

**10th Anniversary of Molesey Local History Society
Launch of 'Molesey Then and Now'**
Saturday 8 July, 2017



Molesey Local History Society recently celebrated its first 10 years. The event was held over lunchtime at the Refresh Centre in Walton Road, East Molesey. Many members dropped in for cake and bubbly, which was enjoyed by all.

This also proved to be an ideal opportunity to launch the Society's first publication, "Molesey Then and Now". The book compares historical images with photographs of the same views today, providing a remarkable record of change and continuity within our community.

Chairman Jennifer Wood (seen here cutting the birthday cake) gave a short speech outlining the trials and tribulations of getting the book to publication. This included having to retake many of the "now" photographs to keep pace with new developments. She was then presented with a bouquet of flowers by one of the members in appreciation of all her hard work over the years.

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.

Forthcoming Events

Tuesday 14 November 2017, 8pm – 10pm (Exhibition opens from 7.30pm)

Educating Molesey

St. Lawrence C. of E. (Aided) School, Church Road, KT8 9D

Please use the Vine Road entrance and note there is no on-site parking

Every year as you know we undertake a major research topic – this year it's schools! Come along for an evening of discoveries and memories – you do not have to have been educated in Molesey to enjoy yourself. We will have a short talk about the history of schooling in the Moleseys. A specially written dialogue based on the memories of people who went to the schools here will be performed by the Barn Theatre Club. The exhibition includes display posters, pop-up museum and rolling PowerPoint presentations created by the Educating Molesey research group, staff from Elmbridge Museum who will be present and children from St. Lawrence School lunchtime history club (supported by Molesey Local History Society). We will have blank Post-It notes for you to share your stories. Do get in touch, before or after the event, if you have interesting photographs, documents or artefacts! education@moleseyhistorysociety.org

Wednesday 6 December, 2017, 5pm – 7pm

Magical Molesey

Tudor & Co, 61 Walton Road

Once again, Tudor & Co are kindly hosting the Society at the Walton Road Christmas celebration. We will be showing a presentation and some of the displays from the 'Educating Molesey' project. We do hope you will join us for some Christmas cheer. For those looking for Christmas presents, our book 'Molesey Then & Now' will be on sale.

Advance Notice – AGM/Membership Renewal

The AGM will be held on Wednesday 7 February 2018. Subscriptions will become due on 1 January and, as usual, you will be able to renew your membership at the AGM.

Meeting Reports

Saturday 10 June, 2017

Molesey Carnival

Once again, our tent at Molesey Carnival proved very popular. On show were displays from our Molesey Boat Club event, celebrating their 150th anniversary in 2016, and a selection of pictures from past Molesey Carnivals, and we did a roaring trade in the pre-order of our Molesey Then and Now book. The change of date of the Carnival, a week later than previously to avoid half term week and enable more schools to take part, had caught some people by surprise, so perhaps attendance overall was a bit down on previous years, but the weather was kind, and the History Society tent had a constant stream of visitors, both members and non-members.

Thursday 20 July 2017

Summer Stroll – Painshill Park

Report by Penny Owen

This year for our Summer Stroll we trod in the footsteps of distinguished 18th century visitors to Charles Hamilton's Painshill Park, following the route specially chosen by him to reveal a succession of wonderful views. We split into two groups led by knowledgeable guides who added to the information we had already gleaned from our April lecture on Painshill by Cherrill Sands.

The Hon. Charles Hamilton was the 9th son and 14th child of the Earl of Abercorn. In 1738 he began to acquire land at Painshill and was innovative in designing a revolutionary naturalistic style of garden in contrast to the earlier geometric formality of gardens such as the Privy Garden at Hampton Court and the age of topiary. He wanted to create a landscape that would frame extraordinary views and where you would feel emotions.

The earlier style of gardens was designed for houses where the state rooms were on the first floor and you could look down on formal areas of planting which made pleasing patterns. Hamilton mentally leapt the fence and saw that all nature was a garden; he wanted no indication as to where the boundary of his land lay and wanted his visitors to enjoy long distance views over the North Downs.

After two Grand Tours, heavily influenced by the paintings of Claude, Poussin and Salvator Rosa, Hamilton was inspired to gradually build up the estate to 200 acres and to create the lake and landscape that we see today. Although he was a visionary landscape gardener, he was no businessman and, despite borrowing from his friends to finance his ventures, he eventually ran out of money and had to sell the estate to repay his debts in 1773.

We approached the lake from the terrace above the vineyard. Hamilton's vines made such good sparkling wine that he convinced the French ambassador that he was drinking French champagne!



We then entered the "amphitheatre" with its tiers of evergreen trees and shrubs. We admired the cast of Giambologna's statue of the Rape of the Sabines at one end of the amphitheatre with the Gothic temple (left) facing it at the opposite end.

From the Gothic temple we looked down over the five arch bridge, grotto island and the Great Cedar of Lebanon, believed to be the largest in Europe. Descending to the "ruined abbey", our guide told us that originally it had been kilns to bake the clay Hamilton used for making bricks, earthenware etc. in an unsuccessful moneymaking scheme.

Hamilton was a great horticulturalist and was especially interested in plants from America. We were shown the "toothache" tree (*Zanthoxylum americanum*) whose leaves were chewed by native Americans to relieve toothache. Although we crushed leaves to release the scent, no one was tempted to sample it!

Crossing the five arch bridge we looked up to the rebuilt Turkish tent. This was made possible by funding from Jeffrey Steiner and his family to commemorate the asylum granted by Turkey to Jews expelled from Spain in the 15th century. Steiner himself and his family had escaped from Nazi-occupied Vienna to Turkey.

We crossed the Chinese bridge to grotto island. The grotto was the highlight of the visit with its stunning artificial crystal stalactites. Leonardo said we should feel two emotions when entering a grotto: fear and desire: you should fear what may be inside, but desire to discover it.

The Mausoleum, with its niches for “Roman” bones, was the next viewpoint. It was built on a bend of the River Mole with framed views across to the waterwheel and, in winter, the Temple of Bacchus, at present still being restored. Our guide Jan had herself researched and managed to track down the original Bacchus statue from Painshill which, after several sales, had eventually ended up at Anglesey Abbey in Cambridgeshire, the property of the National Trust. Despite rarely putting it on show, the Trust has refused to return the original statue to Painshill but a cast of it will be the centrepiece of the newly restored temple.

Jan ended her guided walk by reminding us that Alexander Pope said that a garden should offer variety, concealment and surprise. Painshill certainly does that in abundance. It was a very enjoyable stroll and we were fortunate that the threatened showers held off.

Thursday 21 September, 8 pm

Surrey in the Great War – A County Remembers

Report by Jill Wilkins

Kirsty Bennett, Surrey Heritage WW1 Senior Project Officer at Surrey History Centre came to talk to us about ‘Surrey in the Great War – A County Remembers’, a four year project (2014 to 2018), run by Surrey Heritage and supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, which aims to discover how the 1914-1918 conflict affected those left behind, in the county, on the Home Front.

The project aims to engage people of all ages and backgrounds across the county in order to create a lasting legacy which will tell Surrey’s story during the Great War. This will take the form of a website recording the lives and service of all the men and women whose names are on war memorials in Surrey. It will not only be a comprehensive 21st century digital memorial but also a resource to enable people to explore, discover and understand the impact of the war on their local area and community. A commemorative book, walking apps and an educational pack are also planned to keep alive the memories of the Great War in Surrey.

The project team is gathering stories about people and places and attempting to find answers to questions such as how the Great War affected families/towns/villages/schools and workplaces; how communities rose to meet the ever-growing demands for men, money and arms; how they faced food shortages and air raids; how they responded to the arrival of soldiers from the Empire, refugees and prisoners of war and how they felt about the cause for which they were fighting.

Having briefly explained the project, Kirsty told us about some of the research topics and the success so far in finding information. For instance, there are records of women workers at Chilworth Munitions, stories of local communities engaged in fundraising to support Belgian refugees and tribunal reports of conscientious objectors.

Research materials include archives, maps, photographs, hospital records, local newspapers and online resources such as conscription records. Surrey’s landscape also has tales to tell and we were shown photographs of the Muslim Burial Ground in Horsell and the training trenches at Deepcut.

Food supply and rationing and the efforts of families to contribute to the war effort were important and we were shown the Brockham childrens’ charming hand-drawn publication ‘The Eaton Cottage Herald’. The children reported that ‘the fretwork craze has given us many hours of labour and has resulted in our being able to send several picture puzzles to the hospitals for the amusement of our wounded Tommies’, whilst the ladies of the house knitted ‘very industriously for the soldiers’.

We were shown the records of two VADs (Voluntary Aid Detachments) from Molesey who gave their time to support the war effort: a driver transporting the sick and wounded and a pantry worker. The novelist, EM Forster, who lived in Weybridge, volunteered for the Red Cross when war broke out. He thought he would be too old or deemed medically unfit for conscription to the British army but to his consternation, conscription regulations were widened in 1915 to include all men between the ages of 18 and 40. Although a pacifist, he refused to argue that he was a conscientious objector, but eventually he was deemed unfit for military service and worked as a Red Cross ‘searcher’ in Alexandria, Egypt, in October 1915. His job was to interview the wounded in hospitals for information about fellow soldiers who were reported missing. Forster’s Voluntary Aid Detachment index card shows him resident in Weybridge. He served from November 1915 to January 1919 and his rank on leaving was Searcher-in-Chief.

Finally, Kirsty showed some examples of the website pages: <http://www.surreyinthegreatwar.org.uk/website-launched/>, which invites contributions from anyone who has any information about the experiences of the people of Surrey in the Great War.

Tuesday 26 September
Molesey Then and Now – a Journey of Discovery
Talk by Jenny Wood at Molesey Library
Report by Lynda McCarter

Following an invitation from the Friends of Molesey Library, our Chairman, Jenny Wood, gave a talk at the library which told the story from conception to publication of our first book 'Molesey Then and Now' as part of their series of regular author talks.

Jenny showed many slides to emphasise the difficulty in choosing photographs for the book. Many 'now' photographs could not be taken from the same viewpoint and some 'then' photographs could not be used because of their poor quality. There was also a lengthy search for the right designer who could interpret our expectations of the finished project.

The packed audience appreciated how much hard work had been involved. The book has been a great success and we have now ordered our third print run.

Mike Gambrill
(1935-2011)

Report by Jenny Wood



1957 - Mike Gambrill
Clarence Wheelers

In recent years, there have been several Olympic medallists connected with Molesey. But who was the first person from Molesey to win an Olympic medal? We believe that it may have been cyclist, Mike Gambrill, who won a bronze medal at the Melbourne Olympics in 1956 as a member of the 4,000 metres cycling pursuit team.

In January 1957, the Molesey Review reported that Mike was "according to the experts, one of the top six amateur pursuit riders in the world." Mike was a member of the Clarence Wheelers Cycling Club, which, in the early 1950s, used to meet in St Francis Hall in Eastcote Avenue and later in the 1950s moved to a hut next to The Cannon public house in High Street, West Molesey. Ron Hagan, who was a member of the Clarence Wheelers with Mike, remembers that Mike did not train as much in the evenings as some other members of the club as he cycled from Molesey to work in London every day.

In 1955, Mike and Alan Killick, another member of Clarence Wheelers, set a national tandem record of 1:00:48 for 30 miles, a record that stood for 18 years, and a 50 mile record of 1.45.11. In 1956, Mike won the national 25-mile time trial championship and the national 4,000 metres pursuit championships. In the Melbourne Olympics, Mike was part of the British team who lost in the semi-finals of the 4,000 metres pursuit to Italy, the eventual gold medallists, but who beat South Africa in the ride-off for bronze.

In March 1957, Mike was rejected as medically unfit for National Service but this did not stop him going on to further cycling success. In 1957 and 1958, Mike and his younger brother, Robin, won the team prize in the national 25-mile time trial championships, riding in 1957 with Alan Killick and in 1958 with Alan Jacob. Mike represented Great Britain again at the Rome Olympics in 1960 before retiring.

If anyone knows of an earlier Olympic medallist from Molesey, we should love to hear from you.

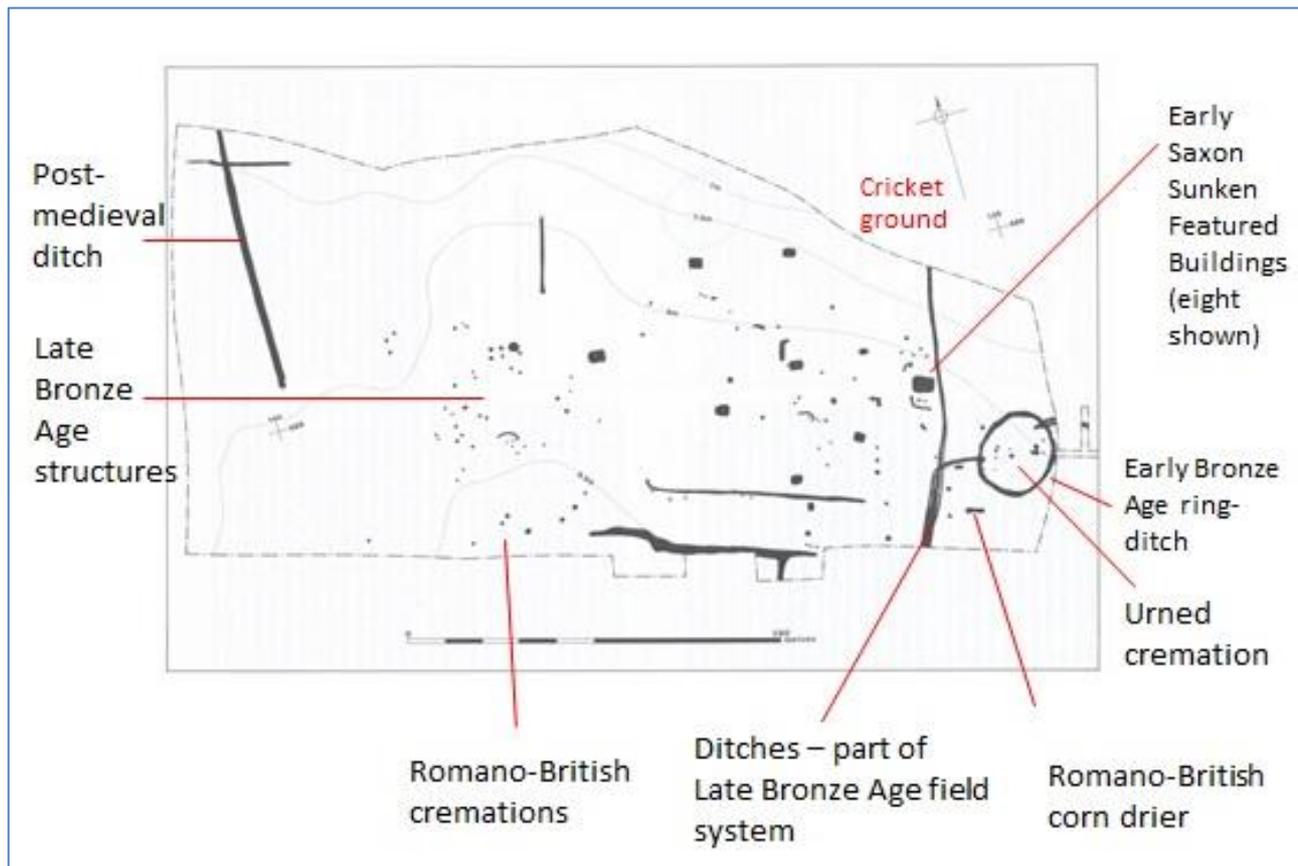
Molesey Hurst in Early Saxon times – Was this the first Molesey?
by Anthony Barnes

What do you think about when you are out walking on the beautifully-landscaped meadowland at the eastern end of Molesey Hurst? Visitors might never guess that here, between the cricket ground and Hurst Road, is the site of a failed Early Saxon settlement. Could this have been the first Molesey?

We will probably never know for sure. People in this area had moved out of their hillforts and into the valleys of the Thames and the Mole (originally called the Emlyn). Road tracks had also become more important as a result of land clearance which encouraged further population spread.

The archaeological evidence gives us tantalising glimpses of scattered settlement in this area dating back to Neolithic times; but we have fewer opportunities to excavate those areas that have been built over which also might have given Molesey its name.

What do we know about this settlement on Hurst Meadows? It only gave up its secrets in 1994 when Wates commissioned Wessex Archaeology to excavate the site before extending Hurst Park and landscaping the rest of the area.



Wessex Archaeology found evidence of a probable Neolithic settlement. Another major find was an early Bronze Age ring ditch with a cremation urn in the middle containing the skeletal remains of an older adult woman and probably an adult male. Burial mounds such as this were only built for people of high status but we can only speculate about their identities. The site also yielded evidence of an unenclosed Late Bronze Age settlement with huts and a field system (11th-10th century BC). There is then no further evidence of settlement until Romano-British times. A corn-drier and eight cremation burials were discovered suggesting that there had been a farmstead or settlement to the south-east of the excavation site in 1st-2nd century AD.

The dig further revealed the evidence of a settlement consisting of eight sunken-featured buildings as well as pits and artefacts from Early Saxon times (6th-7th century AD). It is highly likely this settlement had a communal hall but no trace of one has survived. Were the people who lived here part of an extended family or kinship group? We don't know. And how many people were there? Historians have suggested a ratio of one man to four or five women and children. Could there have been 30-40 inhabitants?

What is of particular significance is that this settlement died out around the time that the name Molesey enters recorded history. It is mentioned in a Charter from 672-4 endowing Chertsey Abbey with lands that included 'Muleseg'. 'Muleseg' means the island or dry ground in a marsh belonging to a man named Mul (pronounced 'Mule'). Mul was a common name given to a person of mixed Celtic-Saxon parentage. Was Hurst Meadows the original Molesey? We know a river channel ran much closer to the site than the present-day Thames but we have no corroborating evidence.

What we do know is that archaeologists could find no trace of people living here beyond Early Saxon times. Why did the settlement fail? Did the inhabitants leave for the higher ground around St. Mary's Church to avoid frequent flooding? It was this area close to the River Mole and a possible trackway to Hersham that became the heart of the 'old village' in medieval and early modern times.

Could this failed settlement on Molesey Hurst have become an important market town situated at a point where it is relatively easy to cross the River Thames? Sadly, not even then. It could not compete with Kingston, two miles away, which had a Saxon settlement to the south of the modern town centre and became the place where two and possibly three Saxon kings were crowned (but not the seven claimed by legend!).

So next time you are on Hurst Meadows exercising the dog/the children/the grandchildren or yourself, let your imagination recreate this lost settlement of Molesey!

Elmbridge Museum Volunteer Recruitment

Elmbridge Museum is looking for enthusiastic volunteers to work as members of the Museum team, assisting the Collections Officer with answering local history enquiries and supervising visitors in the Local Studies room, and contributing to an on-line catalogue of the collections.

This role involves assisting with updating records on the EMu collections database, as well as supervising the Local Studies Room and answering enquiries received by email, telephone, letter and in person, to enable the public to have fuller access to the Museum's collections.

In the first recruitment phase the Museum is looking for volunteers that can work 3 to 3 ½ hour shifts (Monday - Wednesday), based at Elmbridge Museum, Civic Centre in Esher.

The volunteer role is also advertised on the Elmbridge Borough Council website.

If you have any questions, please contact Clara Pereira, Museum Community Engagement Manager on 01372 474586, cpereira@elmbridge.gov.uk.

60 YEARS AGO

THE MOLESEY REVIEW July - October 1957

July Review

- Outline planning consent had been granted for the erection of 15 flats and some garages on the land at the junction of Bridge Road and Wolsey Road.

August Review

- Alterations costing about £7,000 had been made to the hall at the Conservative Working Men's Club. The main body of the hall had been converted into a lounge and the clubrooms at the rear had become a central bar. The remaining gas fixtures had been removed and central heating installed throughout the property. A suspended ceiling had been installed to improve the warmth of the property.
- The old footbridge at Tanners Bridge over the River Mole had been pulled down and replaced by a concrete bridge.
- On 31st July, Mick Gambrill won the British cycling amateur pursuit championships in an all-time record of 5 mins. 7.9 secs.
- Many people complained about Molesey Carnival; they said that the procession was disappointing and the sideshows inadequate.
- The opening times for Molesey Library had changed to the following:- Monday, Wednesday and Friday 10 a.m. – 8 p.m., Tuesday and Saturday 10 a.m. – 5 p.m., Thursday 10 a.m. – 12 noon.

September Review

- Molesey Football Club acquired the freehold of their ground on 4th September.
- The 1957 rowing season was the most successful for Molesey Boat Club for at least half a century. When the 1st VIII won the Grand Cup at Walton Regatta in June, it was the first Grand Cup to be won by Molesey since 1907. "The speed of Molesey's revival as a leading club has been most impressive. If there was any official ranking among rowing clubs as regards success and prestige on the river Molesey would certainly rank third at the moment, only Tideway giants, London and Thames, heading them."
- On 16th September, Thames Tool Service Ltd was moving from Hampton Court Parade to more spacious premises at 282 Walton Road. Thames Tool Service Ltd was formed in 1948 as a subsidiary to Willow Tools Ltd, the aircraft engineers and toolmakers with premises on the West Molesey factory estate.
- One of Molesey's leading businessmen, Mr Thomas Usher, died on 5th September. He owned an ironmonger's shop at 53 Bridge Road. The shop was taken over by his son-in-law, Mr Edward Breach.

October Review

- Agents on behalf of Upper Deck Swimming Pool had sent a letter to the Council offering it first refusal to buy the pool.