

Forthcoming Events

Wednesday 25 September 2019, 8 pm
Merton Priory - A New Chapter
Talk by John Hawkes
Hurst Park School, Hurst Road, KT8 1QS

The manor of Molesey Priory, "with all land in plain and wood, and waters and mills" belonged to Merton Priory for 400 years, until seized by the Crown in the 16th century.

The historic foundations of the twelfth century Merton Priory Chapter House - bizarrely located under a main road in a supermarket car park - have recently been given an extensive facelift. John Hawks of Merton Priory Trust talks about this remarkable survival, and the plans for its future.

Friday 15 November 2019, 8 pm
'Après le Déluge' -
What Happened after the 1968 Floods?
Imber Court, Ember Lane, KT8 1QS

Our meeting in November last year covered the history of flooding in Molesey until the end of the flood of September 1968. This year's meeting will look at what happened after the 1968 flood. We shall consider the efforts to obtain a public enquiry into this flood and the fight for compensation for the flood victims. We shall look in detail at the Lower Mole Flood Alleviation Scheme carried out in the 1970s and 1980s with the intention of preventing a recurrence of the 1968 flood. We shall discuss whether a flood of the magnitude of the 1968 flood is likely to happen again in Molesey. We shall not be considering current Environment Agency proposals for the rivers Mole and Ember and we will not be discussing them at the November meeting.

We anticipate high demand for this meeting and numbers are limited. Details for booking are given at the end of this newsletter. Booking will initially be open to members only, but it may be possible to accommodate guests if all places are not taken. We will let you know nearer the date if there are spaces available.

Hampton Court Pleasure Palace
A Story of Two Palaces – Tudor and Baroque
Talk by Siobhan Clarke
Thursday 16 May 2019, 8 pm
by Lynda McCarter

Our talk at the Clore Centre this year was given by Siobhan Clarke. Siobhan has worked for Historic Royal Palaces for eighteen years, first as a costumed interpreter and then as a guide lecturer. She has also worked with the U3A, the National Trust and author, Alison Weir, a previous speaker to the Society.

Cardinal Wolsey acquired the lease to a small manor in 1514 and began building the following year. His choice of red brick with spires and glass was very unusual. It must have looked like Disneyland to the local people, still living in wooden houses.

Built during a period of peace, Hampton Court was not for defence, but for 'business and pleasure'. Wolsey hosted delegations from all over Europe, as he was the Pope's representative in this country. Roads were unreliable and dangerous, so the Thames was the motorway of its day, linking other great houses to the City of London. After the fall of Wolsey, Hampton Court was transferred to Henry VIII.



He proceeded to build the Great Hall and extend the kitchens, supplying meals to up to twelve hundred people a day. Nearly everyone who worked at the Palace was male; there were only about 50 women and the two hundred workers in the kitchen were all men. Many of the lower ranking members of the royal household and servants ate and even slept in the Great Hall. Henry intended the Great Hall to fill people with awe; its hammer-beam ceiling is 60 feet high. The ceiling still has several carvings of 'eavesdroppers' (*left*) placed to warn visitors to Henry's court that there was always someone listening out on behalf of the King.

Henry took his pleasure seriously and installed tennis courts, skittle alleys and, of course, a tiltyard for jousting. He was also responsible for the purchase of the 'Abraham Tapestries', second only to the Crown Jewels as national treasures. These tapestries were first hung in the Great Hall in 1546 and are incredibly detailed, for example you can see the veins in the hands depicted on the tapestries. In 1540, the Astronomical Clock was installed, pre-Copernicus, so the earth is shown as the centre of the universe. The clock was built by the French clockmaker Nicholas Oursian; his initials 'N.O.' are stamped behind the face of the clock.

Although still retaining its importance and, for example, hosting the Hampton Court Conference in 1604, which commissioned the printing of the King James Bible in 1611, the Palace was becoming old-fashioned and unfit for its purpose.

Everything changed with the arrival of William and Mary from Holland in 1688. They wanted to live at Hampton Court, as they were both keen gardeners. Sir Christopher Wren drew up plans to completely rebuild the Palace in the Baroque style as an English version of Versailles. Luckily for subsequent generations, the money ran out, which is why it is now a Palace of two halves. Unfortunately, Mary died before she had the chance to live in her new accommodation. William also died suddenly, but not before installing the Maze and creating the Privy Gardens with views to the river. He also had the old fish ponds converted into the sunken gardens we see today. The original hedging of the Maze died of Dutch Elm disease and was replaced by the present yew hedging, which has been planted in the same footprint.

When the Georgians began their reign, a new kitchen was installed in Tennis Court Lane. George II and Queen Caroline enjoyed the country retreat of Hampton Court. The east range of Clock Court was built in 1732 by William Kent, who originally intended to introduce the Palladian style, but was eventually persuaded to blend in with the Tudor style. George and Caroline often had an afternoon nap, as they had very long days; they were able to lock and unlock their bedroom door from their bed. After Caroline died in 1737, George did not return to Hampton Court. They were the last monarchs to live in the Palace. The Palace then provided Grace and Favour apartments. The average apartment had 15 rooms and some had as many as 40 rooms. However, although they were spacious, the apartments were often lacking in other amenities, for example electricity and bathrooms. There were many well-known 'Grace and Favour' residents – Ernest Shackleton's widow moved into the apartment which had been occupied by Robert Scott's mother. One resident, Millicent Gordon, lived in a 'Grace and Favour' apartment for over 100 years until she died in 1949 at the age of 104. Several of the residents used a basket on a pulley system to hoist daily deliveries up the stairwell and one even used the basket to lower her dog up and down.

When Queen Victoria came to the throne, she opened the Palace free of charge to the public, which proved very popular. Victorian 'improvements' included the stained glass in the Great Hall and the large display of antlers. Pugin was brought in to oversee the restoration of the ceiling in the Chapel Royal and all 240 moulded chimneys were restored and replaced with copies. Unfortunately for the residents, investment did not include the Grace and Favour apartments that were badly in need of modernisation.

Siobhan told us that today about half of the Palace's revenue comes from its visitors. The Palace is subsidised by income from the Tower of London. Hampton Court Palace's best source of income is the Hampton Court Flower Show. This was a very informative and well-illustrated evening. We all learned a lot about the two most significant building periods, Tudor and Baroque, that make Hampton Court Palace still a pleasure today.

Molesey Walk
16 May 2019
by *Anthony Barnes*

Back in November 2018, the society received this enticing email: "Hello! I am a member of Cranleigh village U3A Towns and Villages history section, which organises walks around interesting locations. We would be interested to know whether your society has the resources to guide a group of about 20, walking around your town.

We usually aim to start with coffee at a convenient location (hopefully with adequate parking nearby) at 10.30, starting the walk at 11.00 and finishing around 12.30/1.00pm. I look forward to hearing from you. Yours faithfully, Malcolm Keeping."

We were delighted to say 'Yes!' and planned a walk for 16 May in the following year starting and finishing at *Eight on the River*, the Molesey boat club café. The theme of the walk was East Molesey's three Conservation Areas (Bridge Road, the Old Village and Kent Town) which took in some of our most interesting sites and stories.

The walk was well-received by their members and Malcolm Keeping sent a kind note of appreciation. It led the committee to think that the walk could be adapted for a future summer stroll – in its present form at just over two miles it is too long – but if anyone would like a copy of the walk created for Cranleigh U3A, please email people-buildings@moleseyhistorysociety.org.

Tuesday 16 July 2019, 8 pm
Brooklands into its Second Century
Talk by Tim Morris
by Claire Annable

We were delighted to welcome Tim Morris from Brooklands Motor Museum to give us an interesting and fact-filled talk about the early years at the iconic Weybridge site.

1903 saw the Paris to Madrid motor race but, with twenty-two fatalities, people didn't seem to understand the dangers of unregulated racing.

In 1906 Hugh and Ethel Locke King were living at Brooklands House and estate. They had seen motor racing on the continent, but there were no races in Great Britain. They made the decision to promote the sport at home. Meeting up with Brigadier-General Sir Henry Capel Lofft Haden, plans were laid for Haden to design and Locke King to finance the building of a racetrack on their estate. The original plans began to grow beyond Locke King's wildest expectations. Far from his initial idea of a simple road circuit, Locke King was persuaded that, in order for cars to achieve the highest possible speeds, with the greatest possible safety, the 2¾ mile circuit would need to be provided with two huge banked sections nearly 30 ft. high. The track would be 100 ft. wide, made of concrete and include two long straights, one running for half a mile beside the London to Portsmouth Railway, and an additional 'Finishing Straight' passing the Paddock and enclosures, bringing the total length of the track to 3¼ miles. Building the track took 9 months, 200 tons of concrete and 2000 navvies. This eventually cost Hugh Locke King his personal fortune, a price equal to nearly 16 million pounds today. Ethel took over the supervision of the development of the track after the stress of building it affected the health of her husband. Her family also came to the rescue, loaning funds to pay off debts caused by the construction. In 1907 Ethel opened the track with a parade and a nine-course meal. The legal speed limit on the public roads was 20 mph but there were no speed limits on the track and racers could drive as fast as they liked.

An interesting fact Tim told us was that, because the track was based on horse racing, cars congregated in the "paddock", the drivers wore silk shirts and were identified by their colours. By WWI, the silks were dropped and the cars given numbers, which made it easier to see who was winning. Betting on cars also followed horseracing practices and tote stands were set up to take the money of race-goers.

1909 saw motor manufacturers testing cars at Brooklands, so a special test hill was built with a ratio of 1:4 at the top and 1:8 at the bottom. Testing engines on the hill could be precarious, as on the way up the drivers relied on the power of the engine and, on the way down, the strength of the brakes.



WWI saw the suspension of racing at Brooklands until 1920.

The popularity of Brooklands grew and in 1930 the Clubhouse was extended to accommodate the social appeal of race meetings. Brooklands, which was still the preserve of the wealthy amateur, became a fashionable venue on the sporting calendar. The Paddock was a busy place as popular heroes mingled with Club Members or those spectators who could afford a paddock transfer pass into the 'inner sanctuary'. *(Photo – start line at 1937 race meeting).*

But, by the end of the 1930s, the golden years were over and motor racing was in its last throes at Brooklands. As WWII approached, aviation construction took over as the main focus. However, Brooklands will always be remembered as the home of British motor racing.

Molesey Carnival
Saturday 8 June 2019

The weather at Molesey Carnival was fine and dry but a little windy. Fortunately, our tent withstood the elements and, yet again, proved very popular. We displayed sheets on the history of flooding in Molesey from our meeting in November 2018, which we held to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the floods of September 1968. Throughout the afternoon, we had a constant stream of visitors, several of whom were in Molesey in 1968 and who passed on their recollections of the floods. Others who were not in Molesey at that time were surprised to see just how bad the flooding was. We sold several of our few remaining copies of the Molesey Then and Now Book. Thank you very much to all of you who called in to see us. We hope that you enjoyed the displays. We certainly enjoyed chatting to all our visitors.

A QUERY FROM TASMANIA

by Jenny Wood

In autumn 2018, we received an email from John Humble, who is the son of Dr J. W. M. Humble and who now lives in Tasmania, Australia, asking if we had any information about flooding in Palace Road during 1947 and about the building of numbers 12 and 14 Palace Road. We did some research on 12 and 14 Palace Road and discovered that the early residents of these conjoined mirror-image houses were well-known Molesey families. The houses were built about 1900. The electoral register for 1901 shows Edgar Charles Milner as the "ownership elector" of two freehold houses, The Hollies (no.12) and Rangemore (no.14), Palace Road. Edgar's father, James, had moved into Palace Road in the 1850s. The Milners were an influential family in the history of Molesey Boat Club and the present clubhouse was named the Milner Memorial Boat House in 1901 in memory of Edgar's older brother, James Abram Milner, who had died in 1899.

Edgar was shown as the owner of the freehold of both houses on the electoral registers until 1911 when he died. The 1911 census shows Edgar and his family as the occupants of The Hollies and George John Tagg and his wife Lydia as the occupants of Rangemore. George Tagg was the son of Tom Tagg, who was the tenant of Tagg's Island and after whom the island is named. Tom was a very successful businessman. He had a boat building business on the island and he built and ran the Island Hotel. He transformed Tagg's Island into a popular pleasure resort. He also built Tagg's Clubhouse on the Molesey bank opposite the island. When Tom died in 1897, the business was taken over by George who was a marine engineer and who had been responsible for designing many of the boats built by his father's firm. Unfortunately, he was not such a good businessman as his father and he soon ran into financial difficulties. In 1904, he was declared bankrupt and all his assets were put up for auction. Rowland Baker tells us that "during the First World War, because of his knowledge of the Continental waterways, and of boats and boating in general, he was appointed as Assistant Director of Inland Water Transport in France and Belgium and Liaison Officer with the allied armies and navies, with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. For his work in this respect he was twice mentioned in dispatches and was awarded the OBE and the French Croix de Guerre. In the Second World War he joined the Civil Defence, and in his black beret was a familiar figure around Molesey." George was still living in Rangemore at the time of his death in 1952 at the age of 89.

After Edgar Milner's death, The Hollies became the home and surgery of Doctor John Edmund Knox, who was the Medical Officer of Health for Molesey from 1899 until his death in 1932. Dr Knox was also a surgeon at the East and West Molesey and Hampton Court Cottage Hospital, the Medical Superintendent of Molesey Isolation Hospital and the doctor of Hurst Park Racecourse. When Dr Knox died, The Hollies became the home and surgery of Dr Humble who succeeded Dr Knox as the Medical Officer of Health for Molesey, the Chief Medical Officer at the Cottage Hospital and the doctor of Hurst Park Racecourse until it closed in 1962.

Dr Humble originally came to Molesey from Dumbarton in 1927 after answering an advertisement from Dr Knox for an assistant and practised as a doctor in Molesey until his retirement in March 1973.



Nos 12 (The Hollies) and 14 Palace Road

Dr Humble used The Hollies as his surgery until 1966 when he and the other doctors in his practice moved into a central surgery at 15 Seymour Road. He continued to live at The Hollies until he died in 1985.

The surgery extension at The Hollies is just visible on the ground floor on the left. John Humble presumes the surgery was built when Dr Knox moved into the property in 1911. The surgery had an external entrance, from the eastern-side driveway, a waiting room, a consulting room, a small dispensary (demolished about 1950 to enlarge the waiting room) and a separate toilet. There was a door from the waiting room into the hallway in the main house.



When John Humble contacted us, he sent us this lovely photograph of Palace Road in flood; George Tagg can be seen in the photograph in his trademark black beret. John assumed that the photograph was taken during the 1947 floods. However, these took place in March 1947 and it is quite clear from the trees in the photograph that it was taken later in the year than March. We therefore do not know in which year the photograph was taken, except that it was either in the second half of the 1940s or in the early 1950s. We would appreciate any help that anyone is able to give us with the dating of the photograph.

The Bacton Altar Cloth at Hampton Court Palace

In her talk on Tudor dress to the Society in 2017, Eleri Lynn, Collections Curator for Historic Royal Palaces, told us about the Bacton Altar Cloth.

Following new research and conservation, Historic Royal Palaces Curators believe that the Bacton Altar Cloth once formed part of a dress worn by Elizabeth herself.



The high-status silver silk, professional embroidery including gold and silver thread, and distinct evidence of pattern cutting all suggest that the item was once an item of elite court dress. Tudor law meant that only the very highest levels of nobility and royalty were allowed to wear clothing that contained gold and silver.

New research supports the theory that this was intended for the highest level of customer and that it is an item of dress from Elizabeth's own wardrobe, making it the only known surviving example of Elizabeth I's dresses.

See the Bacton Altar Cloth, a rare survival of Elizabethan dress worn by Elizabeth I and the iconic Rainbow Portrait, at Hampton Court Palace from 12 October 2019 - 23 February 2020.

60 YEARS AGO THE MOLESEY REVIEW May – August 1959

May, June, July and August Reviews

- The Molesey Society was formed on 28th April 1959 as a result of the increasing concern “regarding current development, the threat to Hurst Park racecourse as an open space and the growing tendency for subtopian elements to appear in the locality.” The Society held its first public meeting on 22nd June. At that meeting, the chairman, the architect Kenneth Wood, explained that the object in forming the Society was to combat haphazard planning, to get more individuality into the style of house building and to clear up eyesores such as air raid shelters, rubbish dumps in full view of the public and indiscriminate siting of street signs and posters. Two films were shown at the meeting, including a film of Molesey, “showing how it could be improved, the maze of road signs which must baffle many an unsuspecting motorist at Hampton Court Station, the rubbish dump on waste ground in Down Street, the unco-ordinated planning of Central Square in Central Avenue, the litter of Hurst Park after a race day, and the ‘hat stand’ trees of Wolsey Road, etc.” We wonder if anyone has a copy of this film – we should love to see a copy.

May Review

- The stables at the Bell Inn had re-opened for housing show horses, after not being used for about 20 years.
- A Public Local Inquiry was being held on 10th June about a request to build a petrol station on land between nos. 106-120 Walton Road (now Lily Blossom and Tesco).

June Review

- Mr C. Cook, the Headmaster of Rivermede County Primary School, was retiring at the end of July after over 19 years at the school. During the Second World War, Mr Cook organised an evacuation to Exeter when the flying bombs started, and after the war he had to deal “with all the problems arising from an increased school population created by the rapid expansion in West Molesey.”
- An article about the expansion of the banking business in the United Kingdom referred to the expected introduction of legislation to make it possible to pay manual workers by cheque. Under Truck Acts, dating from the beginning of the 19th century, it was illegal to pay manual workers other than in cash in order to ensure that workmen were “fully and honestly paid in current coin.”
- There was an article about the Phoenix Club which was founded in April 1947 to enable young people over the age of 20 to meet free from any political or religious bias. The Club initially met in Molesey Youth Centre but members later constructed their own clubroom from a derelict building at the rear of the Centre, this clubroom being opened in January 1949. An article in the May Review indicated that by this time the Club was struggling as most members did not take a very active part in the Club.
- Molesey Football Club's 1st team finished third in the League and runners-up in the League Challenge Cup. The Reserves were the champions of the League Reserve Section and won the League Reserve Section Challenge Cup. An application had been submitted for membership of the Spartan League. The August Review confirmed that this application was successful and said that steps were being taken to improve the ground.

July Review

- Ray Road Boys' School formed a Parents-School Association
- Esher Council intended to seek the consent of the Ministry of Housing and Local Government to a scheme for a new branch library for East and West Molesey being included in the building programme for 1959-60.
- Following delays caused by high river flows, work had recommenced on the final stages of the improvement to the River Mole at Royal Mills. It was anticipated that work would begin shortly on the installation of the main automatic sluice gate to replace the hand-operated gates situated adjacent to the Mills.
- Esher Council had granted consent to the erection of a new Parsonage House and Church Hall in the grounds of Park House, St Mary's Road, (adjacent to the Bell Inn) to replace the existing Vicarage at the junction of Bridge Road and Arnison Road. When funds permitted, it was proposed to erect a Parish Hall for Church social purposes.

August Review

- A meeting of Surrey County Council on 28th July decided to close down Molesey's Fire Station. A special Sub-Committee report on the review and re-organisation of the County Fire Service stated that the station premises were very old and restricted and were incapable of housing a modern large appliance. It was proposed to control Molesey fires from Esher and Walton. The report stated that over the past ten years the average number of fire calls of all types (including chimney fires and false alarms) received in Molesey station was 73 per year. The station establishment employed 21 'wholetime' men and had one appliance and the overall running costs amounted to £17,600 per annum. The report said that the closure of Molesey Fire Station would reduce the standard of fire cover, but that this standard was unnecessarily high. The Molesey Society and the Molesey Chamber of Commerce objected to the closure and were organising public meetings and petitions.
- Esher Council had been negotiating with Surrey County Council concerning the proposed sale of land at The Forum for the purpose of erecting a Library and Clinic on the land.

Hampton Court Oak Tree - The Coffin of the Unknown Soldier

by Jill Wilkins

The body of the Unknown Soldier was selected to rest in Westminster Abbey as a representative of the hundreds and thousands of soldiers who had died during WW1. In November 1920, four unidentified bodies were exhumed in strictest secrecy from battlefield cemeteries at Ypres, Arras, the Asine and the Somme. No reason was given.



The bodies were taken to GHQ at St-Pol-Sur-Ter Noise and each draped with the union flag. Sentries were posted and a high ranking officer entered the chapel and touched one of the bodies. Some say he was blind-folded.

The chosen body was placed in a plain coffin and taken to Boulogne and with it went sacks of soil dug from the spot where the soldier had died, so that the earth he was defending would cover his last resting place in Westminster Abbey. This was then placed in a larger coffin, presented by the British Undertakers' Association, made of two-inch thick oak from a tree which had grown in Hampton Court Palace garden. A crusader's sword from the Tower of London collection and a shield inscribed 'A British Warrior who fell in the Great War 1914-1918 for King and Country' was placed on top. The coffin was taken aboard HMS Verdun amidst great ceremony. The ship sailed from Boulogne to Dover, escorted by six destroyers.

The cliffs of Dover were lined with crowds to see the Unknown Soldier return home on 10 November 1920. On the next day, the second anniversary of the Armistice, the Unknown Soldier was carried through the streets of London and laid to rest in Westminster Abbey. By the end of the day, 200,000 people had visited his graveside and, by November 27th, it was estimated that one and half million had passed slowly by in homage.

Produced by:
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Friday 15 November 2019, 8 pm

'Après le Déluge' -

What Happened after the 1968 Floods?

Imber Court, Ember Lane, KT8 1QS

IF YOU WISH TO ATTEND THIS MEETING ON 15 NOVEMBER, PLEASE SEND IN THIS SLIP (OR A NOTE) WITH YOUR REQUIREMENTS BY FRIDAY 1 NOVEMBER.

ALTERNATIVELY, EMAIL historysociety@btinternet.com. THERE WILL BE A CHARGE OF £1 ON THE DOOR FOR MEMBERS

BOOKING IS INITIALLY FOR MLHS MEMBERS AND THEIR GUESTS ONLY (£3 charge for guests). IF SEATS ARE STILL AVAILABLE AFTER FRIDAY 15 NOVEMBER, THE EVENT WILL BE ADVERTISED TO NON-MEMBERS.

You will not be notified, but you may assume you have a seat, unless you hear otherwise.

NAME.....

Please make a reservation for me/us at for the 'Après le Déluge' meeting on Friday 15 November. Send to Membership Secretary, Molesey Local History Society, 17 Matham Road, East Molesey, Surrey KT8 0SX.