



Byfleet Heritage Society.

Issue 9

Newsletter

February 1999

You will all, no doubt, have read in the local press about the possibility of library closures in Surrey. This especially affects us in the Society, as without the library there would be no Heritage Centre. Therefore we would urge you to fill in and return one of the public consultation forms giving your views. Details of this are on the Society News pages. Also in the news pages are appeals for your help with the oral history project, and for someone to take over the role of Treasurer. But in your haste to read these news items, don't forget to enjoy the rest of this edition, and hope to see you at one of our events!

FORTHCOMING EVENTS



Thursday 11th FEBRUARY: The Evolution of the English Manorial System. The study of ancient West Surrey Lordships and re-enactment of traditional events and rural customs with special reference to Byfleet by Lt Col H W Molyneux-Child. Byfleet Village Hall, Room A, 8.15pm.

Friday 19th MARCH: The Paper Mills of Surrey. An illustrated talk by Alan Crocker, President of the Surrey Industrial History Group. St. Mary's Day Centre, 8.15pm.

Thursday 22nd APRIL: Society AGM and talk on Historic Locks and Keys by Victor Leonardi. Byfleet Village Hall, Room A. 7.30pm.

Friday 21st MAY: Explaining and Understanding Surrey's Historic Landscape. An illustrated talk by archaeological consultant Steve Dyer. Byfleet Village Hall, Room A, 8.15pm.

Sunday 27th JUNE: Visit to Cobham Flour Mill. A look at the machinery, weir and fish ladder and the history of flour milling, with practical demonstrations. 10.30am. Numbers limited to 20.

Thursday 22nd July: St Edward and the community of monks at Brookwood by Tina Cockett, Education Officer at Woking Museum and Arts and Crafts Centre. Miss Cockett will offer a story telling session,

where she traces the legend of Elfrida, Edward's stepmother, and her involvement in his murder! Room A, Byfleet Village Hall, 8.15pm.

Thursday 9th September: The History of Firefighting and Fire Protection in the UK from Roman Times to the present. An illustrated talk by Mr Ron Shettle of the Fire Brigades of Surrey Preservation Trust. Room A, Byfleet Village Hall, 8.15pm.

Evening of Tuesday 19th October: An invitation to the mediaeval festival of the Assizes of Bread and Ale. 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

GUESTS WELCOME, ALTHOUGH THERE WILL BE A SMALL CHARGE

SOCIETY NEWS

Use your democratic voice. You will have seen in the local press that Surrey County Council is having to find considerable financial savings. In particular, the Community Services Committee, which runs libraries, adult education and the youth service, still needs to find savings of £1.2 million.

Although no decisions have been made, concern is growing for the future of Byfleet Library, and therefore the Heritage Centre. Surrey County Council is inviting the people of Surrey to give their views on the future of the libraries, adult education and the youth service.

Surrey County Council have produced a leaflet outlining the possible ways to make the savings - one is enclosed with this newsletter. This contains a form for you to make your views known. We urge you to fill it in and return it. If you have already completed one, pass this form to a neighbour. You can also write to Jim Agnew, Head of Community Services, Surrey County Council, Room 172, County Hall, Kingston Upon Thames, Surrey KT1 2DN, or E-mail him on community.services@surreycc.gov.uk. The Council are asking what we think - please let them know. Without our input, they won't be able to make a fully informed decision.

Oral History - the next stage

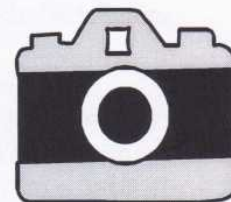
As you know, the Society has long wanted to record older villagers' memories of life in Byfleet before they are lost forever. Members of the committee are preparing a grant application to fund this project. But we need to get a team together, as there seems little point in getting the money, but then not being able to carry out the work.



We **urgently** need volunteers to form a separate Oral History group. We **especially** need a co-ordinator to manage the project. It needn't take too much of your spare time, and of course, the more people volunteer, the lighter the load! Full training in all aspects of oral history will be given. We feel this is an excellent project with lots of potential - just think how you used to enjoy hearing about when your parents and grandparents were young, and how this will bring history alive for later generations. But it **WILL NOT HAPPEN without volunteers**, and a valuable historical resource will be lost forever. If you can help in any way at all, please contact **Paddy Holroyde on 01932 406649**

Photo call!

As you may have seen in the local press in November, St Mary's School has joined the Schools Adopt Monument Scheme. Year 5 have chosen to study the Wey Navigation Canal, and Year 2 have adopted St Mary's Day Centre.



We are trying to provide the students with material for them to study, and this is where you come in! We need pictures and photos to show the children what the old school was like, and what it was like to be at school in days gone by. For example, do you have any old school photos, pictures of the football team, school plays, events or trips? We are not just looking for photos of the "olden days", but photos from the 50s, 60s, 70s and 80s as well (as, sadly, these seem like historical times to our children!). We would be delighted to borrow any you might have. The photos will be scanned and returned to you as quickly as possible. Please contact: Tessa Westlake on 01932 351559.

Saturday 7th November Byfleet Heritage Society toured West Hall, former house of the Stoop family



and now home to engineering consultants, Mouchel. One member remembered the Stoop family, including Harlequins and England rugby player, Adrian. Adrian's father, F.C. Stoop was renowned for his philanthropy in the area – Byfleet tennis club, boat club cricket ground and Village Hall site were donated by him as well as the site for St John's church. There were Stoop wards in the Rowley Bristow and Victoria hospitals, and he helped found the Cottage hospital in Weybridge, originally built to cater for casualties from Brooklands racetrack.

Members saw West Hall in the company of Mouchel employees Jeff Smith and George Crabb who had worked for Mouchel for 40 years. There were some changes since the Society's last visit two years ago. There was a lovely new staff canteen situated in the Stoop's original dining room. This had been a drawing office, but some original oak panelling and a beautiful beamed ceiling had survived and were now restored to their former glory. The new Gerard Room was the old conservatory, and black and white marble tiles still cover the floor beneath the modern carpet tiles.

There is beautiful art nouveau inlay work in the panelling of what used to be the main hall. It is claimed that the hall is haunted. A man has been seen standing by the fireplace and a figure has walked straight through a modern wall. However, all was quiet during our visit! A fine staircase, boxed in during the 60s, will be opened up and restored when time and money allow.

It was a treat to wander the grounds on such a mild day. Many fine trees surround the house, including a plane tree, which is possibly the largest in the UK measured around the girth. The boat house by the canal, the Stoop coat of arms and the Dutch garden survive from the Stoop era. This sunken garden was once covered by a large timber hut, but is now a pleasant place to sit. The car park was once the kitchen garden and two apple trees survive which it is reckoned could be as much as 100 years old. The old stable block is now offices and gardeners' storage rooms. One is still known as the Rhubarb Room, where rhubarb used to be forced.

We finished our tour with a visit to the Bullion Room. The Swiss Bank, one of the former owners of West Hall, stored their gold bullion here during the war. Now it houses the Mouchel archive going back to the early 1900s, including plans of the Liver Building, Liverpool Football Stadium from 1907, the A27 Brighton by-pass and the Lakeside shopping centre. Very many thanks indeed to Mr Smith and Mr Crabb for giving up their Saturday to show us around a piece of Byfleet's past.

On Thursday 1st December Byfleet Heritage Society gathered at Byfleet Village Hall for a seasonal get-together. Some members had brought pieces of Byfleet memorabilia to share. An old sword dug up in his father's sweet pea trench appeared alongside photos of the 1968 floods. Old pictures and postcards showed views of Byfleet long since disappeared or changed. A programme from the Byfleet Players showed Peter Moffett appearing in a Players' production of Tom Jones. He later changed his name to Peter Davidson and starred in All Creatures Great and Small and Dr Who. All these items and more were viewed while enjoying a lovely Christmas buffet organised by Paddy Holroyde, who did us proud.

After more mince pies and sparkling wine, we were entertained by Maureen and Maurice Osbourne, better known as The Pub Poets. The rest of the evening flew by as we enjoyed a lively poetry reading from a range of poets including Pam Ayres and Roger Macgough. There was also a sprinkling of poems with a Christmas theme. The Pub Poets were themselves resplendent in decorated waistcoats and a range of quick changes of hats and props. We were sorry the evening had to end, but it set us up very nicely for the Christmas season.

January 22nd saw a good turnout despite the awful fog for Hugh Compton speaking on the Historic Waterways of Surrey. His talk covered parts of the Thames and also the Wey Navigation, Basingstoke and Wey and Arun Junction Canals.

We saw briefly into the hard lives of the bargers on the Thames. Up to twenty men would pull the barges along with tow ropes. These barges could weigh up to 60 tons, so a good speed was about 2 miles per hour. As there were no locks on the lower part of the Thames, the tide still affected water levels. Barges were parked in the river and unloaded by horse and cart at low tide.

The Wey Navigation Canal is 15 miles long and has 12 locks. It was built in 1651 at a cost of £16,000. In 1760 the canal was extended from Guildford to Godalming. It was privately owned until the last owner Mr Stevens sold it to the National Trust in 1963. We saw pictures of a life gone by, when the many locks such as those at the Oil Mills in Weybridge and Coxes Lock were busy and thriving. There was a particularly nice postcard of St Catherine's Ferry in Guildford. This was part of the Pilgrims' Way and cost 1d to cross. There is now a modern footbridge.

The Basingstoke Canal was built over the Bagshot sands and so was very difficult to keep watertight. A clay lining four inches deep had to be laid, trodden in by a herd of cattle. During the First World War the Aldershot garrison wanted to bring supplies from Woolwich Arsenal by this waterway. Water levels in the canal had always been a problem, due to the sandy soil and lack of reservoir. The Royal Engineers were called in and solved the problem by diverting the River Whitewater into the canal to top it up. But the navigation was never profitable, and by the 1960s it was decided to abandon it. Surrey and Hampshire County Councils bought the canal jointly and agreed that if the Railway and Canal Society could provide volunteers, the Councils would provide supervision to train young people in brick laying and making. In this way the canal is gradually being restored.

The Wey and Arun Junction canal was built during the Napoleonic Wars to bring supplies from Portsmouth by land instead of by sea to avoid the risk of pirates and bad weather. However, by the time it was finished in 1821, the Napoleonic Wars were well over! For many years a barge would travel every three weeks from London to Portsmouth along the canal loaded with bullion. No highwayman ever caught on, and it seems the barge travelled safely every time. A Society is trying to restore this canal also.

We greatly enjoyed a look back into the working days of our local waterways, and learning about plans for their future too. We thanked Mr Compton for his interesting talk.

Coming Attractions!!

Lt.-Col. J. W. Molyneux-Child, Lord of the manor of Dedswell and Papworth, has agreed to visit us and give an illustrated talk. The talk is entitled **The Evolution of the English Manorial System** and he has promised to bone up on aspects relevant to Byfleet's ancient Manor.

Room A, Byfleet Village Hall, 8.15pm. Thursday 11th February.

The ancient manor of Dedswell and Papworth encompasses within its boundary slices of the "modern day" districts of Ripley and Send. The Lt. Col. has made a study of ancient West Surrey Lordships. He is also engaged in the preservation of traditional events, rural customs, disciplines and practices that would, in former times, have taken place under the guardianship of the Lord of the Manor.

Re-enactments of some traditional events and rural customs still take place annually within the Dedswell and Papworth Manor, arranged and directed by the Lt. Col. Before the days of Customs and Excise men, the need to assess, for purity and substance, bread and ale locally produced, fell within the jurisdiction of the justice.

A re-enactment of the Assizes of Bread and Ale will take place on **Tuesday 19th October 1999**. Members of the Society have been personally invited to attend and participate. If you can, I would suggest you keep the evening of the 19th October free. Dust off (or acquire) some rustic or Victorian costume, come along and enjoy an evening of merriment. PS Those attending in costume will be treated to a **FREE SUPPER** at the local hostelry.

WATCH THIS SPACE FOR FURTHER DETAILS.

For the Record...

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

An apology. In the last issue we gave an account of the fascinating talk by Mr Norman Boorer about the history of Brooklands. He has pointed out that the references to "George Carpenter" should read "Sir George Edwards", who incidentally celebrated his 90th birthday in July last year. Mr Carpenter was, in fact, Head Gardener at West Hall in the 1920s, where Mr Boorer's father also worked. Sorry for any confusion caused.

On Friday 23rd October members were well entertained by *The Anchor Folk*, who took us on a musical journey through the history and diversity of English, American, Scottish and Irish folk music. The evening kicked off with a rendition of the traditional song, John Barleycorn, all about a subject dear to English hearts, beer!



British folk music has its roots in the old Viking and Saxon sagas, long stories set to music and passed down by word of mouth. In Scotland, each clan had a bard whose job it was not only to be able to recite the genealogy of the clan leader back as much as 500 years, but also to be the clan historian, watching battles and making up stirring songs commemorating daring deeds. The Ballad of Brackley about John Farquharson of Braemar and his foe, the Earl of Huntley demonstrated the point.

Thankfully, as the songs began to die out, several people set about collecting and writing them down. Thanks to Bishop Percy, Rev Cecil Sharp and Professor Child, songs such as The Dark Eyed Sailor have survived for us to hear. From about 1500-1700 you could buy the words to your favourite ballads and songs from a broadsheet seller. All human life is reflected in our traditional folk songs, from tragic tales of parted lovers, patriotic songs of battles won and lost and the old equivalent of our TV sitcoms and farces, such as The Cunning Cobbler Done Over, a bawdy tale of marital infidelity. Other songs reflected the world of work, such as The Jolly Roving Tar, where the chorus of "Get up Jack, John sit down" reflected the fact that sailors just ashore with full pockets were known to tavern staff as John, but were referred to as Jack once the funds started to run out. When your name changed, it meant you were no longer welcome and it was time to move on.

English, Scottish and Irish music travelled to America with emigrants where, added to music from African slaves and the French, it diversified into many different forms including bluegrass, gospels, cajun and blues, to name a few. Way Downtown and Duelling Banjos demonstrated this.

But folk music is still developing. Modern day writers include Bob Dylan, Richard Thompson, Keith Marsden and Jez Lowe. Songs such as Bees Wing about the present day Travellers, and It's Really Very Simple about trying to find the marmite in Tesco's carry on the tradition about singing about things relevant to life now. There were 370 folk festivals last year alone, with more planned for this year.

It was a real shame more members couldn't make it to this event - it was a real treat. If you want to catch up on what you missed, The Anchor Folk play at the Blue Anchor pub in Byfleet every Thursday, and from what we heard it would be well worth a visit.

HELP WANTED.

Andy Andrews has decided that it is time to pass on the job of Society Treasurer to someone else. He has done wonderful work sorting out our accounts, and we'd like to thank him very much for holding the purse strings for us.

Would someone like to step forward to take over from him? Ideally Andy would like to pass the accounts over as soon as possible, but definitely after the AGM in April. The amounts of money involved are not huge (unfortunately!), and committee meetings are held once a month. If you could help out, or if you would like more information before committing yourself, please contact Andy on 01932 345640.



More new displays

Six more display boards have been prepared for the Heritage Centre at Byfleet Library. One on St Mary's Church and two on St Mary's School have been prepared with that school's Year 2 children in mind, as Our School/Our Church is their topic this term. A display on Broadoaks shows the past and possible future of the house, and for railway enthusiasts there is a board on the coming of the London and Southampton Railway to the area. The board on Byfleet Social Life contains many old photos of people enjoying themselves at many cricket matches, dances or firm's outings. We have only a few names to put to the faces in these photos - maybe you might recognise someone. If so, we would love to know.



Why not pop along and have a look. Byfleet Library hours are Tuesday 10-1, 2-7, Friday 10-1, 2-5 and Saturday 9.30-1, 2-4.30. Very many thanks to all those who helped with these displays. If you have any suggestions, or information that could be used we would be very grateful. Please contact Tessa Westlake on 01932 351559.

MAKE SURE YOU NEVER MISS ANOTHER EVENT!

There's nothing more annoying than realising that the talk you meant to go to actually happened yesterday! So, to save any disappointment, we enclose with this newsletter a small diary of Society events for this year. As you will see, Paddy has booked some very interesting talks and visits. You must admit, it would be a shame to miss out, so why not pin up the diary by your calendar or notice board. Don't forget, guests are welcome, (although we do charge £1 - but this includes an interesting talk and a cup of tea/coffee and biscuits - a bargain!).

So mark up your diaries, tell your friends, and we'll see you there!