

Programme Changes

Following the postponement of our talk on Horace Walpole, it has been decided to postpone our May and June meetings and hope that we will be able to enjoy our Summer Stroll in July. In the meantime, we plan to keep in touch with shorter, more regular newsletters. If you have anything of interest and are willing to write a contribution, we would be happy to include it.

We also plan to send out maps of walks which will take you to places of historical interest in the locality, so that we can all learn more about Molesey history whilst getting our essential exercise.

Memories

With time on our hands, maybe some of us might like to think about writing or recording our memories of Molesey, so that we can add to our archive of social history and perhaps publish some in our newsletter. We might also wish to write about what is happening now, so that our memories can be passed down to future generations.

Meeting Report

Wednesday 29 January 2020

AGM

The Society held its thirteenth Annual General Meeting at St Lawrence School on Wednesday 29 January. The hall was packed, with 91 members attending, and we'd received apologies from 13 others. Members were able to enjoy a glass of wine or soft drink, and renew their membership for the year. The business part of the meeting took about half an hour, and was followed by an illustrated talk by Nick Pollard on "The Story of the Queen Mary Reservoir".

The minutes of the 2019 AGM were approved, and there were no matters arising. In her Chairman's Report, Jenny Wood reported that membership at the end of December 2019 stood at 259, slightly higher than the previous year. Jenny listed the Society's events of 2019: at January's AGM the speaker felt unable to come because of the risk of snow, so the Society's standby film, "Surrey on Film 1914-53" was shown; two events took place in March – an evening on "Suffragists, Suffragettes & Antis" and an exhibition of the flood photographs shown at the previous November's meeting was held in the Methodist Church; May was the Clore Centre meeting with Siobhan Clarke; in July Tim Morris spoke to us about Brooklands Museum, but the planned tour of the Museum in the summer did not attract sufficient numbers to be viable; September's talk was about the history of Merton Priory, and the Society is hoping to arrange a visit at some stage in the future; November's researched meeting was a follow-up to our Floods meeting, covering the aftermath, the flood alleviation scheme, and a look to the future. The Society was also involved in Love Molesey in April, and had a tent at the Molesey Carnival in June.

The 2020 programme had now been published, but the September meeting will change, as the planned speaker is now expecting to be in China on the previously agreed date. Our researched project will be "Designing Post-War-Britain", looking at the work of various Molesey architects since the Second World War. Members will see from our accounts that the Society's accounts are extremely healthy, due to the sell-out of "Molesey Then and Now". The surplus from the sales would be used to fund further publications, with two currently being planned, one about the bridges of Hampton Court, based on the Society's 2013 research project, and a second entitled "Missing Molesey", and covering buildings in Molesey that are no longer in existence.

Three newsletters were produced during the year, and Jenny thanked Jill Wilkins for all her work on this. Any contributions from members will be gratefully received. Jenny thanked Dave Jupp, Anthony Barnes and Laurence Shafe for maintaining and updating the website, and she urged members to let us have any comments about it. Queries from individuals and from schools and other organisations come to the Society through the website, and in 2019 she and Norma Millard went to chat to 3rd Molesey Brownies following one such enquiry. Norma also helped with a query from BBC London about the 1968 flooding, and appeared on a BBC News bulletin.

Jenny went on to thank John Hutton for continuing to look after the Society's day-to-day finances, and all the members of the committee for their continued support. In particular, she thanked Doreen Freeman, who was standing down from the committee – Doreen had been an invaluable member of the committee since its inception, with a vast local knowledge and network of contacts, as well as being unfailingly cheerful and always willing to help. We shall miss her, but know she will continue to support the Society.

Following Jenny's report, the Society's Treasurer, Dave Jupp, reported that in 2018 our basic income was £2,600 and this increased to £2,900 in 2019. Conversely, in 2018 our outgoings totalled £2,000, whereas in 2019 they were £2,500. So, although our income increased, our average surplus of around £600 per annum, reduced by about £200 in 2019, to a little over £400. As long as our membership therefore remains in the order of 250 persons, we believe our present subscription and meeting charges will keep us evenly balanced. Overall, however, we are well off as a Society with just over £18,000 in the bank which, as Jenny had reported, could be used to fund future publications.

Adoption of the accounts was proposed, seconded and unanimously approved, and Alan Hopkins was re-appointed as Independent Examiner of the Society's Accounts.

No formal motions had been received, and there were no points for discussion. David Meggitt thanked the Chair and committee on behalf of all members.

2020/21 Committee and Officers:

Officers: Chair: Jenny Wood, Secretary: Paula Day, Treasurer: Dave Jupp
Committee: Claire Annable, Anthony Barnes, Roger Hoad, Lynda McCarter, Norma Millard, Jill Wilkins.

The Story of the Queen Mary Reservoir Talk by Nick Pollard

After a short break, Nick Pollard, Chair of the Sunbury and Shepperton Local History Society, gave us a fascinating talk about the Queen Mary Reservoir, explaining the need for the reservoir, giving the history behind its creation, its construction and official opening, and illustrated his talk with some delightful personal memories and some stunning photographs.



The Metropolitan Water Board was formed in 1902 to improve the supply of water to London, and began a programme to vastly increase water storage capacity off the non-tidal Thames, including reservoirs at Staines, Walton, Island Barn, Molesey and Littleton. Nick showed some lovely photographs of the old Littleton Village, destroyed during the building of the reservoir.

Permission was granted for two reservoirs at Littleton, but by the time work stopped in 1916 due to the First World War, it had been re-designed as a single reservoir with a central baffle. (*Photo – Aerial View 1926*).

Work recommenced in 1919, with Henry Stilgoe, grandfather of the musician and entertainer Richard Stilgoe, as Chief Engineer of the Metropolitan Water Board. But further changes had to be made to the shape, due to unstable ground at one side, so, to maintain the same capacity, the revised design meant the demolition of a large portion of the old village of Littleton. The road was diverted, and new houses were built to accommodate the displaced villagers. One building, a 16th century cottage called Astleham Manor Cottage, was dismantled, moved from the site, and can now be seen at the Chiltern Open Air Museum.



Nick's talk was superbly illustrated with photographs of the workforce, which would have included Nick's grandfather, had he had sufficient funds to bribe the foreman! It could be quite a dangerous job, with a number of fatalities among the workforce. The centre of the reservoir was excavated to form a bank around the edges, then cutting a slot through this bank to the London Clay below, before filling the slot with clay to make a waterproof seal. Incredibly, this clay was trodden into place by gangs of men with sacking wrapped round their boots! Massive machinery, including this Lubecker excavator, was used and the site had its own railway to transport the spoil, with 32 miles of track, 20 locos and 500 wagons and trucks.



2000 workers were employed, many of whom were housed in huts along Staines Road West. Local women were recruited to cook and clean for the workers. A number of structures were built, including inlet and outlet tunnels and the pumping station, with its 150 foot chimney.

The Littleton reservoir was opened on 13th June 1925 by King George V, and in a last minute change, was officially named after his consort, Queen Mary. The dedication plaque, with the later addition of the name Queen Mary Reservoir, can be seen on the bank of the reservoir to this day.

The reservoir was damaged by bombing during World War Two. A mini submarine designed to carry a 500lb detachable warhead was trialled there in late 1942 and used once, unsuccessfully, against a floating dock in Bergen in 1943. In more recent years, the reservoir has appeared in several films, including Dad's Army in 1972. Today, the Queen Mary Sailing Club sail there, and of course there are sheep on the banks.



The Society's members thoroughly enjoyed Nick's talk, and he answered a number of questions from the audience.

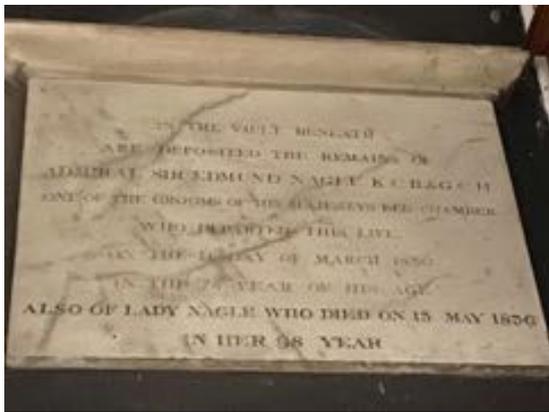
The Slave Trade and Molesey?

Surely Not!

There's a surprising link in the bell tower of St Mary's Church, East Molesey where a tablet marks the resting place of Dame Mary and Admiral Sir Edmund Nagle. *(Photo courtesy of Beth Sawyer).*

In 1833 Parliament finally abolished slavery in the British Caribbean, Mauritius and the Cape. The trade in slaves from Africa to the British colonies had been made illegal in 1807, but it was another 26 years before existing slaves were freed.

Surrey's slave owners were not only men but also a surprising number of women. Some were married, others were spinsters or widows, not all were landed and upper-class, and some had simply inherited their 'asset' through the death of a husband, relative, or as part of a marriage settlement.



Dame Mary Nagle (nee Harnage) was one such of these women.

Her husband, John Lucie Blackman II (1735-1797), a West India planters' merchant to George III, had ownership of slaves on his muscovado sugar plantation, Boarded Hall Estate, St Georges, Barbados. Blackman died in 1797 and in his will Dame Mary was bequeathed an annuity of £700 per year, and a lump sum of £10,000, with the restriction that she should not draw more than £500 a year in case she should cause injury to his trade. He left Boarded Hall estate to his son George Blackman and then to his grandsons George Blackman and John Lucie Blackman. George Blackman (son) who assumed the name Harnage, after marrying his cousin, later became a baronet and director of the Bank of England. *(Map of Barbados by Francis Louis Barrallier 1825).*



Dame Mary subsequently married Admiral Sir Edmund Nagle (1757-1830) who was to become the mortgage holder of the Boarded Hall estate for his stepson George. She unsuccessfully claimed against her son, George Harnage, for compensation against the annual £700 payment and £3,750 for arrears.

Sir Edmund and the trustees were granted compensation for the ownership of enslaved people after the abolition of slavery finally took place.

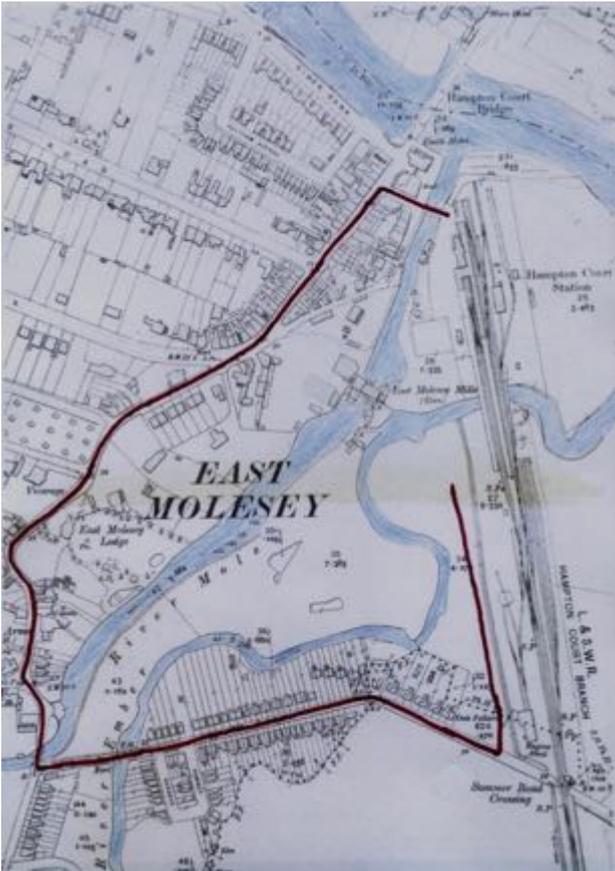
Dame Mary died in May 1836 at the age of 98 and her remains, along with those of Admiral Nagle, are in a vault in the bell tower of St Mary's Church, East Molesey, where they rest together.

by Claire Annable

60 YEARS AGO THE MOLESEY REVIEW - January 1960

In the Review of January 1960, T. S. Mercer looked back more than 50 years to the 'Homeland Handbook' on East and West Molesey dated 1905. He said that it brought back many memories to him, although he did not come to Molesey until 1926 when he purchased a weekend caravan on the Ember.

The 1905 handbook read, "From the station yard a wooden bridge leads across the river Mole to Bridge Road." Mr Mercer said how well he remembered, "the delightful prospect that met the eye as one walked out of the station. Instead of being confronted with a huge arterial road, one almost stepped into a charming little river lined with weeping willows and just a small white wooden bridge to cross into a small square with a row of old fashioned cottages in front and both the Castle and the Carnarvon Castle Hotels on your right with the Mole running along side them into the Thames."



OS map of 1912

The red line shows the approximate route taken by Mr Mercer to and from the station

By 1960, it only took Mr Mercer two minutes to walk from his caravan in Jasmine Way along Hampton Court Way across the bridge over the River Ember to Hampton Court Station. But, before the Ember was bridged in the early 1930s, it took twenty minutes to walk from his caravan to the station. "One had to traverse the whole length of Bridge Road to Summer Road, over the splash and then turn left down a narrow track over which Hampton Court Way was built, four sides of a square! Although I could actually talk from my plot to people on the station platform, it was in fact just as quick to walk to Thames Ditton station but I usually did my best to hitch-hike a passing boat to ferry me across to Hampton Court Station."

In 1905, trains from Hampton Court Station to Waterloo took 52 minutes but there were also express trains for businessmen which only took 35 minutes. Single fares were 1st class 2/-, 2nd class 1/6d and 3rd class 1/2½d and return fares were 2/9d, 2/- and 1/10d. Another option was to go to Shepherds Bush Underground station by tram in an hour and a quarter for 6d or, if you had plenty of time, to take a steamboat to London Bridge for half a crown return. Mr Mercer said that if the London swell chose to ignore these plebeian modes of transport he "could catch the "Vivid" coach at the Hotel Metropole, London, every day at 11.30 reaching the Thames Hotel, East Molesey at 1.20 after a brief stop at the Bull, East Sheen to change horses. The return fare was 10/6d. In the summer, a second coach ran daily from the Hotel Cecil to Hampton Court."

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