

MALDENS AND COOMBE HERITAGE SOCIETY

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 27th APRIL 2016

AT NEW MALDEN BAPTIST CHURCH

Mary, greeted all members (43)

There were apologies for absence from Pam and Alan Vincent, Judith Caddy, Alan Oakley, Cathy Reed, Ann Robinson, Kathleen Coyne, and Dick Riches

There were two potential new members as students James Giles and Peter Hunt

The minutes of the last meeting were taken as read and signed, and will appear on the website at a later date.

Mary thanked the church for the use of their meeting place, and for their catering facilities

It was put to the membership by Mary that it would be a good idea that Membership should be open to students in full time education between the ages of 16-18. This would foster a new generation of those with interest in local history. On a show of hands, the membership was in full agreement and both James and Peter were welcomed.

We were then given a very entertaining talk on the History of Dentistry by Brian Williams of the Lindsay Society. He told us that the museum in London contained 30,000 items covering 11,000 years of dentistry. The oldest item was a Neolithic tooth, but the first evidence of dentistry was from the Mayan civilization from 7000 BC later around 800 AD they drilled holes and inserted stones such as jade into the teeth. All this was pre-anaesthetic. The first type of drill was a bow similar to apparatus used to make fire. Hieroglyphics dated 2600 also showed primitive dentistry. The Etruscans constructed a bridge with artificial teeth 5000 years ago.

Originally tooth decay was thought to be caused by tooth worms and this belief persisted in such countries as China Egypt and India. Brian told us the reason you never saw a portrait of monarchs such as Elizabeth 1 smiling was because she had terrible teeth. The majority of problems with teeth in Elizabethan times was caused by poor living conditions, an abrasive diet, and a high amount of sugar in the food of the wealthy, and of course there was no dental treatment. We were shown a pair of replica roman forceps which were used to pull out teeth with a yank.

Later at some local fairs there would be a travelling tooth puller but he would have had difficulty knowing which tooth to pull. Failing that the village sometimes acted as a makeshift dentist, but in major towns you could start seeing a tooth puller or drawer, who would use tools called pelicans (as they resembled the shape of a pelican beak which removed the tooth sideways in a painful extraction.

Facial abscesses were often fatal, and Brian produced a list of fatalities for August 1665 with the figure of death from illnesses of the teeth amounting to 121.

In the 1700s Pierre Fauchard known as the father of modern dentistry produced a book called "The Surgeon Dentist" the first book about the subject. He correctly identified sugar acid as the prime cause of tooth decay in 1728. The 1700s also saw the beginning of tooth transplants which could result with a child being offered a shilling for one of their teeth which could end up costing the recipient 10 guineas.

Human teeth became a prize asset to be bought and sold. Grave robbers could make today's equivalent of £10,000 a night by stealing teeth from corpses. These grisly trophies from the dead were used to make lifelike dentures. The fad reached fever pitch in 1815 when 50,000 men died at the Battle of Waterloo. The sound of gunfire had barely subsided before scavengers arrived on the battlefield to pull out the teeth of the dead and dying. They flooded the market so even the toothless middle classes could afford new teeth.

Fans were used not only for flirtations but also to hide mouth odours. Madame Le Brun a portrait painter caused a minor scandal when she produced a self-portrait showing her smiling, and revealing her teeth.

Extractions were becoming easier as tooth keys were produced. These were modelled after a door key. It was inserted into the mouth then its "claw" would be tightened over a tooth. The instrument was rotated to loosen the tooth. This often resulted in the tooth breaking, causing jaw fractures and soft tissue damage. By the 1850s new forceps had been produced together with anaesthetic that worked. Vulcanite rubber dentures were also manufactured. After the 2nd World War local anaesthetic was developed and nowadays a dentist would probably use a luxator to gently remove a tooth from its socket.

Brian was thanked for his enlightening talk and the various instruments he brought along for the members to examine.

We then had a discussion on what shops the members remembered between Kings Road and Blagdon Road, and also between Cambridge Road and Sussex Road., but not much information was forthcoming.

The announce of the winner of the Town Pride Award was made by Robin. In third place was the Burhani Craftsmen with 25 votes, second was Pengilly's Shoe Repairers with 26 votes, and in first place was Suttles Of Malden with 34 votes. Congratulations were given to Liz and Don who were present at the meeting.

In AOB Robin mentioned that Julian was giving a talk to the Friends of Kingston Museum and Heritage Service at the museum on Thursday 5th May and all members would be welcome but should book beforehand. He also mentioned that the Waitrose store website (New Malden) had been updated with a history provided by an article from the Village Voice. He also asked for details of any pill boxes from the Second World War in the Malden area, and Tim stated there had been one at Coombe near the top of Traps Lane.

The meeting closed with the next one planned for Wednesday 11th May.

