

Meeting Reports

Summer Stroll

Restoration of the Lost Flood Plain, Home Park, Hampton Court
Jason Debney – Thames Landscape Strategy, Royal Paddocks, Home Park
Tuesday 7th July 2015
Report by Cheryl Meggitt

On a beautiful Summer's evening, twenty five to thirty members were very fortunate to be introduced to the secret world of the wildlife being cared for in The Royal Paddocks owned by Historic Royal Palaces. This is where the horses owned by the Queen go after their royal duties pulling carriages, for instance at Royal Ascot Races, have ceased at the end of the Summer Season and they enjoy a holiday of peace and security, with plenty of room to roam. The beautiful horses we saw were serene and happy in each other's company.

We were accompanied by Russell Downs, Wildlife Officer; Nicholas Garbutt, Trees and Wildlife Conservation Manager; Becky Kendrick, Project development Officer at Thames Landscape Strategy, and Jason Debney of Thames Landscape Strategy introduced them to us. As we walked from The Hampton Wick Entrance to Home Park along the route of the stroll they all gave us relevant information and were available to answer questions. The following paragraph is extracted from the information leaflet they gave us that evening:

'In 2010 The Thames Landscape Strategy and Historic Royal Palaces began designing a three phase project to restore the lost floodplain habitat of The Royal Paddocks in Home Park and look at ways of enhancing the area for water and wildlife. The first two stages were completed between 2011 and 2014 for just over £400,000. Phase 3 looks to connect the works carried out in the first stages to the main park and beyond. This site is identified as an opportunity area for the Lower Thames Catchment and Lower Thames Scheme. It also has the benefit of being a gateway area as the highly urbanised Longford River joins the River Thames. This provides the opportunity for enhancing the habitat and improving the water quality of the Longford River and Thames Groundwater as it passes through Home Park to the main River Thames, acting like sustainable drainage in an urban area, by helping to neutralise nitrates and other substances to improve water quality. The work we have already carried out has been identified as working well to prepare the River and landscape for flooding, aiding in reliance for a quite densely populated area. Phase 1 involved ditch profiling and sluices. In Phase 2 the ditch profiling was extended and planting up took place. Phase 3 proposes work to include expansion of the reedbed and improvements for fish and eels.' (Thames Landscape Strategy)

Early evening Home Park was empty of visitors and in the peaceful surroundings it felt we were a long way from the noise and bustle of traffic, and it was a magic and cathartic time. Our route first took us to The Ice House built late seventeenth century, where we peeped inside in the dark. The Keeper of The Ice House had a small room off the main ice storage area where he had a small fireplace to keep him warm. Shallow ponds were created nearby to enable the water to freeze into ice which was sawn up and dragged to the Ice House. There was a pipe from the house to lower ground to drain out melted water. The ice could be sold to shopkeepers in Kingston as well as being available for Hampton Court Palace.



We then entered the Shire Horse Stables, an area of Home Park out of bounds for normal park visitors. We walked through the stable yards and into the large area of The Royal Paddocks and unspoilt countryside. Cardinal Wolsey originally created the sluices, ditches and river meanders. We were shown the creation of the new sluices on two streams of the Longford River which run into the River Thames. They had had a hydrological survey done and if the river floods, they would shut the sluices and flood the grass area and save Kingston. If there is a drought, the sluices keep the water in the deeper streams, to help preserve the fish. The oak wooden sluices were made by Sir Mark Edwards who made the royal boats, Jubilant and Gloriana, at Richmond. Where the parts of the sluice are in the water, plastic wood is used. We were shown the reedbeds, which when cut back, can be used for thatching or bedding for horses. A large pond has been created where bullrushes are growing and the ditches to Kingston have been scoured and opened up. In the past, they knew where boreholes suitable for ponds were located. (Photo of sluiceways in the Restoration Area).

The Longford River is artificial and was created by Charles I to power his water features at Hampton Court Palace and flush through the water closets, which then went to the reedbeds. A pipe came from Coombe Hill to Hampton Court Palace. The river started in a grim bit of London but is now very clean and flows into The Thames and has river shells and fluvial sand. The fish in the streams are eels, chubb and carp and are kept there as a nursery and, when they are too big, are put into the ponds. There are also mice, grass snakes and voles in Home Park. They are doing a project with Bushey Park to reintroduce water voles back into Home Park. Originally King William and Queen Mary wanted a garden at the bottom of The Wilderness at Hampton Court Palace but it failed because it kept flooding.

As we walked through The Paddocks, we enjoyed a lot of beautiful wildflowers and the hay is cut for the stud horses. They are also very keen to protect the baby eels which are now classified as an endangered species. There are eel passes on the sluices and three times a week the sluices are managed for eels and once a day for the mink traps, who eat a lot of wildlife. We were shown them checking one of the eel traps and logging them. The eels were tiny and are thirty years old when we eat them. They have pulled three hundred out. They have also created a sandmartin wall and a kingfisher bank.

In the gloaming we left The Paddocks and walked past the Rick Pond and Boating Pond to The Hampton Wick Entrance again, at the end of an informative and very enjoyable evening. It was a privilege to be given an insight into the work of the partnership of Thames Landscape Strategy and Historic Royal Palaces.

R C Sherriff - From Towpath to Red Carpet

Talk by Loretta Howells

Wednesday 9 September

Report by Claire Annable

On September 9th we were treated to a fascinating and informative evening with Loretta Howells from RC Sherriff Rosebriars Trust celebrating the life and works of local playwright Robert Cedric Sherriff.

As Loretta pointed out, most people know R C Sherriff for his poignant play about life in the trenches in WWI, *Journey's End*. However, there was a lot more to the man and Loretta talked us through his life from shy insurance salesman to Hollywood screenwriter.

R C Sherriff was born in Hampton Wick in 1896 and attended Kingston Grammar School, where he was captain of cricket and rowing. An only child, he had a close relationship with his mother that continued to the end of her life. In fact, his autobiography entitled *No Leading Lady* (he never married) was not quite true, as his mother seemed to have been the leading lady in his life.

After leaving KGS where he was a big shot he joined Sun Insurance where he became a small fry in a big pond. He hated the monotony of insurance sales and this somewhat shy young man longed to escape.

In 1914, he saw a recruiting advert for army officers. He thought it sounded fun, so he applied. Unfortunately for him, as a grammar school boy he was rejected as the army were only looking for public schoolboys. However, in 1915 grammar schoolboys were accepted and R C Sherriff enrolled in the 9th East Surrey Regiment. He loved it and described it as 'romantic and exhilarating'. 7th November 1916 saw him on the Front Line writing articles for *Wipers Times* (Wipers being the Tommy name for Ypres). In August 1917 at Passchendale he was wounded and by 1919 he was demobbed.

Life after the war saw him back in insurance as a loss adjuster and rowing for Kingston. Here, he set up a social committee to raise money for new boats by writing plays.

He started an insurance correspondence course but, finding it dull, he gave up. He desperately wanted to do something during the winter months when rowing took a back seat so he started to write a novel. This failed but the characters survived to reappear in *Journeys End*. As his family had kept his 'cheerful and realistic' letters from the Front he found writing dialogue easy, he knew the men, their conflicts in relationships, the suspense and the waiting.

Journey's End took a year to write and is set in a dugout in the trenches over four days in March 1918.

The first performance in December 1928 was the prelude to an immense success. Having previously been rejected by the West End theatres, it was given a one-night performance with Laurence Olivier as the Commanding Officer. In the audience was actor Maurice Browne who immediately recognised the play's quality and undertook to take it to the Savoy Theatre where it ran for two years.

Following the success of *Journey's End*, R C Sherriff had to make a decision about the direction of his career. He was offered the chance to go to Hollywood to write screenplays but declined. He tried to write more plays but none had the success of *Journey's End*. Had it been a fluke?

At the age of 34, he went to Oxford to study history. A brief time in Bognor saw a couple of novels and more rowing for Oxford. In 1932, he was asked to write the screenplay for *The Invisible Man* but this put him in a dilemma; should he choose Hollywood with a chance of a new beginning or Oxford with a rowing blue and a degree? In the end, he wrote a number of screenplays including *Goodbye Mr. Chips*, *The Four Feathers*, *Lady Hamilton*, *Odd Man Out*, *Mrs. Miniver*, *Quartet*, *No Highway* and *The Dam Busters*. No degree and no rowing blues. Almost certainly, he hated Hollywood and spent his time commuting between there, Rosebriars, (his house in Esher), a farm in Dorset and a house in Selsey. And he was always with his mother.

R C Sherriff died in 1975 aged 79. His ashes were placed with those of his mother in St Winifred's Chapel, Selsey. Today, a small half hidden plaque marks the life of a writer who is best known for *Journey's End* but in fact wrote so much more.

To quote from *Journey's End*, which is still on the GCSE syllabus today:

'War's bad enough with pepper - but war without pepper-it's-it's bloody awful.'

Forthcoming Meetings

Thursday 22 October 2015, 8 pm (doors open 7.30)
Bishops and Peasants: Everyday Life in Medieval Esher
Dr David Stone
St Lawrence School, Church Road, KT8 9DR

Based on the exceptionally rich documentary archive for the Bishop of Winchester's manor of Esher, this talk charts the history of the manor and the lives of its inhabitants between 1235 and 1367. Bringing a wealth of new historical evidence to light, the talk explores the development of the site as an episcopal residence in the thirteenth century and provides glimpses of the lives of the ordinary men and women of Esher who witnessed these changes at first hand. It then goes on to examine the impact of famine, drought and the Black Death during the seemingly apocalyptic fourteenth century. How did Esher change, and how did the people who led their lives here cope, during this extraordinary and grimly fascinating period of history?

David Stone was the first joint Oxbridge Research Fellow and is currently juggling teaching part-time at Exeter University with the demands of looking after his two young boys. He has published widely on the medieval economy and society, including a book - *Decision-Making in Medieval Agriculture* (2005) - and articles on an eclectic range of topics, such as diet, drought, the Black Death, monastic mortality, and Chaucer's Reeve. He is currently preparing a selection of medieval account rolls for the Bishop of Winchester's manor of Esher for publication by the Surrey Records Society in 2016.

People & Buildings Special Interest Group

The People and Buildings Research Group will meet upstairs at the British Legion on Wednesday 25th November at 8pm.

For more information contact Anthony Barnes: (people-buildings@moleseyhistorysociety.org)

Magical Molesey

by Anthony Barnes

Molesey Business Association is set to get us in the festive spirit with a Christmas event for the community in the Walton Road. Tudor & Co will once again be kindly hosting the Society at Magical Molesey on Wednesday 2 December, from 5pm to 7pm. We have some delightful film to show of a trip along the Thames in 1924 alongside some displays of 'Then & Now' photographs of the river. We hope you will drop in and join us for some Christmas cheer.

How did Molesey shopkeepers attract customers at Christmas over a hundred years ago? Find out in this article from *The Surrey Comet* dated 21st December 1907!

'Christmas Shopping

What Molesey tradesmen have got on show

Once again, as this season of the year returns, the tradesmen, by the splendid show and arrangement of their goods, do their utmost to secure the Christmas orders of the public.

Messrs. H. Thompson and Co. have as usual a fine array of beef, mutton and pork on show, including that of beasts fed by Lord Rothschild and Mr. John Jones, of Llandudno. Their poultry, too, makes a splendid show, their turkeys being very fine.

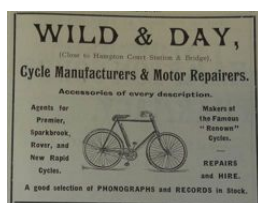
Mr. Lawrence has a fine array of meat, including a fine first-prize beast bred by the Marquis of Breadalbane, K.G., and fed on His Majesty's estate at Sandringham. His show of mutton and beef is also outstanding.

Mr. Cross is well to the fore with a second-prize shorthorn heifer, and another equally fine beast fed on one of His Majesty's farms. Norfolk turkeys are much in evidence at Mr. Ive's premises, as well as a good show of geese and pheasants. Messrs. Gillett and Allnutts' display is also worthy of mention, as well as that of Mr. Wrighton.

Mr. Evans is showing a very choice selection of wines at both his establishments, and his fruits and Christmas dainties again make a pretty show. Messrs. Stevenson's window is a picture of good things, and the same may be said of that of Mr. Latcham. Wines are also noticed in the shows of Mr. Letcher and the Watford Ale Stores.

In the greengrocery trade, Mrs. Starkey, Messrs. Masters and Bailey and the Parade Fruit Stores all show seasonable goods in great variety.

In the confectionery line one may secure all that is required at the establishments of Mrs. Scott and Messrs. Chambers, Redman, Storey, Wright and Hamilton. Mr. Briginshaw and Mrs. Raggett are showing a great variety of fancy goods and sweets for both young and old.



Mr. Patching's show of phonographs, records, mechanical toys and other articles are well up-to-date, while Messrs. Wild and Day also have a great number of records and instruments to dispose of. Mr. Rowland Williams' cycle show is worth a visit.

Footwear is shown in every variety at the premises of Messrs. Jones, Hedges and Tilley, and also at the West End Boot Stores.

The drapers are as usual well to the fore with Christmas requirements. Messrs. Rowe and Stevens, Stimson, Rant, Wheatley and Brooks offering every attraction. Gents' outfitting is well provided for by Messrs. Handley, Wallace and Ford, while Messrs. Griffin have an excellent selection of furniture, glass, china ware, etc., suitable for Christmas and New Year gifts, their new premises at 19 Walton-road, being especially adapted as showrooms. Messrs. Smelt's show also merits attention.



Perfumes, fancy soaps, etc., are to be seen in the shows of Messrs. Kent and Swaby, and at the ladies' and gentlemen's toilet saloon of Mr. Gray almost every description of toilet requisite is displayed.

Fancy stationery and Christmas cards are supplied by Messrs. Taylor, Fox and Franklin, as well as by Knapp, Drewett and Sons, Walton-road, at whose new premises these goods are displayed in great variety.

Through the combinations of the tradesmen in the Walton-road there will be decorations and illuminations from today until Tuesday.

The work of decoration is in the hands of Messrs. Langston, Jones and Co., electrical engineers, of Molesey and Teddington.'

60 YEARS AGO.....

THE MOLESEY REVIEW July –October 1955

Curriculum at Molesey County Secondary School For Girls (August 1955)

When they entered the school at the age of 11 all the girls did Religious Instruction, English, Arithmetic, History, Geography, Biology, Art, Music, Needlework, Domestic Science, Gymnastics, Games and Dancing for the first two years and those girls who had reached a good junior level in English and Arithmetic began French. When they reached the third year girls could choose to give extra time to cookery or needlework and could start typewriting. During the fourth year girls could follow one of three courses:-

The Commercial Course - If pupils had reached a high enough standard in English, Arithmetic and French they could take Commercial Course 'A'. They studied a wide range of subjects and were expected to remain at school until they were 16. They could enter for Pitman's Certificates in Shorthand and Typewriting and the R.S.A. examinations. Commercial Course 'B' was available for some girls who did not qualify for Course 'A'; girls on Course 'B' also had the opportunity to learn to type.



The Homecraft Course - Pupils with the necessary skills could follow Dressmaking or Cookery courses. If they wished they could take the London City and Guilds Certificates at the age of 16 but the course was also open to pupils who just wanted to develop their skills in these 'homemaking subjects'.

The General Course – These courses were for girls who did not want to specialise at the age of 14. 'General Course 'A' is planned for girls of good ability who may later enter for the G.C.E. Examination..... Course 'B' is for pupils of less academic ability and is designed to show them the connection between school work and their responsibilities after leaving school. B.B.C. 'World of Work' and 'Current Affairs' broadcasts are used and visits are made to such places of employment as hospitals, offices, stores, factories, and telephone exchanges as well as to museums and exhibitions.'

The girls could leave school at the end of the term when they reached 15 but many stayed at the school for an extra year. 88 new girls were due to start the school on 1st September 1955.

Clubs in Molesey

The September Review contained a report about Molesey Rabbit Club. It said that the club had 'sprung into life after a lapse of a year or more'. The Club had 'functioned very strongly during the war years, finding funds through its shows for many charities, including the Molesey Hospital.' After the war the number of people keeping rabbits declined as during the war many had only kept rabbits as a way of adding to their meat ration. In 1954 wild rabbits were affected by myxomatosis and it was feared that this disease would spread to tame rabbits. However, tame rabbits could be protected by cleanliness and shop bought remedies and tame rabbit breeders were therefore able to provide the country with rabbit meat and rabbit skins as well as exhibiting at the many rabbits shows held throughout the country.

The July – October Reviews mentioned many other clubs and associations that were functioning in Molesey, including:-

The Phoenix Club (see newsletter March 2015)

Molesey Welcome Club (for people aged over 60)

Molesey Evening Townswomen's Guild

Molesey Youth Centre

Molesey & District Cage Bird Society

Molesey & District Homing Society (for owners of homing pigeons)

Molesey Amateur Boxing Club

East Molesey Cricket Club

Molesey Football Club

Clarence Wheelers Cycling Club

Workers Educational Association (which held classes in various subjects including international and current affairs, psychology, music, archaeology and contemporary art in Esher, Hinchley Wood and the Dittons)

Molesey Boys' Brigade (which was established in autumn 1955 for boys aged between 12 and 17)

Women's Voluntary Service (which opened its centre at 144-150 Walton Road from 10 a.m. – 4.30 p.m. Monday – Friday and organised various activities including visits to those who were housebound and the 'Meals on Wheels' service)
Esher & District Festival Choir
Alexians Dramatic Club
Molesey Lawn Tennis Club
Mole Apiary Club
East & West Molesey Conservative Association
Esher District Allotments & Gardens Association

Molesey Football Club (September 1955)

Lord Frederick Hotham had recently agreed to become patron of Molesey Football Club. He lived in Yorkshire but his family's connection with Molesey dated back to the late 18th century and Beaumont, the second Baron Hotham. Beaumont's sister-in-law was married to Thomas Sutton and Hotham and Sutton jointly acquired the manors of Molesey Matham and Molesey Prior, which comprised almost all of the two parishes of East and West Molesey. When Sutton died and the Enclosure Act was passed the estate ceased to be held jointly. The Hotham holding, which included the football club land, was managed by trustees who gradually disposed of the property.

Molesey Football Club, which was established in 1899, acquired its present ground on a rental basis in 1953 and was then admitted to the Surrey County Senior League. Shortly afterwards the Club had to decide whether to buy the ground and remain a Senior Club or withdraw from the ground and lose its status as a Senior Club. The Club bought the ground. The purchase cost and the cost of preparing the playing surface amounted to £5,600. The Football Association loaned the Club £3,300 on a first mortgage at 2% p.a. interest, payable over a period of 15 years but the Club needed to raise the additional £2,300 itself. The September Review enclosed a letter appealing to the public for subscriptions.

Miscellanea

The July Review gave details of Molesey Carnival which was to take place on July 9th. The Carnival procession was due to leave Weston Avenue at 2.30 p.m. and travel via Walton Road and Bridge Road to Cigarette Island, arriving at 3.30 p.m. When the procession arrived the Carnival Queen, Joan Smith, was to be crowned by Dave King, a well-known television and stage personality. The Carnival would then continue with various arena displays and would finish in the evening with dancing on the lawn until 11 p.m. The September Review reported that the Carnival raised £152 7s 10d, which was just over £62 less than the amount raised in 1954.

A bequest of the late Christian Nielson provided a free film show, ice cream and ice lollies for Molesey children at the Court Cinema on Tuesday 26th July. There were two performances of the film, Laurel and Hardy's 'Blockheads', so that as many children as possible could attend.

The July Review reported the recent opening by E.K.A. Drawing Services of a retail shop at their premises at 10 Hampton Court Parade. It said that E.K.A. had been 'supplying the designing, drawing, tracing and photoprinting needs of firms in the district since 1948'.

At its garden party on 2nd July St Paul's Church launched an appeal to mark the centenary of the Church in 1956. The Church hoped to raise about £2,000 to build a choir vestry on the north side of the Church. (July Review)

Esher Council had approved the removal of 55 pre-fabs near the junction of Walton Road and Molesey Road. It was intended that they would begin to disappear in 1957 and that they would all be removed by 1964. (August Review)

The Townswomen's Guild held a garden party on 25th June at Hampton Court House, which at that time was maintained by Middlesex County Council as a home for old people. (August Review)

A copy of a report from 'The Surbiton Times & Surrey County Journal' of 26th July 1901 showed that Dr. W. G. Grace played in a match at East Molesey in July 1901. (August Review)

June Jackson had been admitted to Tolworth Isolation Hospital suffering from non-paralytic polio. She had been swimming in the River Thames which Esher Council's Public Health Department admitted could have been a contributory cause to contracting the disease. (September Review)

KENT'S CHEMIST, 104 WALTON ROAD

by Jenny Wood

In August this year Historic England listed Kent's Chemist, 104 Walton Road, as a Grade II listed building. It cited the following principal reasons for its listing:

Architectural interest: in its strong decorative treatment, particularly the shopfront with distinctive mosaic signage, the building is testament to the imaginative approach to commercial architecture of the period, as well as clearly expressing its history and function in its design and detail;

Historic interest: as a purpose-built manifestation of a longstanding local family business;

Level of survival: in its unusually complete exterior survival.

The listing is due to the efforts of the East Molesey Conservation Areas Advisory Committee, who spent a considerable time gathering information before submitting a detailed application on 2nd September 2014. We are pleased that we were able to help the Committee by providing some information about the building's history.

The land at the corner of Walton and Spencer Roads on which Kent's Chemist stands previously formed part of the Molesey Park Estate; the mosaic shop sign on the property describes it as 'Molesey Park Pharmacy'. In 1893 the land was bought by Beatrice Mary Kent of 4 Walton Place, East Molesey, the wife of William Henry Plaisted Kent. In February 1894 Mrs Kent entered into a contract with a builder, Joseph Dorking, for the erection on the land of a shop and residence in accordance with drawings prepared by the architects, Tinker and Morewood. The residential accommodation, which was behind and above the shop, was known as 'Norfolk House' and was possibly so called as Beatrice Kent was born in Norfolk.



The date-stone on the building states that the business was 'Established AD 1869'. We believe that Frederick William Kent moved to East Molesey from Bath about this time and that he opened a chemist's shop in premises known as 1 Walton Place, now Walton Road, in 1869. The 1881 census states that F. W. Kent was running a chemist's and post office in Walton Road and show that his 17 year old son, William Henry Plaisted Kent, was his assistant. F. W. Kent died in 1890 and his son, William, took over his chemist's business, moving it to this property about 1894. The chemist's business passed from William, who died in 1930, to his son, Frederick Charles Kent, who had qualified as a chemist in 1914. F. C. Kent ran the business until he retired in 1960, when he sold it to Mr J. F. Norrie who already owned Goulds Pharmacy, West Molesey, and a chemist shop in Terrace Road, Walton. The signage on the building shows that at one time it was also used as a post office, known as Molesey Park Post Office. According to the Molesey Review of March 1960 this post office closed in 1915.

Further information about the architecture of the property is given in the List Entry on the Historic England website – please see: <http://list.historicengland.org.uk/resultsingle.aspx?uid=1426897>.

COMMITTEE CHANGES

In recent months Brian Smith has resigned and we would like to thank him for his contribution to the Society's activities during his time on the committee. We are fortunate to welcome Norma Millard, who has agreed to be co-opted and join us in our work. We are still looking for a treasurer and would welcome any member who feels able to take on this role, ably carried out by John Hutton for many years. John would be happy to explain what is involved and hand over the accounts in excellent shape.

It is an exciting time for the Society. Albeit with some delays, we are very close to publication of the 'Then & Now' photographic book and have plans to repeat the exhibition for the launch. We have other topics that we feel would be suitable for smaller publications and hope to pursue these when 'Then & Now' is completed. The committee is a friendly and cooperative group and we hope that you might wish to join us.