

**Summer Stroll  
Island Barn Reservoir  
Tuesday 21 June  
Report by Anthony Barnes**

On Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> June, 87 members gathered at Chandlers Field School on a blustery but sunny summer evening to collect their map for the fifth stroll brilliantly organised by Tony Osborne for the society.



**Tony Osborne with MLHS members at  
Island Barn Reservoir**

This year's walk took us to a hidden gem of Molesey that many residents may have never seen or haven't visited for years. The Island Barn Reservoir is 100 years old this year; and members were treated to a walk around the open part of the top of the reservoir to be rewarded with views of the Sailing Club clubhouse, Sandown stadium, Esher Church, Molesey Heath, the Hurst Park tower block, St Paul's Church spire and the old Victorian sluice gates!

Afterwards, back at the school, Tony recounted the story of the building of the reservoir on the fields and barn of Island Farm between the Mole and the Ember to ease London's water supply, fire and public health problems. This was the first of the 'giant' reservoirs constructed by the Metropolitan Water Board taking up an area about the size of Kent Town or Hurst Park.

The reservoir cost £152,727 and was built by Robert McAlpine and Sons, the same company that has built the Olympic Stadium for the 2012 games. It is worth remembering that the Victorians did not have the labour saving equipment that construction companies have today. Around 1200 navvies worked on the reservoir and completed it well ahead of schedule. It was officially inaugurated and named by the Lord Mayor of London on 4<sup>th</sup> November 1911.



**The Lord Mayor of London opens Island  
Barn Reservoir, 4 November 1911**

As well as thanking Tony for arranging another fascinating evening, the Society would like to thank Matt Prior, the Conservation, Access and Recreation Manager of Thames Water for giving permission for the visit and providing additional information about Island Barn's reserve status and its role as a specially protected area for geese and wildfowl. We would also like to thank the Sailing Club for making us welcome. They have recently celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, which you can read about on the Club website: (<http://www.islandbarn.org.uk/about-us/history>).

**The Barn Theatre Club  
70 High Street, West Molesey, KT8 2LY  
'Lifeboat' Wednesday 31 August, 8 pm**

There are still a few tickets available for The Barn Theatre's production of 'Lifeboat' on 31 August at 8 pm. Telephone Jill Wilkins 020 8979 3465 for information.

**Claremont House Tour and Talk  
Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> September, 7.30 pm  
Claremont Drive Esher, KT10 9LY**

Our September meeting takes place at Claremont House in Esher. The house was commissioned by Lord Clive of India from Capability Brown, who worked with Henry Holland and Sir John Soane to create the Palladian mansion. Queen Victoria was a frequent visitor during her childhood and as an adult, and later she bought it for her youngest son, Prince Leopold.

Members will enjoy a talk and a tour of the house. Entrance is via Claremont Drive off Claremont Lane (through the Lodge Gates), then follow the road through to the School Park near the Mansion on the hill. There are some steps up to the door, but there is a lift once inside. Tea and coffee will be available.

**It's Carnival Time!  
Wednesday 16 November, 8 pm  
(doors open 7.30 pm)  
Imber Court, Ember Lane, KT8 0BT**

This meeting will take a look back at the Molesey Carnival over the years. If anyone has any cine film or home video of any of the carnivals, which they would be prepared to let us show at the meeting, we should be very grateful if they would please contact Pauline Sieler on 020 8979 7556. We should also be grateful for the loan of photos for scanning, particularly photos from the 1960s or earlier. If you do have any photos, which they would be prepared to let us put onto a DVD and show at the meeting, please contact Pauline.

**Cow Common Memories**

We were contacted by Chris Ward, who came to live in Bridge Gardens in 1948. He remembers playing on Cow Common in the early 1950s, when he and his friends found a way through the wire fencing to the West of the common. They went through and found a concrete pen, with the remains of an aircraft fuselage. After a while they were chased off. We have found one other person who confirms the location of this aircraft and remembers playing on it as a boy, and it would be interesting to hear of any other memories.

Chris also remembers the pet cemetery which was connected to the RSPCA hospital in Orchard Lane - now part of the Molesey Venture. We showed film of the RSPCA Hospital at our Wartime meeting, welcoming dogs that had been rescued from the London bombing. Animal Wardens were appointed to

scout round a district and rescue them. One of our members, John Searle, did this on the Kent coast, just before he moved to Molesey during the blitz in 1940.

**Then and Now  
No. 1 Creek Road, East Molesey**



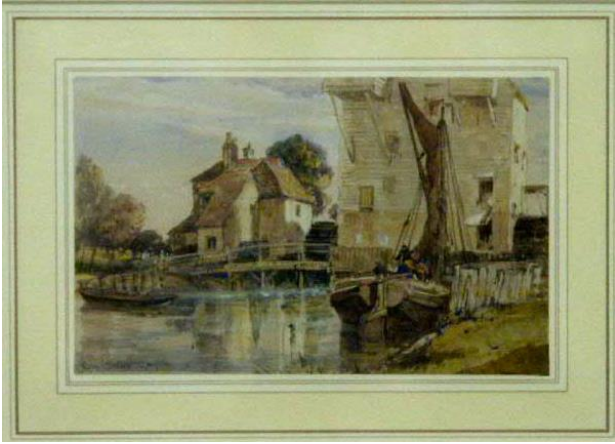
Today, No. 1 Creek Road is Moore's Miscellanea - Bricolage. In the 1860s, Thomas Davis, fisherman, lived here in his aunt's house with his wife and two daughters. The cottage is said to date from the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century. The outbuilding on the right was later converted into an office by A Moore and Son, Estate Agents, who established their business in Creek Road in 1867. The cottage then overlooked the River Mole, which joined the Thames by the Castle Hotel. One had to go over a wooden bridge to reach Hampton Court Station.



**Cambridge University  
Part-time courses in Archaeology, Historic  
Environment and Local History**

The Society has been contacted by the University of Cambridge Institute of Continuing Education about their part-time courses in Archaeology, Historic Environment and Local History, for which bursaries are available. More information can be obtained on [www.ice.cam.ac.uk/awards](http://www.ice.cam.ac.uk/awards). Please let us know if you would like more information, and we will send you a copy of the email that we received.

## Sterte Mill



We had an enquiry from the River and Rowing Museum at Henley on Thames about this watercolour by Edward William Cooke (1811-1880) entitled 'The Mill at Molesey near Hampton Court'. The watercolour is going on display in the 'Power' section of the museum's River Gallery, which looks at milling, flooding and hydropower.

You may remember that one of our members, Brian Smith, researched the Molesey Mills for a talk to our Society and he was able to give the following reply.

This is a watercolour picture of Molesey Lower (or Sterte) Mill painted around 1830 by Edward William Cooke. A Sterte is a narrow neck of land between two rivers - in this case the Mole and the Ember. The Sterte Mill was the only mill still in existence and with a building at this period. The actual building shown in the picture is very like the brick mill built in 1826 and there is a sailing barge on a river - the Thames - in the foreground. I believe the building on the left of the picture is the Anglers Hotel.

The artist, who started off working with his father as an engraver, was a precocious and prolific painter and was active from about 1826. He started oil painting in the mid 1830s. This picture was painted on 22nd July 1829 when Cooke ventured up-river from Barnes looking for barges, commercial and ceremonial, to use as subjects for paintings. An additional mill was built alongside the 1826 building in 1846 and this is not shown in the picture.

Background:

In Molesey there have been three mills - two on the River Mole and one on the River Ember, a tributary of the Mole. The Ember Mill was active for about 200 years from 1600 to 1800. It was mainly a metal-bashing mill processing

lead, copper and iron. It closed in about 1820 and the only picture of it that I have seen is nothing like yours. Only the water channel to the mill from the Ember and the sluices remain.

On the Mole there were two mills - the Upper Mill, about 2 miles from the Thames, and the Lower or Sterte Mill at the confluence of the Mole and Thames.

These are much older mills - not in Domesday but around 1200AD disputes, often violent, broke out between the two mills over the water supply and a petition was presented to King John by the owners of the Lower Mill, Merton Priory, to ask for his judgment as to water rights. The year was 1215 - not a good year for John and the matter was passed to a commission to decide.

Both mills carried on over the next centuries and around 1600 they were acquired by a single owner who converted them to gunpowder milling in the 1650s. This was not popular with locals and they pointed out that in the case of the Sterte Mill, Hampton Court Palace was close by. This Lower Mill reverted to corn milling and some metal processing around 1670.

The Upper Mill continued with gunpowder milling but after a number of explosions- some fatal - it was shut down, dismantled and the land became part of Molesey Park in the 1780s. It is now a gated estate of expensive housing. Only the weir across the Mole and the water leats and channels remain - the actual site of the mill is not obvious.

The Lower Mill was very profitable in the 18th century and was rebuilt in 1826. The old wooden structure was torn down and a brick building - which still exists - took its place. - it was described as "...a most unpicturesque mill." It was very successful and in 1846 an additional mill, for sawing wood and slate, was built alongside the brick structure. This does not appear in your picture. The mill finally stopped flour milling in 1895 and the saw mill stopped some 5 years later.

The site and buildings were used for various industrial purposes but the land is now another gated estate of expensive housing. The brick mill still stands, having been converted to apartments.

You will find the text of Brian's talk to the Society on our website:  
**[moleseyhistorysociety.org](http://moleseyhistorysociety.org)**.

**Hampton Court Palace**  
**National Garden Scheme 'Time Travellers' Tour of the Palace Garden**  
**Wednesday 7 September**

The NGS tour will take place in the evening, after both the Palace and gardens have closed to the public. Your guide for the evening will escort you around these historically important and beautiful gardens. Spend an evening travelling back through time and hear the stories that the garden can tell you of kings, queens, courtiers and gardeners as the 500 year history of this royal landscape are revealed.

Each guide will escort a maximum of 25 people. Tours commence at 6.15pm and last until 8:00pm and tickets cost only £8. To book your tickets, which include a glass of wine, please do so using one of the following:

Email: [tickets@ngs.org.uk](mailto:tickets@ngs.org.uk)

Tel: 01483 211535

Online: <http://www.ngs.org.uk/shop-online.aspx>

**Elmbridge Museum**  
**Elmbridge Exposed!**  
**Discover the Skeletons in the Borough's Closet**

Thought Elmbridge was squeaky clean? Think again...

Allegedly - adulterers, murderers, tricksters, bad boys and even ghosts roamed the Borough's streets in days gone by.

'Elmbridge Exposed' reveals all in an entertaining series of displays. Discover the area's dirtiest secrets, including: the Lord who cheated at cards; the Lady, the Italian poet and the stable boy; the ghost of Portmore Park; the cash for honours scandal; and the unsolved murder. Be wise with hindsight, observe the damage gossip can do, and learn how one foolish action can change lives forever.

The exhibition presents intriguing items from the Museum's collection to illustrate these tales. Portraits and poison bottles, pantyhose and pistols are all exposed to the light once more.

Come along to Elmbridge Museum and take a light-hearted look at the Borough's darker side!  
Elmbridge Museum, Church Street, Weybridge KT13 8DP

There are various events throughout Surrey on sporting history in the run-up to the Olympics. To find out more visit Surrey History : Exploring Surrey's Past – News: <<http://exploringsurreyspast.org/news/000944.html>>. Here are some which may be of interest.

**Surrey History Centre**  
**Our Sporting Life - Exhibition**  
**Tuesday 11 October – Friday 11 November**

Celebrating Surrey's great sporting past through this exhibition inspired by Surrey's sporting heritage. Our Sporting Life is a national initiative, which allows communities in Britain to connect with the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. At its core is an exhibition displaying Britain's Olympic heritage. Surrey has a rich sporting heritage and the Our Sporting Life exhibition offers local museums the opportunity to showcase many of Surrey's contributions to the local and national sporting picture, including the sports themselves, key people, and places. This is a travelling exhibition and will be visiting a number of museums throughout Surrey. Free in the foyer of the Surrey History Centre. Available during normal hours.

**Brooklands Cycle Festival**  
**Sunday 18 September**

The 2011 Brooklands Cycle Festival will include races for Penny Farthings, solid tyre safety cycles, pre-1940 cycles, Rally Choppers and a Brooklands Handicap race for all. Energetic cyclists will be encouraged to try the Test Hill Challenge!

Brooklands Museum, Brooklands Road, Weybridge, KT13 0QN. Contact Valerie Mills at Brooklands Museum on 01932 857381

**Basemen, bats and a lot of balls, Surrey Heritage Annual Lecture**  
**Saturday 15 October 2pm – 3pm**

Surrey's sporting heritage is unique. Not just one but two major international sports were first recorded in the county. One was cricket, which is well known. The other one is rather more surprising. All that, and much more, will be revealed in this intriguing talk by author Julian Norridge Tickets £10.00 including refreshments. Part of the Surrey Sporting Life events.

To book please call 01483 518 737. . Surrey History Centre, 130 Goldsworth Road, Woking GU21 6ND