



Byfleet Heritage Society.

Issue 29

Newsletter

October 2005

Another year is coming swiftly to a close, and the nights are drawing in again, but we hope that this will not deter you from joining us down at the Heritage Centre for the remaining meetings of this year. Chris is also busy arranging more interesting speakers for us for 2006, so watch out for details of those. In the meantime, the dates for next year are available below so you can note them in your diaries now.

2006 is a special year for the Society, as it was a whole 10 years ago that Sir Cliff Richard came to open the Heritage Centre at the library. It was a very special day, and is quite a landmark in the Society's history, so we are planning on a special event to mark the occasion. The exact form of this is still being thrashed out, but please see the relevant section and note the date in your diaries, and keep a look out for more details soon.



We are 10!

It was way back in 1996 that Sir Cliff Richard came to open our brand new Heritage Centre at Byfleet Library. To mark the occasion we propose having a 10th birthday party on Saturday 27th May 2006. Details of the day coming soon—watch this space! Please come and celebrate this milestone with us!



2005

Thursday 10th November: Jim Philips will speak on **The Wey and Arun Canal**. Find out about our local waterways and their history. **Byfleet Heritage Centre, Byfleet Library, 8.15pm.**

Thursday 8th December: Society Christmas Get-together. Mike Webber will show some of David Chapman's photographs taken just outside Byfleet. Christmas cheer and the odd mince pie is assured. **Byfleet Heritage Centre, Byfleet Library, 8.15pm.**

Members free. Non members £2
Everyone very welcome.

Dates for 2006

*These are our meeting dates for 2006.
(Please watch out for further details.)*

Thursday 19th January

Thursday 16th February

Thursday 16th March

Thursday 13th April

Thursday 4th May—(this will be the AGM and held at Byfleet Village Hall)

Thursday 8th June

Thursday 6th July

Thursday 14th September

Thursday 12th October

Thursday 9th November

Thursday 7th December.

For the Record...

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

In **June Chris Glasow** asked the Society “**Who Do You Think You Are?**” as he shared his tips on how to trace your family tree.

The best starting point is to begin with what you know and work back. Your immediate relatives will be your main source. Start with your oldest relatives, getting all the information you can, although remembering that while events might be ancient history to you, it may still be a painful memory for them. Chris stressed that from the very beginning it is vital to record every piece of information gained, and also to file it systematically. This will become more important as you gain more and more information. Make sure to record where you found the information in the first place, as you may need to return to check certain facts and also you may save yourself accidentally going over a document you have already searched. It is a good idea to make copies of everything relating to your family history that you can—photos, dated letters, certificates, school reports, house deeds. Even if it doesn't seem important now they are all pieces of the jigsaw and may later provide vital proof or a clue as to where to head next in your research.

Once you have gained all the information you can from your family, your next stop will be the many public records available. The best known of these are the Registers of Births, Marriages and Deaths, which can provide a range of information, including addresses. The Family Records Centre in London holds copies of all these from 1837 onwards. You can seek the name of your ancestor in the indexes in the public search rooms, but you do need to know what you are looking for in order to be sure you are looking at the right record, so go armed with as much information as you can. Each yearly index is divided into quarters, and as events were sometimes not registered until some weeks after the event, you may need to look in more than one index to find your ancestor. If you can't find what you want, remember it could be simple clerical error. Or the date could affect listings. For example, before 1875 a child did not need to be registered for its birth if it had been baptised. In the early listings there is also a lot of misspelling, so it may be worth checking variations of your name.

Other resources include the Census. If you know where your ancestor's address, you could check in the censuses which were taken every ten years since 1801. Early censuses have limited information, but from 1851 they record names, occupations and ages of people at their home addresses, giving a real insight into your ancestors' home life. As with all records, they are not perfect—names can disappear from census to census as people moved away, died or simply missed the census. Names may be misspelled, and ages were not always given as accurate. Census records are available on microfilm at the Family Records Centre and at many local records offices, and the 1901 census is available to check on the internet, although you may need to pay a small fee depending on the details you want to download.

Parish registers are also another valuable resource, as these can take you back beyond the civil registers. They were began in 1597, with some even going back as far as 1538. Before tackling these ancient documents, you need to do some research into the system, how it worked and how to interpret the recorded information. For instance, the purpose of the parish registers was to record an event such as a burial or baptism, rather than the actual date of birth or death. If your ancestors were not of the Anglican religion, this can complicate matters. While non-Anglicans often used the Anglican church for events, some religions like the Quakers kept separate records. For Catholics, it was actually dangerous in former times to openly declare your religion, so there are very few registers pre-1800, and in 1754 Hardwicke's Marriage Act actually declared Catholic marriage illegal. Most Parish register over 100 years old should be available in local record offices, and those for Byfleet are kept at Woking.

Chris ended his talk by bringing us into the 21st century and showing us some of the resources available on the internet. There are a great many sites, some free, some requiring a small fee, such as The Federation of Family History Societies and The Society of Genealogists, as well as the Family Records Centre's own website. Search engines like Google can also point you in the right direction. And to record all your hard work, there are software packages available to help you store your information, plot your family tree and keep your research for posterity.

In September, **Phillip Arnold** came to speak to the Society about **Woking Palace**.

The site, off Carters Lane, near Woking Park Farm, is owned by Woking Borough Council, and is probably the most important historic site in the Borough. Today there are only a few structures remaining. There is a barrel vaulted building and some Tudor walls of the old hall, three arms of the moat with the River Wey providing a fourth side, remains of the King's Garden (now rough meadow) and a copse that was once the orchard.



The site has been a manor in the gift of the crown since the time of Edward the Confessor and historical figures such as Edmund of Woodstock (son of Edward I), Joan the Fair Maid of Kent (wife of our own Black Prince) and Margaret Beaufort (mother of Henry VII) lived here. It was Henry VII who took over the buildings and began their conversion into a palace.

Norden's map of 1607 shows a diagram of what the palace looked like. There was the old great hall and also a new Kings Hall built in 1508, remains of which still stand. The Queens Gallery stretched along the river. However, it was under Henry VIII that the Palace really prospered. It was in a convenient location near to London, and on the river to enable easy travel. It also provided a handy country retreat for the Court at times when disease was rife in London. At its peak, the Palace contained 70-100 apartments, and members of Henry's court, such as Anne Boleyn, Katherine Parr, Sir Anthony Browne (one time owner of Byfleet Manor) and Thomas Cromwell had apartments there. The Palace did not just house the great. Henry's physician, Dr Butts was housed there, as well as Mark Smeaton, the unfortunate musician executed for alleged adultery with Anne Boleyn. But this was no rustic retreat. Recently some fine tiles from Valencia were recovered from the moat, indicating that the palace was decorated to a luxurious level. These tiles are also of great importance as they are evidence of trade between England and Spain, probably due to Henry's marriage to Katherine of Aragon.

However, by the time of Elizabeth I, the palace was less popular and its upkeep was becoming costly. Elizabeth's successor, James I, gave the palace away to Edward Zouch, who abandoned it altogether and built Hoe Place. Since then the buildings have fallen into disrepair or disappeared altogether, and the area was turned over to agriculture. Parts of the King's Hall still remain, and were used for a time as a barn. There is a sketch by Hassall from c 1823 showing the remaining brick walls covered by a thatched roof. Much of any remaining stone or building materials was gradually robbed for building stone, and many buildings in Old Woking contain pieces of the once great Palace. This "recycling" went on until quite recently, with the latest incidence being within living memory.

The site is now protected by English Heritage, but their policy is not to touch a building and its area unless it is under a specific threat. However, Mr Arnold felt the site was in need of an archaeological dig to enable us to understand more about the Palace. The Friends are allowed to open the site three times a year, but there are problems here as while the Council own the site, they do not own any of the access to it. This leads to further problems when trying to attract funding for the Palace, as grants are not readily available unless you can show public access to the site. However, the Friends are working with many bodies, including Surrey Wildlife Trust, to enable access, and to enable the public to understand the ruins that remain. Three display boards have recently been purchased and put in place, and there is a leaflet "A Walk Around Woking Palace" available from the Friends website (www.woking-palace.org). While the site is open to the general public three times a year, group visits for Societies are also available by arrangement.



We thanked Mr Arnold for his talk, and I'm sure members will be keeping an eye on future developments at this most interesting site.



October's talk was From Concrete to Concorde—the history of aviation at Brooklands, given by Alan Winn, Director of Brooklands Museum.

The large open space in the centre of Hugh Locke-King's 1907 concrete motor racing track soon attracted the first aviators. A V Roe, the first Englishman to design and build his own aircraft, was given permission to attempt trial hops down the finishing straight of the track. Later, Vickers bought the Itala Motor Works in 1915. Hawkers also set up shop at the track, and a famous flying school was established. Before the First World War, Vickers and

Bristol had sheds at the Byfleet end of the track. These were later demolished to make way for the Hurricane factory. Vickers gradually expanded until its hangars were right next to the race-track, and old photos show cars speeding past the enormous Vickers logo. New planes would be taken out of the hangar over the racetrack. During the Second World War, Hawkers found their Brooklands site too small, and moved to Slough. However, Vickers remained and expanded their factories right across the track itself. Once the war was over, Vickers bought the site for £330,000 (approx £10 million today).

Some of Britain's most famous planes were produced at Brooklands. The Vickers Vimy was produced towards the end of the First World War, but gained its real fame as the aircraft that carried Alcock and Brown on their historic non-stop flight across the Atlantic. During the Second World War, the Barnes Wallis designed Wellington was produced at Brooklands. Later, such models as the Viking, Viscount, Vanguard and Valiant were built. The new planes were fitted out with the absolute minimum of equipment, and even then, a hole had to be made in the Byfleet Banking to allow these large planes to take off from Brooklands. They then made a short hop over to Wisley airfield where they were fitted out for their final take off. The TSR2 was designed and built at Brooklands, but the project was controversially scrapped at the last minute. This also saw the end of complete aircraft production on the site.

Thirty-three acres of the Brooklands site is now the Brooklands Museum, which comprises of the Members' Banking, the Wellington Hangar on the old finishing straight, the original 1907 clubhouse, a stratospheric chamber, wind tunnel and balloon hangar used for aircraft development, and a collection of Vickers and BAC planes, including the Wellington R for Robert, salvaged from Loch Ness and now reconstructed. But recently a more glamorous exhibit has taken up residence at Brooklands.

The world famous Concorde was partly built at Brooklands, and an aircraft has recently been acquired for the Museum. This is being restored so that the public can experience what travelling in real style on this unique aircraft was like. This particular aircraft first flew in 1974, but was always used for trials rather than commercial flights. She last flew in 1981 and also flew in formation with the Red Arrows. However, the restoration job was considerable. The aircraft came with no tail fin, no engines, no droop nose (it had been borrowed to replace one on another aircraft that got damaged during a parking accident!), no windows, no seats, very little cabin lining and nothing in the cockpit! Luckily British Airways had kept all parts for Concorde, so spares were found, and in all 45 truck loads came to Brooklands. The aircraft was cut into five sections and transported by truck to the Museum. Restoration has carried on apace since her arrival, and she has been reassembled and repainted, and the refitting of the interior has begun. It is hoped to have displays in the rear of the plane, showing the history of the plane and of its association with Brooklands. Visitors will then be able to sit in the restored interior, enjoy refreshment and then visit the captain in the cockpit. The aircraft should be open for people to view later this year, and fully completed by the end of July 2006.

Further plans for the Museum include changing the entrance to the Museum from Brooklands Road to the old airfield. It is also proposed to move the old aircraft hangar to another location and restore it, opening up more of the original track. It is planned to build a replica of the pre-First World War flying sheds and also a new building to keep the Concorde under cover. There will be a 500m grass airstrip, so flying days can continue, and it is also proposed to restore the original restaurant buildings on the Test Hill. It is wonderful to have a Concorde on site, and we were delighted to hear about all the wonderful things proposed for the Museum and track as it comes up to its centenary in June 2007.



Howard Cook

1907-2005

In our last newsletter, we sadly reported the death of our patron, Howard Cook. Howard was born in Englefield Green in 1907. His family moved to Byfleet in 1911 when his father became Head Gardener at Foxwarren Park, where his father managed the gardens with 12 staff.

As a child, Howard attended Cobham Elementary School, walking the three miles each way, unless he managed to hitch a ride on a passing traction engine! He then attended Guildford Grammar School, where he excelled in English and—perhaps unsurprisingly - History. At 16 a job in Barclays Bank was chosen for him, which unfortunately, he heartily disliked it. He considered he had two choices: to take an external degree by post in order to change his job, or to enrich his life by taking on work in the community. Luckily for Byfleet, Howard chose the latter and he spent many years working for the good of the local area.

When war broke out he became a Sector Leader in the Air Raid Precaution Service (ARP) before being called up in 1941. He trained as an Artillery Surveyor in the Royal Artillery, and in 1943 was sent overseas. He served in Egypt and Syria and eventually went into action in Sicily and the Italian campaign, including Monte Cassino.

Howard returned to Byfleet after the war hoping for a quiet life, but soon found there were things to be done. He became Hon Secretary of St Mary's School Parent Teacher Association. Then in 1947 he became Hon. Secretary of the Byfleet, West Byfleet and Pyrford Residents' Association – a temporary position that ended up lasting almost 30 years! There were 12 members when he started, but by the time he retired he had built up the membership to nearly 6000. He became the Association's President in 1975, a post he held for the rest of his life. His hard work for the area was acknowledged in 1978 when he was chosen as Woking Borough Council's Eminent Citizen of that year, and became widely known as "Mr Byfleet".

As well as his work for the Resident's Association, he set about reviving Parish Day with Eric Bird (restarted in 1952). He also helped at a club for the disabled, negotiated restarting the Byfleet branch of the British Legion, and stepped in to become Secretary of Byfleet Bowling Club, and became President in 1992.

He wrote two short histories of Byfleet and Pyrford, illustrated with his own pen and ink drawings. Six of these sketches of Byfleet scenes were also made into postcards. Needless to say, money raised from the sale of Howard's work all went to local worthy causes.

With his great interest in history, Howard was Doug Bright's inspiration to start the Heritage Society and Centre, and we were very pleased when Howard became one of the Society's patrons in 1996. Mr Cook was so active in so many local causes for so many years that he was known to a great many people, and he will be fondly remembered.

We received the following from member Alfred Smith:

"In the Reader's Digest July 2004 there is a reference to the Old English word "FLEOT—a creek, ditch or channel.

Since the beginning of time Byfleet has been a village of ditches, most of which have been culverted or filled in with grave results in flooding. It occurs to me that the name "Byfleet" may have been derived from "Byfleot".

What does anyone else think?

SOCIETY NEWS

West Hall Visit

Back in July, members were treated to a visit to West Hall, not only the former home of the Stoop family, who did so much for the village, but also the former workplace for many people in Byfleet.

We were warmly welcomed by David Binns and David Thompson, who then took us around both the original house, and the extension added by Mouchels. We were able to compare the state of the rooms now with some old photos that had been collected. Many rooms still contained their moulded ceilings and fine wooden inlay. In some cases, the rooms had been restored to some of their former glory. For example, the old dining room had been used as a drawing office, and the beautiful beamed roof covered up with a false ceiling. This has now been removed and the room serves as a very fine staff canteen. The old Dutch Garden outside has also been partly restored.

At the end, a collection of £37 was made, which the Society committee rounded up to £50. This was sent to David and David for Mouchel's charity collection. Members might like to know that this year the staff at Mouchel Parkman had voted to support the British Heart Foundation. It is company policy to match any funds raised by staff, providing a very useful contribution to the charity. Thank you.

Subscriptions!

Thank you very much for all the subscription renewals we have received since the AGM in May, and also welcome to our new members.

You may have received a reminder form in this newsletter. This means that our records show that you have not yet renewed. We hope that you will decide to do so, and if you already have, or have any questions, please contact membership secretary Jeff Sechiari on 341084 or jeffsechiari@btinternet.com.

Thank you.



"Immortal Harlequin—The Story of Adrian Stoop", rugby player for Harlequins and England and son of FC Stoop of West Hall, has now been published. The

Society provided some photographs for the book, and we have two more copies (signed by the author) for sale. They are priced £10 (in the shops £17.99). If anyone wishes to buy a copy, (a Christmas present for the rugby fan in your life?) please ring Tessa Westlake on 01932 351559. Thank you.

Don't forget

If you would be able to join a rota to help with providing the teas at the end of our monthly meetings, please let us know. Many thanks.

