Molesey Cemetery

Anthony Barnes (August 2022)



Molesey Cemetery is one of seven cemeteries managed by Elmbridge Borough Council

People visit cemeteries for many reasons. For family remembrance, for moments of peace, to reflect on their lives and to search for meaning. Cemeteries are also historical sites. They tell us much about the societies that created them and continuing ideas about individual reputation and worth. They are also places of joy where wildlife flourishes and people go about their daily lives.

This guide gives a short account of the origins and development of the cemetery with pen portraits of some of the people commemorated in the cemetery and the graveyard.



The cemetery has two entrances. The original entrance is at the end of St. Peter's Road (known as Cemetery Road before 1931) off Walton Road. The newer north entrance is off the Hurst Road. The north entrance car park is the site of a public air raid shelter in World War Two

Origins

The need for a new cemetery became acute in East Molesey first. The problem was that by the midnineteenth century, St Mary's small churchyard was practically full. The situation was expected to worsen with the laying out of residential streets spurred on by the opening of Hampton Court Station in 1849. In 1860, the Home Secretary issued an order closing St. Mary's churchyard and prohibiting any further interments except in family vaults. Understandably, people did not like the inconvenience or expense of having to use churchyards that were further away, but West Molesey Vestry had to refuse to allow any more East Molesey people to be interred in their churchyard as that was getting full.

Although the Burial Act of 1852 gave parochial authorities the powers to provide a new cemetery it was not that easy to find a plot of the right size, at the right price, with the right soil and drainage and having the support of local residents.

Finding a suitable plot of land for a cemetery became a vexed and frustrating process. Both St. Paul's, Kent Town (district) and St Mary's (parish) established burial boards in 1860 and, working together, made many unsuccessful attempts to find a suitable plot of land for a burial ground.

A Report by the Burial Board of St Paul's presented to Vestry on 7th June1861 summed up their difficulties. They had placed advertisements in the Surrey Comet, West Surrey Times and the County Chronicle. Mr Kent had offered half an acre of land adjoining Lady Hoste's school in Manor Road for £350, or more than that quantity at the same rate. Lord Hotham had been approached but he and Lady Berkeley "had come to the conclusion that they would not part with any land for the establishment of a Burial Ground" (There's a report from April 1860 saying Lord Hotham was opposed to adjoining land owned by Mr Edmonds on the Hurst being used for a burial ground. That and some other issues decided them not to proceed with that proposal for the time being). Together with the Board of the Parish of East Molesey, St. Paul's Board accepted the offer of an acre of land adjoining the site of the East Molesey National School in School Road from Mr Kent for £700 but the Secretary of State objected "on account of the objectionable character of the soil". The Burial Boards had then offered Mr Kent £600 for an acre of land adjoining the Hurst Lane and nearby adjoining the proposed continuation of the Wolsey Road. Mr Kent wanted £800 for the land but afterwards reduced his price to £700; but the Boards thought it would be imprudent to go above £600! They then approached Mr Kent about another piece of land but he "refuses to enter into any further negotiations for the present". A Mr. Graves (no pun intended) of West Molesey offered a piece of land which proved totally unfit for burial ground purposes.

The publicity surrounding the case of James Coney, a labourer, and his wife Sarah who resorted to burying their child in their garden in Bell Road brought matters to a head. He told his side of the story to the editor of the *Surrey Comet*.

13 Jan 1864

Sir, - I feel it is my painful duty to contradict the statement reported in the *Surrey Comet* of January the 9th, respecting the burial of my child in my garden. At a meeting of the Vestry in East Molesey, one gentleman stated that we were not obliged to do this as we could have applied to the parish, who would have buried it decently. Another gentleman states that we were at that time receiving

parochial relief. This I positively deny. I never received any assistance from this parish or any other in my life up to that time. Two days after the burial of my child, Dr. Wellings, through kindness, sent me an order for one pint of wine from the parish, knowing my circumstance and the delicate state of my health, as I have not earned a day's wages for this last six weeks. Respecting the burial of my child the undertaker applied to the parishes of West Molesey and Ditton. Neither of the two parishes would receive it. He also applied to Esher, and the fee there was £3, and as that I could not pay, he then applied to the churchwardens and to the Gentlemen of the Burial Board; all the answer they gave us was they could do nothing for us, and as the undertaker could not find a burial ground he gave up the job, and so I was obliged to bury it in my garden, where it still remains. I hope that you will be able to find space for this letter in your next paper, and have the honour to be, Sir, Your very obedient servant J.A. Coney

Heated exchanges followed in the letters page of the *Surrey Comet* involving people in official positions such as W.G. Durnford of the Kent-town Board and John Cann, solicitor, and anonymous members of the public signing themselves 'An East Molesey Man' and 'An Old Inhabitant -v- A Young Inhabitant'.

The purchase of land in West Molesey in 1864

Finally, in March 1864, the Parish of East Molesey Burial Board decided to act on an offer of about an acre of land close to the existing churchyard in W Molesey by Mrs. R Edmonds which she was willing to sell for £520. It is an interesting comment of the position of women at the time that the chairman of the Burial Board reported to the Vestry meeting in April:

"it was arranged that before the final step was taken, in consideration of the sex of the vendor, she should first consult her solicitor." (Messrs Jemmett and Rastrick)

The purchase was confirmed in December 1864, and it was agreed to divide the ground equally and each board would manage its own half although they agreed to appoint one clerk (John Cann Esq, solicitor at a rate of £20 per annum shared between them), one sexton and to make do with one chapel rather than two - for both conformists and non-conformists. The East Molesey Cemetery opened in 1866. The segregation of graves for each of the two parishes did not end until 1876.



1888 extension

The Board generally had to deal with minor issues relating to the cemetery such as children stealing flowers from graves. The normal remedy was to ask the curate of West Molesey to admonish the children and their parents!

On the death of Sir Frederick Carden, solicitors for the family approached the Burial Board to see if they would like to buy three acres on the west side of the cemetery.

The clerk attended the sale in June 1888. Bidding started at £250 and the clerk's offer of £500 was accepted; but it was only a provisional contract owing to the opposition of Sir Henry Thompson, a distinguished surgeon and advocate of cremation. He lived at Hurstside on ground now occupied by Balmoral Crescent and Wilton Gardens). The minutes of 5th June 1888 record his objections:

"Sir Henry Thompson has already written objecting to the piece of land being used as a cemetery, on account of the propinquity of his house and of a cottage belonging to him. If this objection cannot be got over the contract must be considered to be at an end."

In September, Mr Hoffman, the Home Office Medical Officer, came to inspect the site. Sir Heny Thompson also attended and "urged every objection, the propinquity of his dwelling house, contamination of water and floodings."

The Officer approved the site and the Board nullified Sir Heny Thompson's objection by ensuring that no interment took place within 100 yards of any of his dwelling houses as required by law.

Objections were also raised by the misses Edmonds who wanted £200 compensation. In October, Sir Frederick's solicitor got so fed up he tried to return the deposit but the clerk sent it back. The Board offered £100 having secured an agreement with Mr Moore of Kingston Rural Sanitary Authority not to go ahead with buying the land the Edmunds wanted to sell to him for the West Molesey cemetery extension. The Edmunds settled on £100. The Board also staved off a request by Mrs Graves for £10 for her consent by keeping her cottages 100 yards off as well.



The 1888 gateposts, still in situ, created a new entrance from the north

The design of the 1864 cemetery was clearly utilitarian, but the layout of the 1888 extension showed the influence of the Victorian garden cemetery movement with curved pathways and carefully planted trees and flower beds.

1893 and 1904 extensions

In 1893, Kingston Rural Sanitary Authority provided West Molesey with a cemetery between St. Peter's churchyard and East Molesey cemetery. After the administration of both villages was taken over by the East & West Molesey Urban District Council in 1895, the two cemeteries were merged. Additional land was purchased in 1904 in anticipation of future demand.

Remodelling of the north entrance in 2010

A new entrance from Hurst Road was built in 2010.



Plans for the remodelled northern entrance



The gates from the 1888 north entrance were moved here in 2002 and incorporated in the new entrance in 2010

West Molesey Cemetery Conservation Areas

Three areas are now being managed to maintain and enhance the diversity of wildlife by restricting cutting to two or three times a year.





The unfurnished chapel is now a store and toilet



Lady Barrow

1810-1906

"The Beautiful Miss Croker" passes away at the age of 97



Lady Barrow, née Rosamond Hester Elizabeth Pennell, was adopted by John Wilson Croker and his wife (who was her birth mother's eldest sister). In 1832, she married Sir George Barrow (d. 1876) with whom she is buried. She died at Ulverston Cottage, 17 Kent Road. "It was the Lord's will and His doing that I should live so long as I could do any good. My health is due to leading a quiet life at the very time I might have made a great sensation when there was so much talk about my picture." (Speaking shortly before her death)



Sir Thomas Lawrence

She inherited the living of West Molesey Church from John Wilson Croker and is best remembered for her charitable work. She founded the first nursing home for local people in Manor Road in 1890.

John Wilson Croker

1780-1857



Croker was a noted politician and essayist with a controversial reputation. He clashed with Macaulay over parliamentary reform and fell out with Peel over the repeal of the corn laws. He also clashed with Disraeli who created a despicable character, Rigby, in the novel Coningsby based on him. He was a Member of Parliament from 1807 to 1832 and Secretary of the Admiralty from 1809 to 1830. He was also a Privy Councillor under George IV, William IV and Queen Victoria.



The Grove, Walton Road, became Croker's country retreat in 1829. (The last of Molesey's great houses destroyed in a fire in 1975).



Lionel Andros de Sausmarez

1847-1929



Lionel was descended from one of the oldest families in Guernsey. He entered the Royal Navy in 1860 on board the 'Britannia'. He was active in the suppression of the slave trade in South East Africa.

In1868, he was awarded the Albert Medal by Queen Victoria and the Royal Humane Society's medal while serving on H.M.S. 'Myrmidon' for rescuing a seaman who fell overboard but could not swim in Banana Creek on the River Congo.

He was present at the Bombardment of the forts in Alexandria in 1882 when a fleet under Admiral Beauchamp Seymour quelled a nationalist uprising which threatened Britain's financial and commercial interests in Egypt. He was mentioned in dispatches and received the Egyptian medal with the clasp for Alexandria, the Khedive's bronze star, and the Order of Osmanjeh (fourth class).

He retired with the rank of Commander in 1883. In the 1911 census, he gives his occupation as company director. He lived at East Molesey Lodge, 94 Bridge Road (now demolished).



Mathilde Frère

(1865-1917)

Ici repose Mathilde Frère neé a Gilly Belgique le 26.03.1865 died Kingston 03.09.1917 Mourir en exil c'est mourir deus fois

Mathilde, age 52, was a spinster lodging at Garrod Cottage, Green Lane, East Molesey. She died of gastric carcinoma in Kingston Infirmary.

England welcomed around 250,000 Belgian refugees in the early years of the First World War. In Molesey, many refugees were accommodated in the School Hall of the Methodist Church in Manor Road until homes could be found for them to go to. Twickenham had a large Belgian community. Refugees worked in the Pelabon munitions factory making shells for the Belgian army. Mathilde's funeral was held at midday on 7th September. It was organised by Frederick Paine Undertakers at a cost of £45. Instructions for the funeral were received from René Xhignesse, 2 Gresley Road, Highgate N6. The coffin was made of 1" unpolished oak. After a short service at the Roman Catholic Church in East Molesey, the coffin was taken by two broughams on a plain or open hearse.

Thomas Guilford JP

1835-1896

30 years of service

Thomas Guilford who lived at The Grove, West Molesey, was a distinguished Alderman of Surrey County Council and Chairman of Surbiton Urban District Council.

The planned testimonial in his honour was widely supported by all classes.

A widely-expressed feeling has been shown by all classes in the district that a suitable testimonial should be presented to Mr Guilford, with the object of recognising his valuable honorary services to Surbiton for many years past, and especially to mark their gratitude for the able and painstaking way in which he, as chairman of the Surbiton Improvement Commissioners, placed their case before the Local Government Board inspector in the late inquiry, the result being the continued independence of Surbiton, the publication of which has given so much satisfaction to every class of the community."





Alfred Gillott

1835-1873

Montague Gillott

1839-1880

Sons of Joseph Gillott

The Birmingham firm of Joseph Gillott was famous for making steel pen nibs. Both sons worked in the family business.



Alfred lived at Shamrock Lodge in Matham Road with his wife and son. He went to Cannes in an attempt to prolong his life but died there at the age of 38. His funeral cortege consisted of a hearse and six mourning coaches. Herbert Andrews, Frederick Richard Pickersgill RA and Dr. Skimming were among the pall-bearers.

rear. The pail-bearers were Messrs. F. Newson, A. Keeling, H. Woodward, B. Mitchell, F. Pickersgill, J. Pettitt, H. Andrews, and Dr. Skimming, who preoeded the hearse in two carriages. Among the relatives and friends who assembled at the house, were—Mr. Joseph Gillett, and Mr. Montague Gillott, brothers of the deceased; Mr. A. Gillett, Mr. H. Gillott, Mr. S. Mitchell, Mr. A. Mitchell, and Mr. H. Weiss. The body was first taken to St. Mary's Church, and the first portion of the service having been read by the Rev. W. J. Boys, the procession proceeded by way of Waltonroad to the cemetery at West Molesey, headed by the vicar. On arriving at the cemetery the service was concluded, and the coffin laid in the valit. A beautiful wreath of *immortelles* was laid on the coffin and the sorrowing company then returned. The valit and the sorrowing inscription :—" Alfred Gillott, and bore the follewing inscription :— " Shrubsole and Co., of Kingston.

The *Surrey Comet* makes no mention of any female mourners.

His younger brother, Montague, who died in 1880, is interred next to him.



The coped stone memorials are made of red granite. The iron railings around Alfred's memorial are clearly visible in this photo from 1971.

Mary Helcke

(1806-1879)

Mary was married to Arnold Helcke, a gunpowder manufacturer from Birmingham.

This monument in the Egyptian style was erected by her son, also called Arnold who lived at the Shrubbery, Church Road, with his wife and five children.

The Egyptian Style was popular in Britain in the second half of the 18th century. It was revived again at the turn of the century after the Battle of the Nile in 1798, and periodically received new interest throughout the 19th century, most notably in the 1860s and 1870s as the opening of the Suez Canal and explorations in Egypt made new discoveries.





Her son, Arnold Helcke, was a noted painter of landscapes and seascapes. He was elected to the Royal Society of British Artists in 1896.

The bridge over the Mole (in Molesey library).

Henry Jewell, Private 11th Hussars



The 19-year-old groom enlisted in 1848 and was 'one of the six hundred' at the Battle of Balaclava on 25th October 1854. He was wounded aboard ship after the charge and invalided to England.

He was discharged in 1860 with two good conduct medals.

The 1881 census shows that he was living in Summer Road with his wife Martha (a laundress) and 8-year-old niece. His occupation is given as 'groom (domestic servant)'.

He died in 1883 aged 52.

Cannon to right of them, Cannon to left of them, Cannon in front of them Volleyed and thundered; Stormed at with shot and shell,

Boldly they rode and well, Into the jaws of Death, Into the mouth of hell Rode the six hundred.

From *The Charge of the Light Brigade* by Alfred, Lord Tennyson.

See also the grave of George Pumfrett, Corporal 17th Lancers.

W.T.Johnson

3rd Air Mech Royal Flying Corps 8th February 1918

Surrey Advertiser -Saturday 16 February 1918

AIR MECHANIC FOUND IN THE RIVER.

An inquest was held by Mr. Gilbert H. White at the fire station, East Molesey, on Saturday (ie 9 Feb) on 3rd Air Mechanic W. Johnson, attached to the R.F.C., stationed at Hurst Park, who had been missing since December 10th, and whose body was recovered from the Thames on Friday morning.

It appeared that at 9.30 on the night of December 10th deceased left to fetch some medicine from a sergeant's quarters which were over the stables, to reach which he would have to pass along the river bank. It was a very foggy night, and apparently deceased lost his way and fell into the river.

Lieut. Hankey, R.F.C., Hurst Park, said deceased had a good character. A letter which had been received from deceased's mother said her son had written her that he was very happy, liked a soldier's life, and spoke very highly of his officers.

The jury returned a verdict of accidental death and expressed deep sympathy with the mother.

The funeral took place on Tuesday at East Molesey Cemetery, military honours being accorded. Francis Jackson Kent (1826-1910)



Mr. F. J. Kent.

Francis Jackson Kent shared the same name as his father, a Hampton solicitor and property developer, who in the 1850s bought 300 acres of land in East Molesey to take advantage of the coming of the railways. The area is still known as Kent Town.

In1861, Francis Jackson Kent the younger moved into a new house designed for him in Church Road. Hazelhurst as it was then called has been converted into two houses at 12 and 14 Church Road. Kent was an active member of the community. He became the patron of St. Paul's Church on the death of his father and all his children were baptised there. From 1884 to 1896, he was a churchwarden.

Kent, his wife Rosa, four of their five daughters and a daughter from Rosa's first marriage are buried in the same grave.

Francis Addenbrooke Kent is in a nearby grave as is another son ,William Charles Kent who was a leading light of Molesey Boat Club and Molesey Hockey Club.



Dr James Jenkinson Knox, 1865-1898

A very popular figure



Dr Knox came to Molesey to assist Dr Skimming at his practice in Palace Road before setting up on his own in Manor Road and becoming Poor Law Medical Officer of Health for East and West Molesey.

He was a Surrey County amateur footballer and founded Hampton Court and East Molesey Association Football Club in 1892. He married the youngest daughter of Herbert Andrews and they lived at Redlands on Walton Road opposite the eastern arm of Matham Road.

His death on Christmas Day at the age of 32 was sudden and unexpected. Flags were flown at half-mast around the village. His polished oak coffin was carried in a glass hearse. After a service at St. Mary's, the interment took place at the cemetery. The long list of official mourners included members of the Andrews, Gillott, Kent, Skimming, Tagg and Wheatley families as well as officials of Molesey and several other football clubs. Crowds lined the road. The funeral was organised by George Alderton, a member of the East and West Molesey District Council.



John Edmund Knox

1870-1932

Indefatigable Medical Officer of Health



Dr. Knox M.B., C.M., known to his family as Eddie, was Medical Officer of Health for Molesey from 1899 until his death from a heart attack in 1932. He lived at The Hollies, Palace Road. His older brother is buried close by.

He campaigned locally for improvements to public health including the establishment of an isolation hospital and connecting more roads to the sewage system; but infectious diseases remained a problem.



Dr. Knox's coachman at the Splash in Summer Road c.1907.



Dr. Knox's car at the garage.



Amy Nielson Margaret Nielson Christian Nielson



'Sove I Fred' – Danish for 'Sleep in Peace'

Amy Alice Elizabeth Nielson (1837-1895) was the first wife of Christian Nielson (1863-1953), one of Molesey's most important benefactors.

They moved to Molesey in 1890 but she died five years later.

When the law preventing a man from marrying his deceased wife's sister was repealed, he married Alice's youngest sister, Margaret, in 1907. She was the mother of Christine, Violet and Monty. Margaret died on 2nd September 1950 aged 74.

Amy's oldest son, Christian, worked for the Post Office in New Zealand (of which his father did not approve!) and died there of influenza in the great epidemic of 1918.



Christian Nielson, husband of Amy and Margaret, at the 1935 Carnival.

George Pumfrett Corporal 17th Lancers



According to the family, he first joined the army to escape his father's brewing business in Huntingdon but his irate parents bought him out.

He enlisted again in 1851 as an ordinary soldier, understating his age to beat the age limit of 25 years, two weeks after his father's possibly suicide.

Family tradition has it that his horse was shot under him at the Battle of Balaclava in 1854 and he walked back unwounded. Theirs not to make reply, Theirs not to reason why, Theirs but to do and die. (Tennyson)

He later served in India where he met his wife Edith Winifred Middleton.

He retired in 1886 having risen to the rank of Honorary Lt. Colonel on a pension of £300 p.a.

He died aged 80 at Highclere, Arnison Road on 31st October 1906.



James Ray

1855-1921 Devoted citizen



James Ray, JP was for 35 years a member of the old local board and urban district council of East and West Molesey. For 16 years in succession, he was the chairman.

James Ray never married. On same headstone is an inscription to Frances Thompson, his niece and housekeeper who died in 1919, aged 52.



The memorial to his parents – William and Mary – is adjacent.

James Ray lived at Lunn House in Park Road (damaged and pulled down after the V1 flying bomb exploded in Pemberton Road in August 1944?)

Alexander Rintoul

1807-1891

Alexander Nelson Rintoul was a portrait artist from Glasgow who worked in London. In 1863, he wrote a guide to painting photographic portraits, draperies, backgrounds, etc. in water colours and for painting photographs (then a recent invention) in oil colours.



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His wife (Ann Felton Rintoul, died 1884) and two of his daughters (Clarie Ann, died 1901, and Isabella, died 1920) are commemorated on the same headstone.

At the time of his death, Isabella was living at 3 Palmerston Terrace in Park Rd.



Maria Snell 1826-1910

Maria lived at 44 Arnison Road

At the time of the 1871 census, she was married to Lieutenant William Pitt Preast (or Priest) of the HM6 Royal Regiment.

They had a lodger – Reverend William Middleton Snell, MA (Cantab) who was a schoolmaster probably at the school at the Methodist Church in Manor Road.

By the 1881 census, Preast is missing (presumed dead) and Maria is married to Snell, previously her lodger.

Snell died in 1899 but Maria lived on to November 1910.

Stories about Maria have been passed down by the family who bought the house in Arnison Road. One is a rumour of another husband. The other is that she has had enough of men and so did not want to let them in the house. So she built a brick-walled pit, twelve-feet deep, in the garden to house the gas meters with manhole covers and an iron ladder to climb in and out.

Douglas has excavated the pit to verify this.

She was also a dog lover and he has found a number of small bones in a mound in the garden!

Thanks to Douglas MacVicar for this story.

Thomas George Tagg (1840-1897)



The Taggs were a prominent and enterprising family of watermen. They probably came over to England from the Netherlands in the 17th century.

"Tom" Tagg was appointed a Royal Waterman at the age of 21 and established a boat building business on an island in the Thames which soon became known by his name. He built a new hotel on the island and a boathouse and club on the Molesey bank.



These businesses were initially successful but ran into financial difficulties and had to be sold by his son in 1904.

Other members of the Tagg family are buried nearby.

Sir Charles Lewis Tupper

1848-1910



Sir Charles Lewis Tupper (1848-1910) had an eminent career as an administrator in the Indian Civil Service holding a number of important government posts mainly in the Punjab between 1871 and 1906. He was widely recognised as an expert in Indian political law. Tupper was one of the founders of the Punjab University and became its vice-chancellor in 1900-01. He also helped to create the Punjab Law Society. He lived at Glenlyn from 1907 and became a member of Surrey County Council as well as President/Chairman of the Kingston Division of the National Service League.





Lieutenant-General Sir Robert Walpole

1808-1876



After completing his education at Eton, he entered the army as second lieutenant in the rifle brigade in 1825. He served during the earlier part of his career in Nova Scotia (1825– 36), Ireland, Birmingham during the bread riots (1839), Jersey, Malta (1841–3) and Corfu.

He saw action in India taking part in the suppression of the mutinies and revolts between 1857 and 1859. He was promoted and received the thanks of Parliament for his role. He was appointed Lieutenant-General in 1871.



He died at his residence, The Grove, West Molesey, in 1876.





The Grove (rear view)

Jesse Wheatley

1821-1900

One of the best-known men in Molesey and its neighbourhood (Surrey Comet)

He established himself in Molesey as a builder and was for some years parish surveyor and overseer. He was one of the first members of the Local Board and served on it for many years. Wheatley was also very active in the establishment of the cemetery. He and his sons carried out large building works in the area including the construction of St. Paul's church. Surrey Comet reports "he was of a most charitable disposition, and generous to a degree, and for many years has had pensioners in the parish whom he has largely assisted ... Mr. Wheatley was twice married and leaves a numerous family ... The interment will take place today at the cemetery, the first part of the service being read at St. Mary's

Church ... The employees of the firm will attend."



St. Paul's built by the firm



Mole Side where Jesse Wheatley lived is now the site of Field Close.

Walter Archibald John Yeend

1912-2000

Father John Yeend was Vicar of West Molesey for forty years.

He was a colourful character. He used to pop into Millers' shop to buy cigarettes and then he would go next door and have a beer in the Royal Oak.

In 1955, he needed to raise £500 to tackle dry rot in the church timbers. A 'penny a day' appeal in March only managed to raise £120 so he challenged all-comers at darts, draughts, dominoes, billiards, snooker and shove-halfpenny on condition that if they lost to him they had to donate money to the dry rot fund!



The Reverend John Yeend in 1983 competing against Bob Carpenter in the Royal Oak's Yard of Ale competition which raised over £300 for Kingston Hospital heart unit.

