

**AGM/Molesey Mills  
Thursday 24 April 2009,  
St Lawrence School**

The AGM was very well attended – so much so that we had to steal loads of extra chairs from classrooms! Over 100 members attended, and heard Jenny Wood report on a very successful year for the Society, with eight main events and a total of 319 members. John Hutton then talked us through the accounts, and was congratulated on the clear presentation.

Two committee members, Rita Ashbourne and Ken Brown stood down this year, and were thanked most sincerely for all their hard work. Elizabeth Cooper has agreed to join the committee. The election of officers and committee was unopposed, as follows:

Officers

Chair: Jenny Wood  
Secretary: Paula Day  
Treasurer: John Hutton

Committee

Jill Wilkins, Doreen Freeman, Pauline Sieler,  
Wendy Guest, Gail Petipher, Elizabeth Cooper.

There was some discussion about the problem of storage, and some suggestions were made, which the committee agreed to follow up. Other issues discussed included the idea of compiling a present day archive, and whether using different venues around Molesey, on different days of the week, was working well.

Following the business of the meeting, Brian Smith gave a fascinating talk entitled:

**Molesey Mills: a story of conflict, scandal, gunpowder & explosions, theft and grave robbing...!**

Water mills have been the main source of industrial power for over 2000 years, most often used for grinding – flour, animal feed and gunpowder – or using tilt hammers, for paper-making, fulling cloth, breaking rocks or metal bashing.

There were three mills in Molesey: two on the Mole - the Upper Mill, in the manor of Molesey Matham, the Lower, or Sterte Mill, in the manor of Molesey Prior, and the Ember Mill on the Ember.

In feudal times, each Manor had the right to have a mill, giving them a monopoly of flour milling and fulling in the area. These monopolies were often jealously guarded, but finally came to an end with the dissolution of the monasteries, when mills became commercial concerns. Throughout the Middle Ages, millers had a reputation for dishonesty.

The Upper Mill continued making gunpowder until 1780, but during its existence there were a number of fires and several fatal explosions. Lord Hotham took over, dismantled the mill and built a grand country house, converting the waterways which powered the mill into gardens – this is now the Wilderness, and you can still see the river and weir near to where the mill once stood.

The Sterte Mill is still visible behind what was the BP garage on Hampton Court Way; it is known to have been used as a flour mill, a lead mill and a saw mill, and Zenith Motor Cycles were built there in the early 1900s. Later, it was used for war work on aircraft, and by Nielsens who made marquees and tents. It is now residential flats.



**Sterte Mill as it is today**

The Ember Mill, which was sited at what is now the end of Orchard Lane, was first recorded in the early 1600s as a flour mill, but was later used for "metal bashing", making water pipes, tanks and roofing, and making iron for barrel hoops etc. Now only the water channels remain.

Interspersed with all these facts, Brian enthralled us with intriguing anecdotes of the conflict, scandal, theft and grave-robbing mentioned in the title! Altogether a really brilliant and informative talk.

A number of members asked to know Brian's sources:

Rowland Baker – The Book of Molesey

[www.moleseyhistory.co.uk](http://www.moleseyhistory.co.uk)

T.E. Mercer – Tales and Scandals of Old Thames Ditton

G.B. Greenwood – Elmbridge Water Mills

J. Stidder – Surrey Water Mills, Cobham Mills.

Cobham Mill is open to the public on the second Sunday of the month from April to October, 2 pm – 5 pm, and is well worth a visit.

**The Warrior Monks of the Middle Ages  
and their connections  
with Hampton Court Palace  
A talk by Chris Gidlow at the Clore Centre  
Hampton Court  
Wednesday 13 May 2009**

Chris Gidlow, the Live Interpretation Manager at the Historic Royal Palaces, gave an absorbing talk to about 100 members on the Knights Hospitaller and Knights Templar. Chris explained that although both orders were monks who had taken vows of chastity, poverty and obedience they were in fact professional soldiers. They were the elite forces of their time and were better soldiers than the majority who were, in effect, conscripts sent to meet feudal obligations. In battle the Templars fought on the right wing and the Hospitallers on the left. Both orders fought in the Crusades, believing that right was on their side and that they were defending Christendom. They were convinced that their actions would give them plenary remission of their sins and that they would avoid purgatory.

The Hospitallers or Knights of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem were founded in the late 11<sup>th</sup> century and became an independent order in 1113. They were named after a Byzantine saint, St John the Almsgiver. By 1204 they had become fully military. The language of the order was French as most of its members were French or French speaking.

The order of the Knights Templar or the Poor Knights of Christ and the Temple of Solomon

was set up in 1118 and was confirmed by the Pope in 1128. The King of Jerusalem gave the Templars a headquarters in his palace. In 1291 Acre fell to the Moslems and the Templars decided not to continue the Crusades and to become bankers. They had been acting as bankers for some time and had become very wealthy. When knights went on crusade, rather than taking all their worldly wealth with them and making themselves a target for robbers, they deposited their wealth with the Templars, who issued them with letters of credit, which could be redeemed by the knights at Templar and other establishments on their way to the Crusades. Following the death of Edward I of England in 1307, Philip IV of France, who had been refused a loan by the Templars, ordered the arrest of the Templars in France. In 1312 the Order was dissolved and in 1314 their Grand Master was burned at the stake. Edward II of England and Robert the Bruce, King of Scotland, allowed the Templars in their countries to join the Hospitallers. Chris recounted the later history of the Hospitallers mentioning their time in Rhodes and later in Malta. The Hospitallers still exist today as a sovereign order. They own two buildings in Rome and have an ambulance corps in the Italian army.

In 1237 Hampton Court was sold to the Hospitallers for 1000 marks. At that time the estate of Hampton Court was nowhere near as big as it became in the time of Henry VIII. The Hospitallers had the grant of free warren at Hampton Court and could keep and breed rabbits. Rabbits are not native to England and had been introduced to the south east of England in the 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> centuries from the Pyrenees. At that time they were farmed and were valued for their fur.

In 1514 Cardinal Thomas Wolsey leased Hampton Court Palace from the Hospitallers on a 99 year lease. One of the terms of the lease was that at the end of the lease he had to return the property, including one thousand pairs of rabbits or 4d in lieu of each pair of rabbits. The Grand Prior of the Hospitallers in England at that time was Sir Thomas Docwra and there is a window depicting him and his coat of arms in the Great Hall at Hampton Court. Docwra died in 1527 and was succeeded as Grand Prior by Sir William Weston who was pressurised by Henry VIII to exchange the freehold of Hampton Court for the manor of Stansgate in Essex and certain other lands. There are bricks with the Hospitallers emblem in Base Court. In 1540 the order of the Hospitallers was suppressed. It was re-established briefly during the reign of Mary Tudor but then suppressed again in 1559 after Elizabeth I became Queen.

**Carnival**  
**Saturday 6 June 2009**

Come and visit us at the Carnival, where we will have maps and photographs on display. If you are able to help set up, we should be pleased to see you around 10.30am.

**Summer Stroll**  
**Tuesday 16 June 2009 from 6.30pm**  
**Green Arden, Spencer Road, East Molesey**  
**St Albans School Hall, Beauchamp Road,**  
**East Molesey 8pm**

Tony Osborne is again organising our Summer event, which will follow up on Brian Smith's talk on the Molesey Mills at the AGM. The walk will start from outside Green Arden at the end of Spencer Road and maps will be available from committee members at 6.30pm (please do not call at the house). The route will finish at St Albans School Hall in Beauchamp Road at around 8 pm, where refreshments will be served and Tony will give a short talk. If the weather is too wet to walk, please come along to St Albans at 8pm to hear Tony's talk and collect a map, so that you can do the walk at a later date. If you are unable to join us, but would like to receive a map, please contact us on 020 8979 3465 or by email at [historysociety@btinternet.com](mailto:historysociety@btinternet.com).

Free of charge to members and £2 for guests, who are welcome. Parking in Walton Road Car Park.

**The First Line for Leisure -**  
**What the Railway did for Molesey**  
**Thursday 17 September 2009, 8pm**  
**Molesey Youth Club, Ray Road**

Our local railway line was the first in the country to be constructed solely for the purpose of leisure, for visitors to Hampton Court Palace. However, its impact on the area was far-reaching – there was an influx of workers to construct and staff the station; Londoners could escape from the city and enjoy the river, horse-racing on Hurst Park and other outdoor activities. Commuting was made possible and this became a significant factor in the growth of Molesey.

**RESEARCH GROUPS**

**People & Buildings**

Meetings are generally held every two months on the last Wednesday of the month. The next meetings will be on 29 July, 23 September and 25 November - all Wednesdays at 8pm at the British Legion, St Mary's Road.

**Waterways Group**

The Waterways Group will be having their next meeting on Wednesday 8 July in the upstairs room of the British Legion, St Mary's Road at 8pm. We will be pooling together our ideas for the talk on "What the Railways did for Molesey". We will also be discussing how we can display our information.

**Sports Group**

Unfortunately, at the moment, I don't have time to continue running the Sports Group. I am therefore urgently looking for someone else to take the group forwards. If you are interested in helping with this group would you please contact me and I can let you know what is involved. Many thanks, Pauline Sieler.

020 8979 7556 [pauline@sieler.co.uk](mailto:pauline@sieler.co.uk)

All the Research Groups welcome new members, whether those wishing to engage in active research or who just wish to come along and participate in meetings. Group leader contact details are given below:

**PEOPLE & BUILDINGS: Anthony Barnes,**  
**0208 979 6744 [agbarnes@ntlworld.com](mailto:agbarnes@ntlworld.com)**

**WATERWAYS: Jenni Haile, 0208 979 0958**  
**[jennihaile@btinternet.com](mailto:jennihaile@btinternet.com)**

**TRANSPORT: David Turner, 07940 016255**  
**[dat504@york.ac.uk](mailto:dat504@york.ac.uk)**

**RECORDING MEMORIES:**  
**Rita Ashbourne, 020 8979 8253**  
**[rita.ashbourne@uwclub.net](mailto:rita.ashbourne@uwclub.net)**

**HELP!**

The Committee would be very pleased to hear from any members willing to volunteer help. We would welcome assistance with setting up and clearing up at meetings. Also, we are recording memories of Molesey residents and would appreciate help in typing these up. It would also be wonderful to receive contributions for the Newsletter – maybe you have a memory or you have found something out in your research that would be of interest to other members. Would you be willing to write a report of one of our talks for the newsletter? Finally, if anyone is available to help put up the tent and set up at the Carnival on 6 June, we would be very pleased to see you at 10.30am. Many thanks.

## Henry VIII's Coronation Weekend Saturday 20 - Sunday 21 June 2009

*A spectacular Tudor river pageant on the 500th anniversary of King Henry VIII's coronation*

**Saturday, 20 June** On Saturday 20 June 2009 Historic Royal Palaces will mark the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of King Henry VIII's coronation (24 June 1509) with a magnificent Tudor river pageant sailing from the Tower of London along the River Thames to the King's favourite surviving royal residence, Hampton Court Palace. The river pageant is in association with Thames Alive.

At 10am, King Henry VIII and his Queen will board the Royal Shallop 'Jubilant' at the Tower of London. Accompanied by a flotilla of traditional skiffs, the King and his entourage will then travel up the River Thames with more boats joining the procession at Richmond for the final leg of the journey to Hampton Court.

King Henry's loyal subjects are invited to line the banks of the river between central London through Richmond and down to Hampton Court Palace, cheering the King and Queen and their splendid entourage as they pass by on their journey.

Meanwhile at Hampton Court Palace, preparations will be underway in anticipation of their arrival at around 3pm. Visitors will be able to see the Tudor cooks hard at work in Henry VIII's Kitchens preparing the King's feast, which will be served to the royal party in the palace's famous gardens followed by music, dancing and entertainment from the King's fools. You can buy picnic items at Hampton Court Palace or bring your own refreshments to enjoy the festivities in the gardens with the King. So get ready to party, Tudor style! **For this special night only, the Henry VIII rooms in the palace will stay open until 10pm with extra entertainment and a grand finale of fireworks.** Visitors to Hampton Court Palace during the day on 20 June will be allowed entrance in the evening with their day admission ticket. For those wishing to enjoy evening admission and entertainment only, tickets will be £5 per person.

**Sunday, 21 June** Festivities will continue at Hampton Court Palace with traditional Tudor court fun and games on the river, such as boat races and greasy poles, with further opportunities to meet the King, Queen and members of the court throughout the day. By late afternoon, the royal flotilla will bid farewell to Henry's palace playground, sailing back down river and bringing the historic weekend's celebrations to a close.

## One Hundred: Elmbridge Museum's Centenary

*A new exhibition running from 23 May to 26 August 2009.*

**One Hundred** is a history of history, tracing the Museum's journey across the century. Explore how it was formed in the genteel Edwardian era, see how it survived two world wars, and learn how 21<sup>st</sup> century technology shapes its role today.

### Molesey Local History on Facebook

Some MLHS members will be more familiar than others with the social networking site Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/home.php>

Facebook is a way of sharing your everyday experiences as well as the special things that happen in your life with family, friends and the groups to which you belong. So it is not surprising that Facebook users have found it a useful way of remembering the places that are important to them: where they live, where they went to school, where they used to work. They upload photographs and video clips, leave messages and ask questions. So if you are interested in exploring Molesey local history in a novel way, sign up to Facebook, type 'Molesey' or 'East Molesey' in the search box and see what comes up. There are groups reminiscing about their school days at Bishop Fox and St Lawrence. There's a group that thinks that Molesey Fish Bar is the best fish and chip shop in the world and there's now also a group that fondly remembers the Woolworths store. The 'East and West Molesey' group is the biggest with lots of interesting pictures of the floods and buildings of Molesey. You could upload your own photos and memories and make it an even more fascinating celebration of life in Molesey. Oh! and people are also compiling a list of famous people who used to live in Molesey. Did Charlie Drake really live here for a while?

### Newsletters

Newsletters are only sent to MLHS members. If you have not renewed your membership and wish to continue to receive the newsletter, please send your £5 subscription to: Membership Secretary, 17 Matham Road, East Molesey, KT8 0SX. Alternatively, visit us at the Carnival on Saturday 6 June or join us on the Summer Walk on Tuesday 16 June. We hope to see you at one of our events soon.

Produced by:  
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