

Volunteers

We are extremely grateful to the members who volunteered to serve refreshments and to man the door throughout the two days of the 'Then and Now' exhibition. Thank you very much to you all for your invaluable help in making the exhibition run smoothly. We have an extremely hard-working committee and any help from members is most appreciated. In particular, we would really like to hear from any members who are prepared to write the occasional meeting report for the Newsletter. We feel that the Newsletter benefits from the inclusion of a member's perspective in the reports of our meetings and that it should not be confined to the reflections of the committee. However, in the absence of volunteers, we often have no option but to write the reports ourselves. If any member has a particular interest in our next talk and would like to write the report, please let us know.

Meeting Reports

Molesey Cemetery Summer Stroll Wednesday 16 July 2014

It was an idyllic summer evening for a gentle stroll through Molesey cemetery. Over sixty members took part before making their way to Hurst Park School for refreshments and a talk by Anthony Barnes on the history of the cemetery and some of the notable people buried there.

The pressing need for a new cemetery came about for a simple reason - St Mary's small churchyard was full. St. Paul's, Kent Town and St Mary's established burial boards in 1860 and worked together to look for a suitable plot of land for a burial ground but without any success. Matters came to a head in 1864 when a poor family in Bell Road resorted to burying their child in their garden. St. Mary's burial board quickly decided to act on an offer to sell about an acre of land close to the existing churchyard in West Molesey by Mrs. R Edmonds for £520.

The cemetery has been extended on several occasions since. The 1888 extension was particularly interesting on account of the opposition of a distinguished local resident, Sir Henry Thompson, whose Hurstside estate (now Balmoral Crescent and Wilton Gardens) backed onto the proposed extension. When Mr Hoffman, the Home Office Medical Officer, came to inspect the site, Sir Henry Thompson turned up in person and according to the Surrey Comet 'urged every objection, the propinquity of his dwelling house, contamination of water and floodings.' Ironically, Sir Henry was one of the first in this country to advocate and popularise cremation.

On the evening of the summer stroll, flags were in place to draw people's attention to significant graves. Many eminent figures prominent in Molesey public life from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century are buried close to the cemetery office; but every area of the cemetery has a story to tell whether it's the graves of members of local families, a group of nuns buried by the cemetery wall or the headstones of service men and women who died in two world wars. Who knew that two of the six hundred men present at the charge of the Light Brigade – Private Henry Jewell and Corporal George Pumfrett – are buried in Molesey cemetery?

Thank you to the members of People and Buildings group for doing the research on the cemetery and organising the stroll. A fuller article on the history of the cemetery will be published on the Society's website later in the year.

The Treasures of St Peter's Church
Talk by Lindy Wilson, Walton and Hersham NADFAS
Tuesday 16 September 2014
Report by Jenny Wood

Lindy Wilson, a member of Walton & Hersham Decorative & Fine Arts Society, gave us an enthralling talk about church recording and the treasures of St Peter's Church. NADFAS volunteers have completed records of over one thousand churches nationwide and the information in these records has been used by researchers, insurance companies and the police. Volunteers from Walton & Hersham, including Lindy, have recently completed recording St Peter's Church; their report is currently at the proof-reading stage. Lindy explained that church recorders work as a team to research and document the contents of a church – memorials, metalwork, stonework, woodwork, textiles, paintings, libraries, windows and other items. It takes about three years to complete a church record and at the end of the process the church is presented with an illustrated book detailing each item in the church and its history.



The oldest building in Molesey is St Peter's church tower, which was probably built about 1420. Lindy said that they thought that the tower was probably originally built as a watchtower, not as a church. The battlements round the top of the tower add credence to this idea. The present church, apart from the tower, was built in 1843 but it replaced a much earlier building and there are many memorials and other artefacts in the church which are older than the building. The north aisle of the church was added in 1859.

At St Peter's Lindy's task was to research and document the memorials. The oldest memorial is a brass commemorating Thomas Brende who died in 1598. This memorial was previously on the floor of the chancel but, in order to preserve it, the memorial has been moved to the chancel wall. Lindy pointed out some interesting variations in the spelling on the memorial, notably in the spelling of 'four'. The memorial states that 'by Mercie his last wife he had foure sonnes and fower daughters'. In total Brende had eighteen children – eight sons and ten daughters – but only one son and five daughters survived him. The photograph shows Christian Nielson's memorial to his two wives and one of his sons. The inscription on the anchor reads 'sove I fred' (Danish for 'Sleep in Peace').

As far as Lindy was concerned the most exciting discovery at St Peter's was the finding of a tiny skull between the coats of arms at the top of the memorial in the north aisle to the Honourable George Cranfield Berkeley 'Admiral of the Red', i.e. Admiral of the Fleet. She was not certain why the skull is carved on the memorial; skulls were sometimes included as a sign that a family line had died out but Admiral Berkeley's son was still alive at his death.

Among the other memorials is a marble bust of the Right Honourable John Wilson Croker on the back wall of the north aisle of the church. Croker was a Member of Parliament for 25 years and Secretary of the Admiralty from 1809 to 1830. He was originally appointed as Secretary by the Prime Minister, Spencer Perceval, who has the misfortune to be the only British premier ever to be assassinated. Croker named his only son Spencer Perceval. Beneath the bust of Croker there is a small marble slab inscribed to his memory and to that of his son, who unfortunately died at the age of three in 1820.

Lindy also told us about the history of many other artefacts in the church. If you would like to find out more information, further details are given in the booklet 'A Short History of St Peter's Church West Molesey', which can be purchased at the church.

'Then and Now' Photographic Exhibition
3 & 4 October 2014
Report by Peter Aron



Friday afternoon on 3 October was sunny and warm, so it was a pleasure to make our way to the Methodist church in Manor Road to view the History Society's 'Then and Now' Photographic Exhibition. The exhibits dated from the late 19th century and photographs of yesteryear were set alongside those taken from the same spot today. So it was possible to see at a glance how Molesey has changed over the years. The photographs were arranged in logical groupings, by location or themes, and the displays took full advantage of the natural light entering from windows high up in the church's arched roof.

The afternoon turned out to be quite a social affair as well, a chance for people to discuss the photographs with friends and neighbours and to meet others with an interest in Molesey. So most of those attending stayed on to chat and enjoy a cup of tea and cake, having viewed the displays. One visitor from Walton mentioned she had been the last baby born at 46 Vine Road (opposite Vine Hall, on the corner with Hurst Lane) before it was converted from a nursing home into residential accommodation. Others recalled the Great Flood of '68 and noted the waterline in the photograph of flooding at the cricket ground this Spring was exactly the same as in pre-War decades. It was particularly pleasing to see photographs of historic interest such as structures and buildings which have since been demolished to make way for new development, e.g. the old Hampton Court Bridge leading into Bridge Road, Molesey Mill between Bridge Road and Hampton Court Way and the Boat Builder's Yard (now The Riverside), next to Molesey Boat Club. There is also a photograph showing St Paul's church tower/spire under construction in 1888.

All together about 350 people visited the exhibition over the two days it was open. I understand it took about two years to compile all the exhibits, so grateful thanks to all those who provided and took the photographs, researched the background information, and undertook the painstaking work involved in mounting the displays etc. Many people lamented the fact a site was not available for the exhibition to remain in place for a longer period so it could be viewed and enjoyed by others in our community unable to attend on these two days. The committee is now starting to work on the publication of a book of 'Then and Now' photographs and the intention is to hold the exhibition again to coincide with the launch of the book.

Forthcoming Events

Tuesday 11 November 2014, 8 pm
How the East Surreys Went to War
Talk by Ian Chatfield
Imber Court, Ember Lane, KT8 0BT

The tragic fate of Surrey soldiers killed or injured during the first four months of the First World War has been detailed in an ambitious project by the Surrey Infantry Museum. There is also a temporary exhibition that will be updated during the next four years to mark the centenaries of other key operations in Europe. Ian Chatfield, curator of the Surrey Infantry Museum and a team of volunteer researchers have set themselves the task of recording the story of each man in the first wave of the Queen's Royal West Surrey Regiment and the East Surrey Regiment. After two years

of research, they have traced more than 2,000 of the 4,000 troops who served in the regiments in 1914, many of whom fell at the First Battle of Ypres in October and November of that year.



On Remembrance Day, Tuesday 11 November, Molesey Local History Society will be commemorating the centenary of WWI with a talk by Ian Chatfield, entitled 'How the East Surreys Went to War'. As usual with meetings at Imber Court, we may experience difficulty in parking due to the other events being held there on the same evening, so you may wish to consider walking or sharing lifts. Refreshments will be available from the bar downstairs.

Magical Molesey – Wednesday 3 December 5 – 7pm

Once again Tudor & Co estate agents have kindly offered to host the Society at the Magical Molesey Christmas celebration in the Walton Road. We will have a presentation of 'Then & Now' photographs of Molesey shops, together with some of the displays of the Walton Road area taken from the recent exhibition.

People and Buildings Special Interest Group

The bi-monthly evening meetings of the people and buildings research group at the Royal British Legion will resume on Wednesday 26th November 2014. We are currently writing a booklet of trails around East and West Molesey highlighting local landmarks. We also hope to contribute to next year's big research effort by the Society looking into the history of schooling in Molesey. Please get in touch with Anthony Barnes who chairs the People and Buildings group if you'd like more information about the group (020 8979 6744 and people-buildings@moleseyhistorysociety.org).

INFORMATION PLEASE – BATS BOWLS

Does anyone know anything about BATS bowls East Molesey? We have received emails from two people this year who each have two pewter tankards inscribed with 'BATS Bowls East Molesey' and then a year. We have not been able to find out anything about BATS bowls and should be very grateful for any information about them.

60 years ago...



Molesey's own monthly magazine, the Molesey Review, reported in October 1954 a head-on crash in Bridge Road between a Chevrolet truck and a Green Line Coach, with the truck being hurled into the window of Perry's, the hairdressers. And in the 'Council Matters' article, it is reported that the experimental one-way system in part of Bridge Road had proved satisfactory and a request would be made to the Minister of Transport to make Bridge Road, from its junction with Creek Road to River Bank, a One-Way Street.

Esher District Council gave outline planning consent to a plan which entailed the lay-out of a cul-de-sac road and 30 buildings plots at the rear of First Avenue, agreed to arrange installation of electricity in five additional pre-war council houses, at a cost of £97.5s and had received

a letter from the County Planning Officer stating that negotiations for the purchase of land at the Forum, as a site for a new library, had not met with success!

In a regular feature, 'Around the Town', 'Old Timer' bemoaned the fact that telegrams are no longer delivered from our Bridge Road Post Office, but come all the way from Surbiton, conveyed by messenger boys on motorcycles.

The Court Cinema changed its programme twice a week, and films for October included 'Dial M for Murder', with Ray Milland and Grace Kelly, and Burt Lancaster in 'Apache'. The Alexians presented 'Friendly Relations', a comedy in three acts, at St Paul's Hall, Vine Road, at 8pm PROMPT. Profit from the production was to be given to the St Mary's Church Dry Rot Fund and to Molesey Hospital Comforts Fund. And there was a Civil Defence exhibition at the Conservative Hall on the 14th October, where you would have seen Civil Defence Training items, interesting civil defence films, demonstrations, and instruments for detecting radio activity.

In 'Club Notes' we learn that the Townswomen's Guild Members' Night ended with a Grumbles Session, covering issues such as the absence of toilets in doctors' surgeries, the badly-patched pavements of the Walton Road, and the unhygienic presentation of food. Members of The Phoenix Club had been to Farnborough Air Show, and the Molesey Young Conservatives were planning to hold a Square Dance.

James Williams, a local historian, continued his trawl through old records of West Molesey, and showed the value of money: 1796, A truss of straw for almshouses, 7½d; 1817, Paid Geo. White for five days work in churchyard, 10s.6d; 1818, printing 100 bills offering rewards for apprehending thieves that robbed the Church, 8s.6d; 1820, for black cloth to cover the pulpit on the death of his late Majesty King George III, £2.14s.

With winter approaching, Timothy Whites & Taylors, Chemists, offered some autumn remedies, while the Comment page stated: 'An advertisement in a trade journal inviting applications for the position of Father Christmas in a London Store disclosed that the successful applicant would be expected to commence duties on 30th November, so it seems the festive season is getting longer and longer.'



MLHS has most issues of the Molesey Review, which was published from May 1953 until January 1969, when it combined with the Esher Courier. We plan to eventually scan each issue so they can be displayed.

Paula Day

Local Events

The Elmbridge Hundred, A Visual Journey - 12–30 November 2014

An exhibition of photographs taken within the Borough of Elmbridge by landscape photographer Astrid McGechan and students from Elmbridge's senior schools

*Robert Phillips Gallery, Riverhouse Barn Arts Centre. Mon–Sun 10am–4pm
 Sullivans Reach, Manor Road, Walton-on-Thames KT12 2PF
 Tel. 01932 254 198 www.riverhousebarn.co.uk*

New Art Gallery for Hampton Court!

*The newly re-opened **Cumberland Suite**, completed in 1732 for the Duke of Cumberland, the younger and favourite son of King George II, has been transformed into an art gallery at Hampton Court Palace this autumn. Visitors will enjoy a magnificent new display of works of art collected by monarchs. Take a closer look at iconic works by great masters including Caravaggio, Rubens and van Dyck. In atmospheric Georgian surroundings, the Cumberland Art Gallery will be a place to indulge your love for art and discover the history of royal patronage at the Palaces.*

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