

Membership

Subscriptions for 2016 became due on 1 January and, if you have not already renewed, your membership of the Society will lapse at the end of March and you will no longer receive the Newsletter or information about future events. We hope you will find something to interest you in our 2016 Programme and that you will decide to renew your subscription.

Meeting Reports

Bishops and Peasants: Everyday Life in Medieval Esher

Talk by Dr David Stone

Thursday 22 October 2015

Report by Anthony Barnes



I first heard Dr David Stone give a talk about the bishopric of Winchester's manor at Esher to the Esher and District Local History Society in November 2013. The fascinating story and lively presentation made me determined to ask him to come and talk to us. Two years on, his research is nearing completion and he was able to reveal more amazing insights into everyday life in Esher a hundred years before the Black Death wiped out about half the population. His account will be published by Surrey Records Society in 2017.

We are lucky that the bishops' scribes recorded in painstaking detail all the happenings on the manor from 1235 to 1367 and that these accounts – the Winchester Pipe Rolls – have survived. David Stone has also drawn

extensively on other medieval studies, the Esher map of 1606 and even Google Earth (you can still make out the shape of the medieval fish pond) to corroborate the story in the Pipe Rolls. He has employed considerable time detective skills to interpret what's in the records. If the Bishop bought 7,500 tiles for the roof of the new chapel built in 1267-8, you can work out its likely size (34'x37'). If a graph of the locks replaced and keys bought on the manor between 1300 and 1367 show a steep rise in the years after the Black Death, you can surmise that the people who survived put a higher premium on security and privacy than before.

David split the story of the bishops' Esher manor into two parts. He described the expansion of the manorial estate in the relatively good years up to the early fourteenth century. The bishops stayed frequently and entertained royalty. Sheep farming expanded dramatically in the 1240s and 10,000 vines were planted in the 1280s. Between 1297 and 1314, the estate produced 425 gallons of wine and 80 gallons of verjuice. In the 1290s, the great pond was built and stocked with 2,600 dace and roach.

Then, in the early fourteenth century, the climate deteriorated. The wet weather caused the great famine of 1315-17 which probably killed 10% of the population. The extreme drought of 1331 also resulted in further distress, disease and death. Nevertheless, further improvements were carried out on the estate in the 1330s. A new road was built along with a tiled dovecote and stable. The windows of the chapel were glazed and a new latrine built. After that, the full force of the plague was felt at the end of 1348 during the outbreak known as the Black Death. We know the names of 22 people who died but many more perished whose identities went unrecorded.

From this distance in time it is hard to capture the full force of these apocalyptic events. Land sales and rent rises on the manor give some indication of the hardships faced especially by the unfree estate workers. It was a world turned upside down. Lawlessness grew and a ducking stool, pillory and stocks had to be erected. Finally, in 1365, the bishops gave up farming the demesne.

David succeeded in conveying the hardship of the times but also saw the humour in everyday situations. Among those who came to hear him, who can forget his advertisement for 'a *garderobe* fit for a bishop': 'providing solutions for episcopal ablutions'!

Magical Molesey – 2 December 2015

Once again Tudor & Co allowed us to invade their premises with displays featuring the river from our “Then and Now” exhibition, and we showed a delightful 1924 film entitled “Along Father Thames to Shepperton”. Members and non-members alike came in to enjoy the film and the displays, sample Reno’s delicious mulled wine, and put their names down to be among the first to purchase our forthcoming “Then and Now” book. You can watch the film at: <http://player.bfi.org.uk/film/watch-along-father-thames-to-shepperton-1924/>.

Tour of Big Ben and the Elizabeth Tower

Talk by Tim Redmond

Thursday 4 February 2016

Report by Jenny Wood

Tim, who has worked as a guide at the tower for seven and a half years, began by dispelling the myth that the tower that houses the bell known as Big Ben is called St Stephen’s Tower - it was called that by Victorian journalists, who referred to anything to do with the House of Commons as news from ‘St Stephens’, because originally MPs used to sit in St Stephen’s Hall. It was initially called the Clock Tower, but was renamed the Elizabeth Tower in September 2012 in honour of the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee.

After most of the Palace of Westminster was destroyed by fire in October 1834 a competition was held to select the architect of the new building. Ninety-six architects submitted their designs anonymously so that there could be no favouritism. The brief was to design a building in the gothic style, to blend with Westminster Abbey. The winner was Sir Charles Barry, who worked closely with Augustus Pugin, the pre-eminent Gothic designer. Pugin designed the tower, which is 316 feet tall and has 334 steps to the belfry. There are eight rooms in the tower; these are all u-shaped as they curve round the weight shaft. The clock faces were also designed by Pugin and are made of cast iron and glass. They are 23 feet in diameter, the minute hands are 14 feet long and the hour hand nine feet long. Normally, clocks with Roman numerals show the number four as ‘IIII’ but these clock faces show it as ‘IV’. It is thought that this may be because it better matches ‘VIII’ in the corresponding position on the other side of the clock. The clock faces are washed every four or five years. Until electricity was installed in 1912, coal gas provided the energy to light the clock faces. There are 28 light bulbs on the walls behind each of the clock faces; each bulb costs £100 and is made by Phillips in the Netherlands.

During the First World War, the lights behind the clock faces were extinguished and the bells silenced because of the risk of Zeppelin attack. The same happened at the beginning of the Second World War until it was realised that the bombers would be too far away to hear the chimes and the ringing of the bells was reinstated, although the clock faces remained unilluminated so that they could not act as a guide to bomber pilots. The glass in the south-facing clock face was destroyed in a bomb blast in May 1941.



The clock mechanism weighs five tons and is five metres long. The level of accuracy required for the clock is that it must not gain more than one second in 24 hours. The clock was built by Frederick Dent and has a fourteen foot long pendulum which has a two second swing cycle. The accuracy of the clock is checked three times a week with the speaking clock and, if necessary, the clock is adjusted. On average, it needs to be adjusted a couple of times a month. Old coins are added to the pendulum to speed the clock up and removed to slow it down. Adding one penny will speed the clock up by 0.4 seconds over 24 hours.

The large hour bell in the tower is known as ‘Big Ben’. Parliament wanted this bell to weigh 14 tons and to sound E natural. However, the first bell which was cast weighed 16 tons, did not sound E natural and cracked beyond repair while it was being tested. It was melted down at Whitechapel Bell Foundry to make the current bell, which weighs 13½ tons. The bell was delivered in 1858 on a 16-horse carriage and it took eight men 32 hours to haul it up the weight shaft. In July 1859, the bell was rung for the first time; shortly afterwards it cracked. Some metal was chipped out of the bell to stop the crack spreading and the bell was turned slightly. It has not been moved again since. At that time Big Ben was the heaviest bell in the United Kingdom; it is now the fourth heaviest, the largest being the Olympic Bell. Big Ben is surrounded by four quarter bells.

When the clocks change in spring and autumn the lighting behind the clock faces is turned off at 10p.m. and turned back on again at 2a.m. (new time). During the interval, routine maintenance is carried out on the clock.

Tim’s talk was fascinating and informative and was illustrated with some lovely slides of the tower, clock and bells. It made me determined to book a tour of the tower as soon as possible. Tours are open to all UK residents and can be booked through your local MP’s office. However, if you do want to go on a tour soon you need to be quick as tours are fully booked six months in advance and the tower will be closed to the public during renovation work, which is due to start next year. It is estimated that the renovations, which include the installation of a lift, will take three years but Tim thinks that it is likely that they will take longer.

Forthcoming Events

Thames Bridges, Staines to Kingston

Talk by Nick Pollard

Tuesday 26 April 2016 at 8pm

St Lawrence School, Church Road, KT8 9DR

Nick Pollard is Chairman of Sunbury and Shepperton Local History Society and of Spelthorne Museum at Staines. He is also the author of several books on local history. He has a particular interest in the River Thames, having lived in Shepperton all his life and having ancestors who worked on the river. By profession Nick is an engineer, and works in the aerospace industry.

Members: £1, Guests welcome: £3. Refreshments will be available.

Warren House, Kingston – Talk on House and Garden Tour

Thursday 19 May at 10.30a.m.

Cost: £12.50

Warren Rd, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey KT2 7HY

Warren House is a Grade II listed building set in four acres of gardens. It was built as a private house in the 1860s for banker, Hugh Hammersley. After his death the house passed through several owners until it was bought by an American heiress, Lady Mary 'Minnie' Paget, in 1907. Lady Paget and her husband, General Sir Arthur Paget, were close friends of King Edward VII and regularly entertained royalty, diplomats, soldiers and politicians at Warren House. The house was subsequently owned by their daughter, Dame Leila Paget, who converted it into a military convalescent home during the Second World War. In 1954, Dame Leila sold the property to Imperial Chemical Industries, who used it as a conference and training centre until 2000. Warren House has been privately owned since 2005 and is used as a conference and events venue.

The price of £12.50 includes coffee or tea on arrival, a talk by historian, Vicky Good, on the history of the house, a talk and guided tour of the garden by Horticulturist and Garden Designer, Andrew Fisher Tomlin, and coffee, tea and pastries at the end of the tour. The tour is limited to 40 people and places will be reserved on a 'first come first served' basis. We have to confirm numbers and make full payment to Warren House at least three weeks before our tour. Initially, this event will be reserved for Society members. However, if you wish to bring a guest, please let us know and we will offer a place if the tour is not full after the booking deadline of 20 April. There is free parking at Warren House. Please complete the form below if you wish to join the tour.

The Chocolate Kitchen – Hampton Court Palace

Talk by Marc Meltonville

Thursday 9 June 2016 at 8 pm

St Lawrence School, Church Road, KT8 9DR

Royal Palace Food Historian, Marc Meltonville has worked on displays of historic cookery and the reconstruction of kitchens at many of the six Royal Palaces and countless museums and stately homes. His talk will take you on the journey that was the discovery and opening of the King's Chocolate Kitchen at Hampton Court.

Marc has worked in museums for the last twenty years. He trained in ceramic history and then went to work at a furniture museum specialising in Windsor chairs. He studied food history under the noted food historian Peter Brears and with him took part in numerous kitchen displays at stately homes all over England. This led him to his work at Historic Royal Palaces.

Marc lectures on food history all across the UK and North America and is well known on TV and radio in both countries.

Summer Stroll – Guided Walks through Kingston

Tuesday 12 July at 10.30 am or Wednesday 13 July at 7.30 pm

The walks will be led by Kingston historic tour guides and will last about an hour and a half. The meeting point will be near John Lewis and the walks will take in The Hogsmill and London Road. There will be a charge of £2. Further details will be given in the next newsletter.

Wednesday 9 November 2106, 8pm,

Molesey Boat Club Graburn Way Barge Walk, East Molesey KT8 9AJ

A celebration of the 150 year history of Molesey Boat Club, with illustrated talks and displays.

Bentalls – Talk by Alex Beard (Part Two)

Report by Paula Day

In MLHS newsletter 33 (June 2015), we printed a report on the first part of a really interesting talk about the history of iconic Kingston retailer, Bentalls, given to the People and Buildings meeting at the end of May last year by Alex Beard, the Customer Service Officer at Kingston Heritage Service. Alex gave us a whistle-stop tour of the firm's first hundred years, and this report covers the years leading up to the Second World War, and the post-war years, when the sports and social club was founded in Molesey. Alex was kind enough to give us his notes, from which I have summarised the information.

In the years leading up to the Second World War, Bentalls organised its own platoon in the Territorial Army. After consultation with the War Office, it was decided that it would be a searchlight company working in conjunction with 30th Surrey AA Battalion. The Bentalls Company was officially launched at the end of 1936 as the 323 (Surrey) Anti-Aircraft Company. The recruits poured in and soon numbered over 300. The company was sent to a training camp in Sussex in the summer of 1939 - it was only supposed to be for four weeks, but with the onset of war they were swiftly made part of the regular army and didn't return for six years!

The Bentalls 323 Searchlight Company was initially attached to the First Army fighting in Algeria and Tunisia. Bentalls' men were amongst the first to enter the city of Tunis when it fell. They were later attached to the Eighth Army for the invasion of Italy, landing at Taranto. Finally, 323 Company was deployed as part of the force occupying Austria. Rowan Bentall himself joined the East Surreys in 1940 and took part in D-day. His brother Gerald was given leave from the Army by the authorities to run the business for most of the War.

Upon being demobilised in February 1946, Rowan returned to the store and was given responsibility for reorganising the store's chain of command which had become rather loose and tangled during the war years. He felt that this important role gave him a sense of purpose. He was, however, concerned that many others amongst the firm's war-time heroes were not so lucky - many returning servicemen found the adjustment to civilian life challenging. Rowan Bentall described the immediate post-war atmosphere as unsettled and unsettling. The war had changed things at home and the returning men had been changed by their experiences overseas. Some struggled to realise that Britain had not simply been put on ice awaiting their return.

Rowan and his brother Gerald were faced with a problem. It was clear that some jobs had been performed loyally for five years by people who wished to continue to do so. Quite simply, some jobs were not available for the firm's returning heroes. That said, Rowan supposed that many of the men would not wish to go back in to exactly the same position they held before the war. He devised a plan whereby each returning man was asked whether they wished to return to work at the store and, if so, the type of work they would like. Those wishing to go for a promotion sat exams and those that did well were fast tracked to positions in store organisation, labour control, merchandise control and salesmanship. A post of Rehabilitation Officer was created to help with personal problems. Rowan noted that "anyone experiencing difficulties over housing, pensions or any other problems would always receive a sympathetic hearing."

This post-war concern for their staff's welfare was the major motivation for Bentalls decision to begin a Sports and Social Club in 1946. However, the search for a suitable site for the club proved tricky. Rowan and his brother encountered many setbacks. But in 1947 they were able to purchase a suitable property, a large mansion called The Grove in Walton Road, West Molesey.

In the 18th and early 19th centuries, the site had been occupied by an earlier mansion owned by the Palmer family, Lords of the manor of Walton. The house which the Bentalls family eventually purchased was designed in 1829 by the prolific Victorian architect Decimus Burton. A protégé of John Nash, Burton built in a classical style and is most famous for his works in London parks and seaside towns.

The Grove had 12 acres of grounds which were converted to football pitches, cricket pitches, tennis courts, hockey pitches, basketball and netball grounds. The house itself was converted into a clubhouse which contained billiards, chess, the ever popular darts and a first class bar and catering service. The clubhouse was also used as a base for club activities such as hiking, dancing, rowing and swimming. There was a debating society, dramatic society and a weekly chess club. A group called the Musical Circle met monthly for musical appreciation. The club was opened on March 10th 1948. Rowan Bentall recalled "it was a gloriously sunny Wednesday and that several sporting events were watched by staff and their families".

The club had its own junior section, catering for members under 18 years of age, and had a full sized billiards table and table tennis table, and a dancing instructress gave weekly lessons. The firm paid for two-thirds of the running costs of the club while the remainder came from a 2d. subscription.



Photograph taken on "Family Day" at the Bentalls Club grounds.

The club proved to be very popular, and was the natural choice of venue for the inaugural Bentalls "Family Day" in 1950. This was a revamping of the company's pre-war sports day. It mixed team games, humorous events and more serious sporting activities. Rowan Bentall notes that the first such Family Day attracted over 4,000 members of staff and families. As the years went on there was an ever increasing abundance of sideshows to go with the sport: pony rides, Punch and Judy shows and a magnificent old roundabout. There were also guest bands including the Regimental Pipes and Drums of the 7th Duke of Edinburgh's Own Gurkha Rifles. Free teas were also provided for everyone with the directors' compliments. Rowan writes proudly "It has long been the most heart-warming event on the social calendar."

Musicians of Note

by Rosemary Searle

Having lived in East Molesey all my life (my father's ancestors moved here during the 1830s and my mother's in 1917), I was fascinated to hear, from a neighbour and family friend, John Searle, who was later to become my husband, about two eminent musicians who had lived in East Molesey during World War Two. One was the prize-winning composer, Percy Godfrey, and the other, one of the last pupils of Franz Liszt, the pianist Amina Goodwin.

I lived with this interesting knowledge for several decades, during which time we enjoyed the company of various mementoes in the form of items which had belonged to these two people.

In 2000, after we 'retired', I was looking for a new hobby and become interested in family and local history.

Having got underway with our family histories, I turned my attention to researching the lives of people of interest with whom we had come into contact during our lives, including those two musicians of note and now, more than seventy years since their deaths, I have put together a booklet by that title which includes John's personal recollections.

See the 'Online Collection' section of the website moleseyhistorysociety.org to read the booklet.

Riverside Artists

by Claire Annable

Percy William Gibbs

British Impressionist - Artist and Painter

We were contacted by the Richard Green Gallery, New Bond Street, who had recently purchased a painting by Percy William Gibbs entitled 'The Bathers'. They had established that Percy Gibbs was living in East Molesey in 1903 and were interested to find out some information about the artist and the location of the painting. We should be interested to hear from any members who know anything, but, in the meantime, here is what we have found so far.



Percy William Gibbs was born in June 1873 in Poplar, London. He was the son of Master Upholsterer, Richard Gibbs, and Maria Gibbs. Along with his older brother, Percy attended Mawbey Road School, Southwark between 1884 and 1889, when he left to be an art student.

He exhibited his paintings between 1894 and 1937 at The Royal Academy and other galleries, winning the Royal Academy Creswick Prize for Landscape in 1895.

In the 1901 census, he is listed as being married to Violet Gibbs and living at Albert Studios, Battersea with a number of other artists and painters. By 1911, Percy, Violet and two servants were living at 12 Riverbank East Molesey where he painted a number of identifiable pictures of the River Thames. Percy William Gibbs died in December 1955 aged 82 years and left £171.13 shillings to his wife.

The Bathers (c.1930) was described in a 2015 auction catalogue as 'delightful paddlers, rowers and bathers'. This painting sold for £31,200, over twice the estimate.'

Denise Wren Studio Potter



Denise Wren was born in 1891 in Western Australia to inventor Charles Tuckfield and his wife, Kate. At the age of nine, Denise emigrated to England with her parents and four siblings. The family settled in England in 1900 and by 1911 Denise was living at 4 Thames View, (now Riverbank), East Molesey, with her parents and siblings, including two more who had been born in East Molesey.

Between 1907 and 1912 Denise studied at Kingston School of Art under the tutorship of Archibald Knox, a designer best known for his work for Liberty's. Here Denise learnt how to make coil and hand-built pots. In 1911, Denise spent time with a flowerpot maker, a Mr. Mercer at Norbiton Potteries, and learnt how to throw pots. She bought a kick wheel from him. By 1912, Archibald Knox had resigned from his post and in protest Denise, her sister and a group of friends set up the Knox Guild of Design and Craft to continue Knox's design and art education ideas.

In 1915, she married fellow potter Henry Wren in Kingston. By 1920, Denise and Henry had bought a plot of land in Oxshott where they built their home and workshop 'Potters Croft', where Denise established the Oxshott Pottery.

From 1922 to 1950 Denise ran two week summer courses in pottery at Oxshott. Here she promoted the importance of studio pottery and pottery making in education. She also taught at Teddington School of Art and Weybridge Hall School. Textile design was another of her activities and she rebuilt her own workshops. The design on this vase is the view from the window of her home overlooking Molesey Lock. It shows her younger brother Charlie fishing.



Denise and Rosemary continued working at the pottery after the death of Henry in 1947. In 1968 Denise made a number of pottery elephants and in 1975 was made an honorary life member of the Craftsmen Potters Association. Denise Wren died in Devon in 1979.

60 Years Ago

The Molesey Review November 1955 – February 1956

West Molesey Industrial Estate

At the end of 1955 and the beginning of 1956 the West Molesey Industrial Estate was expanding rapidly. In November 1955, workmen were clearing a site in Central Avenue for a new factory, which was likely to take six to twelve months to complete. The building was going to be occupied by the Molesey firm of British Fondants Limited in addition to its existing premises in Avern Road. A new factory of 5,000 square feet was nearing completion in November 1955 on the Island Farm Road factory estate. It was to be occupied by Sheetcraft & Ovens Ltd, who ran a ventilating and general engineering business and who hoped to recruit sheet metal workers locally.

In December 1955, another new factory in Central Avenue was shortly to be occupied by the Oil Feed Engineering Company Ltd, which manufactured hydraulic flexible hose and units for both the agricultural and aircraft industries. This factory was to be mainly concerned with hose assembly work and the firm's "Re-usable couplings".

It was anticipated that by the end of February 1956, Electronic Developments (Surrey) Ltd would be able to move into their new 10,000 square feet factory in Island Farm Road. The company was established in 1946 and designed and manufactured model diesel engines and miniature radio control units for model aircraft and boats. The firm exported all over the world and made the first successful crossings of the English Channel by radio controlled boats and planes. The boat crossing was made in 1951 by a boat powered by a 5c.c. engine and took 9 hours. The plane crossing was made in 1955 by a plane powered by a 3.5c.c. engine.

In February 1956, "Old Timer" said that the Central Avenue trading estate looked more business-like as "the roads and paths have been resurfaced; street lamps have been installed too." However, some residents were not entirely happy with the Industrial Estate. Nearly a hundred residents of Eastcote Avenue and Molesey Avenue signed a petition complaining of "an objectionable smell" emanating from a factory in Central Avenue. This petition was presented to Esher Council in November 1955 but the Council decided not to take any action at that time because it was told that the chemical processes which caused the smell were only carried out at three month intervals and would only be repeated twice more.

Train Service

On weekdays, trains from Hampton Court to Waterloo ran three times an hour throughout the day from 5.25a.m. to 10.43p.m. with a last train at 11.29p.m. Between 8a.m. and 9a.m. there were five trains. On Sundays there were three trains an hour between 8.15a.m. and 9.55p.m. with less frequent trains running earlier and later than those times.

Molesey County Secondary Boys' School

At the school's Speech Day and Prize giving on 19th October the Headmaster, Mr B. M. McDermott, reported that the school had "the unique distinction of being the only Secondary School in Surrey of this size which has four co-ordinated and I believe successful courses in being: engineering, building and gardening, together with a combined craft course which is designed to extend the boys who are capable of academic work on Grammar School lines, with the retention of a Technical bias."

He talked of the success of their boys in obtaining jobs but also spoke of the difficult relationship with some parents. He said that many boys came to school unsuitably dressed, "Boys still come to school dressed like cowboys or sporting ties (if at all) which display inferior reproductions of famous film stars. Plimsolls are frequently worn even in wet weather despite strict medical instructions as to the harm they cause to the feet."

He complained about boys being kept away from school and yet allowed to do jobs in the evening, "One boy apparently seriously ill at home is reported to have done his paper round in the evening in order not to let his employer down. If only the school could claim the same loyalty." He did, however, thank the majority of parents who co-operated "generously".

November Review

Molesey Youth Club had transformed "their once morgue-like meeting place in High Street, into comfortable and attractive headquarters" by "weeks of hard work involving scrubbing, scraping and painting".

"Trouble at the Legion" – the President, Vice-President, Treasurer and Secretary had resigned en bloc. The Review believed that the committee were pressing for some changes which the officers did not want but did not know "the real reason why all the officers have resigned".

Mr J. H. Buckwell, who retired after nine years as the Postmaster of Molesey, said that during this time the staff at Molesey Post Office had decreased by one, although he estimated that in the same period the population of Molesey had increased from between 9,000 and 10,000 to over 18,000 and nearly 40 additional firms had been established in Molesey.

Most of the old people's bungalows recently erected in Down Street had been occupied.

The 'Tourmaline', a 40-foot fast motor launch built by Watercraft Ltd, was shipped to Pakistan on 24th October for service with a large Pakistan shipping company.

January Review

Building had recommenced on the Woolworth's parade of shops with workmen preparing the footings for five additional shops. The land had been sold to an investment company.

Esher Council had requested Esher's Member of Parliament, Mr W. Robson Brown, to make representations to the Minister of Transport & Civil Aviation urging that consent be granted to enable the Council's long standing scheme for the proposed widening and improvement of Walton Road between Spencer Road and Park Road to proceed without further delay.

Plans were going ahead for the erection of a new Catholic School in Down Street at the rear of the houses in Belvedere Gardens. "It will accommodate children who attend the inadequate school in Vine Road."

"Old Timer" advised against taking a short cut from Island Farm Road to Molesey Road during the winter "for part of the road is not yet made up and at present looks more like a quagmire."

February Review

Permission had recently been granted to the Metropolitan Water Board for work to recommence on the new Molesey reservoir between Molesey and Walton-on-Thames but it was not known when work would begin. The construction of the reservoir originally started in 1938 but was interrupted by the Second World War.

As 1956 was the centenary of St Paul's Church a booklet written by James Williams five years previously was reprinted in the Molesey Review. The first instalment of the booklet, published in February, outlined the history of the Kent Town area from the Norman Conquest to the purchase of the area by Francis Jackson Kent in the late 1840s.

On 28th January, the BBC had started broadcasting "Shopping Flash" on Wednesdays and Saturdays. One of the two ladies who broadcast the flashes was Miss Antonia Ridge who shopped in Molesey.

On 2nd January the W.V.S. had taken over the distribution of welfare foods (orange juice, cod liver oil, vitamin tables, dried milk etc.) in the East Molesey area from its centre at 144-150 Walton Road.

People and Buildings Special Interest Group

by Anthony Barnes



*The Baptist Church 1929
(Thanks to Stewart Nash)*

What is the cultural value of corrugated iron? Admittedly, this is not the question foremost in your mind at this minute, but it was on the agenda at the People and Buildings group meeting on 27th January. We don't cherish our corrugated iron buildings in Britain and the fate of Molesey's corrugated iron buildings bears this out. Yet corrugated iron played an important part in Victorian industrial expansion, the railway revolution, the growth of empire, the spread of non-conformist churches and the education, entertainment and political literacy of the working classes. In the twentieth century, it became associated with war (Nissen huts and Anderson shelters), factories, warehouses and dockyards. Its appeal as a building material was that it is strong, durable, lightweight, easy to make and inexpensive. It lent itself to prefabrication because it could be transported easily and erected by semi-skilled workers.

At the meeting, we talked about the most important corrugated iron buildings in Molesey that we know about from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They included the Lyceum Hall in Feltham Avenue (1882, now demolished), the Conservative Hall in Walton road (1888, now enlarged in brick), the Baptist Church in Walton road close to where the New Anarkali restaurant now is (1897, demolished in the late 1930s), West Molesey infants school in the High Street (1904, now rebuilt as part of the Barn theatre) and St. Barnabas Church in Vine road (1906-1931).

We plan to carry on finding out more about Molesey's corrugated iron past and would love to hear from members who have memories or photos of any of these buildings.

At our next meeting at the British Legion on Wednesday 30 March at 8pm, we will be discussing the burning down of the grandstand at Hurst Park racecourse by militant suffragettes on the evening of 8th June 1913.

YOUR COUNTY NEEDS YOU!

Surrey History Centre needs volunteers to index 12 digitised local newspapers for the war years. A number of volunteers are already doing fantastic work. Would you like to join them?

The indexes will be used to identify stories about Surrey during the war which can be followed up and added to the bespoke Surrey in the Great War website; as well as identifying information about Surrey people to add to the Surrey in the Great War database. In addition, the indexes will be published on the Surrey in the Great War website. This indexing can be done at home at convenient times for you, or you can work in the search room at Surrey History Centre. The amount of time you spend indexing per week is flexible. A template is ready to use and guidance notes are provided.

Please contact the project team on 01483 518239 / 518238 or surreyinthegreatwar@surreycc.gov.uk

**Booking for Warren House Talk and Garden Tour – Thursday 19 May at 10.30am
Warren Rd, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey KT2 7HY**

Name:.....Telephone No:.....

Email:.....

Enclosed: £12.50 (Cheques to Molesey Local History Society)

Please return your form and payment by Wednesday 20 April to Doreen Freeman, 6 Monaveen Gardens, West Molesey, Surrey KT8 1SB, doreenfree@btinternet.com

If you wish to bring a guest, please let us know and we will let you know after 20 April if there are places available.

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