all within

coaching distance of Byfleet. William Kent, who was influential in the movement, had worked at Claremont and Esher Place, owned by Henry Pelham. Pelham's nephew, Henry Clinton, Earl of Lincoln, created the gardens at Oatlands Palace. Lincoln was escorted on his Grand Tour as a young man by our own Joseph Spence, who was charged with instilling some manners into the young earl. The two remained friends and the Earl gave Spence his house in Byfleet. Woburn Farm, site of St George's College, was Philip Southcote's ornamental farm, another idea fashionable in the eighteenth century. And lastly Painshill Park, owned by Charles Hamilton who made extensive use of new plants from North East America, and had the most famous English vineyard in the eighteenth century. Mr Tomlins opened up the world of grottoes, Chinese bridges, belvederes and ha-has that were essential to the fashionable landscape garden, as well as the references to classical literature and architecture within the gardens, which the gentry would understand from seeing them on their Grand Tours. There is not room here to cover more of Mr Tomlins' fascinating subject, but we were all inspired to go home and see if there was room for a grotto or ruined abbey in our own gardens.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS



PUT THE DATES IN YOUR DIARIES AND TELL YOUR FRIENDS!!

WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 27th

A talk by **Howard Cook** on his childhood at Foxwarren, Wisley. Come along with your own childhood memories too.

At 8pm, Byfleet Village Hall, Room A.

There will be a small charge for non-members.

FOR FUTURE PRESENTATION

We hope that future events will include a **talk on the Wisley prehistoric boat**, and a **preview of the new galleries at Elmbridge Museum**. Geraldene is working hard on organising other events and your ideas are always welcome. We will keep you informed once dates have been settled. So watch this space!

We want to provide the events and lectures that you want. Any suggestions for visits or talks will be gratefully received. Maybe you feel brave enough to give a talk yourself, or perhaps a demonstration of a traditional country craft. I am sure the audience will not be too fierce! If you have any ideas, please ring our events organiser, Geraldene Done, on 01932 400085.

WANTED - NEW BLOOD!

Unfortunately, due to other commitments and, in one case, bad health, the committee is down on its numbers. So we would like to recruit some more members to the committee. Perhaps those of you who were on the original steering committee, but did not stand for re-election at the AGM in May might like to join us again. The duties are not arduous, but at the moment we find that there are too few of us to do all the things that we would like. We are looking for people to fill the post of Treasurer, and help with publicity, practical maintenance in the Heritage Room, and co-ordination of the oral history project. We are also looking for people willing to offer lifts to other members to Society events. The committee meets once a month, and the Treasurer does not have to deal with large sums of money (perhaps unfortunately!). All members are welcome to come to committee meetings, so if you would like see what goes on

before deciding, or if you would like to join the committee and bring us some fresh ideas, please ring the Secretary, **Tessa Westlake** for details on (01932) 351559. I look forward to hearing from you.



WHO'S WHO. In this issue of the newsletter you will have noticed that we have included a membership list. This is so that everyone can see who the other members are, and perhaps remind each other of upcoming events. We have also listed the committee, so that if you have any comments, suggestions or criticisms to make, you are able to contact someone who can follow it up.

Also with this newsletter you will have received your **membership card**. All memberships will be **due for renewal in June**, following the Society AGM in May, where subscriptions for the coming year will be set.

CAN YOU HELP DELIVER THE NEWSLETTER? It would only be three times a year and come to about half a dozen copies to addresses in the same street as you or nearby. If you could help, please ring **Tessa Westlake on 351559**