



Byfleet Heritage Society.

Issue 6

Newsletter

February 1998

**Happy New Year!** The New Year is well under way, and I hope you all had a good Christmas. The Society has started 1998 by becoming involved in the Schools Adopt Monuments Scheme, where school children choose a local monument and study it in various ways – details in the news section. We have had some interesting talks since the last newsletter – if you missed any you can catch up on the details here. Last, but by no means least, we are pleased to welcome Paddy Holroyde to the committee as our new events organiser, so we hope to continue to bring you a varied diary of events and talks. So, while the nights are still long and dark, why not sit back and enjoy this edition of the newsletter, and we hope to see you at some of our events in the future. And remember, if *you* have any comments or queries for the newsletter, please send them to:

*Tessa Westlake, 8 Brewery Lane, Byfleet, (351559).*



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

**Friday MARCH 20th:** A talk on West Hall by former Byfleet resident David Chapman. Byfleet Village Hall, Room A, 8.15pm.

**Tuesday APRIL 21st:** An update and progress report of the Woking Museum and Arts and Crafts Centre by Director Amanda Devonshire. Byfleet Heritage Centre 8pm.

**Tuesday 19th MAY: Society AGM** and talk on Bygone Byfleet illustrated by slides of old postcards by Chris Glasow. Byfleet Village Hall, Room A 7.30pm .

**JUNE:** Talk to be confirmed. Watch this space for details.

**Sunday 19th JULY:** A nature walk with Dr Nigel Reeve. Meet at Plough Bridge for a circular walk along the River Wey and Wey Navigation Canal lasting approximately 3 hours (although you can drop out sooner if you wish). Bring a picnic. Start time to be confirmed.

**Thursday 17th SEPTEMBER:** A talk by Steve Dyer, freelance archaeologist on Woking Palace. Byfleet Village Hall, Room A, 8.15pm.

**OCTOBER:** We hope to arrange a return visit to West Hall. Watch this space for details.

***We would like to welcome Paddy Holroyde to the Committee. Paddy has very kindly volunteered to be our new Events Organiser. The rest of the committee is standing by ready to help out. If you have any ideas for a talk, or an event that you would like to see, please let us know.***



## For the Record...

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

**County Archaeologist Rob Poulton** took Byfleet Heritage Society back to the Iron Age in his recent talk "*Before Byfleet*". He spoke of the excavations at Brooklands and Wey Manor Farm. Archaeological work has been carried out at various times over the last ten years, but the first finds had been made during the building of Brooklands race track in 1907. A hoard of Roman coins came to light and a rare bronze bucket from the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC was found near the river. At Brooklands sewage farm iron age pits and a round house were found, along with evidence of iron working. A huge area near to the modern airfield was also excavated. Trial trenches were sunk in promising areas and the contents examined. Many of the trenches showed that the area had been prone to flooding, but two raised areas to the north and south proved to have been inhabited from the Iron Age, through the Roman period and continuing into medieval times. The southern site was very complex but very interesting, showing iron age and roman remains including another large round house and some granaries, and one complete pot.

Aerial photographs showing crop markings coupled with the discoveries at Brooklands encouraged excavations of the Wey Manor Farm site. Trial

trenches showed that this area had also been prone to flooding, so signs of occupation were limited to three main areas. Another round house was uncovered along with other finds showing that this area had also been occupied from the Iron Age through to medieval times. One outstanding find was a wooden bowl found in a waterlogged pit. The wet conditions had preserved the wood so well that the tooling marks from when the bowl had been made could still be seen. Another interesting feature of the site was evidence showing changes in the landscape such as the sizes of the fields, and this information was still being analysed.

Mr Poulton concluded by pointing out that the archaeology here uncovered two sorts of deposition: the everyday items found on settlement sites, and the more glamorous, high quality goods such as the bronze bucket found by the river. This may have been thrown into the water as an offering to the gods. But the same society was responsible for both types of artefact. In order to understand the villagers of long ago Byfleet, both sides of the picture must be studied.

*A talk by Iain Wakeford on November 21<sup>st</sup> showed members of Byfleet Heritage Society that Woking was a thriving place long before the railway came through. Bronze Age bell barrows on Horsell Common, and a possible Roman ford at Broadmeads gave clues that the area had been inhabited since early times. Woking, which means "the settlement of Wocca's people", was first mentioned in a letter to the Pope from the early 700s AD. It refers to a St Peter's monastery, which could possibly have been on the site of St Peter's church in Old Woking. The church door contains Saxon ironwork which may have come from this monastery. St Peter's monastery was destroyed in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, and Newark Priory was not founded until 1189, but what later became Woking Palace could possibly have been the site of an intervening monastery.*

*The palace is situated next to the River Wey halfway between Pyrford and Old Woking. A few Tudor walls still remain, and the site is a scheduled Ancient Monument. The manor of Woking is mentioned in the Domesday book and was granted to the Bassett family and then the Spencers. Lady Margaret Beaufort, mother of Henry VII developed the manor house into a palace. It became one of Henry VIII's favourite places and he often spent the late summer months there. His famous advisor Thomas Wolsey was with the King at Woking when he received the news that he had become a Cardinal. Hence we have Wolsey Walk in the town centre, and the local football team plays in red and is known as the Cards, short for the Cardinals. Recent research has shown that Mary Tudor may have been born at Woking, rather than at Greenwich.*

...continued



*Sutton Place, built by the Weston family in the 1520s, is a well known local landmark. But it has been discovered that it was built in the site of an earlier manor house which fell into decay while the Woking manor house was developed. Iain finished his talk by showing the surprising number and variety of old cottages which still stand among the modern buildings in the area, and also some of the buildings used for other industries. Agriculture was the main employment for many years, but there was also a mill, a brewery and several nurseries. The Wey Navigation built by the Weston family in the 1650s also provided alternative work to farming.*

*So we learned that the coming of the railway and growth of the modern town of Woking is only a small part of the story, and Woking was once the home of Kings.*



On the **8<sup>th</sup> January Chris Howkins** enthralled members with his talk, **Heathland Harvest**, which is also the title of his latest book.

Mr Howkins took us back to an age where many people in Byfleet and the surrounding area relied on the heath for their living. Surrey heathland spread from where Heathrow airport is now to near Basingstoke, and was at its largest in the sixteenth century. It is difficult to get a real picture of life on the heath, as each section had its own lifestyle depending on how the land was kept, local soils, climates, needs and markets. These could also vary from decade to decade. Also the folk who worked the heath were the lowest level of society, and therefore beneath the notice of writers of the time, although one described them as “violent in behaviour and uncouth in the mouth”. They lived in houses made of turf scattered around the heath, with a peat turf roof, a central stone hearth and a sand floor. These measured about 8-12 feet long and 6-8 feet wide. Some of these cottages still exist, although they have been much altered during the years.

The heath was a very important source of raw materials for industry and domestic markets. There were many broom squires working the heath, causing not a little rivalry, and the law court record books are full of cases of warring broom squires brought before the judge. Brooms were very important in both the household and in industry. Even brooms for the royal household were made in Haslemere and transported to London.

Broom is the only plant named after its use and used to be more common on the heathland than it is now. Surrey villagers reckoned that brooms

made of broom were the best for bringing up the redness of a brick floor. This is explained by the fact that broom, like all plants, needs calcium. It stores this in crystals on its twigs. When the floor is swept, the calcium is released and kills any build up of algae on the brick floor and reveals the redness. Brooms were also made of heather and birch, and a skilled man could make up a broom in about 30 seconds. The brooms would be sold by the dozen, which consisted of 13 brooms, although no-one knows why.

Heathland was managed in sections depending on village needs. Heather and birch was allowed to grow on for making brooms, and no grazing or turf cutting was allowed in these sections, which were cut in rotation. At the height of the sheep age in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Brooklands was used for grazing, and so the flanks of St George’s Hill were used for heather.

But the heath provided much more than material to make brooms. Peat was used to make houses and for burning. Heathland plants were used to make soap and detergent and dyes (most important to the textile industry). Fruit for eating and jam making was found there, and also sand used for scouring dishes and household cleaning was taken from there. Birch from Ockham is still used for horse jumps, and vinegar makers still fill the bottom of their vats with birch twigs to filter out impurities. Birch is also still used to stir molten copper. The birch burns and sinks and takes impurities in the metal with it to the bottom of the vat.

Mr Howkins then answered questions from the audience, who were unable to exhaust the depth of his knowledge. We all enjoyed the talk greatly and were sorry to have to go home.



## SOCIETY NEWS



### Heritage Centre

**Assessed.** In October Dr David Uzzell of Surrey University came to assess the Heritage Centre. This

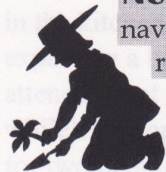
formed part of the prize for the Interpret Surrey Award. Doug Bright and Tessa Westlake spent an informative morning discussing how the Centre and the displays might be improved and some interesting ideas were worked out. We shall be implementing some or all of these as time and space (and, of course, money) allows. So keep popping in to the Heritage Centre and see how we get on. And remember, if you have any suggestions yourself about what you would like to see in there, please let us know.

### SCHOOLS ADOPT MONUMENTS

This is a European

Community initiative, where

schools choose and study a local monument or beauty spot in a variety of ways. The scheme is being co-ordinated in this area by Tina Cockett of Woking Museum. Byfleet County Primary School in Kings Head Lane has joined the scheme, and, with the kind co-operation of Mr Ronald Lee and Rev Roger Trumper, will be studying Byfleet Manor and St Mary's church. The Society has put any relevant archive material at their disposal. There should certainly be many interesting aspects for the school children to explore, and we hope they have fun with the scheme.



**New Acquisitions:** The Society has very kindly been given an interesting artefact! It is a naval ceremonial sword that used to belong to Admiral Wonham, whom some of you may remember as a resident of the village before he died in 1946. The sword has been buried for some years in a back garden. Andy Andrews sought advice from Guildford Museum and is treating the sword in a bath of washing soda to get rid of any active rust. We are trying to find out more about Admiral Wonham, and once the sword has been cleaned up, we hope to display it in the Heritage Centre. Very many thanks indeed to Mr C White, who found the sword in his back garden, for his great generosity in giving it to the Society.

As well as Admiral Wonham's sword, we have had a number of new acquisitions for our archive. These have all been very gratefully received and we hope to share as many as possible with you in future displays at the Heritage Centre. Two large scale Ordnance Survey maps from 1934 have been donated by Mr Peter Gibson, and show the area from Byfleet to Pyrford and down to Wisley. We have also received several old black and white photos, such as one of Tarrants brass band of 1906, and Billie Knowles band at the Village Hall in the 1920s. We also have a few photos of various works or club outings where we do not know the dates or the people involved, and we shall probably see if any visitors to the Heritage Centre recognise anyone. Very many thanks to Mr Gibson, and also to Albert Hassall and Miss J Cawsey for remembering us.



**WANTED:** Does anyone have or know of any copies of L R Stevens book "Byfleet a Village of England" that aren't wanted any more? This book is no longer in print, and we do not have a copy in our archive. Byfleet Library has two copies for reference only. So don't throw out that battered copy! We will give it a good home. Please ring Tessa Westlake on 351559 if you can help. Many thanks

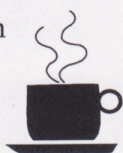




A new book entitled *The History of Byfleet Parish Council* by Andy Andrews is now on sale around the village. It tells the story of the Parish Council from its first meeting in 1894 until 1933 when Byfleet became part of Woking UDC, and from its reinstatement in 1987 until the present day. It is a very interesting read, and tells how street lighting, the recreation ground, the village hall and many things that we now take for granted came to the village and were organised by the Parish Council – a job that they still carry on today for our benefit. I particularly like the section on some of the complaints the Parish Council has received, such as a letter from a Mrs Coe, who “owing to the unlighted conditions of Birch Walk, ... had fallen and injured herself” and wanted compensation from “the authority responsible for the darkness”.

*The book is on sale at Byfleet Library, the Post Office, and Yeomans Stationers and costs £2.50. Proceeds will be divided between Byfleet Community Action and Byfleet Heritage Society.*

**CAN YOU HELP?** At events in the Village Hall we have tried to provide refreshments at the end of the talk. I've been doing these, but to be honest, I'm not very good at it (being nominated for Can't Cook, Won't Cook any day now!).



Also, while I'm pleased to say that attendance at talks has increased since we first started, I think it would be easier to have more than one person in the kitchen! And (a minor detail!) I am expecting a baby in August, whereafter my attendance at events might get a bit erratic for a while!! I propose to set up a roster of volunteers, for two people to do the teas for each event that we put on in the Village Hall. I'll start off the organisation of the roster, but would be pleased if someone else would take it over after a while. Also would someone like to join a similar roster to man the door at events. As you know, we charge £1 to non-members. I am pleased to say that non members have, of course, been very honest and come forward with their money. But it would be more friendly to have someone on the door to take the money and perhaps hand out membership forms if the talk has tempted people to join up. The Treasurer or a member of the Committee is usually present, so you wouldn't have to look after any cash at the end of the evening.

If you could join a roster of willing volunteers, please ring Tessa Westlake on 351559 – remember, the more volunteers we have, the more we can spread the workload! Thanks very much.

### **CAN YOU HELP – PART TWO.**

We would like to let as many people as possible know about the Society and the Heritage Centre. The Committee makes



sporadic attempts at publicising the Society, but it would be very much easier if there was someone to co-ordinate our efforts. We are

not looking for another Maurice Saatchi (although, if you are out there...), just someone to throw a few more ideas into the hat and co-ordinate the odd poster campaign or letting the press know about what we are doing. The rest of the committee is on hand to help with poster-putting-up and any jobs like that, so you wouldn't be left to it on your own. If you could help out, please ring Tessa Westlake on 351559. Very many thanks.

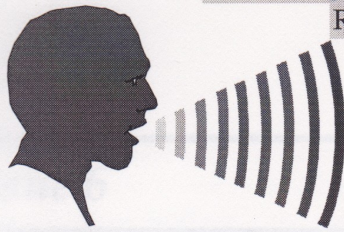


From time to time we get phone calls from people researching various aspects of local history. It would be useful to know what information on Byfleet and the area is available at other local museums and record offices. Is there anyone out there who could compile a list of any such information? Or perhaps if you are visiting a local museum, you could enquire and let us have the information? If anyone has any information to hand, we would be very

grateful. It can be forwarded to the Society via Byfleet Library.



## Oral History



Paddy Holroyde, our Events Organiser, attended on behalf of the Society, a one day course on gathering oral history using a tape recorder. The course, held in the Heritage Room, was conducted by the Curator of Oral History at the British Museum. Attended by eight people from diverse groups, it was designed to initially train an interviewer in the ways and means of effectively recording lifetime experiences. As we know, these unique experiences, particularly from folk who perhaps would not consider themselves "newsworthy" contribute greatly to our knowledge and evaluation of times and events, both past and more recent. The well structured day revolved around four

basic modules:

**Designing a project –**

whom to interview, when, where and for what purpose.

**Equipment –**

Recommendations on the best tape machine, comfortable microphones and distortion free tapes for recording, storing and play back quality.

**Interviewing techniques –**

The good, the bad and the very best of essential methods were discussed and demonstrated.

**Practical experience –**

Splitting into pairs, the group were given the task of practising newly acquired skills as an interviewer and interviewee, followed by an evaluation of the recordings.

The specialised equipment is fairly expensive to buy and we are now looking into ways of sourcing funds to enable us to add this very special technique to our own facilities.

## *From the Archive*

From the Byfleet Parish Magazine of June 1920:

### **Byfleet Motor and General Sheet Metal Works**

**BREWERY LANE, BYFLEET.**

Proprietors: **HENSHALL & HOWELL.**

Radiators, Panelling, Wings, Tanks, Lamps, and Copper Pipe Work.

Kitchen Utensils of every description made and repaired.

Any Article in all kinds of Metal made and repaired on the premises.

Pre-War Workmanship only. All kinds of Dairy Utensils made and repaired.

Sole makers of the Economic Quick Boiling Kettle and the Economic Furnace and

Slow Combustion Stove combined.

## NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to:

Byfleet Heritage Society, Byfleet Library, High Road, Byfleet, Surrey KT14 7QN  
Published by: Tessa Westlake, 8 Brewery Lane, Byfleet, Surrey KT14 7PQ