

Forthcoming Events

Wednesday 23 September 2020 8 p.m.
Objects of Empire
Talk by Amy Swainston of Elmbridge Museum
Via Zoom

The British Empire presents a challenging, contentious history. Local history, especially, might seem worlds away from the colonial landscape, giving many museums no incentive to delve deeper into the topic and uncover now hidden stories. As part of their new online exhibition, Elmbridge Museum has taken 20 objects from its collection, using the research and commentary of expert historians to look at them from a new perspective - through the lens of the history of the British Empire. These objects will soon be going on display at Walton Library as part of a new temporary exhibition. In her talk to Molesey Local History Society, Elmbridge Museum's Exhibitions and Interpretation Officer Amy Swainston will be revealing these objects, as well as ones which didn't make it into the exhibition, in even greater detail, and uncovering some of the links to Empire in the borough's landscape which are often hidden in plain sight.

The link for Amy's talk is

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/2125656313>

It would be helpful to us if you could please email Dave Jupp dave@thejupps.net before the meeting if you would like to attend, so that we have an idea of likely numbers. Dave will then email you the link and any other details that may be needed. However, registration is definitely not compulsory and you are very welcome to join us on the evening whether you have registered or not.

Keith Hathaway who was due to talk to us in March about 'The Kaleidoscopic Life of Horace Walpole – Creator of Strawberry Hill' has decided that he would prefer to wait until he can speak to us in person and we are therefore hoping to re-arrange his talk for some time next year. We are trying to find another speaker for a talk in November this year and shall let you have details about this as soon as possible.

Zoom Coffee Morning
Wednesday 14 October 10.30 a.m.

Anthony Barnes will talk about the **Archaeological Dig on Hurst Park in 1994**. Confirmatory details will be emailed out nearer the time. For anyone needing help with using Zoom, please get in touch with Dave who will be happy to help you get started dave@thejupps.net

Meeting Report

Molesey in 1841
Zoom Coffee Morning – 10 August 2020
Report by Dave Jupp

Over 20 members joined Dave and Anthony for our second Zoom coffee morning on Tuesday 10th August. Anthony gave a short talk on **Molesey in 1841**. Participants asked 'Why 'Molesey in 1841'?', the simple answer being that the census of that year provides a rich source of information. Anthony mentioned some of the individuals recorded in the census including the Right Honourable John Wilson Croker MP of The Grove in West Molesey and John Mullins proprietor of the Castle Inn by Hampton Court Bridge. Although we do not have any maps of Molesey dating from the 1840s, some of the earlier maps reveal a great deal about the differences between Molesey now and then. Without photographs either, we are dependent on the artists who painted and sketched local landmarks such as John Hassell and Edward Potterton.



A recurrent theme in the talk was the dramatic changes both before and after 1841. It is easy to assume that Molesey before 1841 was a quiet, rural, idyllic backwater and that this only changed with the coming of the railway and the property developers. In reality, the quarter of a century before 1841 was a difficult time, especially for farm workers. Anthony spoke about the enclosure of Molesey's open fields after the Napoleonic Wars which brought to an end a farming system that had lasted for over 700 years. The agricultural depression which occurred after the Wars was also particularly tough on Molesey's large number of agricultural labourers.

(William Tombleson's view of the Lower Mill, the Castle Hotel and the second Hampton Court Bridge, c.1833-34 [Wikimedia Commons]).

Although many of the features of Molesey in 1841 have been obliterated, including the 19th-century market gardens in East Molesey and the big houses in West Molesey, some glimpses of the past still survive. Intrepid walkers taking exercise in these uncertain socially-distanced times can head down to the Bridge Road area and seek out Creek Cottages (built by John Mullins) and the Bridge Row cottages attached to the Albion pub (then a newly established beerhouse) built by James Hall of Ealing in 1831.

A lively discussion followed the talk. One of our members wanted to know where he could view the 1841 census. Ancestry.co.uk can be accessed for free from any Surrey library or Surrey History Centre. A video of the talk can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HADcxyKL44U&t=117s>

Researching the History of Sunshine Cottage and its First Owner

by Phil Hall



Since moving to Matham Road three years ago, I've often wondered about the history of our house. My wife Sue and I were aware that it was built in 1932 or 1933, and we knew the previous owner had been here for many years – but nothing beyond that. Needing a hobby to get me through lockdown, now seemed like the ideal time to find out more.

Ours is a modest but attractive detached house on the inner ring of Matham Road - we look enviously at the Victorian mansions opposite with their gardens backing onto the Mole - and stands on the site of a former market garden within the grounds of Matham Manor.

An online search of the 1939 Register showed that the head occupant was a Mrs Suzanne L. Knox and that she called the house Sunshine Cottage – a lovely, and very appropriate, name. But who was Mrs Knox, and how did she come to live here?

Lilian – she preferred to be known by her middle name – was born in 1884 into a wealthy banking family living in Paddington. Her father, Francois Simond, was originally from Switzerland and Lilian was the youngest of nine children. Lilian's elder sister Rose was living in Molesey at the turn of the century, and it may have been her that introduced Lilian to the highly eligible bachelor Dr John Edmund (Eddie) Knox, the Molesey Medical Officer.

Lilian was just 18 and Eddie 33 when they married in 1902. The wedding was widely reported, with the Surrey Comet recording not just the names of the 300 guests but also details of their gifts. Among Lilian's six bridesmaids was one Virginia Pierano who scandalized society in her teenage years by having a snake tattooed on her leg – she later became the millionairess Virginia Courtauld.

The newlyweds lived first at Redlands which, I think, stood on Walton Road opposite the eastern arm of Matham Road. Within a few years, several of the Simond family occupied houses in East Molesey – enough to make a modern-day walking tour.....

Already living comfortably, Lilian and Eddie moved to The Limes at 5, Palace Road and then, in 1914, across the road to the Hollies (number 12) which served as the doctor's surgery. There they lived for nearly 20 years until Eddie's sudden death of a heart attack in 1932 – leaving Lilian a widow at the age of 48.

This is the time when Lilian bought the newly built Sunshine Cottage and moved to Matham Road, along with her housekeeper Margaret who lived with her from at least 1911 until retirement in 1946. The house is not large but, in addition to Margaret, Lilian had a number of live-in guests over the years – including her widowed sister Rose and a billeted GI called Hank stationed at Bushy Park.



Lilian's godson John Humble was introduced to me by the History Society. His father was Eddie's GP junior partner and John remembers "Granny Knox" as a jolly and rather overweight lady. In the 1950s Lilian became the practice secretary back at the Hollies and took a taxi there each day. By this time, she was sharing the house with a new housekeeper and a large and spoilt poodle called Larry.

Lilian sadly died in 1962. She and Eddie share a gravestone at Molesey Cemetery.

What happened to the house immediately afterwards we are yet to discover. We bought it from Mrs Palmer who had lived here from 1970. That only leaves eight years of its history unaccounted for, and we would really love to hear from the subject of the graffiti found in our small bedroom "*Amanda Franks is a silly sausage*" dated 1968.

Query from John Humble

John remembers a GI called Hank being billeted at Sunshine Cottage during the latter stages of the Second World War. He believes that at that time many houses in Molesey had a room effectively requisitioned for the use of service personnel, and wonders what recompense, if any, the householder received.

We raised this query with Doreen Freeman who confirmed that during the War many Molesey families had Americans living with them. Doreen says that she and other children playing in the road were told that the War had ended by an American living opposite her and that she then rushed inside to tell her mother.

Doreen also mentioned that several Molesey girls, including one of her neighbours in Upper Farm Road, married GIs and emigrated to America after the war.

We should be very grateful to hear from any member who can let us have further information about American service personnel being billeted with Molesey families during the War or about Molesey GI brides.

Three Linked Enquiries

by Dave Jupp

A few weeks ago, I noticed someone was enquiring on Facebook about **Grove Lodge Farm**, purported to be in **West Molesey**. It was reported as now being under the **Queen Elizabeth Reservoir**. This linked to two other enquires we received, one about the reservoir and the other about Summers Farm.

Several months ago, someone asked if there were any pictures of the area before the reservoir was built. We requested help from the membership, but at that time nothing was available so we had reached an apparent dead end.

Someone then made an enquiry about **Summers Farm, West Molesey**. Although not on many maps, it was/is possible to get some idea as to where this farm was situated. From various documents the location of the farmhouse is given as; '*Summers Lane led to the Summers [farm/house], 7 Acres of common land that was enclosed under the 1815 Enclosures Act*'. '*Summers Lane now leads to Summers Farm*'. *Apparently, the first bombs to fall in Molesey in WW2, fell in this lane. The 1911 census address for a family at Summers Farm is given as Sewerage Works, Approach Road.*

A map of 1816 does not identify the Farmhouse but shows Dunstable Common having a tract of land going to the Farm. Indications are that Odard Road probably approached the farmhouse which may have been in Chalford Close. Rowland Baker suggests that the farmhouse was still around in the 1970s.

Having looked up about Summers Farm, the remaining West Molesey Farms came under review - *Manor / Hurst; Upper; Island; Church*, which may be the subject for future comment.

So, how does Grove Lodge Farm appear in an account of West Molesey farms, especially as it is not mentioned by Baker?

Grove Lodge is not mentioned in census returns for Molesey either, but it is clearly shown on maps. From further investigation and checking with OS maps, it would seem Grove Lodge was not in Molesey but Walton-on-Thames. The lodge and associated buildings all fall just outside the parish boundary line and on the edges of the old Field Common, just South of Dead River.



The search was thus transferred to the Walton census returns. Sure enough, the Farm is mentioned in 1911 as having three family units. In *Grove Lodge Farm* (I assume Farmhouse) was a plumber and his four family members; In *Grove Lodge* was a solicitor with four family members and the 'farmer' who was single lived at *Grove Lodge Cottage* and was a 'Poultry farmer'. All three families gave their address as being 'West Molesey'. Even in a later business directory, Grove Lodge was stated as being part of West Molesey. Clearly, the occupants believed themselves to be residents of West Molesey although legally they lived in Walton. (*Grove Lodge Farm c.1925 – now Queen Elizabeth Reservoir - Photograph courtesy of John Burch*)

Sadly, Grove Lodge Farm no longer exists as the farmland has been covered by the Reservoir being on the 'Walton' side of Molesey Road (formerly known as Broad Lane). It would seem the buildings may have been demolished to make way for the 'new' Molesey Road.

This does raise another question; when does one enter Molesey when travelling from Hersham? There are two 'Coal Tax Posts' which form an imaginary boundary line to give some indication.

Victorian Stink Pipes around Molesey

by Claire Annable

Do you know what a stink pipe is?

Sometimes known as a stench pole, a stink pipe is something you may have passed on your walks, perhaps not even giving it a second thought. Made from cast iron and usually painted green, a stink pipe is a hollow pipe and looks a bit like a streetlight from the ground. The difference is that stink pipes tend to be taller and wider than streetlights. The big give-away is, if you look up, there is no light at the top.

Whilst walking along Green Lane, I spotted an ornate but rusting example (see *photo*), made by Fred Bird & Co., London. This led me to look for others, confident that there must be more than this solitary example of Victorian engineering in Molesey.

What is the purpose of a stink pipe you ask?

With no proper managed sewerage system, the Thames had been a dumping ground for all things smelly for hundreds of years, ranging from human and industrial waste to rotting carcasses. This caused illnesses and sometimes death to those living by, or using, the river. In the summer of 1858, the stench from the Thames came to a head and is known as the Great Stink. The rotting waste began to ferment in the hot weather. The resulting smell was so bad that it literally brought London to a standstill for weeks.

Two engineers, Joseph Bazalgette and Sir Goldsworthy Gurney, were brought in by the government to build a proper sewerage system to contain the waste, and to design a simple way to ventilate the gases emitted from it. Gurney's stink pipes usually follow the route of the main sewers. The gas they ventilate is a foul cocktail, which includes methane, hydrogen sulphide and ammonia — all flammable and smelly. These pipes allow the gases to escape safely high into the air and to waft the stench away from people in the street.

However, when wandering the streets of Molesey looking for more stink pipes, I was only able to find one other. Camouflaged by horse chestnut branches in Palace Road, it appears taller than the one in Green Lane leading me to suspect that the Green Lane stink pipe has lost a top section. There is a shorter, green pipe at the side of the bridge crossing the Ember. Is this a stink pipe? If so, why there? Maybe, it has some connection to the river.

Next time you walk around Molesey, look up. If you see a tall ornate pipe with no light, do let the History Society know.



60 YEARS AGO THE MOLESEY REVIEW June 1960



The Review of June 1960 contained an article by T. S. Mercer on the history of Molesey Lock and its early lockkeepers. Work was begun on Molesey Lock in 1814 and it was opened for traffic on 9th August 1815. According to Mr Mercer, the original lockkeeper's house was described as "Italianate in style". It was replaced by the present house in 1925. (*Photo - Molesey Lock and Lockkeeper's House in the early 1900s*).

The first lockkeeper was a butcher called John Nash who was paid 32 shillings a week. He came to an untimely end in June 1820, when he was reported "suddenly dead, killed by a race-horse on Moulsey-Hurst".

His successor was another butcher and another Nash, George Nash, but Mr Mercer did not know whether they were related. George also had problems, though probably of his own making. "A brewer named Ramsbottom and a barge owner named Mason complained that casks of ale belonging to the former were being surreptitiously removed from barges belonging to the latter as they passed through Molesey Lock! Nash was loud in protesting his innocence but when cheeses also began to disappear in like manner he was discharged."

The next lockkeeper was Cuthbert Peart, a needlemaker. He had difficulties in getting his accounts to balance and fell out with a neighbour who complained that the lockkeeper's goats were eating the young shoots of his hedges. However, his main problems occurred after he obtained a conviction at Kingston for petty theft against two boatmen named Hamilton and Fencock, who in revenge made his life a misery. "Everytime they went through the Lock, they used insulting and foul language, taking charge of the Lock and shutting other boats out. It usually ended in a scuffle and gradually wore him down." In 1842, when he was 70 years old, he asked for a few additional shillings a week to employ a boy to attend to night traffic but died before a decision was made on his request. His widow unsuccessfully applied for his job but she was given a pension of 10 shillings a week and allowed to remain in her house for her lifetime.

The next lockkeeper, John Obadiah Jacques, had his wages reduced in 1848 because of competition from the railways. Jacques died in 1854; Rowland Baker wrote in *Thameside Molesey* that in that year the job was advertised at 18 shillings a week, a dramatic drop from the initial salary of 32 shillings a week.

In the early days of the lock, all small pleasure craft went through the lock without having to make any payment. "But there was a snag! You had to work the lock yourself, no easy job for an amateur, and many accidents resulted." Mr Mercer recounted the story of two ladies, each with a maid and baby, and a waterman who went through the lock to do some shopping in Kingston. The ladies stayed in Kingston and sent the maids and babies back by boat with the waterman. When the waterman reached the lock, he tied the boat to the lock wall and opened the gate himself. "As the water rose, the boat caught on some projecting timber and began to flood. The maids, nearly frantic, were able to throw the babies onto the grass and then scramble out themselves, very wet and dishevelled." At an enquiry, the lockkeeper successfully pleaded that the matter was nothing to do with him – the boat paid no toll and was none of his business.

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