

### Membership

Thank you to those of you who renewed your membership at our AGM on 1st February. May we remind you that your membership will lapse if you haven't renewed your subscription by 31st March and you will no longer receive newsletters and information from the Society.

We hope that you will find something of interest in our programme and newsletters and will decide to renew your subscription and to come to our meetings.

Thursday 9 March 2017, 8 pm  
**Kenneth Wood, Molesey Architect**  
**'A Modernist in Suburbia'**  
**Talk by Dr Fiona Fisher**  
*Hurst Park School, Hurst Road, KT8 1QS*

Kenneth Wood trained at the Polytechnic School of Architecture in Regent Street and worked for Eric Lyons before establishing his architectural and design practice at East Molesey in 1955. His work was published and exhibited in Britain and internationally in the 1950s and 1960s and was critically well-received at that time. Projects from that period include street improvement schemes, church halls and church extensions around Kingston upon Thames and in North London, a village centre at Oxshott, a youth club and a school at Kingston, and a new district headquarters for the Forestry Commission at Santon Downham in Suffolk. Wood's firm became best known for the design of private houses in the modern style, most of which were completed in Surrey.

Dr Fiona Fisher is curator of Kingston University's Dorich House Museum, the former studio home of the sculptor Dora Gordine and her husband, the Hon. Richard Hare, a scholar of Russian art and literature. She is a researcher in design history in the Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture, where she supports the research and activities of the Modern Interiors Research Centre. Her book 'Designing the British Post-War Home: Kenneth Wood, 1948-1968', explores the development of modern domestic architecture in Britain through a detailed study of the work of the successful Surrey-based architectural practice of Kenneth Wood. Dr Fisher's talk will give an overview of Wood's career, focusing on his work in and around Surrey.

Wednesday 26 April 2017, 8 pm  
**'Painshill, The Restoration Story'**  
**Talk by Cherrill Sands**  
*St Lawrence School, Church Road, KT8 9DR*

In 1981 Painshill Park Trust was set up to restore a beautiful yet forgotten 18th century landscape which was originally created by the Hon. Charles Hamilton between 1738 and 1773. The landscape garden was completely overgrown and derelict – however, after years of hard work and determination, Painshill has now been restored. The crystal Grotto is once again a sparkling centrepiece within the landscape garden. The last great project, the rebuild of the Temple of Bacchus has just begun, to be finished in July 2017.

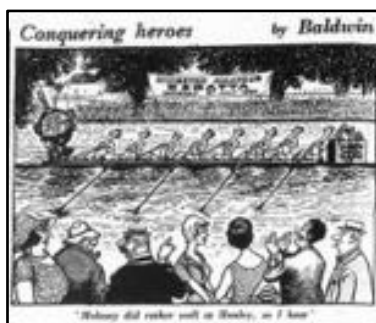
Garden and landscape historian, Cherrill Sands, will be giving us a talk on the restoration by the Painshill Park Trust and this will be followed by a guided tour of the gardens in July, which will be this year's MLHS Summer Stroll.

Tuesday 6 June 2017, 8 pm, doors open 7.30 pm  
**'Anne Boleyn: A King's Obsession'**  
**Talk by Alison Weir**  
*Clore Centre, Hampton Court Palace, KT8 9AU*

We are delighted that Hampton Court Palace has agreed to allow us to hold a meeting at the Clore Centre again. We anticipate high demand for this talk by Alison Weir and you will find a booking form at the end of the newsletter. Booking will initially be open to members only and you will find details of how to book at the end of this newsletter. Alison will be talking about her new novel 'Anne Boleyn: A King's Obsession', which is due for publication on 18 May and will be on sale to members at the meeting.

## Meeting Reports

Wednesday 9 November 2016  
**150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Molesey Boat Club**  
*Report by Lynda McCarter*



2016 marked the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Molesey Boat Club. To celebrate this, the Society had worked with Boat Club members to compile displays and talks on the history and achievements of Molesey rowers and our November meeting was held at the Boat Club. Upon entering there was a large display of interesting information and photographs for members to enjoy. Articles and anecdotes had been gleaned mainly from newspapers and the Minute Book of the Boat Club, and from speaking to members. The bar, where the meeting was held, also has a wealth of photographs and mementoes covering the walls.

Our evening began with Roger Haile providing a potted history of rowing from ancient boats, such as triremes, to the present day. Initially, rowing was used just to get from A to B and was a hard and tiring job. The first 'races' started as competitions between these professional watermen. The only one of these to survive is the Doggett's Coat and Badge race, established in 1715/16, and contested annually between London Bridge and Chelsea.

Rowing as a sport was introduced at Oxford University in the 1770s. This led to the formation of local boat clubs and the holding of regattas. The first Olympic rowing events were held in 1900, for amateurs only of course. Events were for men only and women were unable to compete in the Olympics until 1976.

Phil Bourignon, head coach at Molesey Boat Club, gave us a more technical talk with examples of how rowing has changed since the early days. Major improvements were the keelless boat, the swivel oarlock, the fitting of an outrigger and the sliding seat, although ancient Greeks would sit on sheepskins to give them some movement. As the boats became larger and narrower, a different type of athlete was needed, as the power was now provided more by the legs. With improvements, times became faster and faster.

This led into the talk by Martin Cross, an Olympic rower. Martin won bronze at the Munich Olympics and a gold medal in Los Angeles (alongside Steve Redgrave). He had brought his medals along, which was very special. It was interesting to hear how hard it was to compete against some of the other crews who were 'chemically enhanced'. All the more credit for beating them! Molesey has had quite a few other Olympians, including gold medal winners from Rio 2016.

A long-standing member of Molesey Boat Club, John van Ingen, then gave us a talk on the history of the Club itself, from the first club house on Ash Island to the well-equipped building today. He introduced us to many notable characters who had contributed to the success and reputation of the Club. These included William Payne, the first President, C.W. Kent, Captain and President, the Milner family and the Underwood family.

Another character was George Booker, who was a cox and later a coach. He regularly swam across the river on his horse 'Tony' from his home on Ash Island. A painting hanging over the main doors shows the spectacle. A guest at the evening was 'Dickie' Knight, who has been a member since 1949 and has represented Great Britain many times, including at the Rome Olympics in 1960.

The evening was well attended and was a great success. We all left knowing significantly more about rowing and our local Club than we had before.

Wednesday 1 February 2017

### **AGM**

### **The Power of Beauty in Restoration England: The Windsor Beauties**

**Talk by Laurence Shafe**

*St Lawrence School, Church Road, KT8 9DR*

*Report by Dave Jupp*

The Society's 10<sup>th</sup> AGM was held at St Lawrence School on Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> February, when over 90 members attended to hear about the Society's activities and achievements over the last year, to approve the accounts, and to elect a committee for the forthcoming year – in fact all the officers and committee had agreed to re-stand but, as ever, volunteers to help with various projects are always welcome. The 2017 programme had been circulated, and there were also ideas for topics in 2018, but further suggestions are also welcomed.

If any members were unable to attend the AGM but would like to see a copy of the 2016 AGM minutes, a draft copy of the 2017 AGM minutes and the statement of accounts, please do get in touch. Following the business part of the evening, Laurence Shafe gave a most interesting talk and presentation about the Windsor Beauties and their role within society.

Starting at the time of Charles II, around 1660, Laurence explained how ballads were used as a medium to poke fun at society in general. He showed two cartoon examples - 'Rock the Cradle, Joan' and 'Rock the Cradle, John' - Joan having to look after her husband's child by another woman and John doing vice versa having been 'cuckolded'.

This gave an illustration of society in general and of what was deemed 'acceptable'. The new freedoms introduced by the Reformation Court spread through society.

At this time 10% of businesses were owned by women, passed on to them by their husbands. The first daily newspaper was run by a woman. Margaret Cavendish was the first female scientist, known as 'Mad Madge'. Mary Beale was a professional artist in the style of Peter Lely and had a shop in Pall Mall. However, it was a male-dominated society and so these heroic women had to fight against established norms and laws.

Mistresses were public knowledge and accepted in society, a French idea introduced by Charles, with Charles known to have had between nine and eleven. Beautiful women who could attract the eye of the king to become his mistress also influenced appointments at Court and political debate. Laurence showed portraits of Nell Gwyn, Barbara Villiers and Louise de K rouaille, as three examples. The offspring from these relationships, of which there were many, were acknowledged as being children of Charles, by the giving of titles. The talk was concluded with the works of Sir Peter Lely, **The Windsor Beauties**, commissioned by the Duchess of York, that can now be seen at Hampton Court Palace, and he provided interesting nicknames:

*Hidden; Poisoner; Poisoned; Curse of the Nation; La Belle Hamilton; Joker; Trophy; Villainous, Smelly, Quiet.*



The illustration is of Henrietta Boyle, Countess of Rochester, the alleged 'Poisoner'. The diarist John Aubrey (1626-1697) wrote that Lady Denham 'was poisoned by the hands of the Countess of Rochester'. It was rumoured that Lady Denham had been murdered with a poisoned cup of cocoa, the motive being jealousy – a case of "death by chocolate". The poet Andrew Marvell wrote couplets on the supposed murder in his poem "Last Instructions to a Painter", written in September 1667: "What frosts to fruit, what arsenic to the rat, What to fair Denham, mortal chocolate."

### Magical Molesey

Tudor & Co once again allowed us to invade their offices in Walton Road for Magical Molesey. There, we showed a film, pictures and displays about the history of Molesey Boat Club, which celebrated its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2016. Both members and non-members called in to look at the displays, had a chance to sit down for a while, and enjoy the mulled wine and chocolates kindly provided by Tudor & Co. Our thanks to them for their hospitality.

### People and Buildings Group need you!

Members of the People and Buildings Group are looking into a range of topics at the moment and would welcome any help you can give us:

- Do you remember when Molesey had a 'Molesey Parent Teachers Association' in the mid-1950s?
- Do you know anything about the Molesey branch of 'The United States and Canadian War Brides Parents Association'?
- How did the embroidery hanging in the caf  at the Henrietta Parker Centre come to be made?
- Were you involved in the item that Danny Baker made for Six o'clock Live about East and West Molesey?
- Do you or any of your family have any memorabilia or memories to share about going to school in Molesey that would help us prepare for the exhibition we are planning in November?

If you can tell us anything about any of these topics, please contact Anthony Barnes at:

[people-buildings@moleseyhistorysociety.org](mailto:people-buildings@moleseyhistorysociety.org)

## MERTON PRIORY

by Jenny Wood

From about 1130 to 1538, the manor of Molesey Prior, belonged to Merton Priory, which was one of the most influential and prestigious of all the houses of Augustinian canons.

This year marks the 900<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first service held by the canons of Merton Priory in their new building on the River Wandle on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1117. The Priory had been established in 1114 by Gilbert the Norman, the Sheriff of Surrey, who had been given the manor of Merton by King Henry I; in May 1117 it moved to a new 60 acre site 'more suited to the quiet of religion and in many respects more convenient'. During the 12<sup>th</sup> century the Priory expanded; the number of canons increased, substantial building work took place and various 'daughter' priories, including Holyrood Abbey in Edinburgh, were established. The Priory quickly became an important centre of learning. Thomas Becket, who later became Lord Chancellor and Archbishop of Canterbury, was educated there around 1130 and, during the 1220s, Walter de Basings, later Walter de Merton, was sent to be educated at the Priory. Walter later became Lord Chancellor and Bishop of Rochester and he founded Merton College, Oxford, in 1264. Some scholars suggest that Nicholas Breakspear, the only English Pope (Pope Adrian IV), was also educated at the Priory about 1125.

During the early part of the 13<sup>th</sup> century Merton Priory, like many other monasteries throughout Britain, saw a period of great expansion. Rebuilding work at the Priory may have begun as a result of necessity after a storm in December 1222 blew down the tower of the 12<sup>th</sup> century church but it continued for many years and was still in progress in the 1250s.

Henry III, who was King of England from 1216 to 1272, enjoyed a close personal relationship with Merton. He is reputed to have stayed there 54 times, sometimes only for a couple of days but more often for a week or two, and he had his own apartment there (*A. Heales' The Records of Merton Priory, published in 1898*). During his reign, in January 1236, the Statutes of Merton, which formed the basis of common law in England for many centuries, were signed at Merton. The Statutes remained, in part, on the statute book of Parliament for over 700 years.

Merton Priory was closed on 16<sup>th</sup> April 1538 during the dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII. Many of the monastic buildings were demolished and the stones were used to construct Nonsuch Palace. Eventually, during the late 17<sup>th</sup> century the site began to develop into an important manufacturing centre. During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, it was adapted for a range of water-based and water-powered industries, which were predominantly associated with fabric printing, and which were later associated with significant designers and manufacturers such as Edmund Littler, William Morris, founder of the Arts and Crafts Movement, and Liberty & Co who continued to operate on the site into the 1970s.



About 1130, Engelram d'Abernon, a member of the d'Abernon family from Abernon in Normandy, gave lands which he owned in Molesey to Merton Priory. The Priory continued to own these lands for the next 400 years and they became known as the 'Manor of Molesey Prior or Molesey Priory'. Following the dissolution of the monasteries the manor fell into the hands of the Crown.

The illustration shows a 12<sup>th</sup> century arch found during the demolition of 'Abbey House' in 1914.

In 1921-2 Colonel Bidder, a local antiquarian, began excavating the foundations of the Priory. His excavations revealed the exact location and basic ground plan of the church and chapter house. During the second half of the twentieth century and the early years of this century, extensive excavations were carried out on the site and the foundations of much of the site were recorded. The foundations of the Chapter House have been preserved and are housed in a specially constructed enclosure underneath the raised section of Merantun Way in the London Borough of Merton between Sainsbury's / M&S and Merton Abbey Mills craft market. The first service after 1538 was held in the ruins of the Chapter House on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1998 and a service has been held annually since then. This year, the service will be held on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> May.

The Chapter House is currently closed for improvements and will not be open to the public until the autumn.

I am very grateful to the Friends of Merton Priory for their help and support in the preparation of this article. For further information, please email [friendsofmertpri@aol.com](mailto:friendsofmertpri@aol.com) or see <http://www.mertonpriory.org/> and <https://youtu.be/RoSbvZJuKjI> (a short film focusing on the proposed improvements due to take place to enhance the visibility and accessibility of the premises).

## **60 YEARS AGO**

### **THE MOLESEY REVIEW October 1956 – February 1957**

All the Reviews, except the December Review, contained articles by James Williams on 'A History of Education in East & West Molesey'. These articles will be used in the research for our November meeting, 'Educating Molesey'.

#### **St Agnes Home for Children Weston Green**

The Home was situated at "Newlands", Weston Green Road, Weston Green. In 1919, the Home of Compassion in Thames Ditton had been asked to care for a young mother and her child. They subsequently received other applications and three rooms were set aside for use as nurseries in the Home. In 1934, a house in Church Walk, Thames Ditton, was bought for use as a children's home and soon there were 20 children living there. When Newlands became vacant it was decided to use this for the children's home. However, before it could be occupied the Second World War broke out and Newlands was requisitioned. The children were evacuated to Torquay for the duration of the war. Newlands finally became St Agnes Home for Children in 1948. The director of the home was the Mother Superior. There were some orphans at the home but it was mainly for the children of broken marriages. In December 1956, there were 22 children in the Home, ranging in age from 6 months to 14 years. There was no state grant for the running of the home and St Agnes relied solely on voluntary contributions. The Review of December 1956 appealed for sweets, toys and clothing for the children, for a television set and for unwanted furniture for the dormitories.

#### **October Review**

- 'Around The Town' complained that buildings per acre in Wolsey Road had increased a lot since the war and that another large garden was up for sale and development.
- 'Around The Town' also commented, "This is the ruddy limit! British Railways have installed loudspeakers on Hampton Court Station. This is an absolute waste of money and I challenge those responsible to give one good reason why loudspeakers are necessary on a platform where the trains depart for only one destination."
- One case of acute encephalitis, one of acute poliomyelitis and four of pulmonary tuberculosis were notified in Molesey during July and August.

#### **November Review**

- The first Premium Bonds were to be sold in November and Ernie (electronic random number indicator equipment) was due to make the first draw for prizes ranging from £25 to £1,000 in June 1957.
- Esher Council had started the clearance of the prefabs in Tonbridge and Dunstable Roads, West Molesey, which were erected in 1947. Two families had already moved into new houses in Priory Lane.
- 21 detached houses were to be erected on 'Biggs land' in Molesey Park Road. The houses would be built to form a cul-de-sac with the opening at the Molesey Park Road end. A specimen house had already been erected and had attracted many visitors. The houses would all be three-bedroomed and would cost about £3,500.
- The 3<sup>rd</sup> Molesey Scout Group had erected its own headquarters, "The Hut", in St Peter's Road, West Molesey "after three years of toil". The brickwork was erected by a contractor, but the footings, drains, kitchen, toilets, roofing and tiling were done by the scouts and their parents. Mr Patching had installed the electrical equipment free of charge. The scouts still needed to raise £300 to pay for flooring and numerous fittings. The scouts had planned various fund raising events, including the collection of ten tons of waste paper.
- Shops were being built in Walton Road near Woolworths (now Poundland). The shops were to be let not sold but the shopkeepers would have to install their own fittings.

#### **December Review**

- Esher Council had applied to the local planning authority and the Ministry of Housing and Local Government for approval of their plans to erect flats, maisonettes, a branch library and a welfare clinic on the Forum Estate off Walton Road.
- W. J. Hallt Ltd was building two semi-detached houses on the corner of Seymour Road and Walton Road. The houses were due for completion in March 1957.
- At the 30<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Molesey (St Paul's) Scout Group on 31<sup>st</sup> October 1956, Mr S. T. Nevard retired as Group Scoutmaster. He had been G.S.M. since the Group was formed in 1926.

## January Review

- The Council was advertising for tenders for the widening of the carriageway of Walton Road between Spencer and Park Roads to a width of 24 feet. The estimated cost was £1,226.
- The December meeting of Esher Council agreed that part of the Ray Road allotment site should be developed. It was hoped to erect 15 dwellings.
- Three members of the Brownie pack attached to St Paul's Church and 21 girls from the children's home at Esher House, Palace Road, had decided to provide money to replace a crucifix which had been stolen from St Paul's Church.
- John Aldous, a well-known local figure, died in December. He opened a butcher's shop in Walton Road in 1900, was a member of the old Molesey Council and a great supporter of Molesey Football Club. His younger son, Mr Jack Aldous, was managing the butcher's business.
- In his book, "Cricket Crossfire", the Australian Test cricketer, Keith Miller, complained about the Australians visit to Molesey in April 1953. "Frankly, the team were not happy about this extra match. If we had to have a pipe-opener, why, we asked one another, should this little isolated club be picked out for the distinction of playing a full Australian eleven when there were others with longer, more distinguished histories?"

## February Review

- In the first three months since its introduction in August 1956 a lottery in aid of Molesey Football Club's ground fund had donated £619 to the fund.
- Because of petrol rationing, plans for a carnival procession in 1957 had been abandoned.
- There was an article about J. M. Hargreave & Co. Ltd of Central Avenue, a company which produced aircraft instruments. The company had introduced new methods and installed modern machine tools to enable precision components for the aircraft, instrument and allied industries to be machined economically.
- The old cottages in Bridge Gardens were being demolished and were to be replaced by six new two-bedroomed flats, which were likely to cost in the region of £2,000 to £2,300. The builders were F. Hartfree Ltd of Malden.

Produced by: Molesey Local History Society  
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Tuesday 6 June 2017, 8 pm  
**'Anne Boleyn: A King's Obsession'**  
**Talk by Alison Weir**  
*Clare Centre, Hampton Court Palace, KT8 9AU*

Alison will be talking about her new novel 'Anne Boleyn: A King's Obsession', which is due for publication on 18 May and will be on sale to members at the meeting.

**IF YOU WISH TO ATTEND THIS MEETING ON 6 JUNE, PLEASE SEND THIS SLIP (OR A NOTE) WITH YOUR REQUIREMENTS BY TUESDAY 18 APRIL.**

**ALTERNATIVELY, EMAIL [historysociety@btinternet.com](mailto:historysociety@btinternet.com). THERE WILL BE A CHARGE OF £2 ON THE DOOR.**

**BOOKING IS FOR MLHS MEMBERS ONLY. IF SEATS ARE STILL AVAILABLE AFTER 18 APRIL, THE EVENT WILL BE OPEN TO GUESTS AND ADVERTISED TO NON-MEMBERS.**

You will not be notified, but you may assume you have a seat, unless you hear otherwise. After 18 April, the meeting will be open to guests and non-members (£5 charge on the door) if there are spare places.

**NAME.....**

**Please make a reservation for me/us at the Clare Centre meeting on Tuesday 6 June. Send to Membership Secretary, Molesey Local History Society, 17 Matham Road, East Molesey, Surrey KT8 0SX.**