



## *For the Record...*

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

Members might remember the display on W G Tarrant at Parish Day last year and some of you may have bought the lovely book by Richard Norris. In **January** we were very pleased to welcome the author to speak on his subject.

Walter George Tarrant (or WG as he preferred to be known) was one of nine children. WG went into business with two of his brothers, Henry and Percival. Another brother Edwin went into the army. Percy followed him during the First World War and unfortunately lost his life. His name appears on the Byfleet War Memorial. On retirement, WG's father lived in a house called The Nook, on the corner of Petersham Avenue and Oyster Lane. Both parents are buried in St Mary's churchyard.

The Tarrant firm soon made a name for itself in the local area. He built Rosemount Parade, Station Parade and St John's Church in West Byfleet, and some say he was also responsible for Birchwood Road. He produced many fine, large houses including Cassilla in Madeira Road, which was built for his brother Percy. His first major development was The Hockering, still a prestigious address in Woking today. It was said in the family that Tarrant's navvies did a great deal of the earth shifting in the building of Brooklands Racetrack.

At its height, Tarrant's business had a staff of about 5,000 people, all based at his works in off Chertsey Road in York Road. There seemed to be a family atmosphere in the company, and we saw photos of the plumbers and the admin staff as well as Tarrant's famous tug of war team and Tarrant's band.

Tarrant also developed St George's Hill, and it was said that the trees that he removed from there were used to build his houses. Back then a 6 bedroom house on the development would have set you back £1,836! 155 acres were set aside for the golf club and 14 acres for the tennis club. During the First World War the golf clubhouse became a military hospital.

WG took the challenges that war presented in his stride. He developed the Tarrant Light Portable Sleeping Hut for the troops—an easily assembled wooden hut. Much of the carpentry was done by teams of women. The design proved so popular that it was said that if all the huts produced were laid in a line they would stretch from London to Newcastle. They remained very popular until the invention of the Nissan hut. In 1917 WG met Flight Lieutenant Rawlings and discussed building a plane that could bomb Berlin. The Tarrant Tabor was developed, the largest plane ever built at the time, but which unfortunately crashed on its maiden take off.

WG married Henrietta and they had five children, all of whom were encouraged to enter the business. In 1921 WG and Henrietta celebrated their silver wedding and the 21st anniversary of Tarrant's Ltd. He hired a train to take all the staff to Bognor for the day, and they in turn presented him with a barometer and an engraved silver salver. The children grew up. His daughter Elsie married Hugh Junor, a pilot who had fought with T E Lawrence in the First World War. Another daughter, Mildred, met a dashing South African on a trip there with her parents and married him. However, life was not without its tragedies. His son Edwin did not enjoy managing his father's brickworks, and decided to emigrate to Australia. Sadly he went for a swim one day off the Melbourne coast and was never seen again. Hugh Junor was also killed in a plane crash in 1927, and was buried in St Mary's churchyard.

In 1920 WG had bought the Wentworth estate, and gradually developed the area and set up the golf course. Wentworth was even earmarked to become the centre for government during the Second World War should London be destroyed. WG lived at Wentworth for some years (in a Tarrant House, naturally) but in 1931 he suffered a serious heart attack. Rest was prescribed, and so the family took their trip to South Africa. However, without WG's hand on the steering wheel, the business deteriorated and at one point he was £170,000 in debt. St George's Hill golf club was sold to the members and a notice was put into the papers that WG was retiring from the business due to ill health. The family moved out of Wentworth to Malt House Farm in Farnham. However, at the end of 1931 a board meeting was held and all Tarrant's assets added up, and on the basis of this the bank made a further loan of £120,000 on top of the original debt.

In 1938/9 WG moved to Hafod in Wales, now known for its beautiful rural walks. It was here that WG collapsed and died in 1942. The house became derelict and was later sold and demolished in the 1950s.

It was a wonderful glimpse into the life of this eminent Byfleet resident and we thanked Richard for an overview of WG's busy and productive life. (Copies of Richard's book are still available—please contact one of the committee for details)



THE LATE MR. THOMAS HOLLOWAY.

In March we welcomed Joy Whitfield, a former nurse at **Holloway Sanatorium**, who shared her knowledge and collection of memorabilia of the mental hospital and its founder, Thomas Holloway.

Thomas started out as a purveyor of pills and ointments that claimed to cure all ills. His first ointments were made in his mother's saucepans, and he and his wife sold pills on the docks. The business grew and soon had premises on The Strand in London. Thomas was one of the first businessmen to appreciate the value of advertising, and he even managed to put advertisements on the pyramids and at Niagara Falls. He did try to offer Charles Dickens a fee to mention his pills in *Dombey & Son*, but the author refused.

Having made his fortune, Thomas decided to turn to philanthropy, and after attending a public meeting in 1861 about the badly managed care of the mentally ill, he decided to set up a private mental hospital for the professional and middle classes. At the same time he set up a college for ladies—Royal Holloway.

Thomas set about building his hospital with a will, on some of his own land in Virginia Water. He had a separate railway siding installed at Virginia Water to bring building materials to the site. He consulted Pugin about the style of the architecture and held a competition for architects to design the building. He engaged John Gibson, Superintendent of Regents Park, Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens, to landscape the grounds. In 1873 Thomas' wife Jane laid the first brick and Thomas the second. But unfortunately both died before their new sanatorium was finished.

The finished building was palatial. The front hall doubled as the chapel, which every hospital was required to have. 189 plane trees were planted in the grounds, of which only one is left in Holloway Drive. The interior decoration was apparently influenced by that of La Sainte Chapelle in Paris and cost £400. This was finished in 1878. Pictures in the patients dining hall were supplied by students from the South Kensington School of Art, and there were also life sized portraits of British notables.

The building was finished in 1879, but as regulations for the care of the insane had changed in the meantime, it failed and the architect William Crossland had to revise the plans. Thomas Holloway died in 1883, and his brother and brother in law took over running the hospital. Finally on 15th June 1885 the hospital was officially opened in a grand ceremony with the Prince and Princess of Wales, who came down from London on a special train.

Conditions at the hospital were quite luxurious. It was full of elegant furniture, and the first medical superintendent installed flush toilets and electric lighting. The hospital even had its own gas works. Male and female patients were kept apart, and male nurses were known as attendants. Female nurses were dressed in grey (the lady companions) or blue (the more hands on nurses). There was a chapel choir and male nurses were expected to be good at sport, as it was thought suitable for male patients to do physical activity.

By 1893 there were 366 patients (up from 73 on opening) and during the First World War patient numbers increased again, while staff numbers decreased.

In the 1930s the new state registration came in, meaning that nurses had to have 3 years training. In the 1950s nurses worked mornings (7am-1.30pm), afternoons (1.30pm-7.30pm) or nights (7.30pm—7am). All grades of patient were admitted and there was no catchment area so patients would come from anywhere. There were strong rooms and padded cells where patients could only be kept for a limited time. Patients had the use of occupational therapy rooms, a library, shop, cafe and art studio and also a chiropodist, physiotherapist and a hairdressers. Tea dances were held on Wednesdays at 2pm and sometimes there were visiting concerts too. There was also plenty for the staff to do too, with dances, a billiard room, cinema, bowling green and tennis courts.

More changes came with the introduction of the NHS in 1948. Extensions were built and the large rooms became dormitories. However, on 8th February 1978 a fire broke out in the cinema. This spread rapidly and although everyone escaped from the hospital, three wards were gutted and several areas badly damaged. This, coupled with policy changes regarding putting mental patients more into the community, meant that in 1980 the hospital closed. The remaining patients were transferred to St Peter's and the building was left empty for over 10 years. It suffered vandalism—even rumours that a witches coven was meeting in there—but eventually Octagon took it over and renovated and restored the building with help from English Heritage. The hospital has featured in many TV programmes, films and music videos, including Michael Caine's *Jack the Ripper* and several episodes of *Morse*.

After Joy's informative talk, we browsed her extensive collection of memorabilia including many of Thomas Holloway's adverts in many languages and pictures of the hospital through the ages. We were accompanied by music written by Elgar for Powick mental hospital, which would have been the same sort of music played by Holloway's "Sanny".



THE HOLLOWAY SANATORIUM FOR MENTAL DISEASE, AT VIRGINIA WATER.

For our AGM this year Jeff Sechiari presented a quick look at Byfleet Village Hall. This building is known to all of us and is a focal part of village life. It was founded to commemorate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897 and the land was donated by local landowner Hugh Locke– King. It was agreed the F C Stoop of West Hall would pay for the actual building as long as the villagers could raise the money to furnish it. They were mostly successful, although records show that Mr Stoop did help out a bit in that department as well. A competition was held to select an architect and an article in The Builder of 1897 says that 92 designs were received. The final winners were Ashley and Armstrong of London. The crest of Queen Victoria which is still over the stage has the date of 1898 on it, as this was when the hall was finally ready to open.

The hall also houses the Village Club. Mr Stoop was the first club President and subscriptions were 6s per year or 1/6 per quarter. This seems quite steep, but the club was aimed primarily at the Byfleet tradesmen. All members must be male, over the age of 17 and reside in the parish of Byfleet. However, honourable members need not reside in the parish, although their subscription would cost 10s. You could introduce a friend for 1d, although no-one eligible for membership could be introduced more than once a year. There was to be no gambling and no spirits served at the bar, and only three half pints of beer in any one day.



The Village Club's first AGM was held on Tuesday 13th February 1900. There were 116 members at that time, 42 of them honourable. The expenditure for that year stood at £13 3s 4d, including £2 on snooker cues and £6 13s 4d to set up an athletic club as the trustees considered it important to encourage sport among the villagers.

Jeff showed some interesting pictures of the hall through the ages. One of the interior, probably from the opening, showed the hall equipped with gas lamps and moulding around the stage proscenium arch. This moulding had unfortunately since been removed. The original stage curtains had been lovely old Victorian theatre curtains. There was a back room behind the stage where at one time the secretary to the Trustees, a Miss Booker, actually lived. When not being used for dancing, the hall floor was protected by a canvas cover which was tied to hooks in the walls. Prior to the war, this floor was reputed to be the best dance floor in Surrey. Receipts still exist for tins of floor polish ordered from Harrods, who delivered the goods in their motor car.

Early outdoor views showed the stream that used to run past the front in a ditch. There was some debate about when this ditch was filled in, but one member remembered that it had gone by the time of the Second World War. Different pictures of the exterior showed how many extensions and alterations have been made to the original hall. Jeff also showed photos of the garage to the back to the hall, which at one time had been an air raid shelter. Many of the original features still exist on the inside.



The hall has had long and varied use over the years. There was a Doctor's Room for clinics, an Assembly Room, and the club had a Billiards Room and a Card Room. During the war and for some years afterwards, the Hall was used as a Civic Restaurant where you could buy a hot meal for 10d and a desert for 3d. This was thought to have started in 1941 or 2 and to have continued until 1948. Some members remembered having their school lunches in the hall when at St Mary's school across the road.

In his enthusiasm, Jeff had even ventured beneath the hall to show photos of the foundations.

We thanked Jeff for his talk and all enjoyed a new look at such a familiar part of our village.

# BYFLEET QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

For this issue, we have reproduced the article written by member David Barrett where he recalls the Byfleet Cycle Speedway team and track, complete with a sketch map of where the team held their races. Do you remember the team, or did you go to any of their events, or even compete? If so, we would love to hear from you.

If you have any memories that you would like to share—about the Broadsiders or any other aspect of life in Byfleet—please drop us a line and leave it at Byfleet Library.

## BYFLEET CYCLE SPEEDWAY

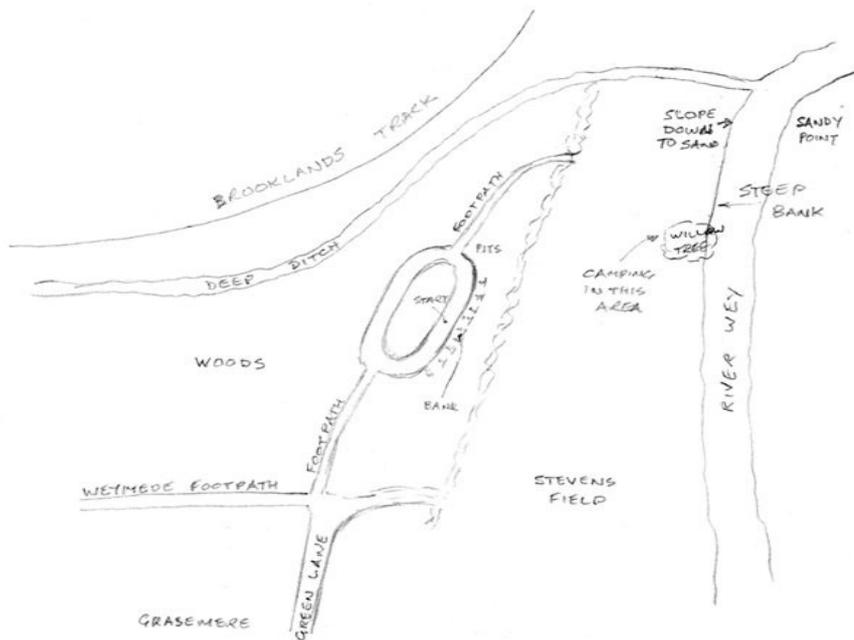
by David BARRETT.

Byfleet Broadsiders or Broadsides started on a dirt track in Weymede woods behind 'Grasmere' and adjacent to Stevens Field.

To reach the track you either used the Weymede path from Oyster Lane or Green Lane to their junction and then followed a minor footpath leading to 'Sandy Point', an area used for camping in Stevens Field and swimming in the River Wey.

The track was sited to take account of the virtually even level of its east side and almost the entire area of the bends. The west side was levelled out from a gentle slope and the spoil and tuffets used to form the outer edge of the first bend.

I remember Ray Ingram in particular at the time and anybody was free to help prepare the track and of course to go round it on their bikes.

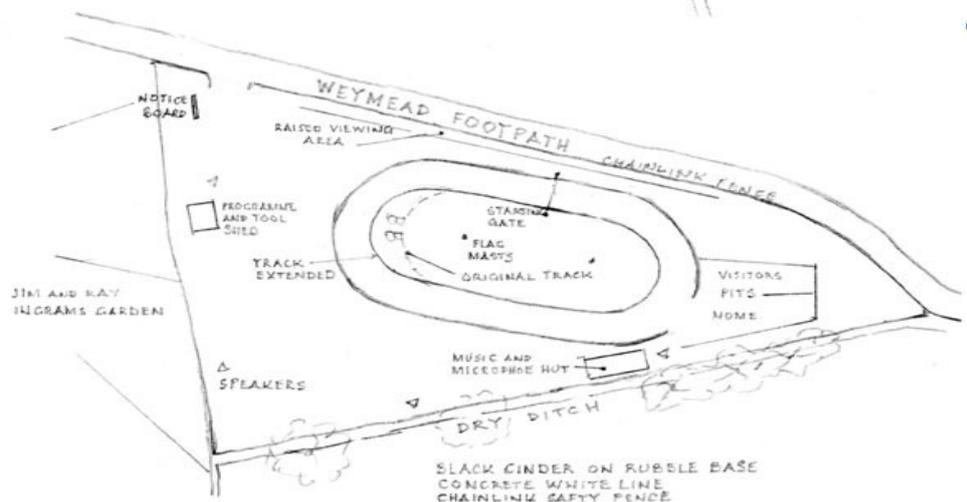
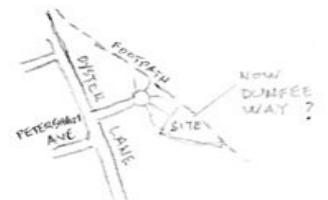


A white line was eventually laid and the starting gate added. It was around this time a competitive team was formed with bikes adapted for racing.

This track reflected the general level of the majority of the other teams facilities, but was probably on a squatters use basis, (the land owners in the village were usually very tolerant, as long as no damage was caused). But as the team following grew, an upmarket facility was considered the way to go and a small area of land rented with a far superior track constructed where Dunfee Way now exists.

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WATER SUPPLY } AND HOSEPIPE FROM  
INDRAMS HOUSE

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## BYFLEET PARISH DAY

Saturday July 18th  
Byfleet Recreation Ground

It's summer, so that must mean it's Parish Day once again. We will be attending, but it would be great if we could have some volunteers to lighten the load.

If you could spare half an hour or an hour to help look after our stand, we would love to hear from you. No expertise required—just take a seat and look friendly!



If you could help out, please let us know. Call Tessa on 01932 351559. Thanks very much.

## BYFLEET FIRE STATION

There will be a working party to start tidying up the fire station on the corner of High Road on **SATURDAY 20th JUNE**



from 10am to 1pm.

If you can come along and lend a hand in helping to maintain one of our oldest buildings, we'll be very happy to see you.

## SUBSCRIPTIONS 2009/10 ARE NOW DUE!

A reminder to everyone that subscriptions for the coming year are now due. If you have already paid at the recent AGM, thank you very much for your continued support.

There should be a reminder slip inside this newsletter for those whose subscription we have not yet received. If I have included one and you have already paid, then please let us know so we can amend our records. New members who have joined us since January 2009 need not renew until next year.

Thank you all for your support and we hope that you decide to continue with us.

## Byfleet Photo Competition

Do you like to do a bit of photography in your spare time? Do you have some nice shots of Byfleet that you are quite proud of? Well, maybe this will be for you.

The Society would like to hold a photographic competition to get us all out and about, looking at our patch of Surrey and capturing something you like the look of. The aim would be to then choose winners to make up a calendar of our local area for 2010.

Your work can be submitted in print or digital form. A photo editing program can be used to remove blemishes from your picture, but we will not accept excessively manipulated images.

Please make sure your name and address are either written on the back of the print, or included with your emailed image.

Entries can be of any aspect of the area that catches your eye—whether landscape, architecture, wildlife or any other subject. But the image must come from within the villages of Byfleet, West Byfleet or Pyrford.

Closing date for entries will be Friday 4th September and entries can be left at Byfleet

Library or posted or emailed to Jeff Sechiarì, Manor Side East, Mill Lane, Byfleet KT14 7RS ([jeff.sechiarì@btinternet.com](mailto:jeff.sechiarì@btinternet.com)). Entries must be marked with name, address, contact telephone number and where the photo was taken.

Copyright of the picture will remain with the photographer, but you will assign use of it to the Society for their use in the calendar and possible other projects if you are one of the winning entries.

If you would like your entry returned to you after the competition, please include a self addressed envelope, or a note that you will pick up your picture from Byfleet Library.

A more detailed set of rules is available on application (see above) or please come and see us at Parish Day,

Now, fingers crossed for some more good weather to show off our villages at their photographic best.

Good luck and we look forward to seeing your entries.

