

Membership Renewal

Membership subscriptions for 2014-2015 become due from 1 April 2014 and you will receive your renewal details with this Newsletter. As usual, there will be an opportunity to renew subscriptions at the AGM.

Meeting Reports

The Bridges of Hampton Court Friday 15 November 2013

Report by Stewart Nash

On 3rd July 1933 Edward, Prince of Wales, officially opened the new Hampton Court Bridge. It was a busy day for the Prince as he also opened the bridges at Chiswick and Twickenham.

Now 80 years later, and following extensive research, the Society mounted a comprehensive display that commemorated the four bridges at Hampton Court, which was complemented by four presentations that linked together seamlessly to tell the story.

The story, as told by Brian Smith, begins at a time when there were only three historic bridges, London, Kingston and Staines. At that time the Thames was tidal and the river could be forded at low tide or by using one of the ferries. Bridges were built at Putney (1729), Westminster (1746) and Walton (1750). In 1750 an Act was passed authorising James Clarke to build a bridge at his own expense across the Thames from Hampton Court to East Molesey and declaring that it would be lawful for Clarke to collect tolls as set out in the Act. The driving of the first pile in October 1752 was observed by the Prime Minister, Henry Pelham, and the Speaker, Arthur Onslow, who lived at Imber Court, and the bridge opened in 1753. James Clarke's plans also involved the creation of a new route to Esher by the building of Esher Road with new bridges crossing the rivers Mole and Ember.

The first bridge lasted only until 1778, when it was replaced by a new bridge. Roger Haile now took up the story. Only 17 feet wide and 375 feet long the second bridge had 11 spans compared to the seven of its predecessor. The bridge was described as a "crazy, hog-backed

disfigured the Thames at Hampton Court, and obstructed navigation". Strangely, it also provided a landing stage for boats at its central span with a staircase to road level. Like its predecessor it was also a toll bridge and apparently so vigilant was the toll keeper that reputedly even the King of France was not allowed to cross without paying the toll.

By 1862 there was demand for a third bridge and the proprietor Thomas Newland Allen obliged with a new structure that was 26 feet wide and had only five spans. The new bridge, whilst not considered to be as ugly as its predecessor, was still considered to do little to enhance the view. This was probably not a sentiment held by the Impressionist Alfred Sisley who painted a number of scenes of the Thames at Hampton Court, including the bridge. The parapets of this bridge remain intact as does the tollhouse on the Hampton Court side which is now incorporated into the Mitre Hotel. In 1876 the bridge was bought by the Metropolitan Board of Works and tolls ceased, an event that was marked with festivities and a firework display on Hampton Court Green. However by 1922 this bridge was showing its age and the scene was set for the building of the fourth bridge.

Enter Civil Engineer, David Meggitt, who was in his element describing the ambitious plans for the building of the fourth bridge, which included demolition of the Castle Hotel, the diversion of the River Mole from Creek Road and the creation of the Hampton Court Way. David described the various options and the details of the design and means of construction so that what might have been technical became easy listening. The scheme also involved the removal of Wren's Island and the taking away of part of Cigarette Island to produce a wider, straighter channel. The Client, County Engineer William Robinson, selected LG Mouchel and Ptrs. as Consulting Engineer and Holloway Brothers as Contractor whose winning civil engineering combination for the River Thames virtually replicated their pioneering Royal Tweed Bridge built at Berwick some 10 years earlier. At Hampton Court, the eminent architect, Sir Edwin Lutyens, ensured the structure was sympathetic to the historical setting with its elegant spans and brickwork cladding and the design gained royal approval although the four pavilions, which Lutyens had proposed, were never built.

To conclude the evening Vic Knibb was able to tell it as it really was. As an eight year old school boy he was amongst the pupils who were invited to the opening ceremony. Having walked from Park Road school and then waited for what "seemed like ages" to see the Prince of Wales "for all of 50 seconds" and then walked back to school having had no lunch or tea the whole thing seemed "a bit of a non-event". Eighty years on Vic now appreciates he is a part of living history.

Due to the refurbishment of Mole Hall the event was moved to Imber Court and was rewarded with a large attendance. The ample accommodation enabled easy viewing of the many display stands. My personal perspective was that this was an evening that was not only informative but also entertaining. After the meeting a number of people commented on the excellence of the evening endorsing it as one of the Society's 'best yet' and I have no reason to disagree with those sentiments.

EGM 4 February 2014

An EGM was convened to vote on raising the annual subscription from £5 to £7. This was attended by 92 members and 3 guests. MLHS Treasurer had prepared a financial summary, which accompanied the Notice of the EGM and, on the basis of this information, the members present voted unanimously to increase the annual subscription to £7. This takes effect from 1 April 2014, when subscriptions for 2014-2015 become due. The meeting charge of £1 for members and £3 for guests will also continue for most meetings. It may be necessary sometimes to charge more for meetings, which are more expensive, such as the annual meeting at the Clore Centre. The EGM was followed by talks given by Pamela Reading and Anthony Barnes which are reported below.

Howard Houses Tuesday 4 February 2014 Report by Claire Annable

"Houses for Those of Modest Means..."

This was the slogan Donald Howard used when he spent £15,000 on 52 acres of land from the Upper Farm estate in West Molesey on Christmas Day 1933.



At our Members Evening, we heard Pamela Reading and Anthony Barnes give an illuminating talk on the houses that have become known as the Howard Houses in First Avenue, Upper Farm Road, Molesey Road, Eastcote Avenue and part of Walton Road.

Aged just 22 years, Howard planned to build 988 houses in the briefly fashionable Modernist style of the 1930s. His vision was to build a community in the green fields of Surrey with houses, a church, shops and a public house. The houses were to have a kitchen, sitting room, two bedrooms, a fitted bathroom, flat roofs and steel-framed Crittall windows. They were to be rendered in white and to have gardens of approximately 80 feet - all this for £395 or 9 shillings and 9 pence a week. For an extra cost, railings could be placed around the edge of the roof to create a suntrap roof garden!

Unfortunately for Howard, the public did not take to the Modernist style, and by 1935 only 320 houses had been built, with only 100 sold. With such low numbers the brewery pulled out of the plans for a public house. Howard went bankrupt but started up again in his wife's name building houses on the White Lodge Estate in Hampton and Brookfields Estate in a more conventional 1930s style with curved steel windows and pitched roofs.

Howard's plan to build a community for middle class Londoners looking for a more rural lifestyle was never fully realised. Today, the houses have been progressively extended and changed but, 80 years on, are still known with fondness as the Howard Houses.

After the talks there was an opportunity to look at the displays from 'The Bridges of Hampton Court' meeting, which many members had asked to see again.

Forthcoming Events

**Wednesday 30 April 2014, 8 pm
AGM**

Wayneflete Tower

Talk by Penny Rainbow

St Lawrence School, Church Road, KT8 9DR

Wayneflete Tower takes its title from its 15th century builder, William Wayneflete, Bishop of Winchester and Lord Chancellor of England. The Tower was the former gatehouse to his grand Esher Palace and is all that remains. Cardinal Wolsey is perhaps the most universally known resident and, as his renown overshadows Wayneflete, the gatehouse is sometimes referred to as Wolsey's Tower. The architecture of Esher Palace was notable as a precursor to Hampton Court and, in the eighteenth century, it was renovated in the gothic style by William Kent.

Penny Rainbow, whose home the Tower now is, has been carrying out an extensive programme of restoration works since 1992, and is the author of 'A Complete History of The Tower of Esher – a William Wayneflete Landmark'. Penny will be giving a talk on the history of the Tower and its residents.

Refreshments will be served and there will be a charge of £1 for members, £3 for guests.

The V&A will be hosting an exhibition from 22 March until 13 July 2014 entitled "William Kent – Designing Georgian Britain" and Esher Palace, Kent's gothic masterpiece, will be featured.

Thursday 5 June 2014

Doors open 7.30, Talk at 8 pm

Real Tennis 'Game of Kings'

and other Tudor Sports

by Lesley Ronaldson

Clore Centre, Hampton Court Palace

Lesley Ronaldson is Assistant Professional at the Royal Tennis Court. She has also been an official guide lecturer at Hampton Court Palace for 23 years. Lesley was a founder member and chairman for ten years of the Ladies Real Tennis Association, as well as winning the World Championship doubles and the British Open singles in 1987, and becoming the first lady professional in Britain. Lesley will be able to offer us a unique insight into this historic game and to enlighten us about other Tudor sports. Having lived at the Palace for 27 years, Lesley has had ample opportunity to amass a wealth of specialist knowledge and entertaining anecdotes, and we can look forward to enjoying a lively evening.

Numbers are limited at the Clore Centre, however we are not asking members to book their seats, as we have done in previous years. The meeting will not be advertised to the general public and open only to subscribed members and their guests. There will be a limit of 20 on the number of guests, whose places must be booked in advance. If you wish to bring a guest, please let us know by email or telephone so that we can do our best to ensure that we are not overcrowded on the evening.

There will be a charge to members of £2, payable on the door. Guests, who must book in advance, will be charged £5.

'Henry'

Wednesday 25 June 2014, 7.30 pm

The Barn Theatre, 70 High Street, KT8 2LY

One of the actors from The Barn Theatre Club who took part in our WWII meeting in 2010, Bob Harvey-Jenner, is directing a new musical about the life of Henry VIII, which will premiere at the Barn Theatre in June. Historically accurate for those studying the Tudor period and described as 'family viewing', the production explores Henry's life from his own perspective, giving insights into his battles with church, country and conscience. The Barn Theatre is a members' club, but we have been offered the opportunity for our members to benefit from advance booking for the production on Wednesday 25 June. We hope that enough members will be interested to make this an exclusive MLHS event and that you will come along for what promises to be an enjoyable social evening.

Tickets are £13 each, which includes temporary membership of The Barn Theatre for the evening. If you would like tickets, please send your ticket requirements with cash or your cheque payable to The Barn Theatre Club and a stamped addressed envelope for return of your tickets to Jill Wilkins, 17 Matham Road, East Molesey KT8 0SX. Should the event on Wednesday 25 June be oversubscribed, we have also been offered the opportunity for our members to book tickets on other evenings during the production run.

People and Buildings Research Group

There will be no People and Buildings meeting in May, so the next meeting will take place on Wednesday 30 July at 8 pm at the Royal British Legion, St Mary's Rd, KT8 0ST. All are welcome.

The Baddeley Legacy

by Claire Annable



Robert Baddeley
1732-1794

As a young man, Robert Baddeley was a cook and worked in the kitchens of the well-known actor manager Samuel Foote. In 1760, when he was 27 years old, he became an actor. It appears that David Garrick gave Baddeley his first opportunity and his admiration for Garrick and his love of Drury Lane theatre are made clear in his will. Baddeley enjoyed something of a reputation as a dandy, and it was said 'loved as great variety in his amours as in his clothes'.

On the 24th of January 1764, at St. Margaret's Church, Westminster he married the eighteen year old Sophia Snow. Sophia Baddeley was to become one of the most popular and controversial stage personalities of her time. For Baddeley, however, married life proved to be tumultuous and unhappy because of his wife's extraordinary beauty, vanity and recklessness. In 1770 they separated and in his latter years Baddeley lived with Catherine Sherry and, after her death, with Catherine Strickland in West Molesey (called Upper Moulsey in his will) in a house later to be known as Mole Abbey Cottage. Baddeley also owned premises in New Store Street, London.

In his will he left his properties and personal effects (all but a few) to Catherine Strickland. After her death it was Baddeley's desire that the house in West Molesey should provide a home for a number of theatrical pensioners of the Theatrical Fund set up by Garrick. His will stated: *'...after the demise of Catherine Strickland as to my freehold messuage or tenement and premises in West Moulsey... I devise and bequeath the same unto the Society established for the Relief of Indigent Persons belonging to His Majesty's Company of Comedians of the Theatre Royal Drury Lane....that the said Society shall and do use the said premises as and for an asylum for actors or actresses....who may wish to enjoy an*

apartment and the use of produce of a garden rent free...'.

His wish was to have 'Baddeleys Asylum' painted on the house.

He also left money to be invested to provide an income for the inhabitants or for additions and enlargements to the house in West Molesey. He willed his books, paintings and 'Garrick's Head' (presumably a bust!) to be deposited in his house for the use of the inhabitants. He stipulated that, every year on the anniversary of his birthday, 20th April, the eldest inhabitant was to wear his Medal of the School of Garrick, the inhabitants should distribute to ten poor people of West Molesey the sum of two shillings each, and twelve shillings was to be used to pay for food and eight shillings for drinks so that the inhabitants of the asylum could dine together.

Unfortunately, neither the actors nor actresses of Drury Lane, nor the ten poor inhabitants of West Molesey were to benefit from his legacy. Catherine Strickland lived in the West Molesey house until her death in 1815 and is buried in West Molesey churchyard. After her death the trustees of Drury Lane Theatre sold the house and transferred the profit into the Theatrical Fund.

One bequest that was upheld is a Twelfth Night cake, wine and punch to be enjoyed every year by the company in residence at Theatre Royal Drury Lane, and this wonderful old custom has survived. The Baddeley Cake ceremony still takes place every January 6th and the cakes are decorated according to the theme of the current production.

Robert Baddeley died in the early hours of 20th November 1794, at his house in New Store Street. According to The Times *"He was seized with a fit on the stage... in performing the character of Moses in The School for Scandal"* but other versions say that he was taken ill whilst dressing for the part in his room. He was buried in the churchyard of the Actors' Church, St. Paul's, Covent Garden.

In the 18th century, Twelfth Night was a festival much celebrated as the end of the Christmas season. There have only been thirteen known occasions when it has not been possible to carry out the bequest because of the Theatre being closed or the ingredients for the cake not being available during war time rationing.

Anyone for cake?