

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Wednesday 22 June 2022, 8 p.m.

Talk by Pieter Morpurgo

**THE HISTORY OF BUSHY PARK AND THE RESTORATIONS OF THE
WATER GARDENS AND DIANA FOUNTAIN**

St Lawrence School, Church Road, East Molesey KT8 9DR

What connects a river that isn't a river, a WW2 detonator, ants, a bouncing bomb and a statue moved for the third time? Bushy Park. It has a 4,000-year history, a unique Water Garden and some of Christopher Wren's work. The three sections of Pieter Morpurgo's talk will answer all these questions.

Monday 11 July 2022

SUMMER STROLL

We are hoping to arrange a tour of Hampton Court House on Monday 11 July, but Hampton Court House is unable to confirm this date until a couple of weeks before. If the tour does not take place, the Summer Stroll will be round part of Molesey Cemetery in West Molesey. Further details concerning the Stroll will be sent out next month.

Tuesday 13 September 2022, 8 p.m.

Talk by Julian McCarthy

THINGS ABOUT KINGSTON YOU (PROBABLY) DIDN'T KNOW!

Hurst Park School, Hurst Road, West Molesey KT8 1QS

Julian is Chair of Kingston Tour Guides and author of three books on Kingston upon Thames. He specialises in discovering the stories behind the streets and buildings and the people connected with the town. Did you know that Kingston changed the course of history on no less than four occasions? Come along and find out more! Copies of Julian's books will be on sale.

MEETING & EVENT REPORTS

Talk by Keith Hathaway

THE KALEIDOSCOPIC LIFE OF HORACE WALPOLE

Hurst Park School, Hurst Road, West Molesey

Thursday 24 February 2022

Report by Lynda McCarter

Horatio Walpole, better known as Horace, was born in 1717. He was the third son of Robert Walpole (Britain's first Prime Minister) and Catherine Shorter. He was very close to his mother who unfortunately died young. Educated at Eton, he then went to Cambridge University to study law, but did not finish the course.



In 1739, he went on the 'Grand Tour' with his fellow old Etonian, Thomas Gray. They spent three years travelling through France and Italy. The art and architecture which Horace saw had a lasting influence on him. While in Florence, he met Horace Mann and they corresponded for the rest of their lives. In 1742, his father resigned from the Government and was raised to the peerage as the First Earl of Orford. His father retired to his country seat at Houghton Hall in Norfolk, accompanied by Horace who catalogued his father's extensive art collection at the Hall. Horace's reputation as an art historian is based on this catalogue. Unfortunately for us, the entire collection was later sold to Catherine the Great by Horace's nephew.

Horace became a Member of Parliament, first for Callington, a rotten borough in Cornwall, which he never even visited, then later for Kings Lynn. This was near the family home so he had no excuse not to visit. At this time, Members of Parliament were not paid but Horace was financially independent. By the time his father died, Horace was renting near the Thames at Twickenham. He later bought the property 'Chopped Straw Hall' which we know today as Strawberry Hill House.

Horace formed a 'Committee of Taste' with John Chute and Richard Bentley. Together they created a house of mystery and magic around the original building. His taste was 'Gothick' and was heavily influenced by his previous travels and the decorative arts which he had seen abroad. Horace used wood and papier mâché, instead of stone, to achieve the look he wanted for many of the decorative features in the house. He had a collection of old Flemish School stained glass incorporated into the design. A whole room was dedicated to copies of portraits by Holbein. The house contained a number of treasures, including gloves belonging to James I and a clock that Henry VIII had given to Anne Boleyn on the day after they married. A portrait of Horace at the time shows him wearing a cravat that looks like lace but is in fact wood carved by Grinling Gibbons. His housekeeper would show people

around when he was away, such was the interest in his house. Horace published a guidebook for his servants to use when conducting tours.

A printing press was installed in the grounds of Strawberry Hill. Apart from his own works, he printed 'Elegy in a Country Churchyard' by his old friend Thomas Gray. Horace wrote the first Gothic novel 'The Castle of Otranto' which he originally published anonymously in 1764 as he was afraid of ridicule. The novel was so popular that Horace revealed that he was the author when the second edition was published. He also wrote a play 'The Mysterious Mother' which featured the dubious subject of double incest. This was never performed in his lifetime but apparently, Lord Byron was a big fan. Over 16 years, from 1762 onwards, he published four volumes of 'Illustrated Anecdotes of Painting in England' using the notebooks of George Vertue.

At Strawberry Hill he entertained many of his friends and neighbours including Henrietta Howard Countess of Suffolk from nearby Marble Hill House. All the while he was an inveterate letter writer; his letters have been published by Yale University Press in 48 volumes. He had many female friends, some of whom looked after him in his later years. He died in 1797 at the age of 79. Strawberry Hill and its contents were later sold off by the Waldegrave family.

Horace Walpole lived an interesting and entertaining life. Strawberry Hill is a really fascinating place and well worth a visit. Keith gave us a brief glimpse into the life of a key figure of the 18th century.



Walpole purchased 'Chopped Straw Hall' in 1747 and set about transforming what was then a couple of cottages into his vision of a 'little Gothic castle'. Between 1747 and 1792, he doubled the size of the property, creating Gothic rooms and adding towers and battlements

HISTORY OF MOLESEY EXHIBITION

Refresh Centre, 129 Walton Road, East Molesey
Friday 25 & Saturday 26 March 2022

To celebrate our fifteenth anniversary, and as part of Love Molesey, we held an exhibition to display much of the material that we have obtained and prepared during our research over the years, covering topics including the Floods, Molesey during the Second World War, the Carnival, Sport on the Hurst, Hampton Court Bridge, Molesey Then and Now, Molesey Boat Club, Education, the Flood Alleviation Scheme and Molesey's Enclosure Story, bringing it up to date with a display all about Molesey during the Pandemic.



A steady stream of members and non-members called in, some staying a few minutes, others staying more than an hour, to browse through the mass of information that was on display.

We gained some new members and received some interesting information, photographs and maps. Such was the success of the exhibition that we hope to remount it in a few years' time.

Talk by Anita Anand

SOPHIA: PRINCESS, SUFFRAGETTE, REVOLUTIONARY

St Paul's Church, Church Road, East Molesey
Tuesday 10 May 2022
Report by Paula Day

Our planned venue of the Clore Centre at Hampton Court Palace had to be cancelled at the last minute as they had some large-scale filming taking place that week (possibly another series of *Bridgerton*?) and as a charity, the Palace was simply not in a position to turn down this sort of opportunity. Luckily, St Paul's Church was available, and over 80 members and guests came to listen to a fascinating talk by Anita Anand, a British radio and television presenter, journalist and author. She has worked on numerous programmes including "Newsnight", "Daily Politics" and "Midweek", and has been host of "Any Answers" on Radio 4 since 2012.



Anita is a brilliant speaker, and really brought Princess Sophia to life - Sophia Duleep Singh - daughter of a maharaja, goddaughter of Queen Victoria, champion dog breeder, keen cyclist, resident of Hampton Court, and prominent campaigner for women's rights.



Princess Sophia c 1900, in her mid-twenties. She is shown here wearing traditional Indian dress although she preferred Western clothes

When Anita first heard of Princess Sophia, she wanted to know more, but couldn't find any books about her. So, she put on her journalist's hat and began her own research, which culminated in the publication of a book, which was available to members at a reduced price after the talk.

Sophia's grandfather, Ranjit, was the maharaja of the Sikh empire of the Punjab, one of the most powerful empires of India. The British had always had their eye on the Punjab, and when Ranjit died and his young son, Duleep - Sophia's father - was propelled to the throne, they entered the kingdom, separated the little boy from his mother and forced him to sign everything over.

Duleep was raised by a Scottish doctor and his wife and learned to speak and act like an Englishman - reading Shakespeare, playing cricket. He also cut his hair and converted to Christianity. Queen Victoria heard how beautiful Duleep was, and when he was brought to England she formed a great bond with him, and he looked on her as a mother figure.

He married a beautiful young girl in Cairo called Bamba, the illegitimate daughter of a German merchant and an Abyssinian slave. Duleep returned to England with a wife who spoke no English, and although she was welcomed, she led a lonely and unhappy life.

The couple had five children who reached adulthood, two boys and three girls, the youngest of whom, born in August 1876, was Sophia, who became a goddaughter to Queen Victoria. The family lived at Elveden Hall in Suffolk, where John Nash recreated the inside of an India palace.

Duleep Singh purchased the Elveden Estate in 1863 and rebuilt the house in an Italian style, with the interior resembling a Mughal palace





Sophia selling copies of The Suffragette outside Hampton Court in 1913. King George V asked what could be done to stop her

the women being seriously injured. The incident became known as Black Friday, 18 November 1910.

Many suffragettes boycotted the 1911 Census. Sophie wrote on her blank form: "No vote, no census. As women do not count, they refuse to be counted and I have a conscientious objection to filling up this form."

At the outbreak of war, she started raising money for the troops, and became a nurse. She tended wounded Indian soldiers who had been evacuated from the Western Front. Sikh soldiers could hardly believe "that the granddaughter of Ranjit Singh sat by their bedsides in a nurse's uniform". After the war and the enactment of the Representation of the People Act 1918 allowing women over the age of 30 to vote, she felt she rather lost her purpose, but she continued to be an active campaigner.

At the start of the Second World War, her housekeeper had recently given birth to a daughter, whom Sophia adored, and to keep them safe, they all moved to the countryside, where she took in three evacuees. Sophia died at home in 1948, at the age of 72, and although a life-long Christian, asked that her ashes be scattered in India.

Anita ended her enthralling talk by reiterating Princess Sophia's plea that we should all make full use of our right to vote, which she had fought so hard to gain.

Duleep was spending way beyond his means, and when Sophia was seven years old, he abandoned the family and tried to return to India. However, he was arrested and never made it to his homeland again. Queen Victoria allowed the family to live in Claridges, and at the age of 18 Sophia made her debut in Society at Buckingham Palace.

Sophia and her sisters were given a grace and favour apartment at Hampton Court Palace, in Faraday House. Although her sisters hated the British, Sophia enjoyed life here. But when she visited India, saw the poverty there, and met independence activists, she returned to England determined to do something useful and effect real change.

She joined the suffragette movement and became a key member. Following the dismissal by Parliament of an act to give women voting rights, suffragettes marched on the House of Commons. Police had been told that no arrests should be made, and this resulted in five and a half hours of police brutality - many of



Sophia volunteered as a British Red Cross Voluntary Aid Detachment nurse, serving at an auxiliary military hospital in Isleworth from October 1915 to January 1917

MOLESEY MEMORIES

MOLESEY'S REAL-LIFE BIGGLES

The Story of 2nd Lt. Charles A.R Shum

By Claire Annable

Second Lieutenant Charles Arthur Robert Shum was born in London in 1887. He achieved his aviator's certificate in 1917. On 11 March 1917, while flying a FE2b at 14,000 feet, over the Western Front with the Royal Flying Corps, his aeroplane was attacked by three German

fighters. A bullet pierced his petrol tank and the aeroplane was set on fire.

Charles climbed on to the extreme end of one of the aeroplane's wings and by working a part of the apparatus made a safe landing behind German lines.

He had burned his hands but was able to cut the strap and release his observer who received slight concussion but recovered in 12 hours.

The same evening, Charles was invited to dinner by a high-ranking German officer in front of whose headquarters he had landed his aeroplane. The German officer congratulated him on his clever handling of the aeroplane and marvellous escape. Charles was



Lieutenant Sham, with wife and two children, after he returned from the German prison camp

permitted to write letters to his wife, Hilda, and their two daughters, and also to his commanding officer informing them of his safety.

Charles was interned as a prisoner of war for 21 months and finally arrived back in Molesey in 1918 to be greeted at Hampton Court railway station by the men of East Molesey fire brigade, of which he had been made captain in 1914.

They escorted him back to his house, Roydsmoor, 6 Arnison Road, East Molesey.

The family emigrated to Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe, where Charles died in 1967 at the age of 80.



A FE2b bi-plane similar to the one piloted by Charles in 1917 when he was attacked by three German fighters

THE ROYAL SCHOOL OF NEEDLEWORK & THE EMBROIDERERS' GUILD

By Jenny Wood

THE ROYAL SCHOOL OF NEEDLEWORK

The Royal School of Needlework was founded in 1872 as the School of Art Needlework by Lady Victoria Welby. Its founding principles were twofold, firstly it wanted to revive a beautiful art which had fallen into disuse and secondly, through its revival, it hoped to provide employment for educated women who, without a suitable livelihood, would otherwise find themselves compelled to live in poverty. The first President of the School was Princess Helena, Queen Victoria's third daughter. In 1875, it was granted royal patronage and became the Royal School of Art Needlework. Its name changed to the Royal School of Needlework in 1922.

The School began operating in the 1870s in a small room above a bonnet shop in Sloane Street, London, employing 20 ladies. In 1903, after major fundraising efforts, it moved into a purpose-built centre on Exhibition Road close to the V & A Museum, where, at its peak, it employed around 150 workers. The School has been based at Hampton Court Palace since 1987 and now teaches over 1,500 students each year. Over the years, the School has been involved in many illustrious projects, e.g. in the early 20th century it made the coronation robes of Edward VII and Queen Alexandra and the coronation regalia for George V, in 1953 it made the Robe of State for Elizabeth II, between 1969 and 1974 it created the Overlord Embroidery (34 panels depicting the events of D Day) and in 2011 it worked for Sarah Burton of Alexander McQueen on the Duchess of Cambridge's wedding dress.

To mark its 150th anniversary, an exhibition '150 Years of the Royal School of Needlework: Crown to Catwalk' is open at the Fashion and Textile Museum in London. For further details, please see www.royal-needlework.org.uk



*Edward VII and Queen Alexandra
in their coronation robes*

THE EMBROIDERERS' GUILD

The Embroiderers' Guild is an educational charity dedicated to educating people of all ages about the world of embroidery. It was founded under the name 'The Society of Certificated Embroideresses of the Royal School of Art Needlework' in 1906 by sixteen former students of the Royal School of Art Needlework. The purpose of the Society was to 'deal entirely with Embroidery, and with the first object of keeping up a high standard of work and design.'

Over the years, the collection of the Guild has been stored in various locations, including for many years Hampton Court Palace. The collection is now based at the Bucks County Museum in Aylesbury.

WORKING FOR THE EMBROIDERERS' GUILD AT HAMPTON COURT PALACE, 1980/81

By Rosemary Searle (née Chandler)

The Embroiderers' Guild moved from London to Hampton Court Palace in 1980. I answered an advert in the Surrey Comet in November 1980 for a person able to set up a new library-type system (manual, as we were pre computer databases in those days) and attended an interview at the Palace. The interview was held upstairs in Apartment No. 37 in Lord Chamberlain's Court, with the well-known embroiderer, Diana Springall, Chairman of the Guild, who I remember lived and had her studio in a converted oast house in Kent and Ann Joyce, the acting Guild Secretary, who lived in Tonbridge, until she later moved to East Molesey.

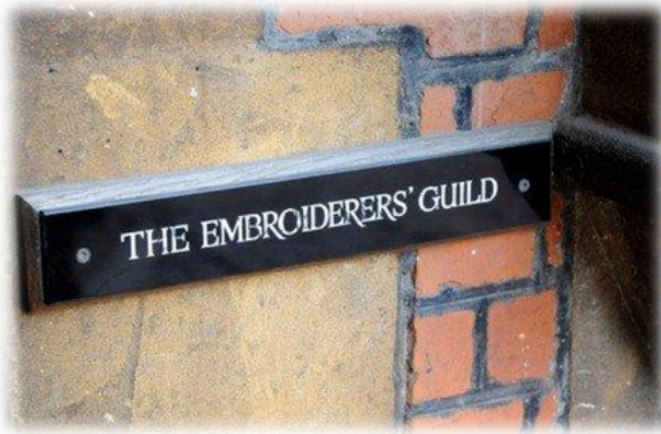
I had previously worked on the admin. staff at Trinity College of Music in Mandeville Place, London W1, but had found three hours of commuting each day too onerous and my health had suffered. As I lived in East Molesey, I thought it would be an easy ten-minute cycle ride over the bridge to and from Hampton Court Palace. However, having been given the job, I started work in early December 1980, during a very cold winter spell which lasted for about two months, thick snow making cycling to and from the Palace impossible and I had to trudge there wearing wellington boots!



Diana Springall who interviewed Rosemary is a well-known British textile artists. Her work is found in many collections, including the Embroiderers' Guild

Apartment No. 37, which had originally been a Grace and Favour Apartment inhabited by Mrs Rosalind Kennedy, Ludovic Kennedy's mother, was our temporary Apartment whilst we waited for restoration work to be completed across the courtyard in Apartment 41A. Access for staff to Lord Chamberlain's Court was via Tennis Court Lane and through a green door on the right. Conditions in Apartment 37 were very primitive and extremely cold that winter. We had only 5-amp electric points and had to restrict usage to a one-bar electric fire in the main office which was switched off when we wanted to boil a kettle to make coffee or tea! The wearing of several layers of woollens, plus gloves, was essential during those first few months! No Health and Safety in those days but we felt privileged to work in such an historic setting with the added excitement of a better future in our permanent Apartment.

My official title was Portfolio Secretary, and my responsibilities were to keep the portfolios of historic samples, plus accompanying packs of colour slides and educational leaflets in good order and to arrange for the distribution of the same to branches around the UK upon request. Avoiding date clashes and allowing for postage times involved some complicated logistics to ensure that nobody was disappointed!



When Apartment 41A was at last ready for habitation, we moved across the courtyard in readiness for the official opening in March 1981 by Princess Alice, Duchess of Gloucester (1901 – 2004). It was an elaborate affair involving local dignitaries and much refreshment!

In the new Apartment we were at last able to bring items of the collection out of storage and to set up a museum

upstairs under the control of a full-time Curator by the name of Rosemary Ewles. Apartment 41A was beautifully furnished with an extensive classroom, also upstairs and overlooking the moat. My office was in a small area downstairs, but rather than a window I had a glazed door for natural light. It is the small door with a wooden balcony in the left-hand far corner of the moat when viewed from the main entrance to the Palace. In hot weather I used to open the door to enjoy both the river breezes and also the view of visitors to the Palace crossing the 'drawbridge' whilst eating my lunch!

I married and left the Guild in December 1981, after just one year, as I went into business with my husband, John Searle. When I left, Diana, Ann and the Staff took me to the Mitre Hotel for a farewell lunch and the presentation of a parting gift of a delightful hand-embroidered jewellery box.

Happy memories of an important time in the history of the Embroiderers' Guild and in my own life.

WELSH GUARDS' SPORTS DAY IMBER COURT, 30 JUNE 1944

By Eve Standing (née Keyse)

This is my account of the tragedy that happened at Imber Court, East Molesey on 30 June 1944.

I was just a child of 11 years. I was attending the sports day of the Welsh Guards who were stationed at nearby Sandown Park racecourse. My father, Frank Keyse, was a Welsh Guards driving instructor. I was at the sports day with my mum and dad. It was a bright sunny day, and everything was running smoothly, the band was playing and there was food laid on tables. We made our way to the stand, thinking that would be the best place to see everything.

It was not long before the air raid sirens sounded but nobody took any notice as we were so used to them going every day, and the band played on. Very shortly, we heard the

dreaded hum of the Flying Bomb (Doodlebug), everyone started to run for cover as the engine of the bomb cut out. My dad appeared and pushed Mum and I onto the floor of the stand for protection, but the band played on.

Then there was an almighty blast and then complete silence for about 30 seconds, followed by screams and shouting for help. My dad helped Mum and me up, we were very shaken as you can imagine. We noticed that Mum's face was covered in blood, her glasses had broken and cut her face quite badly, but when we saw the devastation around it was nothing short of a battlefield.

There were bodies lying everywhere and soldiers with limbs missing and blood everywhere. The band was not playing any more. The bomb had landed very close to them and most of the bandsmen had been killed or badly injured. One thing that has remained in my memory is seeing an arm hanging in a tree.

It was not long before the American soldiers that were stationed in Bushy Park arrived and set about helping the wounded. They asked my mum if she needed help, but she declined the offer and said that there were far worse injuries than hers.

My dad's aim was to get Mum and me away. We were lodging at Weston Green, so we said that we would walk home. Dad stayed behind to do anything that he could - he had lost many colleagues.



There is a Remembrance Plaque to those who lost their lives on that terrible day in the grounds of Imber Court, and a service of remembrance is held each year in the grounds on the last Sunday in June

THE MOLESEY REVIEW - 60 YEARS AGO MARCH - MAY 1962

The March and April Reviews both referred to a Government proposal to include Molesey in a greater London Borough of 252,000 people comprising Kingston, Malden and Coombe, Surbiton, Esher, Walton and Weybridge. The local M.P. Sir William Robson Brown voted in favour of this proposal, but he did extract a promise from the Government that, where an area put forward a case to be excluded from the Greater London Plan, a decision based on the wishes of the people of that area would be taken. The Plan was opposed by Esher U.D.C. who wanted the Esher Council area to combine with Walton and Weybridge to become a borough of 106,000. The Molesey Society sent out 2,000 cards to local residents seeking their views. 87% of the 300 replies received by the Society supported the Council's view. At the time of the **May Review** a decision was still awaited.

The Molesey Chamber of Commerce held its Annual Dinner-Dance at The Casino, Tagg's Island. The **April Review** described The Casino "as a wonderful place albeit in need of decoration and repairs in an ideal situation and with first class facilities for such occasions - but Oh, the Food **and the service** !! ..." They referred to sloppy cooking and bad service. They also mentioned rumours that 'The Casino' was to make way for a block of flats.

ELMBRIDGE MUSEUM

'Nothing About Us Without Us'

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, Elmbridge Museum collaborated with 'It's Not Your Birthday But...' to work with those who were, at times, extremely isolated. The Museum gathered their thoughts in the form of oral histories, and also had their portraits painted by a professional artist. The portraits and oral histories can be explored in the display at the Civic Centre, or in the Museum's online exhibition.

<https://elmbridgemuseum.org.uk/online-exhibitions/nothing-about-us-without-us/>

Jubilee events

The Museum is running Jubilee events at a number of Centres for the Community over the coming weeks. Each event will include a reminiscence session and jubilee craft activity. The nearest session to Molesey will take place on 31 May at Thames Ditton Centre. From 8 June onwards there will be a Royal Jubilee exhibition at Xcel Leisure Centre, Walton.

Molesey Local History Society
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