



Byfleet Heritage Society.

Issue 4

Newsletter

July 1997

Time keeps flying by. Here we are on the fourth edition of the newsletter already, and the Society has just had its second AGM. If you missed the most interesting talk by Norman Boorer, there is an account inside. There are five new displays at the Heritage Centre, and we make our debut on the World Wide Web. We are also appealing for your help again for the committee – see the Society News pages for details. And remember, if you would like to write any articles or letters or have any queries for the newsletter, please send them to
Tessa Westlake, 8 Brewery Lane, Byfleet, (351559).

FORTHCOMING EVENTS



MAKE A NOTE IN YOUR DIARIES AS EVENTS WILL ONLY BE ANNOUNCED IN THE NEWSLETTER. AND DON'T FORGET TO TELL YOUR FRIENDS!!

Sunday JULY 27th: A walk on Wisley Common, guided by Ranger Dave Body. Meet in the Wren's Nest car park, Wisley Lane, 2.00pm.

AUGUST: No meeting planned, but members might like to know that National Trust Warden Robin Lewis will guide a visit to Langham Ponds, SSSI, on Sunday August 3rd at 11.00am. Meet at Langham Farm off A30, Egham By-pass. National Trust members free, adults £1, OAPs and children 50p.

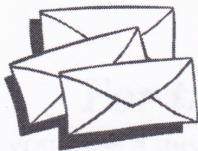
Thursday SEPTEMBER 11th: Visit to Coxes Millpond, Bournside Road, Addlestone 6.00pm. A talk by Kevin Morgan about the natural and industrial history of the mill and the Wey Navigation.

Wednesday OCTOBER 15th: "Before Byfleet" - a talk by Rob Poulton, County Archaeologist about the excavations at Brooklands and Wey Manor Farm. Room A, Byfleet Village Hall, 8.15pm.

Can you help?

Geraldene Done, our former Events Organiser, stood down at the AGM. Therefore we are looking for a lovely volunteer to take over the job. This would involve booking speakers to come to the Heritage Centre or Village Hall, or events such as our walk on Wisley Common in July. Events are booked until October and the rest of the committee is willing to pitch in with ideas, so you wouldn't be on your own. Remember, we need your help if we are to carry on having Society events. And lastly, a big Thank you to Geraldene for over a year's worth of interesting and varied events.

If you can help, please ring Tessa Westlake on 01932 351559.



Letters

INFORMATION WANTED!

One of our members living in Old Orchard is interested in tracing the history of that site. Almost the only information that he has so far has come from the two editions of Leonard Stevens' book "Byfleet - A Village of England", Howard Cook's History of Byfleet and some items on display in the Heritage Centre at Byfleet Library.

Before the present set of 28 maisonettes was built, Old Orchard was the site of a large house dating back at least to 1749. Originally named Albany House and later Old Lodge, the site is clearly shown on two of the maps in the Centre. Also in the Centre is a newspaper cutting with a photograph of the house burning in 1959. This is intriguing because the deeds for Old Orchard show that approval to demolish the house and erect the maisonettes had been given in October 1958.

If anyone has information, particularly photographs, that they think might be helpful, please contact Mike Webber at 8, Old Orchard, Byfleet, West Byfleet, Surrey KT14 7RW or on 01932 344174. At the present time this is a personal study. If at a later date the information is to be made more widely available then sources of information will be acknowledged.

MEMORIES OF ST MARY'S SCHOOL. We would like to provide display boards on St Mary's school and church to help the school children with their projects. Does anyone have any old school photos or picture or mementoes of the school that they could lend us to copy? Old postcards, school reports, memories of the school before it became the day centre, photos of school football teams etc - all would be helpful. If you have anything, or would like to share your memories of St Mary's, or indeed any of the other local schools, please contact *Tessa Westlake, 8 Brewery Lane, Byfleet 01932 351559.*

From the Archive

Both these items are taken from the Byfleet and District Review of May 1935.

A MAIDS' CLUB FOR WEST BYFLEET

A lady reader has suggested that a Domestic Servants' Club be formed. She points out that with the exception of going to Woking or roaming the streets, there is nowhere for the local maids to go on their day out. She thinks that West Byfleet would be an ideal centre. We should be glad to hear from anyone who is interested in this project and will forward any suggestions, or offers of help to the right quarter.


COUNCILLOR CAWSEY WILL NOT OPEN THE LIDO

It has been whispered that Councillor Cawsey has been invited to open the Woking Lido dressed in one of Councillor Griffin's bathing costumes. When we rang him up on the long distance telephone to enquire if he was going to accept the offer he said that he had turned the invitation down as a Councillor Griffin had refused to lend him the backless model.

**DON'T FORGET TO COME AND SEE US ON PARISH DAY SATURDAY 19TH JULY
BYFLEET RECREATION GROUND**

For the Record...

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



On **19th March** Pam Webb came to the Heritage Centre and gave us a talk on **Interpreting Heritage**. In her job as a London Tourist Board Blue Badge Guide, interpreting heritage is something that she has to do each day. She described organising a tour like a swan gliding over a lake - everything should go smoothly and calmly - and no-one should be aware of the frantic paddling going on underneath. From her description of the situations, requests and questions that are thrown at a guide at any time, you certainly have to be on your toes - and this is besides keeping up with new information that comes to light with new research. In a guide's interpretation of heritage, you have to tread a fine line between giving people accurate facts without crushing the romance out of it. For example, many of the stones in Westminster Abbey's twin towers have been replaced and repaired over the ages, but it is still essentially the same building. Therefore you would not need to point out the changes. However, the fact that the House of Commons was rebuilt after damage in the Second World War is part of that building's history, and needs to be told. Pam wound up a very interesting and thought provoking talk with her personal view that the current trend in re-creating things to look as they had done when new was not perhaps the best thing for future generations. Would they be confused at what was really old and what was reconstruction? Perhaps our heritage was being hi-jacked in favour of artificial representation, and places needed to encourage the imagination more. Discussion followed over a cup of tea, and an enjoyable evening was had by all. Very many thanks to Pam for her talk

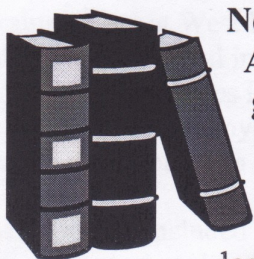


Members at our meeting on **17th April** got two speakers for the price of one! **Simon Fowler, Family and Local History specialist at the Public Records Office** at Kew was delayed. But Amanda Devonshire, Director of Woking Museum and Arts and Crafts Centre stepped in to tell us about plans and progress at the new Galleries. Members' patience was further rewarded by Mr Fowler's informative talk. Founded in 1838, the PRO collects and preserves all government records. The 96 miles of shelving includes 5 million maps, 1.5 million photos, posters, evidence from court cases and one dried lemon (from a first World War spy case). The Family Records Centre in Myddleton Street, London EC1 holds civil records for England and Wales, such as censuses and non parochial registers. With a few exceptions you can view anything over 30 years old.

Mr Fowler suggested using a first visit to find your way around. Take identification to allow issue of a Reader's Ticket. Lap top computers and tape recorders may be used in the room, but no pens - only pencils. Order the documents you wish to view at the reception desk, and within 30-40 minutes you could be looking at Shakespeare's will, Captain Cook's charts, contemporary sketches of Nelson's funeral or World War II propaganda posters. Ringing before you visit is advised, to make sure the Reading Room is open, to order documents that you want or to make sure they are not located elsewhere. For Records Enquiries ring 0181 392 5200, or try their Home Page on the Internet (<http://www.open.gov.uk/pro/prohome.html>). Leaflets are also available at the Heritage Centre. To finish, Mr Fowler fielded many questions from the floor and left us resolved to dig out some of Byfleet's past from the Records Office.

Help wanted

As well as a volunteer to help organise Society events, we are looking for someone to act as Publicity Co-ordinator. Mr Howard Cook pointed out at the AGM that there were still an awful lot of people in the area who did not know of our existence, either as a Society or in the shape of the Heritage Centre. We must agree with him, and it is an area that the committee has been meaning to address. We have come up with a couple of ideas and are acting on suggestions by members, but it would be easier to do if someone could co-ordinate the effort. You would find a willing team of helpers already in place in the shape of the committee. So if you could help to promote the Society and Centre, please contact
Tessa Westlake on 01932 351559



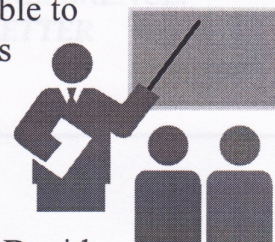
New Additions to our

Archive. The Society is gradually adding to its archive. After seeing the article on the Heritage Centre in the last Woking magazine, Mrs

Mockett has donated some photos of her father, Harry Medhurst, when he was a garden boy at West Hall. There are also some of the "Top Hats and Leather Aprons" annual cricket match between the gentry and West Hall staff. You may have seen these photos at the AGM, but if you missed them, we hope to use them in a display in the future. Very many thanks to Mrs Mockett for her generosity. We also have a couple of new additions to our reference list. Jeff Sechiari's History of Byfleet Brewery and a Short History of Broadoaks by Helen Gristwood are now available. The list is up in the Heritage Centre. Please ask the Library staff if you

are interested in seeing any of the available material.

Back to school. In April Doug Bright and Tessa Westlake attended the two day course, Towards Good Practice in Interpretation. This was part of the prize for the Interpret Surrey Award which the Centre won last year. The first day consisted of lectures and talks. On the second day we visited Hampton Court Palace to see all the theory being put into practice. It was most interesting, and we hope we have been able to put some of what was learnt into practice in our new displays. The second part of the prize will be a consultation with Dr David Uzzell to find out the good and bad points of the Heritage Centre. This, combined with the course, should help us to make the Heritage Centre even better.



MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

It's that time of year again! Society memberships are now due. If you have not already renewed, you should find a form enclosed with your newsletter. Please return either to the library or to the Membership Secretary. Thank you for your continued support, and hope to see you at some of our events over the year.

After the business of the AGM on **23rd May**, members settled back to hear **Mr Norman Boorer** talk about **Growing up in the Byfleets**. Mr Boorer's father had moved to Byfleet almost one hundred years ago when he came to work at West Hall as Head Vegetable Gardener, living as a bothy boy until 1915 when he married and moved to Birchwood Close. Mr Boorer told how the Head Gardener, George Carpenter, was very fond of the staff's children and would open up his apple store and let them into the vast strawberry patch to help themselves. Mr Carpenter also crossbred flowers, and named two new varieties of chrysanthemum Norman and James, after him and his friend.

Mr Boorer took us back to a time when children could roam far and wide in search of fun. The daily trip to school was an adventure involving buying a pennyworth of stale buns from Greenlands Tea Rooms on Station Approach, or hitching a ride on the horse drawn coaches – a practice which grew more hazardous with the arrival of motorised transport. Miss Leslie's scout troop in Dartnell Park was keenly attended – in fact Mr Boorer and his friend were so keen to become members of the scouting movement that they enrolled as Brownies for three months before the scout troops was started.

With no television to act as a distraction, Mr Boorer talked of all the activities on offer. You could go trainspotting at West Byfleet station, swimming in the canal at Dodds Bridge in summer and skating and sliding on the canal in winter. There was the West Byfleet School football team, the Scout fife and bugle band, and long hikes in the countryside with which Byfleet and West Byfleet was surrounded. Dances and plays were held many times a year at Byfleet Village Hall, and Parish Day was a keenly awaited annual event. Everyone was given the day off school to join in the races, competitions and fancy dress parades.

Mr Boorer concluded his fascinating talk with a few words about Vickers where he went to work in the machine shop on leaving school. By attending the Vickers evening classes, Mr Boorer became qualified to work in the Drawing Office, and started an illustrious career working for Barnes Wallace and George Edwards. The Society thanked Mr Boorer for a talk which brought back memories for many in the audience, and made the younger members wish they had known the Byfleets of former years.

**SEE THE FRONT PAGE FOR OUR UPCOMING EVENTS
WHY NOT KEEP THE PAGE BY YOUR CALENDAR FOR EASY REFERENCE.
EVENTS WILL ONLY BE ANNOUNCED IN THE NEWSLETTER
WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU!**

NEW MEMBERS



Please remember – we are looking for someone to help out with publicity for the society, and also for someone to help out organising Society visits and talks. Please see the relevant sections in the News pages for more details.

SOCIETY NEWS



New Displays

There are five new displays at the Heritage Centre. The new titles are Beer in Byfleet (about the Brewery), Byfleet Technology, a new board on West Hall, showing photos of the interior taken in 1906 when it was still home to the Stoops, another selection of Byfleet Bygones, and Air Traffic over Byfleet. Very many thanks indeed to all members who helped with contributing material. Don't forget – if you have material or information or an idea which we might be able to use on a display board of the future, please contact Tessa Westlake on 01932 351559



Following on from the last item, we are starting to plan the next round of display boards. Next year will be the 100th anniversary of the opening of Byfleet Village Hall, and we felt we couldn't let this go unmarked. Therefore we would like to collect any information, especially pictures or postcards, of anything to do with the Village Hall or the Village Club. If there is anyone out there who has been working on a history of the club, or knows if one already exists, I would very much like to hear from you. We can't let this anniversary pass us by, so get rummaging in your lofts and see what you can find. Please contact Tessa Westlake on 01932 351559 if you have any information at all. Many thanks.

A Word on Displays. You will have seen our display boards on various topics at the Heritage Centre. We have recently added 5 new ones to the set, so go along and have a look. Let us know what you think – we are always open to constructive criticism. Remember, we are not experts, and if you think we have missed something out, then let us know. If you have any additional information or pictures, we would love you to share them with us. In this way we can build up a substantial archive and improve our displays.

Calling all Cricket fans. Malcolm Denham has written a Brief History of Byfleet Cricket Club, a valuable addition to the Society's archives. We would like to make up a display board using the information - and here's where you come in! Do you have any pictures of the cricket club, past or present, perhaps of the ground, the pavilion, any fixture cards? Or do you have souvenirs of some of the famous fundraising concerts and dances at the Village Hall, or of the Annual Dinner, or Cricket Week? How about the club's centenary celebrations, by all accounts something to remember, or even a newspaper cutting from when Byfleet topped the Surrey County League in 1995.

The Cricket Club records are kept at the Surrey Record Office, and there are pictures there. Perhaps some kind soul would go up there and photocopy some of the things for us. The Society would pay travel and copying expenses. Please call Tessa Westlake on 01932 351559 if you can help.

International Fame? It seems from our visitors book in the Heritage Centre that we have had some Swedish visitors in, who also just so happened to be members of the Swedish Cliff Richard Fan Club. Was it the fascinating history of Byfleet that drew them to the Centre, or the fact that Sir Cliff did the honours and opened the Centre for us? We hope they enjoyed their visit!

Surf's Up! Anybody who is anybody has something on the Worldwide Web! Now the Society is no exception. Chris Glasow has kindly given us some space on his website, for which many thanks. So, if you are wired, the address is <http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Plains/3427>. We also appear on the Surrey Web pages. Their home page is on <http://www.surreyweb.org.uk>. Look under the "What's New" section, unless they have managed to update it since I last looked. Happy surfing!



CAN YOU HELP DELIVER THE NEWSLETTER? I would be grateful if people could help deliver the newsletter. It would probably only be about half a dozen copies to addresses in the same street as you or nearby, and only four times a year.. If you could help, please ring

Tessa Westlake on 351559