



Byfleet Heritage Society.

Issue 25

Newsletter

June 2004

Another AGM has come and gone—rather scarily this was the 9th. Where on earth does the time go? With the AGM gone, that means it's time for subscription renewals again too. A renewal form is enclosed with this issue, and we hope you will continue with us. If you have already renewed, or joined the Society since January 2004, thanks for your support and you need not renew until next year.

There are the usual appeals for help in this issue, I'm afraid. This time for help on the stand at Parish Day and—as ever—for help on the committee. Please see the back page for details of how you can contribute. If you are interested in joining the committee, but want to see what may be involved before putting yourself forward, our next committee meeting will be on Monday July 5th at Byfleet Library, and you are welcome to come along for a "recce".

In the meantime, thanks for you continued support, and hope to see you soon at one of our talks.

FORTHCOMING
EVENTS 2004



2004

FRIDAY 9th JULY: (Please note change of day). **Iain Wakeford** is conducting one of his excellent **Heritage Walks** around Byfleet, and we are going to join him. Meet at **Byfleet War Memorial, High Road, Byfleet, 7pm**. These walks do not cover too great a distance, and are taken at a gentle pace.

Monday SEPTEMBER 13th: We are proposing to hold a workshop at **Surrey History Centre** to follow up on our event last year. Please see below for details and let me know if you are interested. If there is not sufficient interest, the event cannot go ahead.

Thursday OCTOBER 21st: *The Wey Navigation Canal* by **Denys Wood** from the National Trust at

Dapdune Wharf. Come and hear about our nearest National Trust property, past present and future. **Byfleet Heritage Centre, Byfleet Library, 8.15pm.**

Thursday NOVEMBER 18th: **Byfleet Oral History Group** will tell us all about their latest project and about their success in collecting and preserving villager's valuable memories of the past. **Byfleet Heritage Centre, Byfleet Library, 8.15pm.**

Thursday DECEMBER 16th. **Mike Webber** will revive some memories of the **shops and businesses that have been in the village**. As usual, mince pies and Christmas cheer assured! **Byfleet Heritage Centre, Byfleet Library, 8.15pm.**

**Members free. Non members £2
Everyone very welcome.**

WORKSHOP AT SURREY HISTORY CENTRE, MONDAY SEPTEMBER 13TH.

A few members have expressed an interest in this opportunity to carry out some research with the expert help of the History Centre staff. Topics we hope to investigate are:

The Enclosure Act and the boundary trees remaining in Byfleet

Houses on the site of Old Orchard and

The Blue Anchor murder.

If wish to join us at History Centre on these or other projects, please give Tessa Westlake a ring on **351559**. Please note the event will be cancelled if numbers are too few. Thanks!



For the Record...

Did you miss a meeting? Find out how it



Our talk for **March** was **the History of Heathrow Airport** by **Nick Pollard**. The Thames gravel terraces of the site had provided very productive farmland, and so the area has been inhabited from ancient times. A rectangular earthwork gives evidence of this, and excavations made before the airport was built discovered 11 hut circles and a possible Iron Age temple dating back to 500-300BC. Also traces of a bronze age field system have been found in the new Terminal 5 area.

In the 18th century the original base line of the Ordnance Survey was laid out over Hounslow Heath, running from the Kings Arbour earthwork to the Hampton poor house. The two ends of the line were marked by a bollard made from a cannon, and one of these is still in place within the airport today.

Before the airport was built, the area was made up of scattered farms collectively called Heathrow. Perryoaks Farm, Heathrow Hall, Perrotts Farm and Heathrow Farm all show on old maps.

But aerial activity was taking place early on—we saw a photo of a hot air balloon flight in Caines Lane in 1908. The flatness of the general area led to the development of many aerodromes. Hounslow Heath Aerodrome operated from 1919-1920 when it was superseded by Croydon. This was in effect the first London airport, with the first commercial flight from England to Australia leaving Hounslow on 12th November 1919 in a converted Vickers Vimy bomber built at Brooklands. Heston opened in 1929 and is famously where Neville Chamberlain returned from his meeting with Hitler in 1938. It was used by the RAF during the war as a photo reconnaissance unit, but closed post war. And Hanworth Air Park was visited by a Graf Zeppelin in 1930.

The site for Heathrow Airport was requisitioned in 1944 and handed to the Ministry of Civil Aviation in 1946. The official opening on 31st May 1946 saw flights by a BOAC Lancastrian, a converted Lancaster bomber. The seating was arranged lengthways inside the cabin, and passengers still had to step over structural spurs of the plane. There was also a chemical toilet for the travellers' comfort! The "terminals" were quite basic as well—in a tent! However, there were still flower arrangements inside, an odd collection of chairs to sit on, and a WH Smiths kiosk! Arrivals and departures were announced on blackboard – 8 arrivals and 5 departures were shown in a picture from 1946/7.

The airport soon became a local attraction and visitors were positively encouraged. They could watch the aircraft from surprisingly close up and were allowed to walk across the runways to get to their enclosure—something that could not happen in these security conscious days.

All services were on the north side of the airport until an era of expansion in the 1950s. A tunnel was built under the central area which opened in 1953. New terminal facilities went up, with the Queens Building with its roof gardens being opened in 1955. The first multi-storey car park opened in 1963.

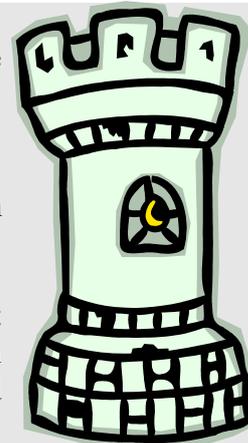
Nick also showed us some of the memorable moments in the life of the airport. Queen Elizabeth II returned to Heathrow from Africa on the death of her father. A look at where the Staines Trident crash of 1972 had taken place showed how this disaster which killed 118 people could have been so much worse, and of course no visit to Heathrow would be complete without a look at Concorde. Even now the airport is expanding with work going ahead on Terminal 5. The story of Heathrow goes on.



Mary Alexander made a return visit to the Heritage Centre in April to tell us about the history of Guildford Castle.

There is no clear date for its founding, as few dates are recorded until the 13th Century. It was primarily used initially as a garrison for horse soldiers, in order to keep a watch on the surrounding countryside.

Mary explained that the motte was built first, then a tower was constructed on top of it and also a bailey. This type of castle, of earth and timber construction, could be built in weeks using unskilled labour. In the 12th Century, these materials began to be replaced with stone.



What remains today is part of the shell keep and the upper part of the motte. The buildings are plain, and therefore difficult to date, but the shell keep dates back to the reign of King Henry I (circa 1130-1140) or to King Stephen.

Mary told us that the keep appears to have been built on two phases, with one or two floor levels, and was added to later, as can be seen from the sign of some crenellations. The entrance was on the first floor level

Most of the castle was abandoned in the 14th Century, except for the keep which was used as the county jail.

The windows are 16th Century, but there is evidence that there may be medieval windows above these. As the local chalk was not thought to be suitable, most of the tower was built of Bargate stone, gathered from fields as small slabs. There are lines of 'herringbone', used to level up the stonework.

The only decorative stonework is found in the chapel area (in which prisoners were kept from the 14th Century to the 16th, and who carved into the walls – early graffiti!), leading Mary to believe that the castle was built for King Stephen, as he was unable to afford much art or craft work which could be expected to be undertaken on it. Some of the carving is of poor quality, so it is puzzling as to whether it was a royal castle and it is also difficult to date.

There are no medieval chimneys, so heating would have been provided by braziers.

The castle occupied a site of 5-6 acres, including an area for grazing and an area for soldiers to muster in the event of battle.

The first written reference to the castle is dated 1165, when the king was having it extended. In 1245, King Henry III bought some land to extend the castle, in the area now known as Castle Cliff Gardens, and to include rooms for the future King Edward I. Purbeck marble was used for a window put in to the Queen's chambers, in order to let in as much light as possible.

King James I got rid of the building and it was eventually divided up into lots. A local man became keeper of the castle in the 16th Century, and he used it as his residence. Brick windows were built around this time.

The keep was taken over in the 1880's by the Borough Council and restored. Much inappropriate conservation was carried out at this time, leading to problems such as water being trapped in the concrete. It was also then covered in ivy, so plants were put on the top to placate opponents of the removal of the ivy.

The building was opened to the public in 1888. The present extensive conservation work, which has meant that the castle has been closed, is due to be completed towards the end of June 2004. Work has included a new floor at first floor level and better definition of the crenellations. It has now been repointed with a lime mortar.

By Jim Allen

For our AGM on **20th May** we were very pleased to welcome **Chris Glasow** who spoke to us about **the history of St Mary's Church**.

The first ever written mention of Byfleet occurs in 727 when the manor of Byfleet was granted to Chertsey Abbey by Frithwald, Governor of Surrey. The first actual mention of the church is in the famous Domesday Book of 1086, but this does not necessarily mean that this is when the church was built. There was probably an original Saxon church on the site, with the present building dating from about 1290-1320.

Chris put forward a theory as to why the church is somewhat removed from the centre of the present village. Pottery kilns and evidence of early British settlement have been found around the Broad Ditch area, said to be the original course of the River Wey. This original British settlement possibly grew into Saxon settlements, although unfortunately any traces of this have probably been covered by the M25. But the site of the church would be convenient for a settlement in this area.

The oldest parts of the present building are built in the Gothic and Early English architectural styles. It is possible the rebuilding was done with funds from King Edward II. Byfleet was quite well connected during this time. Edward II stayed at the Manor in 1307 and the following year he granted it to his favourite, Piers Gaveston. However, poor Piers wasn't popular with everyone and was later banished. The Black Prince later had Byfleet Manor as one of his residences.

A picture from 1803 shows a door to the left of the present entrance. This led to a gallery above the nave. A dormer window under the bell tower was to light a second gallery across the end of the nave. In the early 19th century (before the additions of the 1860s) the main entrance to the church was on the south side. In Medieval times the main everyday entrance was often to the south, with the north door mainly used for processional purposes. An entrance to the south would also be more convenient to the original Saxon settlement. The north door was also known as the Devil's door, as when you went in at the south, the devil flew out the north door opposite.

The church boasts some medieval wall paintings by the north door, which would be in a good position to be seen if the main entrance was in the south. Both the consecration cross by the door (which would originally have been one of 12) and the picture of an unidentified king are covered with what looks like a masonry pattern, perhaps from when all imagery in churches was frowned upon after the Civil War, and the original medieval pictures were painted over.

There is still some ancient stained glass still in the church. Some 14th century glass on the north wall of the chancel is not original to the church, but a head of Christ and a probable coronation of the Virgin in an east window is original. There is a fine commemorative brass to Thomas Teylar, Rector of Byfleet from 1454-89 now on the wall behind the pulpit. This was originally set into the floor of the chancel, and this is where Thomas still lies.

Finally Chris mentioned the font, dating from the 15th century, which originally stood at the west end of the church with a painted conical lid. This is octagonal in shape and carved with alternate quatrefoils, angel's heads and shields. It was perhaps not finished as the shields have been left blank. Also one of the angel's heads is missing his wings, so if he isn't an angel, who is he? Perhaps we will never know. Another mystery are the initials RS on the pulpit, which dates from 1616.

So there is still much to discover, and to tell and Chris had to stop there. But he has promised to come back at a later date and bring us up to the present day, so keep an eye out in our diary for that!



Questions and Ponderings

This time we have a query from Jean Barratt. A house called The Red House in West Byfleet (near West Byfleet school) has been bought by developers. Mrs Barratt feels it is in some danger, and has heard that it has some connection with the famous aviators Alcock and Brown. If this is the case, she feels the house should have some protection. But she is having trouble finding out anything about it.

Does anyone know either anything about this story, or where Jean might go to research it. She has already tried Surrey History Centre and Brooklands Museum without success.

If you can help or suggest anything, please ring either Tessa Westlake on 351559 or Jean herself on 349822. The planning meeting is taking place at the end of the month, so speed is of the essence. Thanks very much for your help.

Some answers to previous investigations

Jim Allen, Ruth Drew and various other members remember the Robin Hood castle in the grounds of Foxwarren. It could be seen from the path going from Manor Bridge to Wisley Common/A3 on the hill to the left. Jim also remembers filming at Boldermere.

As regards the sewer to Wisley, Mary McIntyre told us that 2 large pieces of wood with fittings for a sluice gate had been discovered in Broad Ditch (the original course of the River Wey). The attendant archaeologist said the wood had been carved using flint instruments. The area had been used for farming, so possibly these gates were to do with irrigation of crops. Experts reckoned they were 4,000 years old.



Carl Neville has reported that Juniper Cottage, where the funeral procession for PC Choate began, may be number 12 Chertsey Road. He is going to check with family friend and get back to us.

Thanks to everyone for their information. If something comes to light about one of our queries, please contact Tessa Westlake (01932 351559 or tessa@westlakesystems.co.uk) or leave a note at Byfleet

Library. Many thanks!

SOCIETY NEWS

BYFLEET PARISH DAY SATURDAY JULY 3RD

We are having a stand at Parish Day again this year, and would be very grateful if you could come and help man the pumps for half an hour or an hour on the afternoon, or help clear up at the end (about 5pm).

It's a great job on a nice day, and you are never far from a cake stall, ice cream van or beer tent, depending on your preference!

The more volunteers we can get, the less there is for everyone to do, and it's also not quite so lonely! So if you are free, could you give Tessa a ring on 351559. Thanks very much and see you there!



At the risk of becoming a nag (!!!), I'd like to remind members that we could still do with some help on the committee. It's not too formal, and you can come either in a specific capacity such as booking speakers, or just as extra bodies to help out as and when required (such as at Parish Day). Even if you could take on the tea duty once every six months, we would be very grateful.

As ever, please ring Tessa on 351559. I look forward to hearing from you!



THE HERITAGE SOCIETY WILL SOON BE 10!!!

As we noticed with somewhat of a shock at this year's AGM, next year we will be 10 years old!! So we thought it would be nice to do something a bit special for next year's AGM. Is there anything you would like to do, or a special speaker you would like to hear? Or is there a particular outing you would like to go on? The more time we have to organise it, the better, so if you have an idea, please let us know and we'll see what we can arrange.

Please ring Tessa (351559) or any committee member with your ideas, and let's make it a meeting to remember!!



For those of you who enjoyed Trudie Cole's talk on the Iron Age finds in Surrey—and for those of you who couldn't make it that evening—Trudie has asked me to point out that the Surrey Archaeological Unit is having an Open Day on Saturday 17th July at the Surrey History Centre, Goldsworth Road, between 11am and 2pm. They will be open for tours every hour on the hour, and you can see and touch real archaeological material and see how they reconstruct all those bits of pot!

For further details please contact Trudie on 01483 518772 or trudie.cole@surreycc.gov.uk.

Members might wish to know that Norman "Spud" Boorer, who had shared his memories of his childhood and his working life at Vickers with the Society, sadly died recently.

Spud knew West Hall, where his father had been head gardener, and joined 1st Byfleet scouts aged 6. After joining the workshop at Vickers Aviation Ltd in 1931, he was soon promoted to work with senior structural engineer George Edwards. Spud developed equipment for the Wellesley, Wellington and Warwick aircraft. In November 1945 he joined Barnes Wallis and became his second in command and chief designer. Although he finally retired in 1981, he continued his association with aircraft, helping to set up Brooklands Museum where he was an enthusiastic volunteer until his death.