

Membership

Because we are still unable to hold meetings as usual and have no idea at present when this will be possible, we have decided to leave the membership subscription at £7 per annum for this year and for 2022. Members who renewed their membership in 2020 will remain members until the end of 2021 and will not be asked to pay a subscription this year.

We normally hold our AGM at the end of January or the beginning of February, but under the provisions of our constitution we are only obliged to hold it by the end of June. We have decided to postpone our AGM this year in the hope that we shall be able to meet in person before the end of June.

Forthcoming Events – Zoom Meetings and Coffee Mornings

Please note: the link, meeting ID and password for all the following Zoom events are as follows:-

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2125656313?pwd=ZTI1Y2JaZFpqR2dMa1o1OTlwdXVDZz09>

Meeting ID: 212 565 6313

Passcode: 009348

Wednesday 20th January 2021 at 8 p.m.

Victorian Life: Upstairs and Downstairs - Zoom Talk by Judy Hill

In 1851 there were over a million servants in Britain. This illustrated lecture draws on letters, diaries and autobiographies and provides a vivid insight into the day-to-day lives of country and town house servants. The lecture will also explain how the Victorian household operated with a large army of servants.

Judy is a freelance lecturer and researcher based in Surrey and previously taught history at the University of Surrey.

Zoom Coffee Morning

Wednesday 10th February 2021 at 10.30 a.m.

The History of Boat Building on Platt's Eyot - Presentation by Roger Haile and Roger Day



Located opposite Hurst Park, Platt's Eyot is just one of the islands on the Molesey reach and has a rich and interesting history, some of which will be covered in the presentation. The island was originally a typical eyot used for growing osiers but, in the 1860s, boat building began on the island, when Tom Tagg built a boatyard, which was later taken over by Moritz Immisch and then Thorneycroft.

Tuesday 16th March 2021 at 8 p.m.

'Down The Drain'

An Illustrated Talk - by Ray Elmitt via Zoom

One of the most down-to-earth problems facing local communities in the second half of the 19th century was how to deal with the human waste generated by their ever-growing populations. It was a topic that occupied huge numbers of column inches in newspapers and fuelled lively and sometimes bitter debate. How did such an unprepossessing issue come to force itself centre-stage in the attention of so many worthy and capable local politicians? This talk will reveal how Molesey found itself the centre of attention for the whole Lower Thames Valley area, how it escaped unscathed and how it eventually solved its own local problem - with a solution which is still operating to this day.

Ray is a local historian who has written several books on the history of Hampton Wick.

Thursday 22nd April 2021 at 8 p.m.
In the Footsteps of the Impressionists
Zoom Talk by Michael Robinson

This talk concentrates on Alfred Sisley, perhaps the least known of the Impressionists and yet the only one who stayed loyal to the aesthetic qualities of Impressionism for his whole career. In the summer of 1874 Sisley came to stay in East Molesey. Here he captured the essence of leisurely life on the upper reaches of the River Thames.

Michael is an art historian and London Blue Badge Tourist Guide.

The Gentleman's Magazine: A Panorama of Georgian Surrey for Family and Local Historians
Talk by Julian Pooley of Surrey History Centre
Via Zoom on Tuesday 24th November 2020
Report by Claire Annable and Jenny Wood

In November, we were treated to a talk by Julian Pooley from Surrey History Centre on the history of The Gentleman's Magazine, a monthly magazine founded by Edward Cave in 1731. Cave used the magazine to provide a monthly 'bouquet' of articles that had been published in numerous publications around the country, presenting his readers with an easily digested overview of the political life of the country and a handy almanac of information, covering such things as crop prices, weather reports, births, marriages and deaths, civil, ecclesiastical and military appointments, crimes and bankruptcies along with readers' own ideas, thoughts and inventions.



Extract from the front page of The Gentleman's Magazine January 1731

The illustration of St John's Gate depicted Cave's home, which was in effect the Magazine's office. To either side of the illustration were lists of publications from which articles had been taken.

Cave edited the Magazine under the pen name 'Sylvanus Urban'.

The magazine succeeded because it was an effective means of communication and its popularity was ensured by its readiness to include contributions from its readers. By 1754, 94% of the content of the magazine was contributed by its readers. The magazine had a monthly print run of over 10,000 copies.



The magazine understood the public's desire to hear lurid stories. In 1767, it reported the case of Elizabeth Brownrigg, a midwife who lived in Fetter Lane in the City of London. Brownrigg took female apprentices from the Foundling Hospital and subjected them to sadistic physical abuse; she suspended them naked from wooden beams in her kitchen before whipping them. Her neighbours eventually raised concerns with the Foundling Hospital and, when her property was searched, girls were found starving and dying in the cellars and cupboards. Brownrigg was charged with murder, convicted and executed.

Each month, the magazine contained a list of convicted criminals. At Kingston Assizes in March 1733, William Sweet and Philip Wilkinson were found guilty of sacrilege, having cut off the gold tassels and lace from the cushion and pulpit of Kingston Church. They were executed at Kennington Common on 11th April 1733. However, not all convicted criminals were executed. Some were transported and others were sent to the Surrey House of Correction in Southwark.

There were various reports relating to Molesey over the years, such as:

The bankruptcy in 1764 of John Pearce, a victualler.

The appointment in 1796 of Thomas Sutton of Molesey as the High Sherriff of Surrey.

A report sent in by Walter Bowman in 1753 detailing an earthquake in March 1750, which he felt at his East Molesey home. However, Julian thought that what Mr Bowman felt was more likely to have been caused by an explosion at a gunpowder mill than an earthquake.

A number of reports of explosions at the Molesey gunpowder mills with detailed accounts of the fatalities sustained, for example, on 19th October 1754, The Dust House belonging to Mr Norman's gunpowder mill at Molesey blew up and killed a man who was barrelling up the gunpowder. The building was reported as being blown into a thousand pieces and the man's body as being blown limb from limb. The explosion shook buildings over an area of several miles, including Hampton Court Palace.

Several references to sporting activities on Molesey Hurst, for example, in June 1783, Mr Betterton of Shepperton died as a result of his breastbone being fractured by a blow from a cricket ball while playing on the Hurst, in May 1785 Mr Sadler and a young gentleman of fortune made a balloon flight from the Hurst and in October 1816 there was a report of a boxing match on the Hurst between Turner and Curtis which ended with Curtis dying, having becoming disabled after fighting for an hour and 28 minutes, and Turner being tried and found guilty of manslaughter at the Old Bailey.

In 1778, John Nichols became the editor of the magazine. He continued the move away from reprinted articles which had begun during Cave's lifetime and increasingly sought original articles. Nichols also gave obituaries a central place in the magazine. Through the obituary columns of the Gentleman's Magazine and various biographical works which Nichols based on them, a body of biographical work was created which later formed the basis of the Dictionary of National Biography.

Death notices had always appeared in the magazine and often gave interesting facts about the deceased, for example John Villet who died at Molesey in 1769 was described as being famous for raising pines (pineapples), Mr Pettit who died at Molesey in 1771 was referred to as master gardener at Hampton Court to King George I and William Duckett who died at Esher in 1801 was stated to be the inventor of the drill plough.

The Gentleman's Magazine is an important source of information for historians and in many cases, references in the magazine are the only record that we have today of certain events. The Gentleman's Magazine continued in a number of guises until it finally ceased publication in 1922.

Report of Zoom Coffee Morning – 10th December 2020 Pemberton Road Virtual Christmas Stroll

Our stroll on Zoom attracted well over 30 walkers. It's amazing how quickly we've adapted to this way of meeting (with a big thank you to Dave Jupp). Starting at the Walton Road end, we 'walked' up the west side admiring the architecture of the mid-Victorian cottages and villas and the striking new homes designed by Michael Jones Architects on the site of George Alderton's premises.



Anthony Barnes sketched the history of the Westminster Freehold Land Society which bought the land on which Pemberton Road is built from Francis Jackson Kent. Norma Millard took over to tell the story of those who lost loved ones in both World Wars. Norma's grandmother died when a V1 flying bomb exploded in the road in August 1944. Turning back down the east side of Pemberton Road, Anthony showed photographs of the second cottage hospital, the Hampton Court Laundry and the 1968 floods as well as talking about some of the notable figures who gave so much to the community in the course of their lives.

A lively discussion followed with members sharing their memories of Pemberton Road. If you missed the coffee morning and would like to know more, you can watch the talk on YouTube using this link: <https://youtu.be/zJ5-rR1i2N0> (Photo: Hampton Court Laundry c. 1960 - courtesy John Sheaf collection)

'Proud to be Part of This' – Help us Make History

by Jill Wilkins

A nationwide survey, 'Proud to be Part of This', has been launched to record and research the efforts of volunteers during the pandemic to make protective garments, such as scrubs, masks and visors for the NHS and care settings. This survey is being coordinated by Meta Zimmeck and Colin Rochester of the Voluntary Action History Society through their 'Practical Wisdom' consultancy <http://www.practicalwisdomr2z.co.uk/>. Meta and Colin are expert researchers and authors with many years' experience of studying volunteering, voluntary organisations and social policy.

An army of volunteers all over the country, including fundraisers, needleworkers, 3D printers, couriers, administrators, and many more, worked mostly from their homes to contribute their skills to meet a national need.



As local examples, between 7 April and 24 August 2020, Sewing4Kingston <https://sewing4kingston.surbitonccrg.org> made 40,070 items for NHS and care settings and is still sewing scrubs for the rollout of the vaccine. Our small group, MoleseyScrubs, led by the instructor of the Henrietta Parker needlework class and working from St Paul's Parish Room, contributed 66 pairs of medical grade scrubs to the Kingston Hospital volunteer effort at the height of the pandemic in April. (Photo: Mei-Wen Wang-Gilges, needlework instructor, and Sheelagh Heugh in the Parish Room cutting scrubs)

The survey: "Proud to be part of this": Voluntary action and the making of PPE for health and social care in a time of pandemic, can be accessed here <https://kent.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/ppe-and-voluntary-action>. It should only take 15-20 minutes to complete.

It is only through working on the Society's special projects, such as the 1968 Floods, that I became aware of how much contemporary testimony can bring history to life. The pandemic will undoubtedly be a subject for historians for years to come and, if not captured and recorded now, this story of volunteers working in their homes will not gain the recognition it deserves.

'This survey will be priceless for future historians because, in this age of fake social media and algorithms dictating what we read, it will be the accounts of people at the heart of helping and healing that will be needed for the real history books'. – Carole Hawkins, MoleseyScrubs, responding to the survey.

If you (or anyone you know) made a contribution to this national effort, no matter how small, this is your chance to tell your story and make sure that it becomes part of the history of the pandemic. Please pass on this information and help us make history. If you want to know more, please contact me on historysociety@btinternet.com or 020 8979 3465.

Elmbridge Museum Exhibition on Historic High Streets

Elmbridge Museum's next exhibition, 'Historic High Streets', will be opening at the Civic Centre in Esher from March 2021. The exhibition will look at the changing identities of high streets across the borough, as well as the people who have influenced them, from the 1950s, 60s and 70s up until the present day.



The Museum would be grateful for contributions from the local community in any form - oral or written memories, photographs, home videos, recordings, artwork, posters or objects. If you have anything relating to any of the 'high' streets of Molesey (Bridge Road, Walton Road and High Street) from the 1950s onwards, the Museum would be very pleased to hear from you. The Museum is intending to make this a community-curated exhibition and one which supports and raises awareness of the work of local businesses.

If you would like to take part, you can contact the Museum on 01372 474568 or by email: ebcmuseum@elmbridge.gov.uk The closing date for submissions is 21st January 2021. However, we appreciate that this does not give you much time, and the Museum has therefore said that it can be flexible with submissions coming in slightly after the official closing date, provided that they are received before 1st February. (Photo: Bridge Road, East Molesey 1978 - copyright John Eagle)

Produced by:
Molesey Local History Society
moleseyhistorysociety.org