

## Keeping in Touch

During these unsettling times, it is even more important to keep in touch with each other. That is why we are sending out newsletters more frequently. With this issue we are celebrating our 50<sup>th</sup> newsletter.

One of the main purposes of the newsletter has always been to make sure no members miss out if they cannot get to a meeting. Thanks are due to all the volunteers over the years who, with only a minimal amount of arm-twisting, have written meeting reports for the benefit of other members. It's a pleasure to re-read these accounts but it can sometimes be difficult to find a particular report that you are looking for. Past newsletters are published on the Society's website under the Research tab. Newsletters that are less than a year old are in the Members Only area under the Membership tab. Use the password 'Mlhs2017' to access these. If you are trying to find a specific report or article, the Newsletter Archive Index is a good place to start. It's a keyword-searchable pdf file under the Research tab.

While our face-to-face meetings are temporarily suspended, past newsletters are the place you can go to enjoy our community history and heritage. Here are some suggestions of articles and items of interest that you might like to re-visit:

- Jenny Wood's regular digest of news stories from the *Molesey Review* from sixty years ago (No.28 onwards)
- Horsepower on the Hampton Court Branch in 1849 by David Turner (No.13)
- Anna del Conte, cookery writer, on her time living in Molesey and her recipe for Elephant's Turd by Jill Wilkins (No.18)
- The mystery of Alfred Sisley's painting of Langland Bay presented to 'Dr William Taylor Physician for the Parish of Molesey' (No.24)
- Hanged for Housebreaking: the execution of William Banks of the Moulsey Gang by Anthony Barnes (No.27)
- The Night A Doodlebug hit Molesey by Norma Millard (No.41)
- Curious Assault at East Molesey Church: 'May a man embrace his wife in church?' by Claire Annable (No.42)
- Arthur Noel Ayliffe (1899 – 1974), a Molesey resident, by his granddaughter Rosemary Searle (No.44)

In the early days, the newsletter was printed for all our 250+ members. Now, fewer than 40 copies of the newsletter are posted but we still want to ensure that people without access to the internet don't miss out. Newsletters by email are cheaper and better for the environment, but we also know there's a danger that they can languish unread in people's inboxes.

Looking back over the first fifty issues is a reminder of the wide range of fascinating features in the newsletter, especially those based on research projects carried out by the Society, but also members' individual stories. If you have a tale to tell – short or long – we would love to hear from you!

### Zoom Coffee Morning – 7 July 2020

*Report by Dave Jupp*



*Maids on Boat in Molesey Lock*

Our first online 'Zoom' coffee morning took place on Tuesday 7 July with Anthony Barnes giving a short presentation on Postcards of Molesey.

16 members were gathered around their computer screens looking at old photos and some, no doubt like me, were trying to read the messages on the cards! Everyone seemed to enjoy the presentation - 'It was so lovely to be whisked away from COVID and look at wonderful postcards from another time. I specially loved the maids in their frilly aprons and the huge hampers' was one comment received afterwards.

## A Membership Holiday and Forthcoming Events

This year has obviously been very difficult due to the Covid-19 outbreak and we have unfortunately had to cancel or postpone the meetings that were scheduled to take place in March, May and June. We hoped until recently that it would be possible to hold our Summer Stroll either this month or later in the year but, because our intention is also to have a talk about the route of the stroll and it is still not possible for us to meet together, we have now decided to postpone the stroll until next summer.

As we have been unable to hold many events this year, we have also decided that we all deserve a year free of subs! Those of us who have already paid the £7 subscription this year will not need to renew in January, and our membership will be valid until the end of 2021. Anyone who has not renewed in 2020 will remain a member until the end of this year. The membership of anyone who renews now or at any time during the remainder of the year will also continue until the end of 2021.

However, we do want to try and hold some events in the autumn, even if these have to be virtual rather than actual. We have contacted Amy Swainston, the Exhibitions and Interpretations Officer at Elmbridge Museum, and are very pleased that she has agreed to speak to us on Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> September at 8 p.m., either in person or via Zoom. Amy is going to talk about 'Objects of Empire', an exhibition which the Museum has been working on recently and which they will be uploading to their website this month. The exhibition will look at evidence of the British Empire in Elmbridge's historic landscape, homes and thoughts and Amy's talk will consider this evidence in closer detail. Amy is happy for us to record her talk so that we can put it on our website for those who are unable to attend the meeting.

We are hoping to re-arrange Keith Hathaway's talk about 'The Kaleidoscopic Life of Horace Walpole – Creator of Strawberry Hill', which was originally due to take place in March, for either October or November. We shall let you have further details about this in our next newsletter. Unfortunately, we have cancelled our November talk on 'Designing Post-War Britain. Renowned Molesey Architects' as it has been impossible to carry out the necessary research due to the pandemic.

### Flying the Flag for Marmite

by Jill Wilkins



We were amused to spot this demonstration of patriotism in Molesey Road and it reminded me that I had read that there was a shortage of Marmite caused by Covid-19. 'Marmageddon'\* was announced on Twitter by a distraught devotee. The closure of pubs led to a drop in the production of beer and a corresponding lack of brewer's yeast, the key ingredient. Marmite lovers were urged to use their jars 'responsibly'.

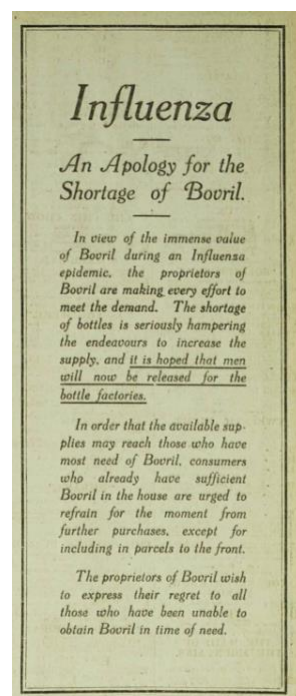
I had been reading the text of a 'Ten Minute Talk', which had been given by Dr Andrew Jackson of Bishop Grosseteste University, Lincoln, about the Spanish Flu epidemic of 1918, on the website of the British Association for Local History\*\*. He mentions that there was a shortage of Bovril during the pandemic and quotes a notice to shoppers to stop buying it: 'those customers who have a stock of Bovril should avoid purchasing.'

Sales of Marmite were boosted with the discovery of vitamins in 1912 and it was supplied to troops in WWI as a vitamin B supplement. Bovril beef-extract was included in standard rations and promoted as a 'body-builder of astonishing power' with the slogan 'Bovril gives the Strength to Win'.

It is interesting that, in both pandemics, appeals have been made to the public to share these much-loved British products.

\*Marmageddon' first occurred in New Zealand, where it was extensively covered in the press. It was caused by the closure of the factory in Christchurch, after the earthquake in 2011, which was followed by the 'Great New Zealand Marmite Famine'.

\*\* [https://www.balh.org.uk/\\_resources/presentation/ten-minute/researching-the-spanish-influenza-epidemic-from-newspapers-1918-19-notes.pdf](https://www.balh.org.uk/_resources/presentation/ten-minute/researching-the-spanish-influenza-epidemic-from-newspapers-1918-19-notes.pdf)



The Daily Telegraph  
27/11/1918

## PANDEMICS

This topical article by Gillian Adams was first printed in the Elmbridge U3A newsletter of June 2020. Many thanks to Gillian for giving us permission to reproduce the article in full.

### Plagued by the Past

Uncontrollable spread of disease, unprecedented lockdown, greatest numbers worldwide — coronavirus has challenged even the media's stock of superlatives. We just have to accept the hyperbole. Personally, we have never known anything like it. But historically Covid-19 has been rivalled. One theory is that disease eliminated the entire Neanderthal race, leaving Cro-Magnons to inherit the earth 30,000 years ago.

In our district, however, all started well. When hunter gatherers came to live in the area we now call Elmbridge towards the end of the last Ice Age, there was little danger from communicable diseases — everyone sought a separate space away from competition. It was the shift to agrarian life ten thousand years ago that increased the potential for infection.

Communities first settled on high ground such as St George's Hill and the Warren, Esher, where people lived, ate and slept close together for security, offering a splendid opportunity for diseases to be transmitted. Influenza, tuberculosis, leprosy, smallpox and others first appeared at that time. Then tribes waged territorial wars, villages became more densely packed towns, and trade routes set the pattern of dispersal. Love of goods and money is the root of all evil? It certainly contributed to the spread of disease. Elmbridge came under siege.

Epidemics crossed national boundaries and became pandemics. The first, probably typhoid, was recorded in 430 BC, starting in Africa and spreading to Europe during the Peloponnesian war, but it probably did not reach Elmbridge.

In 165 AD the Antonine smallpox plague came nearer. Huns infected the Germans who passed it to the Romans, whose troops spread it throughout the Roman Empire. Fortunately, no major Roman roads ran through Elmbridge, so it was bypassed again.

Named after the first known victim, the Christian bishop of Carthage, the Cyprian plague entailed diarrhoea, vomiting, throat ulcers, fever and gangrenous hands and feet. City dwellers fled to the country, thus spreading infection, and recurrent outbreaks occurred in parts of Africa and Europe until it reached Britain in 444 AD. It hampered fights against the Picts and Scots, causing the British to seek help from the Saxons, who colonised Wessex, thus having a long-term effect on Elmbridge history.

This was consolidated by the bubonic plague which scuppered Emperor Justinian's plans to restore the Roman Empire. Starting in 541 AD, recurrences over the next two centuries killed about fifty million people, one quarter of the known world's population.

World trade (still the root of all evil?) could be blamed for the Black Death in the mid-fourteenth century, thought to have started in Asia and moved west in caravans. It wiped out a third of the world population including, locally, all the monks of Sandon Priory in Esher and so many peasants that the few who survived could demand real wages. The feudal system collapsed, changing Elmbridge society for ever. Armies were so depleted that England and France had to call a truce to the Hundred Years War.

London's Great Plague of 1665 spread bubonic infection through ports along the Thames, thus reaching Walton. Its effect on humans is well-known, but also hundreds of thousands of cats and dogs were slaughtered as possible causes of the disease; animal lovers must have been devastated.

Thereafter, the vastly greater knowledge of modern medicine has promoted alleviation of individual symptoms, but prevention of pandemics is still elusive. From the nineteenth to the twenty-first century, diseases such as cholera, Russian 'flu, Spanish 'flu, Asian 'flu, HIV/AIDS and SARS are well documented, and there can be hardly any U3A member whose family or friends have not been affected by one or more of them, directly or indirectly.

We have to agree with the media: coronavirus in many respects is unique in our lifetime. But from a historical perspective, our Elmbridge ancestors might beg to differ.

## Molesey Review April and May 1960

Hurst Park Syndicate Limited was seeking permission to develop Hurst Park racecourse as a housing estate with houses for 3,450 people on 86.25 acres and a school, car parks, shops, a church and a riverside walk on the remaining 36.25 acres. The Molesey Society was strongly opposed to these proposals and had organised a petition asking the Minister of Housing to reject them. They wanted Hurst Park to be preserved as open space, preferably in the form of a riverside amenity and playing fields.

Rowland Baker was also opposed to the proposed development. He wrote an article on the history of Molesey Hurst, which was published in two parts in the April and May Reviews. His book, 'Thameside Molesey <http://www.moleseyhistory.co.uk/books/molesey/tm/index.htm>) includes the information contained in this article in the chapters entitled 'The Hurst: Cradle of Cricket', 'A Bloody Rendez-Vous' and 'Hampton Races'. He concluded his article in the Molesey Review with the following words, "These meads, one of the few remaining open spaces in Molesey, are now threatened with destruction by speculative builders. For the benefit of future generations we should do our best to see that they do not suffer the same fate as so much other land in Molesey."

The April Review said that the archives of the Molesey branch of the British Legion showed that Molesey was one of the oldest branches in Surrey, dating from 1924 a year before the British Legion was granted its Royal Charter. Before 1924, the present British Legion premises were used as a club by an organisation called the Association of Comrades of the Great War.

Planning permission had recently been obtained for the building of a new clubhouse at Molesey Football Club. The development plans were drawn up by the well-known architect, Eric Lyons, who at a meeting in April congratulated the Club's representatives on the "bold scheme saying they were helping to melt Molesey's 'Iron Curtain' between East and West". The scheme involved the construction of a Club House with kitchen, bar, lounge, dressing rooms, a concert hall seating 550 with stage, dressing rooms etc., and a comfortable stand for football, athletics and other open-air activities. The football pitch was going to be turned round and space was going to be left for a running track to surround the whole pitch. Work was to start during the summer.

### Elmbridge Museum Online Exhibitions

Details of online exhibitions held recently by Elmbridge Museum can be found on their website using the following links:-

**Elmbridge at War and Memories of War** – a look at life in Elmbridge during the Second World War, including interviews with a range of local people who remembered the war.

<http://elmbridgemuseum.org.uk/online-exhibitions/elmbridge-at-war/>

**Look Back in Anger** – the history of protest in Elmbridge through the ages

<http://elmbridgemuseum.org.uk/online-exhibitions/look-back-in-anger/>

**A Day at the Races** – the sport of horse-racing has played an important part in the history of Elmbridge, the home of two major racecourses (Sandown and Hurst Park). This exhibition includes three interviews with one of our members, Stewart Nash, a horseracing historian who spoke to us about racing on the Hurst in October 2012. <http://elmbridgemuseum.org.uk/online-exhibitions/a-day-at-the-races/>

### Knox & Simond Families – Request for Information

We received the following request from one of our members, Phil Hall:

*'I've been spending a lot of my lockdown time researching the family of the first owner of our house. She was Suzanne Lilian Knox (née Simond), who lived here at No 24 Matham Road for nearly 30 years, having moved in following the death of her husband, Dr John Knox, when the house was first built in 1932/33. There is quite a bit written about Dr Knox – he was the medical officer for Molesey, founded the Isolation Hospital, has his photo in 'The Book of Molesey' and, with his brother James, was the subject of a 'Molesey Matters' article.'*

If you have any information, please contact Phil directly on [philip.hall124@btinternet.com](mailto:philip.hall124@btinternet.com).

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