

Subscription Renewals 2018

Membership subscriptions for 2018 are now due. As usual, you will have the opportunity to renew your membership at the AGM on Wednesday 7 February. We do hope that you will find something of interest in our programme and will continue to support the Society and the events and meetings that are planned for the year.

Forthcoming Meetings

Wednesday 7 February 2018, 8 pm

AGM

Molesey Then and Now – ‘A Journey of Discovery’

Talk by Jenny Wood

St Lawrence School, Church Road, KT8 9DR

We will keep the business of the AGM as brief as possible and it will be followed by a talk by our chairman, Jenny Wood, about the Society's first publication, 'Molesey Then and Now'. Jenny will tell the story of the book from conception to publication. It was a collaborative project, involving much hard work by many members of the Society and Jenny's illustrated talk will describe some of the unexpected pitfalls that were encountered along the way.

The carpark will be open and refreshments will be served.

Hardback copies of "Molesey Then and Now, costing £15 each are available from: Doreen Freeman, Tel: 020 8979 0059 or Norma Millard, Tel: 020 8398 0181 and will be available at our meetings..

Thursday 15 March 2018, 8 pm

Sopwith Aviation and the Great War

Talk by David Hassard

Hurst Park School, Hurst Road, KT8 1QS

David Hassard is the Joint Project Leader for Kingston Aviation Centenary Project. 2012 marked the centenary of Kingston upon Thames' first aircraft factory founded by aviation pioneer Tommy Sopwith. Many of Britain's most famous fighter aircraft started life on drawing boards and in factories at Kingston upon Thames, but the fact that no other town in the country has contributed so much to the UK's air forces has largely been overlooked. A group of former employees and aviation enthusiasts have been putting these achievements on the map, thanks to a £49,500 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

David's talk covers the story of Kingston's Sopwith Aviation Company and the other aircraft manufacturers in Surrey who together built nearly 9,000 aircraft for the First World War.

Meeting Reports

Tuesday 14 November 2017

Educating Molesey

Report by Lynda McCarter

Education came full circle in Molesey on 14 November. Our meeting on the history of education in Molesey was held in the brand-new St Lawrence School.

There was a wealth of information and artefacts on display. The St Lawrence School History Club had made a model of a Victorian schoolroom based on the old Park Road School, complete with a dunce's hat. Elmbridge Museum had also brought along some school-related items from their collection. Many members loaned or donated materials and two members created table displays with the personal memorabilia of their school days in Molesey. The wall display included a time-line of education in Molesey relating it to what was happening nationally. All the information members had researched about the various schools was presented in the form of scrapbooks so there was plenty for the 100 members and guests to look at.



A school handbell was rung to start the proceedings, introduced by the Headmistress (Jenny Wood, our chairman). Anthony Barnes gave an interesting and informative talk about the history of education in Molesey. This had all started with the setting up of a charity school for six poor boys in 1787 next to Radnor House. Both West Molesey and East Molesey had a dame school in the early nineteenth century. A church elementary school was opened in West Molesey in 1839; and both St Mary's and St Paul's created church schools situated in School Road and Park Road in 1860. There were at least four private schools in Matham Road at one time or another.

The state's role in education expanded with legislation enabling the setting up of school boards, which West Molesey chose to do in 1880. In 1902, Surrey County Council was given responsibility for education. The Council responded by building new schools in the Walton Road in 1913 (now the Joseph Palmer Centre) and The Orchard in 1915. It was not until 1936 that a Central School for secondary-age pupils opened in Ray Road. The pupils moved to Bishop Fox School in 1973 but this school closed in 1985. Since then, there has been no secondary provision in Molesey, but this could all be about to change with the news that a free school is to be built on the edge of our area in Walton on Thames. Anthony also highlighted some of the headteachers who left their mark, including Reginald Plymen, 'Jasper' Williams and the redoubtable Miss Snow.

We were very lucky to have four actors from the Barn Theatre to entertain us next. They performed a dialogue covering schools from the 1850s-1950s, talking about uniforms, punishment, school dinners, lessons and toilets! The information in the dialogue came from school log books and numerous interviews conducted by members. The usual refreshments were enhanced by a real school dinner favourite, butterscotch tart!

This was a very enjoyable evening and the audience appreciated all the hard work that had gone into making it such a success. I wonder if other members thought, like me, that reminiscing about school was more fun than actually going!

Wednesday 6/Thursday 7 December 2017
Magical Molesey & Bridge Road 'Winter Wander'

As in years before, Tudor & Co kindly hosted the Society for the Magical Molesey Christmas celebration. We were busy with people dropping in for a chat and to see a slide presentation and displays on the history of Molesey schools. We were also kindly invited by Refresh to have a table outside their premises to sell "Molesey Then and Now". It was great to see so many local residents passing by saying "I've got one already!" and congratulating the Society on the really interesting publication. On the following day, it was Bridge Road's turn to celebrate with their 'Winter Wander', complete with choir and reindeer. Dale's butchers gave us a table outside the shop to distribute books, where they were offering visitors a brilliant venison stew.

We are grateful to Tudor & Co, Refresh and Dale's for their ongoing support of the Society and, in particular, for helping us to distribute 'Molesey Then & Now'. Copies are available from Tudor & Co in Walton Road and Dale's in Bridge Road.

Flooding in Molesey – Information Please



Walton Road in 1928

This year we are researching the history of flooding in Molesey and would like to ask for your help. We have chosen flooding as our research topic this year as it is the 50th anniversary of the 1968 floods, but we shall be looking not only at the 1968 floods but also at other floods which have affected Molesey. We should be very grateful for any information which anyone has about flooding in Molesey. If you, or anyone you know has any personal recollections, we should love to speak to you; if you have any photos, newspaper cuttings etc, we should be grateful if you could please let us have scans of these or, if you would prefer, we would be happy to borrow the originals and scan them ourselves.

Please contact Jenny Wood: jenniferwood@btinternet.com 020 8979 0889.

The Night A Doodlebug hit Molesey

by Norma Millard

On 7th August 1944, Dorothy and Frederick Clark and their son Norman (my father) aged 16 had an evening meal with their niece, Doreen Clark, at their house, 54 Pemberton Road, East Molesey. Doreen lived in a flat in what used to be Molesey Hospital opposite the house. They asked if she would like to stop the night but she said no as she had told her parents that she would stay with them in Hurst Lane. What a good decision that turned out to be!



Dorothy did not want to go to the Anderson shelter so they all decided to sleep in the house that night. In the early hours of 8th August 1944, a doodlebug (V1 Flying Bomb) landed without warning in the back garden of 54 Pemberton Rd, totally demolishing the house and the Anderson shelter along with adjacent properties.

Many local people including ARP wardens, Police, Firemen and some USA army personnel who were stationed in Bushy Park came to help. After over eight hours of digging in the rubble, Norman and his father Fred were pulled out by Mr Stevens (who ran Rowe and Stevens in Walton Road) alive, with only cuts and bruises but, unfortunately, only the deceased body of Dorothy was recovered. *(This photograph of Dorothy was taken in the back garden weeks before the blast.)*

Norman, dressed only in his pyjamas, just ran away from the site and kept on running. After an hour or so, he was found and taken to Molesey Hospital, where he was treated for cuts and loss of hearing which fortunately did eventually come back. After he had been examined at the hospital, he was told that he could go home with his father. But they did not have a home to go to or a change of clothing. They were met at the hospital by Dorothy's mother and they went to stay with her in Avern Road for a short while. They had lost everything but eight days later Norman's cat was pulled out of the rubble - ALIVE - he certainly had nine lives.

Not only did Dorothy lose her life in this incident, but her neighbour, Dorothy Pratt, who had just come out of hospital, and a friend, Doris Baldwin, also died. They were in the Anderson shelter which took the direct hit.

Norman did not talk much about his ordeal until 1997, when he was asked by his grandchildren what had happened. We then understood why he did not go to sleep with the light off or that he slept with the curtains open so the street light could be seen. He also suffered with nightmares until the day he died in 2000.

In 1999, Norman and his wife Jean went on a Rhine cruise where they met, by chance, Mr Stevens' daughter, who told Norman that her father was still alive and living in Brighton. She then phoned her father from Germany to ask him what he remembered. Her father wanted to meet Norman. So, a few weeks later, Norman went to Brighton to see Mr Stevens, who told him everything about that awful day. Norman had been told that his mother was alive when they found her, but Mr Stevens assured Norman that she was not and that she had died from a broken neck. This meeting helped Norman to put everything into perspective and he was also pleased that his mother did not suffer.

60 YEARS AGO

THE MOLESEY REVIEW November 1957 – January 1958

November Review

- A 15 year old boy, who was mixing chemicals in the conservatory of his house in order to make fireworks, blew off his left hand when the "concoction he was mixing" exploded. The explosion also shattered nine panes of glass in the conservatory.
- "Old Timer" said that "the Post Office have paid a compliment to the youth of West Molesey. They have completely encased the telephone kiosk in Ray Road with strong wire mesh. This should prevent the local bright boys from smashing the glass windows in the kiosk which is repaired at the expense of the taxpayers."
- "Old Timer" complained about the carts used by local road sweepers, saying that they had presumably been kept for their historic value; "one used in West Molesey looks as though it was introduced by the Romans. It has an iron frame, solid tyres and carries two dustbins."
- "Old Timer" also complained that the telephone exchange was out of date; "it should be automatic and surely it's time we had one exchange for Molesey and another for Teddington and not one serving both districts as at present."
- A launderette opened on 11th November at 124 Walton Road, near Woolworths (now Poundland).
- Esher Council was considering the purchase of the Upper Deck Swimming Pool.

November and January Reviews

- “Old Timer” remembered “the old wooden fence with about half a century’s tar painted on it” which used to surround the Hurst Park Racecourse and mentioned the decay of the concrete fencing on the river side of the racecourse. He said that “several concrete panels have had to be replaced and others are cracked and crumbling.”
- Local residents objected to Esher Council about Hurst Park Racecourse Syndicate’s proposal to build a two-storey house, offices and a boardroom on land at the junction of Graburn Way and Hurst Road. These objections caused the Syndicate to withdraw their plans and to substitute a plan to erect the buildings on part of the members’ car park near the junction of Ferry Road and Hurst Road.
- Residents of Rosemary Avenue whose properties backed on to the cemetery at West Molesey petitioned Esher Council about the proposed extension of the cemetery, complaining that it was not properly screened. They said that the boundary wall behind their properties was damaged by enemy action during the Second World War and had not been rebuilt. Two other Rosemary Avenue residents subsequently protested against the erection of a screen wall. The Council therefore decided to circularise the owners of all houses in Rosemary Avenue which would be affected by the proposal to build a screen wall, seeking their views on four alternative types of wall.

December Review

- Representatives of Surrey County Council were going to recommend the acquisition by the County from Esher Council of a site at the eastern end of the Council housing site at the Forum. It was believed that the site would be used for a new branch library and welfare clinic.
- The school kitchens next to Woolworths in Walton Road were going to close towards the end of 1958, as by this time most schools would have their own kitchens and dining rooms. The Walton Road kitchens catered for five schools, three in Molesey, one in Walton and one in Hersham.

January Review

- Esher Council gave instructions for the re-opening of negotiations with agents acting for the owner of Priory Nursery, Priory Lane, West Molesey as they thought that the site would be suitable for council housing. A private developer was also anxious to build on the land.
- The secretary of the Chamber of Commerce complained about the “appalling road and lighting conditions” in Molesey. He said that, “The recent cut in Council expenditure has postponed improvements to many roads including our local death trap Hurst Road. This particular road surface can be compared with a frozen ploughed field and its lighting arrangements are as effective as a wet match in the Arctic Circle.”
- The East and West Molesey Conservative Working Men’s Club was officially opened on 6th December. “At a cost of approximately £7,000, the hall has been converted from its medieval barn like appearance with its hissing gas lamps, to an ultra modern club.”
- Fred Witch of Molesey St John Ambulance Brigade, who organised Molesey Carnival, wrote about the history of the Carnival. He said that it was originally held to raise funds for Molesey Cottage Hospital. “In those pre-war days the procession formed up in the lower part of Beauchamp Road, East Molesey, proceeded via Priory Lane, High Street, Walton Road, Bridge Road, River Bank, Hurst Road through Graburn Way to the East Molesey Cricket ground where the majority of Molesey’s residents congregated for a mammoth sports day. The profit in those days was always in the region of £400.” After the nationalisation of hospitals, the Carnival was organised to build a Civic Centre for Molesey, but the project was not popular and was abandoned. St John Ambulance Brigade then took over the Carnival.