

## Then and Now 5 - Moulsey Hurst / Hurst Park

**Moulsey Hurst - 1780**



**Hurst Park - 2015**



*Top Picture - Moulsey Hurst (Unknown artist -English Style) 1780 © MCC*

*The painting of Cricket at Moulsey Hurst, painted in about 1780, was until the 1980's thought to be by Richard Wilson (see Then and Now 3 - Marble Hill House). It is now thought that the claim of Wilson as the artist could have been a forgery. It may have been an existing landscape with the cricket figures added later. The artist or artists are unknown, it now described as being in the style of the "English School". The painting is currently hung in the Committee Dining Room at Lord's Cricket Ground and is owned by Marylebone Cricket Club.*

Look at both pictures and find these comparative details:

### **Cricket at Moulsey Hurst - 1780**

1: The painting depicts the start of First Class cricket in England. It is of historic importance for anyone interested in cricket but it also gives us a view of the River Thames in the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century. First class cricket matches are between the top County sides and are still played today. The match in the painting, between the counties of Surrey and London, took place on Moulsey Hurst in Surrey in 1723. It was the first, First Class cricket match, ever recorded. Moulsey Hurst was an open space on the south bank of the River Thames, just outside London, in the County of Surrey. The view is northwards, across the river to the village of Hampton on the north bank of the Thames. Looking from left to right you can see some tall houses, the tower of St Mary's Church, with a flag flying from the tower. To the right of the trees can just be made out a small building with a dome shaped roof and a large house overlooking the river. The house is Garrick's Villa, a country house built for the actor and manager of Drury Lane Theatre, David Garrick (1717-1779), the dome shaped building is Garrick's temple, a tribute to William Shakespeare. Just to the right of Garrick's Villa is a weeping willow tree and a small green mound. It is hard to tell from the picture but this was probably Garrick's Ait (pronounced eight), a small uninhabited island in the Thames opposite his Villa. Finally on the far right is another large house, the home of Nell Gwynne,



### *Golf in 1520 (British Library)*

2: King James VI (of Scotland) united the English and Scottish thrones in 1603 after the death of Queen Elizabeth I. He grew up in Scotland at Stirling Castle, only 50 miles from the Old Links golf course at St Andrew's, where golf had been played since the early 15<sup>th</sup> Century. When James VI also became James I (of England) in 1603 he came down to London to live at Hampton Court Palace. He brought his golf clubs with him from Scotland. Looking for a large open space to play golf he found Moulsey Hurst, only 1 mile upstream from Hampton Court Palace. He could have used Bushey Park next to the Palace but that was an enclosed deer park so may not have been suitable with deer getting in the way. He played golf on Moulsey Hurst in what was probably the first game of golf in England. He may also have played golf in Greenwich Park and at Westminster.

3: The 1780 painting was, until recently was thought to be by one of the first British Landscape artists, Richard Wilson. He painted Marble Hill House in 1770 and was still alive in 1780, so the period is correct. However, the style of this painting does not match the subtlety of the colouring in his Marble Hill House painting. It is possibly a forgery in the "English Style" with the cricket figures added to an ordinary landscape at a later date.

### **Photograph - 2015 - Hurst Park and Hampton**

1: Moulsey Hurst has now become Hurst Park, in East Molesey, Surrey. It has a very strong historic sporting connection. Hurst Park is now an open space on the banks of the River Thames, with Surrey on the southern bank and Hampton, in Greater London on the northern bank. At the time of the painting Hampton was not in London but in the County of Middlesex. In 1964 Middlesex disappeared and Hampton became part of the London Borough of Richmond, one of the outer London boroughs. Cricket is still played nearby by East Molesey Cricket Club, on the banks of the Thames in Graburn Way, East Molesey.

2; The view, northwards, across the Thames from Hurst Park towards Hampton is still very recognisable today as being the spot where that game of cricket was played almost 300 years ago. The photo is from a similar spot but slightly closer to the river bank. Looking at the buildings in Hampton, from left to right, we can still see some tall houses, then an even larger triple fronted building that today is the Bell Inn. Next is the church of St Mary's, with its distinct tall tower with four corner pediments. The island of Garrick's Ait is still there in the far right of the photo, The island now has bungalows rather than a grassy mound. The domed roof of Garrick's temple can just be seen to the left of the wooden bungalow on Garrick's Ait. Garrick's Temple is sometimes open to the public.





*Garrick's Temple in Hampton*

3: Hurst Park has many historic sporting connections other than the first game of golf in England and first game of First Class cricket in England. From about 1872 until 1962 it was also used as Hurst Park Racecourse for running horse races. The land was sold off in 1963 to create housing and some left as an open space. The only evidence left that this was a race course are the huge iron gates and brick plinths in Graburn Way, East Molesey, near East Molesey Cricket Club and Molesey Boat Club. These gates, near the start of the course, closed the road to allow horses to have a longer straight. Hurst Park was also used to stage boxing matches and archery tournaments in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. There was a golf course in the middle of the race course from about 1907 until 1939.



*The race course gates in Graburn Way, East Molesey*