

Membership Renewal

Membership subscriptions for 2014-2015 became due from 1 April 2014. We have sent out final renewal reminders. We hope you will find something to interest you in our future programme and that you will decide to renew your membership.

New Look for the Newsletter

The Society's first Newsletter was published almost exactly seven years ago in the summer of 2007. Since then it has retained the original two-column format, although the first edition was written in a rather large font and contained only one meeting report of the first Clore Centre event, when we had a talk by Ian Franklin about the Grace and Favour residents at Hampton Court.

Following a request from a member, we are now changing the appearance to make the Newsletter easier to read on a tablet, as the majority of our members now receive their information via email and may not print it out. It is interesting to note that, three months after our inaugural meeting, the Society had 192 members and that we have maintained a healthy membership since; it now stands at 244.

Meeting Reports

Waynefflete Tower

Wednesday 30 April

Report by Anthony Barnes



For Penny Rainbow, finding out about the history of the house you live in has special meaning! Speaking to members after the AGM in April, Penny told us what it was like to become the owner of Waynefflete Tower in Esher in 1992. For over 300 years, it was a building of national importance, lived in and visited by some of the most important people of the day. Waynefflete Tower has also withstood shifting fortunes with periods of demolition and neglect making its survival to the present day even more remarkable. Penny spoke about the detective work that has gone into revealing the hidden stories of the place and the painstaking efforts to preserve and restore the Tower. In this, she has been helped in 2005 by Tony Robinson and the Time Team, who discovered the foundations of the Great Hall, and in 2007 by members of the Surrey Archaeological Society who found some eighteenth-century artefacts.

William Waynefflete, Bishop of Winchester, built Esher Palace in the 1460s. The gatehouse, Waynefflete Tower, is now all that remains of the Palace which was destroyed in the late seventeenth century. Cardinal Thomas Wolsey spent some time in forced retirement here in the 1520s; and records also confirm that Henry VIII stayed here a number of times. On one occasion he and Anne Boleyn came to seek shelter from the plague.

Robert Dudley, a favourite courtier of Queen Elizabeth I, was another famous owner in the 1570s. Penny told us about his secret marriage to Lady Sheffield at Esher in May 1573. Later in the century, Richard Drake, a cousin of Sir Francis Drake, established himself at Waynefflete Tower and entertained Elizabeth I here.

In the eighteenth century, Henry Pelham, Prime Minister of England, purchased Waynefflete Tower to be close to Claremont, the property of his brother the Duke of Newcastle. Many of the changes made to the buildings and grounds by William Kent, architect of the Gothic revival, were subsequently altered by John Spicer, a stockbroker who lived there in the early nineteenth century. On 20th May 1813, Jane Austen wrote to her sister Cassandra "from a Mr Spicer's Grounds at Esher which we walked into before our dinner, the veiw[s] [*Jane's spelling!*] were beautiful. I cannot say what we did not

see, but I should think that there could not be a Wood or a Meadow or a Palace or a remarkable spot in England that was not spread out before us, on one side or the other.”

At the end of the nineteenth century, Lord and Lady D’Abernon lived at Wayneflete Tower and restored the staircase and improved the grounds; but between the wars, Wayneflete Tower fell into neglect and was only saved by Frances Day, an American movie star, and Sir Raymond Francis Evershed, England’s future Master of the Rolls, who bought it jointly for £905.

These snippets of the Wayneflete Tower story do not do justice to the rich history of the place and the passion that Penny has for it. You can find out more on Penny’s website <http://www.waynefletetower.co.uk/> and in the lavishly illustrated book that she has written.

Real Tennis ‘Game of Kings’ and other Tudor Sports

Thursday 5 June 2014

Report by Lynda McCarter

Members attending the recent meeting at the Clore Centre were treated to a lively and entertaining talk by Lesley Ronaldson. The subject was ‘Real Tennis, Game of Kings, and Tudor Sports’. As a former professional player and now a guide and lecturer at Hampton Court, Lesley proved to be a mine of information. She was also lucky enough to live for 27 years as ‘Keeper of the Royal Tennis Court’.

Sport originated as training for warfare and your status defined the activity you were permitted to enjoy. Rich and powerful men hunted on horseback, flew fine hawks and jousted in the tiltyard. The poor could hunt hares and rabbits and fly a kestrel, but were expected to practise archery from an early age.

When Cardinal Wolsey began building at Hampton Court, he designated a large area for sport, including a huge bowling alley behind the tennis court. Henry VIII was an athletic young man and rode thirty miles before breakfast, exhausting eight horses! He was a keen tennis player, but perhaps he won more often than he should as his opponents wanted to keep their heads. After a jousting accident in 1536, Henry was reduced to standing and shooting at deer as they were driven past him. Apparently at his death he weighed thirty-three stone.



Poor people played football in the streets, but by Tudor times the game had already been banned several times due to extreme violence and even murder. The medieval equivalent of Health and Safety wanted the men to be fit enough to die for their country if necessary. Tennis had also started in the streets, the ball being played off the shop roofs. This explains the unusual appearance of the Tennis Court today, with sloping ‘penthouses’ around three of the four walls.

Lesley showed us examples of an early and a modern racquet, explaining how these developed from players first using their hands, then special gloves and then sieves. The balls used are very different from the ones used in lawn tennis, being much harder and heavier. Also, they do not bounce.

With the building of special courts, tennis became a game for the rich and huge sums of money were wagered. The rules of the game were first written down in 1555 and Lesley endeavoured to explain them to us. Henry had courts built at Whitehall and Greenwich Palaces and it appears that a court has just been found at an archaeological dig at Woking Palace.

There are twenty-six real tennis courts in use today in this country. Also there are courts in Europe and America and even as far afield as Australia. The court at Hampton Court is in constant use from 7 am to 11 pm every day of the year except Christmas Day. Lesley suggested we all go and have a look at the ‘Real’ thing.

Molesey Carnival - Saturday 7 June

Report by Brian Smith

The weatherman finally looked kindly upon us on the first Saturday in June, Molesey Carnival Day. The morning started off cloudy and grey and worsened until finally heavy rain fell. Much gloom in the streets and much shaking of heads – was the Molesey carnival doomed to be a washout? Well no – the rain stopped – the sun broke through and by midday we were all sweltering in the heat trying to understand what the strange codes on the metal tubes meant and how we could convert these into a passable marquee. The codes 1, 1a and 2 were etched upon our minds until Paula came along and

put us on the right path. There is, apparently, a psychological behaviourist rule that the number of solutions to a problem is the number of men involved plus one and we proved that. Well done, Paula.

A comprehensive display of the work done on the Hampton Court Bridges presentation last November was mounted and attracted much attention especially the maps showing how the roads of Molesey had been altered and the Chinoiserie design of the first bridge. It is generally called the Hampton Court Bridge, but should really be the Molesey Bridge as Hampton Court had little to do with the first three that were built, usually with money provided by local Molesey entrepreneurs. Molesey has perhaps missed a trick here as it is now known as the Hampton Bridge north of the river.

This year there were many comments as to the turnout with a much longer procession of walkers and floats than in previous years. The recreation ground was buzzing with the fairground amusements and the large number of stalls dotted around the central area of the recreation ground. The dog show pitted Alsatians against some of the smallest dogs I have ever seen. We at MLHS had a steady stream of visitors. It was a good opportunity to talk to people about research projects to trace what happened to all the people named on the local war memorials and to find people who were educated in Molesey schools. We were also given a delightful business card, showing the Jolly Boatman in its heyday as a Tea Rooms, with beautifully tended gardens and ornamental trees flanking the pathway to the entrance. This will be on show later in the year at our 'Then and Now' photographic exhibition.

Finally the carnival started drawing to a close and the stalls were packed up on what, despite a very inauspicious start, turned out to be a most enjoyable day.

Visits to Wayneflete Tower

Two groups of members have recently been to Wayneflete Tower beside the River Mole in Esher for a guided tour by its owner, Penny Rainbow. Penny had given us a talk at the AGM last April, so it was absolutely fascinating to see the Tower for ourselves - it really brought everything to life.

The Tower was originally built by Bishop Waynfilet in the 15th century as the entrance to his grand palace; the Tower is all that remains today. However, in the garden Penny pointed out the corner of the keep of Wayneflete's 15th century palace that was uncovered by Channel 4's 'Time Team' during their investigations in September 2005. The close resemblance in design suggests that the Tower was possibly the inspiration for some of the later great buildings of England, especially Hampton Court Palace and Richmond Palace.

The Tower has now had a complete dramatic conversion from a 15th century Palace Gatehouse into a modern family home, without any sacrifice of its many historical features. Penny's (unscripted!) running commentary was full of fascinating facts and stories which helped to put everything into perspective. The tours were really enjoyable and Penny was a superb guide and hostess. We are hoping to arrange another tour in September or October. If you are interested please contact Jenny Wood jenniferwood@btinternet.com or 020 8979 0889.

Forthcoming Events

Summer Stroll - Molesey Cemetery
Wednesday 16 July 2014, maps available from 6.30 pm
Doors open and refreshments available from 7.30 pm
Talk by Anthony Barnes at 8 pm (please note revised time)
Hurst Park Primary School, Hurst Road KT8 1QW

In December 1863, an East Molesey resident resorted to burying his child in his garden because the churchyards in East and West Molesey were full and he could not afford £3 to bury the child in Esher. The resulting scandal put pressure on the authorities to find land for a cemetery. Molesey Cemetery in West Molesey opened in 1866.

Our cemetery stroll may struggle to compete with a walk around the Père Lachaise Cemetery in Paris! Each year, thousands of visitors flock to admire the elaborate tombs and pay homage to their heroes like Oscar Wilde, Edith Piaf and Jim Morrison. However, we have quite a few fascinating characters buried in the cemetery with interesting tales to tell. It will also be an opportunity for members to enjoy a relaxed and tranquil walk among the yews and cherry trees and to remember loved ones whether they have family or friends buried in the cemetery or elsewhere.

Maps will be available from 6.30pm at both the north entrance (Hurst Road) and the south entrance (St. Peter's Road) followed by refreshments at Hurst Park Primary School at 7.30 pm and a talk by Anthony Barnes starting at 8pm (please note the change in time from that given in the programme).

If you are coming by car, parking is available at Hurst Park Primary School and in nearby streets. Limited parking is also available in the cemetery at the north entrance (Hurst Road) but please note the gates will be locked at 8pm.

**The Treasures of St Peter's Church - Talk by Lindy Wilson, Walton and Hersham NADFAS
Tuesday 16 September 2014, 8 pm
St Peter's Church, Walton Road, KT8 2QF**

Volunteers from the Walton and Hersham Decorative & Fine Arts Society have recently completed recording the artistic heritage of St. Peter's Church, West Molesey. A copy will be given to the church and important national and local bodies. Come along to St. Peter's Church on Tuesday 16 September at 8pm for an illustrated talk by Lindy Wilson on what church recording is and why NADFAS members do it. Find out what it was like recording at St. Peter's and what they discovered.

**'Then and Now' - Photographic Exhibition
Friday 3 October 2014, 2 pm – 8 pm, Saturday 4 October 2014, 10 am – 4 pm
Methodist Hall Manor Road**

Most members will be aware that we have been working on a long-term photographic project 'Then and Now'. Two local professional photographers, Mark Goodman and Emily Sieler, have taken 'Now' photographs to match around one hundred historic photographs all around Molesey. Their brief was to endeavour to capture the scene from the same vantage point as the original photographer and this they have done, as far as possible. One of our members, Alan Lane, is continuing to take further photographs for us. We are now preparing an exhibition in October and the plan is then to work upon publication of a book.

People and Buildings Special Interest Group

The bimonthly evening meetings of the people and buildings research group at the Royal British Legion will resume on Wednesday 26th November 2014. We are currently writing a booklet of trails around East and West Molesey highlighting local landmarks. We also hope to contribute to next year's big research effort by the Society looking into the history of schooling in Molesey. Please get in touch with Anthony Barnes who chairs the People and Buildings group if you'd like more information about the group (020 8979 6744 and people-buildings@moleseyhistorysociety.org).

Molesey War Memorials

Do you have any family members that fell in WWI, whose names are on any of the Molesey war memorials, including the memorial in St Mary's Church? Norma Millard is researching the memorials and has already found a lot of information about the servicemen recorded there. If you have any information about these men or their families, please contact Norma on normafirstworldwar@btinternet.com or contact MLHS by mail or phone.

Molesey Schools

For our next major research topic, we shall be looking at schooling in Molesey. Did you or any of your family go to school in Molesey and have memories that you would like to share? Please contact Claire Annable (07940 434156, claireannable@hotmail.com) if you would like to contribute to this project, which will be the subject of a meeting in autumn next year.

**Baseball in Surrey
by Jenny Wood**

Nowadays we think of baseball as an American game but the earliest known manuscript references to the game are of it being played in Surrey in the 18th century. Until last year the earliest known manuscript mention of baseball was in a diary kept by William Bray of Shere who documented a game with friends in Guildford on Easter Monday 1755, while he was still a teenager. However, last year David Block, an American baseball historian, found a reference in the Whitehall Evening Post of 19th September 1749 to baseball being played in Walton-on-Thames. The entry in the Whitehall Evening Post read, "On Tuesday last, his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, and Lord Middlesex played at Bass-Ball, at Walton in Surry; notwithstanding the weather was extreme bad, they continued playing several hours."

Surrey County Council's archivists at Surrey History Centre have identified the area where the game was played in Walton-on-Thames as Ashley Park, which was at that time owned by Charles Sackville, the Earl of Middlesex. David Block and other baseball historians had thought that baseball was originally played only by children and young adults, but this assumption has been overturned by the finding of the article in the Whitehall Evening Post as this shows the game being played by men entering early middle age.

Baseball in mid-18th-century England would have looked very different from modern American baseball. Block's analysis of dozens of references to English baseball from the 18th and 19th centuries suggests that the game would have been played on a smaller scale than the modern pastime, with shorter distances between the bases and with the pitcher standing much closer to the batter. It was also a game that required less athleticism. The ball was much softer than today's; and instead of a bat, the palm of the batter's hand was used to strike the ball. Although there are differences, the basic elements of 18th-century English baseball — pitching, batting, base-running and fielding — were comparable to those found in the later American game, and Block believes that there is little doubt that the English game was the forerunner of the modern American pastime.

60 years ago.....

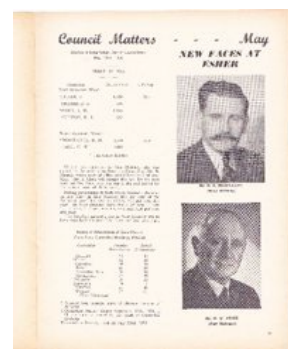


..the editorial of the June 1954 edition of Molesey Review, Molesey's monthly magazine, bemoaned the fact that the Bridge Road post office would not open on Sundays in the future. It also commented on the poor attendance of members at local meetings – one meeting attracted four members of the public, who were outnumbered by those on the platform. The “Feminine Feature” reviewed the new Singer Swing-Needle sewing machine, and the magazine contained ads including Devonshire Food Supply, of 100 Walton Road, offering ham at 1s 3d per ¼ lb; Molesey Sheet Metal Works of Grove Road was selling ornamental iron gates from £3 15/-; and The Wool Shop in Bridge Road offered hosiery repairs, 1s 6d per stocking, up to 8 ladders.

Some things never change – “Old Timer” reports: “With all the building that is going on in Molesey at the present time, roads are of necessity being torn up quite frequently for the laying of new sewers etc. This is accepted by the residents as a necessary nuisance but what they do object to is the fact that when the holes are filled in, they are not made up to the level of the road, sometimes for a matter of weeks. These pot-holes, which are usually anything from three to six inches deep, are a constant menace to traffic”.

The page called “Council Matters” featured pictures of two new Molesey councillors, but reported that there was a 10% decrease in the number of voters.

The Court Cinema (“Two minutes Hampton Court Station, buses 201, 206, 152, 131, 604, 216”) was showing “Hobson’s Choice” starring Charles Laughton and John Mills. The British Legion reported that Bay Bobbins would be competing in the Legion’s all-England darts competition; the Alexians performed “Murder at the Vicarage” at St Paul’s Hall, Vine Road; the Phoenix Club had recently formed a Rifle Shooting Section, and the Molesey Evening Townswomen’s Guild had a talk from Mrs Lamb of the Surrey Floral Decoration Society.



“Molesey Memories”, an article written by local historian James Williams, explained the origin of some road names in the Kent Town area. Mr Kent and his son had more land than they could manage themselves, and sold a block to the Westminster Freehold Land Syndicate, which consisted of a number of businessmen included William Pemberton, George Edgar Dennes and Henry Vine, who planned roads in their names. After some years, the phonetic spelling “Dennis” instead of Dennes” began to be used, but as late as 1911 “Dennes” appears in official records.

MLHS has most issues of this magazine, which was published from May 1953 until January 1969, when it combined with the Esher Courier. Eventually we plan to scan each issue so they that can be displayed.

Events at Kingston Museum Commemorating WWI

'1914: Remembering Kingston at War' Exhibition 16th May 2014 - 16th Aug 2014

Discover the often forgotten stories: conscientious objectors, women and children on the home front, Belgian refugees, overage and underage soldiers, nurses, aviation, war work and war heroes. Exhibition open during museum opening hours: Tuesday, Friday and Saturday 10am to 5pm, Thursdays 10am to 7pm. Free.

Lunchtime lecture: 'Conscientious Objection' 12th Jul 2014, 12:30 - 13:15

The sixth in a series of lunchtime lectures, Ben Copsey will be discussing conscientious objection in the First World War. Please book beforehand by phoning 020 8547 5006.

Kingston Museum, Wheatfield Way, Kingston upon Thames KT1 2PS

Events at Surrey History Centre

The Last Summer: Surrey on the Eve of the Great War

Free display in the foyer 3 June 2014 - 2 August 2014 during normal opening times

On the 4 August 1914 Britain declared war on Germany. The First World War had begun and life would never be the same again. Using archives and local studies materials from Surrey History Centre, this exhibition provides a snapshot of Surrey in the last summer before the outbreak of war. It explores family and school life, news reported in the county's press, sport and leisure. The exhibition assesses Surrey's concerns with women's suffrage and also looks at the county's changing landscape at the opening of the twentieth century and at its industrial life before the Great War.