

VE Day Remembered: A Time of Joy?

by Anthony Barnes

For some Molesey families that had lost loved ones, the parties must have been bittersweet events; and across Europe, the hardships from the War were still far from over. The Second World War did not finally end until the surrender of Japan which occasioned a second wave of victory street parties in September and Molesey had its fair share!



Who do you recognise in this photograph of the Pemberton Road party? Christian Nielson is sitting at the head of the table. Ron Hicks remembers "Yes! I was there, I'm the boy with the 'ears' just below the lady with the hat just in from the right-hand side." We have put some more photographs of street parties in the Gallery section of our website.

***Homemade Floodlights Brighten VE Day's Varied Festivities
Surrey Comet, Saturday 12 May, 1945***

'With fairy lamps and home-made floodlights, bonfires, singing and dancing, Molesey lived up to the spirit of VE Day.

Cigarette Island lent itself well to a huge bonfire and jollifications.

West Molesey seemed to be the most active part of the district as regarded street tea parties, but generally the whole area came out strongly with flags and bunting, Walton Road being especially prolific in fairy lamp illumination. In Grange Road, West Molesey, singing and dancing by the light of a huge bonfire was kept up into the small hours.

For the thanksgiving services at the churches there were large congregations.

People of Ember Farm Way, East Molesey, had their own excellent idea of impressing VE Day on the children.

Tables loaded with goodies were set in the road and 50 young guests from Ember Farm Way and Ember Farm Avenue, waited on by Mrs. S.D. Bumstead, who originated the scheme, and many helpers, did full justice to the spread. Major Walter Meade said grace.

Following tea were sports in an adjacent field and each child had a present. Later on there was a huge bonfire, and fireworks, some home-made, were produced by Mr. F. Smith. These were a great success, especially as they were the first ever seen by some of the children.

Ices were provided during the festivities. Helpers included Mr. and Mrs. Worsfold, Mr. and Mrs. Wright, Mrs. Glanville, Mr. and Mrs. Voles, and Mr. W.D. Rogers.

Disabled men and nurses, over 70 in number, were entertained at a VE Day party at Molesey by the local district branch of the Lest We Forget Association. Local men and others from hospitals and homes were given refreshments and smokes on arrival. They were entertained by a London concert party until tea time, when a full meal was served to all.'

Please get in touch with your memories of the VE and VJ Day parties in the Moleseys.

Email: people-buildings@moleseyhistorysociety.org

or post on our Facebook page:

<https://en-gb.facebook.com/pages/category/Community/Molesey-Local-History-Society-355914481102053/>).

BBC Radio Surrey

The Society were asked by BBC Radio Surrey to send them a one-minute piece about the history of Molesey. After some discussion of how we could possibly encapsulate all of our history in sixty seconds, we opted for explaining where Molesey is, the impact of its topography - being surrounded by three rivers - and the origins of its name. You could hear it, together with one minute pieces from loads of other villages around Surrey, on BBC Radio Surrey's breakfast programme this Saturday 2 May, from 6am. The information we have is that our piece will be on at around 7.40am. Or you could wake up at a more civilised time and catch it later in the day at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p08b5982>.

Future Programme

Planning for the future has more or less become a thing of the past, but your committee has been meeting online to discuss possibilities. As you know, we have had to postpone our Clore Centre talk by Anita Anand in May, and also Michael Miller in June. We are still hopeful that we can enjoy our Summer Stroll at the end of July, and Roger Hoad has finalised plans for it, but we will let you know nearer the time if this is possible. In the meantime, we are planning to carry on sending short newsletters and maps of past summer strolls to keep you in touch with our lovely historic surroundings.

Future History

As those of you who experienced the 1968 floods will know, the people of Molesey have a history of coming together to help each other when times are tough. From the clap for the NHS to the WhatsApp groups set up to help the vulnerable, we swung into action to do what we can to make sure that everyone is looked after and included. Many isolated individuals are having more contact with others than before as we try and make sure everyone has what they need. There are groups sewing laundry bags, headbands and scrubs for NHS workers, donations of food and money for the Foodbank and vulnerable children.

We thought that we should try and capture this unique period in history by collecting photographs and experiences, so that they are there for the interest of future generations. Some of you will be putting these on social media. The Society would like to start collecting photographs, video and personal accounts of your experiences during this time. The plan is to keep these and, maybe in the not-too-distant future, put them together for a meeting, so they can be shared. In any case, they will be there for future generations. We are not going to share them until normal life has resumed. Please only send in material (including photographs) for which you, and any others involved, give clear permission to share it with others, by publishing in our Newsletter or other means including digitally.

Email: historysociety@btinternet.com

The Museum of London is also conducting a similar project 'Collecting Covid', collecting objects and experiences of this time <https://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/discover/museum-for-london-collecting-covid>.

60 YEARS AGO - THE MOLESEY REVIEW - February and March 1960

February Review

In the February Review, James Williams, a local historian and the ex-headmaster of the junior boys' school in Park Road, remembered the centenary of the opening of two East Molesey schools, one founded by St Mary's Church and the other by St Paul's Church. St Mary's School opened on 14th January 1860. The Surrey Comet described the opening as follows:

"This joyous event took place on Tuesday last, when East Molesey was in much bustle and stir to do honour to the great occasion."

The school, which was originally a Mixed and Infants' School, was built in the precincts of the Priory Manor Farmhouse. To the east of the farm, a new road, which became known as School Road, was cut to give access to the school. The total cost of building the school, including the cost of the land, was £825.

Mr Williams said that the early records of St Paul's School could not be traced but circumstantial evidence showed that the school was also opened early in 1860, probably in January. The school was built on three building plots in Park Road, and it too was initially a Mixed and Infants' School. The cost of building the school was £665; the Government contributed £211 and the National Society gave £16.

To help defray the cost of building both schools, the Parish Almshouses were sold for about £230, of which £130 was given to St Mary's and the rest to St Paul's. Both schools were built "for the children of the poor". People who did not fall within that description were expected to provide for their children's own education. However, in 1860 there was no compulsory education. Education was not made compulsory until the Education Act 1880 became law, making school attendance compulsory for children between the ages of five and ten.

March Review

The March Review reported the retirement of Mr F. C. Kent who had sold his chemist's business at 104 Walton Road. The business had been established by Mr Kent's grandfather, Mr F. W. Kent, in premises known as 1 Walton Place, now Walton Road. After his grandfather's death, the business was carried on by his father, Mr W. H. P. Kent, who built the premises at 104 Walton Road and moved the business there in 1894. A sub-post office known as Molesey Park Post Office was incorporated in the business until 1915, when it closed. Mr F. C. Kent took over the business on the death of his father and by the time that he retired in 1960 the business had been in the continuous ownership of the same family for over 90 years.

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