

Forthcoming Events

Subscription Renewals 2020

Membership subscriptions for 2020 are now due and will remain at £7 per member. If you joined the Society after 1 October 2019, you will not receive a renewal notice, as your membership continues through 2020. As usual, you will have the opportunity to renew your membership at the AGM on Wednesday 29 January. We do hope that you will find something of interest in our programme and will continue to support the Society and the events that are planned for the year.

Wednesday 29 January 2020, 8 pm

AGM

The Story of the Queen Mary Reservoir

Talk by Nick Pollard

St Lawrence School, Church Road, KT8 9DR

Nick Pollard has been Chairman of Sunbury and Shepperton Local History Society for the past twenty-two years. His talk looks at the planning of the the Queen Mary Reservoir and the impact it had on the village of Littleton. The construction programme was subject to changes and disruption caused by the outbreak of war and is fully illustrated through the different stages of the work. The reservoir had a Royal opening, then played a surprising role in developing secret weapons in another war, before becoming a valuable leisure asset for the community.

Thursday 19 March 2020, 8 pm

The Kaleidoscopic Life of Horace Walpole - Creator of Strawberry Hill

Talk by Keith Hathaway

Hurst Park School, Hurst Road, KT8 1QS

Son of the first British Prime Minister, Sir Robert Walpole, Horace Walpole was a writer, art historian, man of letters, antiquarian and Whig politician. He had Strawberry Hill House built in Twickenham, south-west London, reviving the Gothic style some decades before his Victorian successors. His literary reputation rests on the first Gothic novel, 'The Castle of Otranto' (1764), and his Letters, which are of significant social and political interest. Keith Hathaway will be giving a talk on this 'renowned author, connoisseur, collector and inexhaustible gossip of the 18th century'.

Meeting Reports

Merton Priory - A New Chapter

Talk by John Hawkes

Wednesday 25 September 2019, 8 pm

by Lynda McCarter



Merton Priory – Artist's Impression

Our September talk was all about the new presentation of the Chapter House Ruins of Merton Priory. John Hawkes, former manager of Merton Abbey Mills, now manages the Chapter House and is Vice-Chairman of the Trust whose function it is to promote and preserve the Chapter House ruins.

At one time, the Priory owned significant land in Molesey, hence the local interest. The Manor of Molesey Prior was situated around the School Road area, the land having been given to the monks in around 1130 by Engelram d'Abernon in the hope of a quick and easy entry into heaven.

Merton Priory itself was founded in 1117 by monks of the Augustinian order. It occupied a prominent position close to Stane Street (the present A24) and the River Wandle. The first wooden buildings were soon replaced by those built of stone. This came from Reigate and northern France. Decorative elements used flint and Purbeck marble.

At its height, the Priory would have provided education, hospital services, a venue for political meetings and, of course, spiritual activities. Five or six hundred people would have lived on site, with a farm providing for their needs. There would also have been a scriptorium, where the monks would create books and documents.

Many important events happened at the Priory. Thomas Beckett was educated there, before going on to become Archbishop of Canterbury. Walter de Merton had strong links to The Priory. He started an educational foundation in Malden, which moved to Oxford in 1274. This became Merton College, the model for university life in the future. In 1236, the Statute of Merton was drawn up. This law, concerning property and inheritance, became the first entry in the English Statute Book. In 1437, Henry VI was crowned at Merton on his sixteenth birthday.

It was another Henry who was responsible for its demise. In 1538, the Dissolution of the Monasteries was ordered by Henry VIII. Many abbeys and priories did survive to become parish churches and cathedrals. Others were left to become picturesque ruins. However, Henry wanted to build a hunting lodge nearby. All the stone, wood, glass and lead was removed and used to build what became Nonsuch Palace. Unfortunately, the building did not survive as, after Charles II gave it to his mistress, Lady Castlemaine, she had to sell all the materials to cover her gambling debts.

Pioneering excavations were carried out in the 1920s and again in the 1960s, when the grand plan could be seen. The Priory church was said to be as big as Westminster Abbey. The Museum of London carried out the main excavations, before Sainsbury's could build their vast SavaCentre. Most of the excavations were covered in and lie under the car park, but the Chapter House ruins were left visible, albeit through a dingy window to begin with.

The Merton Priory Trust has now completed Phase One of the representation of the site. Now housed in a glass-fronted structure, the Chapter House has become an arts and performance space. It is now underneath the bridge that Sainsbury's had to build, but not connected to it in any way, so that the bridge can bounce. It is only a summer venue, as no heating can be allowed beneath a bridge. From April to October, the Chapter House is open on a Sunday from 11 am until 4 pm. John Hawkes was very keen to have as many visitors as possible to see the developments. We may consider this as a possible outing for the Society in spring. Further plans include the creation of a physic garden, subject to funding of course.

It was a very interesting evening to learn about such an important piece of history on our doorstep.

APRÈS LE DÉLUGE

Our meeting at Imber Court, in November, looked at what happened after the flooding in Molesey in September 1968 and considered whether it is likely to happen again. We started with a short film clip from September 1969 which reminded us of the devastation which the 1968 flood caused in Molesey. Jenny Wood told us that, in the Esher Council area, 8,000 out of 20,000 homes were flooded; 4,000 of these were severely affected, with many being under several feet of water contaminated with sewage. Many households had to throw away all their downstairs furniture and shops had to dispose of thousands of pounds-worth of flood-damaged stock. It was a considerable time before things returned to normal, as people could not redecorate until walls had completely dried out and this took many months. It took even longer for the smell to disappear totally; many people complained that even some years after the flooding, when it was wet, the horrible stench would return.



ABOVE: Demonstrators approach Thames Conservancy and the end of their march.
BELOW: Protest marchers pass Molesey Police Station on their way to the river.

There was enormous anger in Molesey at what residents considered to be the failings of Thames Conservancy, the authority which was responsible at that time for the management of the River Thames and its tributaries in this area. They felt that the flood warning system was inadequate and that much of the flooding in Molesey could have been prevented if sluice gates on the Mole had been opened. This anger and the refusal of the Government to agree to a public inquiry led to a protest march through Molesey and then the formation of the Flood Victims' Campaign (*photo: Flood Victims' Protest March, 19th October 1968*). The Campaign collected 10,000 signatures to a petition demanding a public inquiry and journeyed to London to present it to the Government.

However, the Campaign's efforts to obtain an inquiry into the causes of the flood failed as the Government continuously maintained that the cause of the flooding in September 1968 was the phenomenal rainfall. They accepted that there may have been failings by Thames Conservancy but argued that these had little or no impact on the scale of the flooding and that instead efforts should be concentrated on measures designed to ensure that the flood would not happen again.

Roger Hoad then spoke to us about the Lower Mole Flood Alleviation Scheme which was drawn up by Thames Conservancy to prevent future flooding. The Conservancy instructed their consulting engineers, C. H. Dobbie and Partners, to prepare a feasibility study and recommend flood alleviation measures. The engineers reported back in June 1969 that works should be carried out on the lower 6km of the River Mole. These works should enable flood water of the same magnitude as that of September 1968 to be contained without overspill. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) supported this view in principle and discussions were held between themselves and Surrey County Council, Thames Conservancy and the Urban District Councils where funding was agreed.

A Compulsory Purchase Order was made in August 1971 to allow the acquisition of lands and property to enable the works to go ahead. Application for planning consent was made to the local authorities concerned in May 1971. The Secretary of State's approval with modifications was received in March 1974 and the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food confirmed the Compulsory Purchase Order.

The peak flow in September 1968 was estimated and this was used for the hydraulic calculations. Several solutions were considered but it was decided to form a widened channel to take the peak flow. Several alternative routes for the improved waterway were investigated and eventually an economic solution involving the least demolition of property was selected. The final solution was to create a single channel from Albany Bridge at Esher to the Mole/Ember junction near Hampton Court. Where there was housing on either side, the banks were created using steel sheet piles with concrete topping; in the more rural areas the channel is trapezoidal with revetted side slopes.



As well as constructing the channel structures, it was necessary to build three new sluices on the River Ember to regulate flows and retain water levels. The existing sluices on the River Mole were modified and mechanised. Apart from forming the main channels and sluices, several other major engineering works had to be completed as part of the overall scheme. Most of these consisted of either alterations to existing bridges or completely new bridges. Major engineering works were undertaken to underpin the railway viaduct taking the London to Southampton railway across the River Mole between Esher and Hersham. New bridges were built to take Esher Road over the widened channel and a new footbridge was built over the river in Summer Road (*photo: New Channel through Molesey looking towards Esher from Summer Road Footbridge*).

From when the first scheme proposals were put to Thames Conservancy in 1969 until completion in 1987 took 18 years. Construction works started in 1975 with the underpinning of the Railway Viaduct. The channel through Molesey was constructed between 1977 and 1982 and the trapezoidal sections from Esher to Molesey were built between 1981 and 1984. Esher Road Bridge was completed in 1984. The channel from Albany Bridge to the Viaduct Sluice and the widening of the existing channel from Hampton Court Way to the River Thames was completed between 1986 and 1987.

The complete cost of executing the scheme construction works, together with site supervision, fees, land purchase and compensation totalled **£19,268,000**.

The final presentation of the evening posed the question 'Could it happen again'? Julian Mayes (independent weather consultant) highlighted the fact that weather systems are 'chaotic' and, as such, the likelihood of extreme events is difficult to assess. After the floods, a return period of 200 years was estimated. Subjectively this seems reasonable but there are two caveats. First, at the time the UK had only around 100 years systematic rainfall observations. Second, we now have an unstable, warming climate – the notion of a return period is discredited. Furthermore, once in 200 years equates to 5 times in a Millennium. As each event occurs independently, two such events could occur in consecutive years.

Julian contrasted the risk from the Thames and Mole catchments – we must not ignore the flood risk from the Thames simply due to past memories of the Mole flooding. However, it was acknowledged that the Mole catchment is unusually impermeable for South East England which allows a faster response in river flow following heavy rainfall. There is also a particular mechanism whereby heavy rainfall can occasionally be generated over the area – north-easterly winds blowing off the Thames Estuary associated with a slow-moving low pressure area and air that is 'unstable' (i.e. highly buoyant).

Past records from the RHS gardens at Wisley show that the number of days having more than 25mm of rain is slowly increasing, though rainfall overall is not. This is consistent with projections of rainfall becoming more erratic in future decades. Projections indicate a likelihood of winters becoming wetter in southern England while summers become drier, though the risk of very wet summer days may not decline. The wetter winters implies higher flows in the Thames in particular. Flooding on the Mole is influenced more by the chance occurrence of local extreme rainfall which, by definition, is less predictable. Together with wetter winters, this implies a greater number of high flows here too – the Mole / Ember flood alleviation scheme will continue to prove to be a valuable investment.

As usual, there were numerous displays round the room giving further details about the topics covered by the talks and about floods which have occurred since 1968. We are very grateful to everyone who supplied us with information or photographs and, in particular, we would like to thank John Eagle who provided us with a huge number of photographs showing flooding in the 1970s and the flood alleviation works.

Memories of Hampton Court Palace *by Doreen Freeman*

I was born Doreen Hagan in March 1939 at 8 First Avenue in West Molesey and my first recollections of Hampton Court Palace were the daffodils and crocuses in The Wilderness. My mother used to walk my brother and me through the Palace grounds and Home Park to Kingston to see our Grandparents.

When I was about eight or nine I was allowed to catch the 131 bus and go to Hampton Court with my friend and neighbour Barbara. We would walk through the grounds and go into the apartments with no charge. We loved the Great Hall and the stained glass windows. I never knew the history of them till many years later. We would spend time looking at the tapestries and trying to work out the story attached. The rooms were like an Aladdin's Cave with the beautiful china and the beds and all the pictures of the ancestors of the Royal Family.

My favourite place was in the Cloisters. It was magical, with the fountain in the middle and the frieze at the top of the wall, which now looks very faded, but then I am going back at least 70 years. In 1950, when we were going through this area, we saw Moira Shearer in her wedding dress when she married Ludovic Kennedy. She was so beautiful and waved to us. Her smile was exquisite.

We sometimes went into the Maze, which cost us a penny in old money. Another place that I found intriguing was the Grape Vine. When I was about twelve years old, May and I decided to go the Palace to try and see the ghost of Anne Boleyn, as there had been a lot about it in the Press. We went up to the gates by the Moat and spoke to the warden and told him what we wanted. He was very polite and said that once the main gates were closed the general public were not admitted and to go home before it was dark. As you can imagine, we were very disappointed and even now I am not sure whether I believe in ghosts.

In the year of the Coronation, 1953, when I was a Patrol Leader with the 1st Molesey Guides, Esher District was asked to paint the floor of the apartment of Olivia Baden Powell for visiting Scouts and Guides. We spent nearly a whole day on our hands and knees with paint brushes. Even if I say it myself, we did a good job.

When my brother Ron was a butcher's boy with Arnolds the Butcher in Bridge Road, he would cycle into the Palace with his meat deliveries and ring the bell. A basket would come down to the ground into which he placed the meat and bill and it would be hoisted up and the monies sent down to him. If change was needed, he would place it in the basket and return it. I sometimes went with him, as we spent a lot of time together and were real buddies. His customers were Lady Salmon, Lady Yeates and Lady Baden Powell. Ron sometimes saw the ladies making their way back home with shopping, so would put their wares into his butcher's basket on the bike and see them home. The butcher's shop was where Casa Mia restaurant is now and at the back there was an abattoir. Some of the equipment looked lethal.

The grounds were always pristine although the Privy Gardens leading down to the River Thames were very overgrown at the time. Now the gardens are back to their original design. A fellow scout, who was a gardener at the Palace and received an OBE for his long service, helped to restore the area, which he was very proud of doing. Until the resurrection, I did not know why the steps were there, but when the arbour was constructed it all made sense.

Many of our school friends went to work in the Palace or the grounds. My favourite place was the sunken gardens and the grape vine, especially during the spring. The knot garden was always beautifully shaped, as were the trees leading up to the Long Water, which always had so many swans and cygnets floating around and sometimes a black swan as well. Once I saw a large carp in the stream running up to long water.

When the Friends of Hampton Court were first established, Lady Bailey's flat was our room where we met other members and made them tea or coffee or just chatted. I was very fortunate and went up on the roof, which was amazing; it was just after a flower show and the ground was very muddy where the vehicles and people had been. It was very warm and, as I suffer with vertigo, I was glad of chimneys to lean on. I also went up behind the clock and whilst there the clock struck, which made the visit more interesting. We watched tapestries being washed and aired and could not believe they used water on them. When the Antiques Road Show came to the Privy Garden at the Palace, I was given the job of looking after one of the antique dealers, making sure they had refreshments. All the committee members were allocated a job on that day and it was very interesting seeing all the articles bought in for valuation, some big and others small. The day was very hot and colourful, with tables and umbrellas and everyone in summer clothes.

The housekeeping talk was an eye-opener as to how they cleaned the chandelier and protected items from moth and dirt. Ian Franklin took us on a Ghost Walk one evening. The kitchens were hot as they were roasting on the spit and cooking old recipes. The cooks were dressed in medieval clothes that looked very heavy and not suitable for kitchen wear. We had a taste of plum jam made in the old fashioned way.

Once when we had French visitors who lived just outside Paris, we took them to visit The Palace and were lucky to see how Queen Elizabeth was dressed with her farthingale and all the pins holding her garments in place. After watching and thinking how long it took to dress her, I was pleased to live in present times. On another occasion whilst sitting in the grounds, the Ladies and Gentlemen dressed in period costume came along and many of the visitors took pictures of them.

Over the years I have had the pleasure of many talks, but the one that sticks out in my memory is when we went to the Great Hall and saw the tapestries with backlighting, which revealed their original vivid colours, showing just how beautiful they had been when Henry was King.

After the fire, the rooms seemed to be too new and I felt it lost a lot of the old charm. I was surprised when the Chocolate Kitchen was found, but it makes me wonder what other treasures still will be found.

In 2012 when Gloriana came up the Thames, we were fortunate to see her from our friend's flat in Thames Ditton overlooking the gates at the East Front of the Palace. We also saw the boat from Cigarette Island opposite the palace. It was a marvellous sight and will stay in my memory bank forever.

I am on the Committee of Molesey Local History Society and we come to the Clore Centre once a year for a talk, so over the course of years I have learnt quite a bit about the Kings and Queens and their way of life.

My father went to Hampton Court School (he was born in 1908) when he was a young lad. I do not know how he he was eligible, but I do know that my grandmother, Sophie Hagan, later Mrs Highley, lived in Ivy Cottage along the Hampton Court Walls. Ernest Hagan, her first husband, came to Kingston in the 1920s. He was a farrier, so he may have worked at the Palace. I also have a picture of my mother in the gardens near the Long Water when the yew trees were quite small. It appears our family have always had history with the Palace.

Nellie Ada Jarman
'World's First' Beauty Pageant Winner
By Norma Millard

Anniversaries
Friday 14 August 1908
 The world's first recorded beauty pageant is held at the Pier Hippodrome in Folkestone, Kent, with competitors from Britain, Austria, Ireland, France and America. The winner was 18-year-old Nellie Jarman, from East Molesey, Surrey.

After a neighbour gave me this news paper cutting about Nellie Ada Jarman, winner of the first International Beauty Pageant, I was interested to find out more. In 1908, Robert Forsyth, an Edwardian entrepreneur and managing director of Folkestone Pier, decided to host an International Beauty Pageant, as he thought it would put Folkestone on the map.

So, on the 14th August 1908, the Pageant was born. It was held in the Pier Hippodrome with contestants from Britain, Austria, Ireland, France and America.

Not everyone thought it was a good idea and the Folkestone Express reported the next day that the two front rows were occupied by Suffragettes. They each wore a large sailor hat with a red band with the words 'Votes for Women'. However the Pageant proceeded, to the delight of the audience.

There was no panel of judges, as members of the audience were given 3 votes each.

The winner was Nellie Ada Jarman, aged 18, from East Molesey, and the reason she won was for her 'Stunning Beauty'.

Nellie was born in 1890 at Oral Rd, Croydon, to Ellen and Daniel Jarman. According to the 1901 Census, at the age of 11 she was living in Feltham Ave, East Molesey, with her parents and her nine year old brother Fredrick. Her father's occupation was given as a local butcher.

In the 1911 Census they were all living in Fontenay, Creek Rd, East Molesey. Age 21 and her occupation was listed as a dancer.

The first beauty pageant recorded in Britain was held during the Eglinton Tournament of 1839, organized by Archibald Montgomerie, 13th Earl of Eglinton, as part of a re-enactment of a medieval joust that was held in Scotland. The pageant was won by Georgiana Seymour, Duchess of Somerset, the wife of Edward Seymour, 12th Duke of Somerset, and sister of Caroline Norton, and she was proclaimed as the "Queen of Beauty".



It would also appear that the first international competition took place in Spa, Belgium, in 1888, when an 18 year old Creole contestant won in a contest that was not regarded as respectable. Even if he knew about it, which is doubtful, it is unlikely that Robert Forsyth would have seen this as an obstacle to his claim of holding 'The World's First Beauty Pageant'.

If anyone has any other information about Nellie, please let us know.

60 YEARS AGO
THE MOLESEY REVIEW September – December 1959

September, October, November and December Reviews

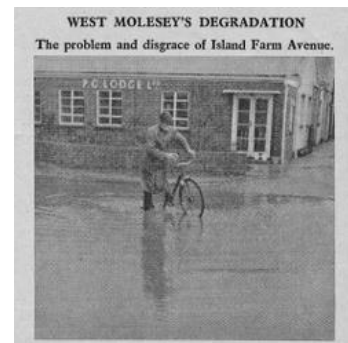
Molesey Chamber of Commerce and The Molesey Society organised a public meeting at St Paul's Hall, Vine Road, on 5th October to protest against the closure of Molesey Fire Station. In the September Review, the Chamber of Commerce said that the meeting was being widely advertised and appealed for everyone to make a determined effort to attend. In the October Review, the Chamber of Commerce argued against the closure of the Fire Station, saying that there would be inadequate cover for Molesey if it had to rely on appliances from Esher and Walton. In particular, the Chamber pointed out that a factory estate provided a much greater fire risk than residential property and Molesey was the only area in The Esher Urban District with such a concentrated area of factories. It cited the example of a fire at Pytrams factory in West Molesey the previous April when the Molesey Fire Engine arrived within 3 minutes of being notified and the Esher appliance did not turn up until 11 minutes later, even though it was notified first.

At the October public meeting, a resolution was passed protesting strongly to Esher Council and Surrey County Council against the proposal to close 15 of the Fire Stations in Surrey and, in particular, the Molesey Fire Station. On 6th October, a Special Meeting was held at the offices of Esher Council. The Council informed Surrey County Council that they were not satisfied that the proposed revised fire protection put forward in the County Council's report could be given in the Esher U.D.C. area, particularly at West Molesey. Esher Council said that they noted the reported inadequacy, according to modern standards, of the Molesey Fire Station, and recommended that it should be replaced by a new station on a site in High Street, West Molesey, which had long been reserved for the purpose.

In the December review, the Chamber of Commerce reported that Surrey County Council had decided to override the recommendations of Esher Council and go ahead with their plan to close the Fire Station in Molesey. The Chamber of Commerce had contacted their MP, Sir William Robson Brown, to ask him to take up the matter.

October Review

- A major effort was being made by Esher Council to enrol members of the public into the local Civil Defence Corps. The Civil Defence Corps was the largest volunteer body in the country; its object was to teach people how to take care of themselves and their neighbours in any kind of emergency. However, in Esher, there were only 208 members although the peace-time membership of the unit could be 518.
- The 1st Molesey Scouts celebrated their Golden Jubilee between 10th and 17th October with a variety of events including free film shows, demonstrations, camp-fire sing-songs, parades etc. They were also embarking on a heavy building programme at their headquarters in Walton Road to incorporate a cub room and meeting room, to redo the roof and install a new heating system.



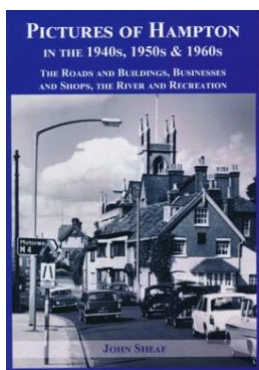
November Review

- A renovations appeal with a target of £200 was being organised on behalf of the Esher House branch of the Shaftesbury Home and Arethusa Training Ship in Palace Road, East Molesey. The Shaftesbury Home took care of children who were the victims of broken marriages. There were 25 girls housed in the Esher House branch in Palace Road. Their upkeep was entirely supported by voluntary donations.
- Molesey Football Club's prolonged negotiations for the purchase of their ground in Walton Road had been completed. Plans were being prepared for the development of the ground.

December Review

- The Molesey Society drew up a petition protesting against proposals to develop Hurst Park Racecourse for speculative building and made a house-to-house collection of signatures to the petition. The petition was to be presented to the Minister of Housing and Local Government and the Molesey Society was going to urge that the racecourse should become part of the Green Belt. An application had been made by Modern Homesteads Limited for outline planning permission to develop Hurst Park as a housing estate. Esher Council was opposed to the Hurst Park residential development plans, saying that, "It would have a widespread and detrimental effect not only on this Urban District but also on neighbouring Authorities."
- 'Around the Town' commented on the condition of Island Farm Avenue, "I feel sure the Esher Council will find no peace until they make up the shocking mess called Island Farm Avenue. Oh, and when they do finally get round to doing it, a 'Cul de Sac' sign at the entrance to the Avenue, wouldn't go amiss! The regular stream of vehicles turning round at the bottom of this Avenue has made it into a mill pond in this weather. Owners of factories have sent strong letters of protest to the Council."

Pictures of Hampton



This newly published book, written by Hampton local historian John Sheaf, provides a fascinating description of Hampton in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s including life under wartime conditions. It covers the roads and buildings of the village, the shops, pubs and businesses of that wartime and post-war era as well as the river and recreation. There is a separate section for each main road with details of the significant changes; each with an individual map and related pictures. Changes to other roads are also described as well as information on all new roads, with appropriate images.

This very well-illustrated book, with many pictures in colour, includes over one hundred and thirty historic images and eleven maps.

Available at many shops in Hampton and from the local history website at www.botlhs.co.uk where you go to Publications and click on the image of a cover of the book to buy. Price £7.50

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