



PRESIDENT: Lionel Green

VICE PRESIDENTS: Viscountess Hanworth, Eric Montague and William Rudd

BULLETIN NO. 168

CHAIR: Dr Tony Scott

DECEMBER 2008

left: 'Surrey
Yeomenry
making cut one
4th Division'

These early
19th-century
prints (the
years are
illegible) are a
reminder of the
volunteer
troops raised in
Surrey to meet
the threat of a
Napoleonic
invasion. See
these pictures
in colour on the
cover of *Coal
and Calico!*

right: 'Merton
Light Infantry
Draw Ramrod'

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PROGRAMME DECEMBER-MARCH



Saturday 6 December 2.30pm

Raynes Park Library Hall

‘The History of Scotland Yard’

This promises to be a fascinating talk by **Maggie Bird**, head of the Metropolitan Police Historical Collection.

Saturday 31 January 2.30pm

Snuff Mill Centre

‘Kingston upon Thames - 800 Years as a Royal Borough’

There are only three Royal Boroughs, and Kingston is the oldest of them.

Jill Lamb, who is the Kingston Borough Archivist, is the speaker.

Saturday 28 February 2.30pm

Snuff Mill Centre

‘Recent Excavations at Bermondsey Abbey’

Bermondsey’s Cluniac priory, founded late in the 11th century, was made an abbey in 1399, and played a part in national affairs until its dissolution. **Alistair Douglas** is the speaker.

Wednesday 4 March Annual Dinner

See enclosed slip

Saturday 28 March 2.30pm

Raynes Park Library Hall

‘Archaeology in London over the Centuries’

Nathalie Cohen is team leader for the Thames Discovery Programme (archaeology of the Thames foreshore), and is also Cathedral Archaeologist for Southwark Cathedral. Her presentation will explore the development of the archaeology profession and the growth in understanding of London’s archaeology.

Raynes Park Library hall is on or close to several bus routes and near the station.

Very limited parking. Please enter the hall via the Aston Road entrance.

To reach the Snuff Mill Centre in Morden Hall Park, from the garden centre car-park cross the bridge between the café and the garden centre, go through the gateway, and turn right along the main path, which leads to the Snuff Mill Centre. Morden Hall Road is served by many bus routes.

Please note that numbers are limited at this venue.



DAVID HAUNTON changes some details.

THE FIRST RAID ON MERTON: AMENDMENTS

I only discovered a new source for the effects of this raid after *Bulletin* 166, containing ‘Part 2 : Where the Bombs Fell’, had gone to press. That source is the ‘List of Civilian War Dead’ maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. Comparison of the List with my previous evidence gave the amendments set out here.

In the West

At least one bomb did hit the Bradbury Wilkinson works, as a man injured there later died of his injuries.

The bomb falling between Barnard Gardens and Belmont Avenue landed in the back garden of 28 Barnard Gardens, killing a woman.

In the East

One of the two bombs south-west of the Pincott Road – Nelson Grove Road junction hit a house called Poplar Place (next to the Nelson Saw Mills) and killed Mr Carter who ran a tree-felling business from there.

Two women are recorded as having been killed at 4 and 6 Nelson Grove Road, near Abbey Road. However, no bomb is marked there on the summary map. Perhaps a bomb-site was mis-plotted, or perhaps the two ladies were in the street or at work (the Omega Lamp and Brett’s Packaging firms were close by) and where they died was mis-recorded. This last is the more likely, as we know that Caroline Bond died in her caravan south of High Path, but the List records her death at 2A Nelson Grove Road.

Two people were killed at Liberty’s works, despite what Bill Rudd was told. Maybe his colleagues thought it best not to burden a young lad with such knowledge.

Finally, the man who was caught outside the air-raid shelter in Nelson Gardens was Mr James Cullen, not Mr William Eaton as I stated. (Mr Eaton, the ambulance man, died in a later incident, in 1944.) My apologies to both their families.

VISIT TO WATERPERRY GARDENS AND SULGRAVE MANOR

The weather forecast for Saturday 5 July was not good, but in the event the Kilsbys worked their usual magic and our coach-load of MHS and WEA (Sanderstead and Selsdon) members had sunshine as well as sights and scenery to enjoy.

Waterperry Gardens, Oxfordshire, began its existence early in the 1930s, as a school of horticulture for ladies. Today the eight acres of landscaped ornamental grounds offer inspiration to gardeners or simply a tranquil and beautiful place in which to wander and relax. A shady stretch of the little River Thame forms part of its boundary. There are handsome herbaceous borders, a waterlily canal, an alpine garden and abundant apple and pear trees. The small museum of country life opened ahead of schedule just for us. Here the extremely knowledgeable volunteer on duty happily answered questions about the well presented and well labelled exhibits, which included such diverse objects as fearsome hedge trimmers, which looked like huge hair clippers, a variety of ingenious explosive bird-scarers and anti-poacher devices – and a humbug cutter.

The ‘small rustic church of great charm’ (Pevsner), dedicated to St Mary the Virgin, has a quaint wooden tower and retains a Saxon chancel arch, partly filled in by a 14th-century one. There is a palimpsest (re-used) brass, which belonged originally (1440) to a London church. It was removed and re-engraved in 1532, to commemorate Walter Curson and his wife Isabel in an Oxford church, and was finally transferred to Waterperry. Stained glass figures of the Cursons and their children (*right*) are a further reminder of the family, who made local benefactions. The attractive Waterperry House close by is stuccoed and has a balustraded parapet. According to Pevsner it dates from the 17th century, but was largely rebuilt in the next century, and remodelled *c.*1820.



We then rejoined our coach to cross the border into Northamptonshire. Sulgrave Manor was built in 1540 by wool-stapler Lawrence Washington (*c.*1599-1583/4), mayor of Northampton, who was the great-great-great-great-great-grandfather of George Washington, first president of the United States. It was George’s great-grandfather John Washington who emigrated to Virginia in 1656. Three years later the house was sold out of the Washington family. While George himself, of course, never visited, it was interesting to see the Washington family arms above the main entrance (*right*) – three mullets (stars) and two bars (stripes). Is this really the origin of the American flag’s design?



Sulgrave was purchased in 1914 to mark a century of peace between Britain and America and to be a sort of shrine to the friendship between the nations. Both British and American money paid for the purchase, the refurbishment, and the endowment which secures its future.

The house is much smaller than it once was, in spite of a wing added in the 1920s by architect Sir Reginald Blomfield. However, much of the remaining fabric dates from the time of the 16th-century builder, though the pretty staircase with twisted balusters is somewhat later, and the 18th-century kitchen was transported, with all its fittings and equipment, from a house in Hampshire. The stone-flagged Great Hall has a splendid fireplace, above which hangs a fine original oil portrait of George Washington. Also downstairs is an 18th-century oak-panelled parlour. Of the bedrooms the largest is the Great Chamber, floored with exceptionally wide oak boards and housing an Elizabethan bedstead. This now has modern hangings embroidered in the Tudor tradition with motifs taken from the frame of an unusual mirror of that period in one corner of the room. They include tame and wild animals, mythical beasts, flowers, and mermaids. Each motif has been stitched onto the green velvet draperies. The team of British and American volunteers recently completed this huge task, which was begun in 1995.

Thousands of schoolchildren visit Sulgrave Manor every year to explore life in the past. There is a George Washington Exhibition in a separate building, and the recent (1999) courtyard range of buildings, which harmonises pleasantly with the old house, provides shop, café, lavatories and a function room. The grounds include a herb garden, a knot garden, formal plantings and an orchard.

This was an interesting and varied trip, which was enjoyed by all, and for which once again we thank Pat and Ray Kilsby.

Judith Goodman

VISIT TO THE WELLCOME COLLECTION

Sir Henry Wellcome (1853-1936) was a manufacturing chemist, entrepreneur, philanthropist, patron of science, pioneer of air photography, and avid collector of anything vaguely connected with healing and medicine. He was born in the Midwest of America, trained as a pharmacist, and, together with his partner Silas Burroughs, founded the first company to sell tablets (then called 'tabloids') in England. As he prospered, he funded medical education and research, and established the Wellcome Foundation. The Institute in Euston Road now houses some of his collection of over a million items. The first permanent display opened in 2007 and was visited by around 20 members on 7 August, where we were given conducted tours of two sections of the collection by two knowledgeable and entertaining guides, Kelly and Chris.

From a greetings card from Wellcome Collection

The first section ('Medicine Man') started with medical glassware, and chairs for birthing, dentistry and torture. Kelly gave us a brief history of the man and his collection, and highlighted a few of the many items on display. These included masks for medicine men from Sri Lanka and elsewhere, a 'scold's bridle' for silencing a nagging wife, artificial limbs of many kinds, surgical instruments, paintings of medical procedures including dentistry and midwifery, cutaway models of the human body, and archaeological exhibits, including a trepanned skull from 2000BC. Under the heading of 'Treating Yourself' we found Napoleon's toothbrush, snuff containers of exotic shapes and sizes, and a 'tobacco resuscitation kit' for injecting tobacco fumes into drowning people (and not via their mouths), to mention but a few of the fascinating and sometimes gruesome items.

The second section ('Medicine Now') looked at three specific areas of modern medicine. First was the Human Genome Project, which was partly funded by the Wellcome Foundation. This maps the human DNA via the base-pair sequences in the 23 chromosomes (1-22 and X/Y). There were huge bound volumes for each chromosome, in tiny print consisting only of the letters A C G T in infinitely varied combinations. Among the useful(?) facts relayed by Chris were that only 2% of the information was apparently significant; that the entire DNA chain for one cell would stretch six feet if unwound; and that human DNA is 80% the same as that of a banana!

Secondly there was a display on malaria, which illustrated the different types, methods of inhibiting the spread of the disease, and the use of drugs, including the impact of counterfeit drugs on the poorer nations.

Lastly there was a section on that most topical disease: obesity. Pride of place was given to a grotesque statue of an enormously fat man (or woman – it was impossible to tell). A glass cabinet displayed the many 'cures' for obesity, for example patent foods, liposuction, obesity pills, 'healthy' vs. 'standard' portions, and gastric bands. There was also a ceiling-high bookcase of over 600 diet books, including a copy of the world's first, *A Letter on Corpulence* by William Banting, from 1863. Chris highlighted the display of labour-saving devices, including an electric toothbrush, TV remote controls and an automatic lawnmower, to save us from the least exertion in our daily lives, and hence contributing to our waistlines. In addition there was a life-size 'body slice' of a woman, displaying all the internal structures and organs.

This concluded the formal conducted tour, but many members went on to look at the temporary exhibitions, including skeletons unearthed from different parts of London (one from Merton priory) and crystal structure designs from the 1951 Festival of Britain. Altogether it was a fascinating collection of items, well displayed and with many curiosities not to be found elsewhere.

Desmond Bazley

SURVEY OF LONDON

Many members will be interested to know that English Heritage, with the Institute of Historical Research, has made the *Survey of London* series available, free of charge, via the Institute's British History Online website, which is

www.british-history.ac.uk/surveyoflondon

MERTON PARK WALK

This event was to have been led by Judith Goodman. When unexpected illness prevented her from fulfilling her commitment **CLIVE WHICHELOW** very kindly stepped into the breach. Not only that, he has written the following report. Thank you and thank you, Clive! JG

Wednesday 17 September was a dull grey day threatening rain, which wasn't ideal for a guided walk around Merton Park as part of the Celebrating Age festival. But 20 of us, armed with raincoats and umbrellas, met at the war memorial and started our tour inside the church. Lorna Cowell had very kindly offered to give a short history of St Mary's and to point out items of interest in the building, including the hatchments of Nelson, Rear Admiral Isaac Smith and Sir William Hamilton; the memorials for the Smith family and Sir Gregory Lovell; and the Edward Burne-Jones stained glass windows.

We then walked along Church Path after talking briefly about old Church House and its various incarnations as family home, children's workhouse, and school, and looked at the 200-year-old cottages, and the 300-year-old one, before arriving at Mostyn Road. Here we took in John Innes Park, which will be 100 years old next year, and Merton Cottage, one of the area's oldest buildings.

We then went on to John Innes's Manor House in Watery Lane, which is now of course part of Rutlish School. I talked about Innes's development of the area and also mentioned some of the old boys of Rutlish, who range from Gerry Cottle to John Major, from Raymond Briggs to Tubby Hayes, not to mention one of Cliff Richard's Shadows.

Next stop was Merton Rush where, raising my voice to be heard above the traffic, I talked about the development of Nelson Hospital by local doctor Frank Deas, the *Leather Bottle* public house, and Long Lodge. This building has a varied history as the home of pre-Raphaelite artist Frederic Shields, a school run by the sisters of architect Sydney Brocklesby, and the headquarters of Merton Park Film Studios.

The walk continued along Kingston Road, passing the birthplace of writer Ford Madox Ford; The Lookout, which was a British Restaurant during the war; and the 1797 almshouse at the junction with Mostyn Road.

We went as far as the Spring House flats, which are on the site of the 18th-century Spring House, once the home of not only a publisher/bookseller, but also (a century later) the writer Henrietta Stannard who usually wrote under the name of John Strange Winter, and who was a friend of Oscar Wilde.

This was also a good viewing spot for Dorset Hall, the family home of Suffragette Rose Lamartine Yates who, along with her colleagues, sometimes attracted crowds of up to 20,000 people to their meetings on Wimbledon Common.

I would normally continue the walk to the old Merton Park station and the *White Hart*, but time was pressing, and as this was a Celebrating Age walk I didn't want to tax the energies of my walkers too much more!

We returned via Church Lane to our starting point, where the walk officially ended, but I did invite anyone who had time to spare to come on a short guided tour of the churchyard, where we looked at the graves of John Innes, Frank Deas, Rear Admiral Isaac Smith, William Rutlish, the Wyatt family, and others.

The Celebrating Age organisers had asked all attendees to fill in a form saying how they had heard about the walk etc, and also giving marks out of five. I'm not sure how many points were awarded, but I hope we got a bonus for the fact that, in the end, it didn't rain.



*Ford Madox Ford
born at 245 Kingston Road*

THE EVELYN JOWETT MEMORIAL LECTURE FOR 2008: 'MORE MITCHAM MEMORIES'

Beginning his talk, on 11 October at Mitcham Parish Centre, Eric Montague recalled the days when he was starting to explore Mitcham's history. Evelyn Jowett was then Librarian for Merton and Morden and was quite a daunting personality. She told him firmly not to step over the border and interest himself in the affairs of Merton and/or Morden. However, though Mitcham, she said, was not her patch, she would help him as far as she could. And she did. So he was delighted to be giving this year's lecture in her memory.

While most of the slides he would show us had been taken by him between 1970 and 1975, he illustrated his first topic with this 18th-century print showing part of Mitcham Common with, in the distance, **The Cranmers, The Canons** and **Park Place** – three fine large houses which dominated that part of the Common, and two of which survive. The Cranmers took its name from that of Robert Cranmer, an East India merchant, who purchased the property in the Commonwealth period, and rebuilt the farmhouse that it then was, as a gentleman's residence. Shortly



afterwards he and his wife both died, leaving seven young sons. The year was 1666. Was it the plague? The site of The Cranmers is occupied now by the **Wilson Hospital**, opened in 1928 and named after property developer Sir Isaac Wilson, who largely funded it. Water featured in a view of **Cranmer Green**, which still (usually) has its pond, and in one of the **obelisk** in Madeira Road, nearby, which commemorates the appearance of a spring during a severe drought early in the 1820s.

The Canons takes its name from the Augustinian canons of St Mary Overy at Southwark, who had owned the site. The house dates from 1680 and was later acquired by the Cranmers. Its pond is fed by the obelisk spring, and the neighbouring quaint clunch-built dovecote bears the date 1511.

Park Place is a late 18th-century house whose occupiers have included, early in the 19th century, the picturesquely named Lt. Gen Forbes Champagne. Its plain but pleasing lodge was pulled down by the council's housing department. One survival in Commonside West is the late Victorian **Windmill** pub, named probably for the unusual horizontal windmill, which once overlooked **Three Kings Piece**. **Nos 1 and 4 Commonside West** are attractive small 18th-century houses. The early 19th-century **Three Kings** was replaced in 1928 by a 'brewer's Tudor' building, now (sign of the times) a Chinese restaurant. Three Kings pond is fed by a stream running alongside Commonside East and was once known as Heatherderry pond.

A row of modest **cottages** in an alley adjacent to what was Mitcham County School for Boys has been demolished as not up to modern standards. And the little **Beehive** pub survives now only as a façade to a development of flats with houses behind.

Monty then moved on to show us a print of **Mitcham Grove**, which once stood beside the Wandle, and was the largest house ever built in Mitcham. Large, and luxurious – it was said to have had hot and cold water piped to the bedrooms. This was where Henry Hoare, of Hoare's Bank, and a great benefactor to Mitcham, lived. After his death in 1828 the house was acquired by Sir John Lubbock, but by 1846 it had been demolished. A **cedar of Lebanon** near the Watermeads estate is the only reminder of a grand house, but the footings of a medieval predecessor were found in 1974/5 during a 'dig' by members of Surrey Archaeological Society and Merton Historical Society.

Fragmentary remains of **Ravensbury House**, beside the Wandle in what is now Ravensbury Park, continue to crumble. They date from mid-18th-century enlargement and improvement put in hand by John Arbuthnott, proprietor of the Ravensbury printworks. The property was later bought by the railway engineer George Parker Bidder, who built a new house some distance away.

An early 20th-century postcard of the old **Surrey Arms** showed also the unusual and attractive 3-storey weatherboard house known as the White House, now owned by the National Trust. The Ravenspring mineral water works opened here in 1877. A view from the 1970s of the present pub building also showed **the old barn** that once stood within the park between the pub and the White House, and was sadly lost in a fire.

If Monty's main theme was regret for what has been lost in Mitcham his audience could at least rejoice that in his writings and his hundreds of slides he has produced an invaluable record of Mitcham over a number of decades.

Judith Goodman

BOOK REVIEW: *COAL AND CALICO*

This Merton Historical Society publication is an A4 sized book of 200 pages and comprises the letters and papers of two related local families, Bennett and Leach, mainly covering the period 1794 to 1835.

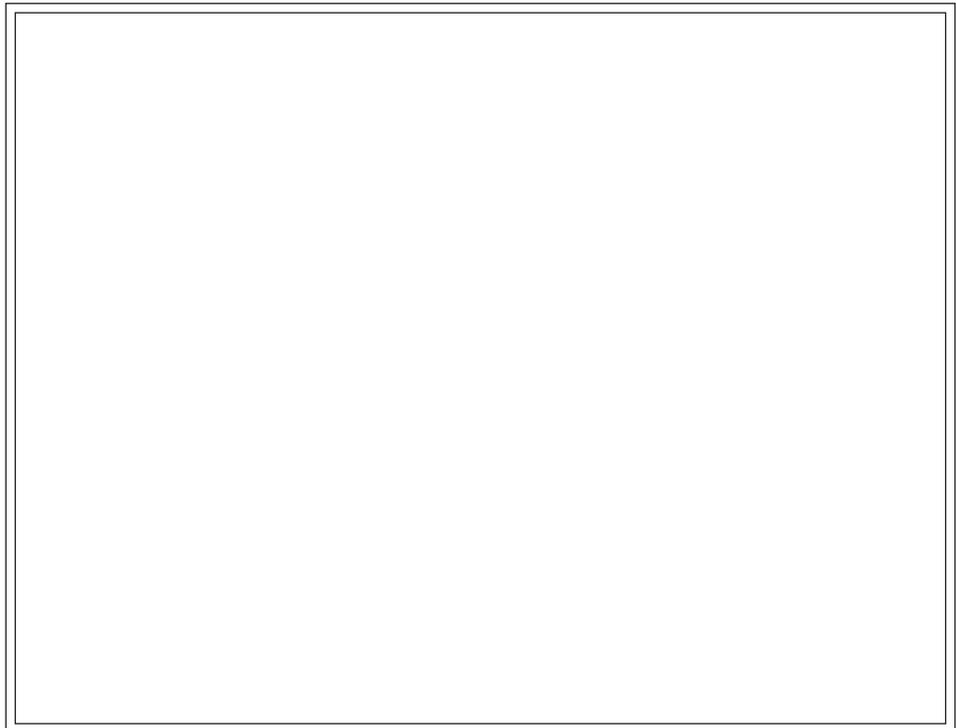
Thomas Bennett, the son of a lighterman on the Thames, was born in 1742 and as a young man he set up business in Wandsworth, at the mouth of the Wandle, transshipping coal from sea-going vessels to his fleet of Thames barges. John Leach, also born in 1742, was the managing partner in a calico printing works at Merton Abbey. In 1797, his daughter, Sarah Jane, married Thomas Bennett (Jr), a son of Thomas Bennett of Wandsworth, thus uniting two influential local families. The letters are accompanied by notes and comments written in 1898 by Frederick Bennett, Sarah and Thomas's grand-son, and the whole was edited by Judith Goodman.

The letters between the family members are varied; some are formal, some are informal and each gives us an insight into Georgian life and times. Most years the family went on holiday, usually leaving the men at home to 'mind the business'. Holiday locations were as varied as the Peak District of Derbyshire, Hastings, Cromer, North Wales, Cheltenham and Bristol.

Some letters give wonderful glimpses of travel in those times, such as the one written in 1803 where Thomas Bennett (Jr) writes to his wife and son who are staying with friends in Bristol saying 'I will set off [from Merton] on Wednesday on horseback and consequently you shall expect me on Thursday evening or Friday morning.' On another occasion, John Leach rode his own horse to Hastings from Merton, a distance of 65 miles and returned on another day, leaving Hastings 'after an early dinner' and arriving home at 10pm. We are informed that the mail coach took 9¾ hours for the journey.

There is a description of a burglary at night at a house in Haydons Road in 1826 where the owner, John Leach Bennett, shot at the fleeing men, injuring one of them. He called the Mounted Horse Patrol of the Bow Street Runners who eventually apprehended one of the burglars, who was brought to trial and sentenced to transportation for life. Apparently, he was lucky not to be hanged.

The collection of letters contains many other revealing stories and it is admirably illustrated by numerous contemporary sketches of houses and locations mentioned. The glossy cover of the book displays a very well reproduced set of colour portraits of Leach and Bennett family members. There is, in addition, a comprehensive 28-page introduction to the families written by Frederick Bennett in 1898. The family trees at the end of the book are very useful to the reader in monitoring the relationship between many of the letter-writers and their addressees.



I thoroughly recommend *Coal and Calico* to members for the insight it gives into Georgian life and times in the locality and in the wider world. It is well worth its price of £7.50 (£6 to members) plus £1.35 p&p.

Tony Scott

RAVENSBURY – COMING SOON

Eric Montague's latest *Mitcham History – Ravensbury* – is due in mid-December, probably not in time for our December meeting. Order from Publications Secretary Peter Hopkins, 57 Templecombe Way, Morden, Surrey SM4 4JF at £4.80 (members' price) plus 90p postage.

LOCAL HISTORY WORKSHOPS

Friday 15 August, evening meeting. Five present. David Haunton in the chair.

- ◆ **Cyril Maidment** had prepared a laminated A3 photo of the entrance gate to (Merton) Abbey House, intended to be viewed together with the precious wood frame of the gate that has been carefully retained and looked after by the Wandle Industrial Museum in which the workshops are normally held. Members wondered if the age of the timber had ever been tested.

With regard to the proposed *Local History Note* on Merton Rush, Cyril had prepared plans showing the location of the 20 houses and how the land of numbers 6 to 20, extending to Manor gardens, had been used in the 1930 extension to Nelson Hospital. Numbers 1 to 5 had survived until September 1940. Captions had been added to the 14 photographs and Census and Directory data compiled, covering 1891 to 1914.

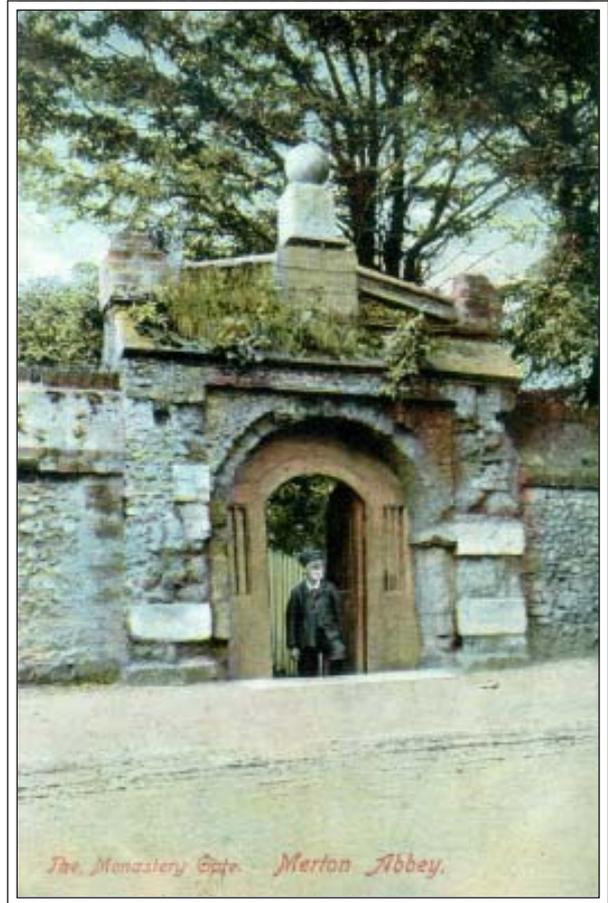
- ◆ **Judith Goodman** had been given by Charles Toase details of the promotion in *The Times* of 5 April 1873, of 1250 acres of the Morden Park Estate. An extensive forty foot wide road, (Grand Drive) had been constructed to link Lower Morden to Raynes Park Station, and the Garth brickyard was in operation situated on Morden Common.

Judy presented more information on John Piper, whose extensive murals on canvas had decorated the Morden Road, near the underground station, Civic Restaurant during the war, catering for 7-800 diners daily. The artist will be the subject of a future article in preparation.

- ◆ The evening was remarkable for two substantial local history books reaching critical stages. Judy's *Coal and Calico* was published and on the table, looking very attractive (details elsewhere in this *Bulletin*). And **Peter Hopkins** had completed a draft of Part 1 of his studies on *Medieval Morden*, covering *The Manorial Economy*. This provides a wealth of information of the Morden of 700 years ago, a vibrant community, previously overlooked due to the difficulties of such research. In this case publication is a year or more away as he wants first to complete drafts of the remaining parts, dealing with *Property Transactions* and *Social Networks*, to avoid overlaps and omissions. In the meantime Peter is looking for expert help on the verification of his translations of the medieval Latin of some rather long-winded documents relating to the church and clergy. His expert on manorial Latin found that these ecclesiastical documents defeated him!
- ◆ **Lionel Green** had noted a railway siding that Lines Brothers had paid £2,400 for off the Merton Abbey line. He circulated a very detailed photograph from a calendar showing the production of Pedigree dolls. He had also produced a personal reminiscence 'Another Air-raid', which is reproduced in this *Bulletin*.
- ◆ **David Haunton** had found on a Commonwealth War Graves Commission website details of all civilian casualties of the War. Lionel remembered that six are buried in the south-eastern corner of the churchyard of St Mary's Merton. However they are covered by a hedge and cannot be seen.

It is a small world and David had had a call lasting one hour from Brisbane giving information about the exploits of the maker of the Palmer-Reville & Co. miniature racing car after he had moved to Australia.

Cyril Maidment



'The Monastery Gate, Merton Abbey' postcard stamped 1906

CORRECTION

With reference to the first item in the workshop report on page 6 of *Bulletin* 167, Bill Rudd has written to point out that Gilbey's menswear shop in Morden first appeared in the directory for 1934, at 11 London Road. In 1998, after 64 years, it had to move to much smaller premises at 32 Crown Lane, and finally closed less than ten years later.

Friday 3 October 2008 afternoon meeting. Seven members present. Cyril Maidment in the chair.

- ◆ **Lionel Green** had been pleased to read in the September parish magazine of St Mary's Merton Park an article about novelist Sue Allan, who grew up in Merton Park. Her first novel, *The Mayflower Maid*, had been about the 16th-century Lady Rose Hickman, daughter of William Lock, but she only discovered the Locks' connections with Merton when reading Lionel's guide to the church. Lionel wrote an article about Rose in *Bulletin* 123, September 1997.

Lionel reported that the holly hedge covering the WWII graves in St Mary's churchyard has been partially trimmed back, but many of the graves are still obscured. Unfortunately the inscriptions on those that have been revealed are illegible. During the war Lionel had marked the location of various bombing incidents in Merton Park onto a street map, which he has now given to David Haunton.

He also gave details of the Alfred Sisley (1839-99) exhibition at the National Gallery 12 November–15 February. Sisley painted at Hampton Court and other places not far from us.

- ◆ A descendant of William Wood Fenning, whose father and grandfather were proprietors of the Ravensbury printworks in the late 18th/early 19th centuries, had sent **Peter Hopkins** photos of his watercolours of the Ravensbury area. Peter had also been given a copy of a poem called *Ravensbury* written by W W Fenning after a visit to Mitcham in 1850, which mentions various local characters and events of the period. Peter is hoping that Eric Montague can identify them.
- ◆ **Bill Rudd** gave us more information about St Helier station, mentioned in the last *Bulletin*. The original plans for the railway line were prepared before the St Helier estate had been conceived so no station had been planned for the area. The LCC gave the land for the line on condition that a station would be built to serve the estate. One corner of the LCC land was cut off from the estate by the railway line, of which ten acres were set aside for an open space, 15 acres were leased to trustees at a nominal rent to create the Douglas Haig Memorial Homes and nine acres were granted to the Housing Association for Officers' Families. Bill showed three photos of the land before the estate was built.

- ◆ **Madeline Healey** brought along two photographs taken five years ago at the Carter's Steam Fair at Hersham, of the fairground ride shown in the Vincent Lines prints in the last *Bulletin*.



- ◆ We were pleased to welcome new member **Lesly Trodd**, who is researching the history of bowling greens in the area. Bowls is an ancient game known to the Egyptians, and has been played in England for centuries. Lesly belongs to the bowls club in John Innes Park, which will celebrate its centenary on 31 July 2009. Originally there were two greens in the park, one now lost under the grounds of Rutlish School, and the other used as a croquet lawn. The present green is more recent. Bowls was always considered a man's game, but in the early 20th century women were being encouraged to join, and some local clubs have photographs from this period.

- ◆ **David Haunton** has received a photograph of the last surviving Lines Brothers' target glider, now in Australia. It has a 32-foot span and is 20 foot long, about the same size as a Spitfire. He also has reports by pilots of the difficulties in getting airborne while towing the gliders.

David and Katharina have also found out more about Vincent Lines. Member John Brown from Streatham, told them that his sketches also appeared in Streatham local newspapers between April and July 1928 (see article on pp10-13).

- ◆ Vincent Lines was also the subject of **Cyril Maidment's** contribution. The Wimbledon Society Museum has a number of his drawings, which were used to illustrate articles in local newspapers. Cyril brought along copies relating to Morden from 1929 and 1930, showing the Parish Hall and George Inn, Morden Park house, the Plough Inn and shops in Central Road, Lower Morden Lane, and an as yet unidentified Morden footpath alongside a timber-framed building. Perhaps one of our members would like to track down the accompanying articles at Merton Local Studies Centre? They would make an interesting publication.

Cyril also showed photos, maps and page layouts for his forthcoming *Local History Note* on Merton Rush.

Peter Hopkins

Next Workshop: Friday 9 January at 2.30pm at Wandle Industrial Museum

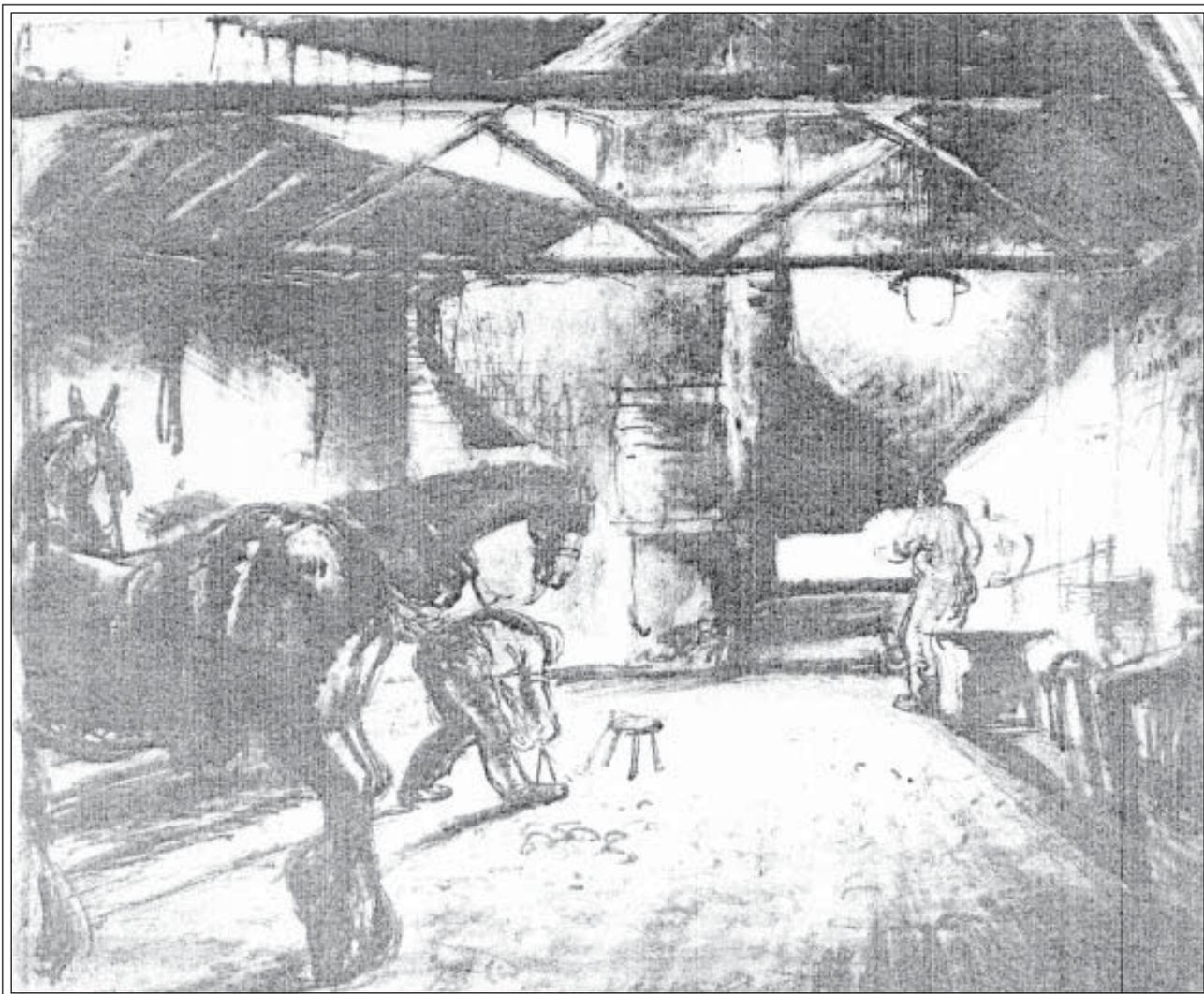
Following our article in *Bulletin 167*, DAVID HAUNTON has learned more about:

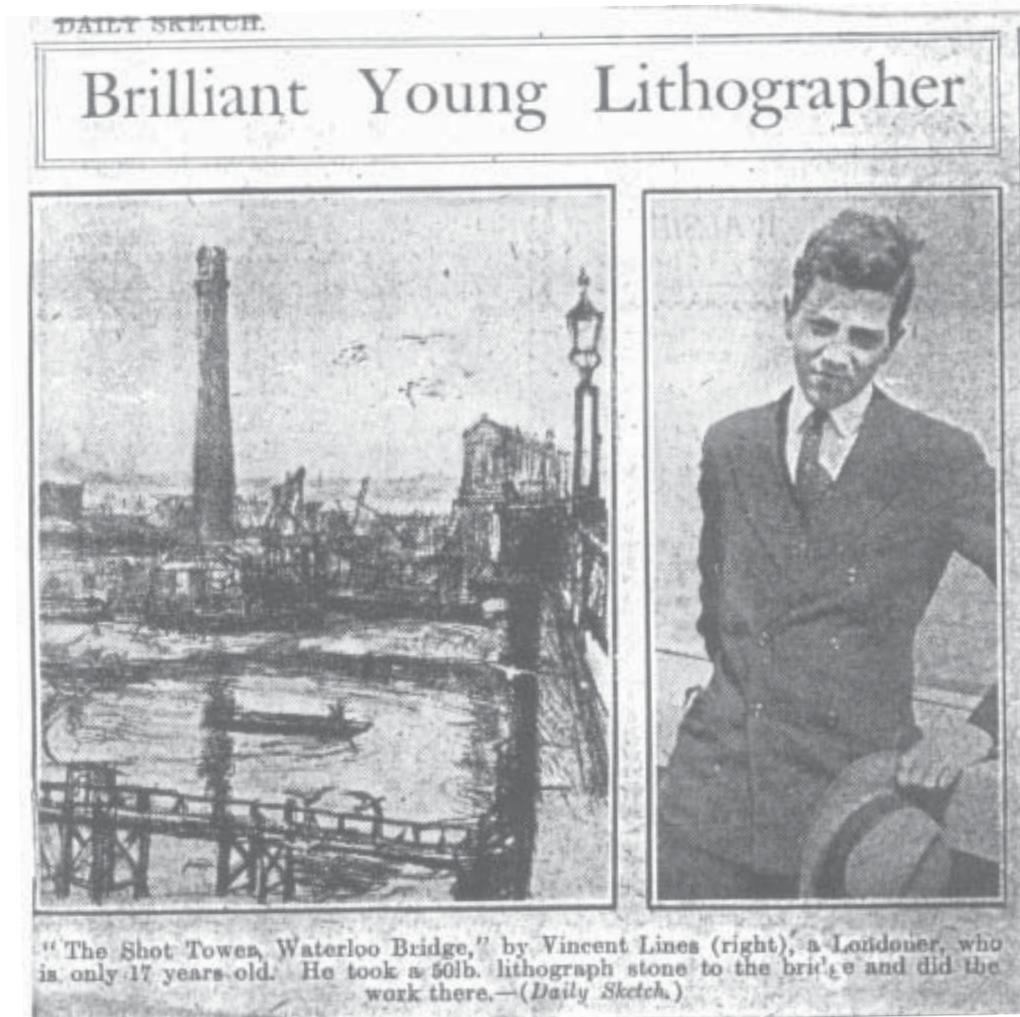
VINCENT LINES: A LIFE IN ART

Vincent was born in Dulwich Village on 19 June 1909 to Benjamin Henry and Agnes Rose Lines; Agnes was a second cousin of Rudyard Kipling. When Vincent was some 18 months old the family (parents, older brother Leonard and Vincent) moved to 30 Emmanuel Road, Balham. This is on the north side of the road and commands a fine view down the length of Tooting Bec Common. In 1925, when Vincent was 15, they moved the few hundred yards east to 20 Kirkstall Gardens, Streatham Hill. By now the family included a sister, Sheila, always called ‘Antoinette’ by Vincent. Two of his sketches bear on the back the addresses of 41 Kirkstall Gardens and of 73 Christian Fields, Norbury, but it is not clear whether Vincent ever lived at these places, or whether they were the homes of people he knew.

Vincent was not academically gifted, but his artistic ability was recognised at an early age. From about 1924 he attended the LCC Central School of Arts and Crafts (CSAC) in Southampton Row (now the Central St Martin College of Art and Design). There he studied print-making techniques, especially lithography, mostly under A S Hartrick. Recalling the *Self-Portrait* cheekily inscribed ‘Vincent’ (illustrated in *Bulletin 167*), it appears not only that Hartrick knew Vincent Van Gogh, but had actually been offered the preparatory drawings for *Sorrow*, one of Van Gogh’s prints – which offer Hartrick declined. So the cheek is magnified. But Hartrick must be the source of the anecdote, and is thus revealed as a man of wry good humour, well able to tell a story against himself. He and his wife Lily Blatherwick, the lithographer and water-colourist, became good friends and ‘like second parents’ to Vincent, and introduced him to many artists in their studio at 75 Clancarty Road, Fulham.

Vincent’s early promise is demonstrated in our first two illustrations – the lithograph (below) of *A Blacksmith’s Shop* is dated 1927 (when he was 17 or 18), while the *Daily Sketch* printed the snippet (on the opposite page) under the title ‘Brilliant Young Lithographer’ when he was 17 (in 1926 or 1927). The photo shows the artist to be a well-dressed young man wearing a double-breasted suit and tie, with a soft hat in one hand. The story of his carrying the 50-lb lithographic stone to Waterloo and sketching directly onto it has been repeated several times – though one wonders if this was perhaps the only occasion on which he performed this heroic feat.





At the age of 18,¹ Vincent took up a scholarship to the Royal College of Art (RCA) in South Kensington, then under Sir William Rothenstein. Initially he studied lithography and exhibited at the Senefelder Club (where he met such well-known artists as Frank Brangwyn), but he later became increasingly interested in painting in oils and in water-colours.

While he was at RCA (though his sister thought while he was still at CSAC), Vincent began to earn some money with his pen drawings of ancient buildings in the Merton / Wimbledon / Streatham / Clapham area, accompanied by short articles. These were published in local papers such as the *Wimbledon Boro' News* (1928-1931), *Streatham News* (April – July 1928) and *Wandsworth Borough News*. He was a 'surprisingly poor speller' so his (four years younger) sister always sat beside his ancient typewriter on a Sunday, spelling for him while he wrote. The articles demonstrate his aptitude for a different sort of art – they give the impression that the author is a much travelled and mature man of the world, perhaps approaching retirement.

Holidays were mostly spent touring in the West Country, on a heavy push-bike with panniers to hold his sketching equipment – a mode of transport Vincent maintained until the end of his life. He supplied the local papers such as the *West Briton and Cornwall Advertiser* with pen drawings of local subjects and people. During his time at CSAC and RCA he became well-known in yet another field as the 'Demon Bowler of Tooting Bec Cricket Team'.

In 1931, at the end of his time at the RCA, Vincent's brief testimonial from William Rothenstein included the phrase 'one of the best students of the Painting School'. In addition, he was awarded a Travelling Scholarship, so from July 1932 he could travel for three months through Germany and Austria to Rome, returning through Holland. Apart from single visits to Spain (in 1935) and to Ireland, his subsequent visits abroad seem to have been confined to France. The Irish trip was in the summer of 1934, when he sailed in a Breton fishing boat round the southern coast as far as Kerry, where he met and drew the writers and traditional story-tellers Maurice O'Sullivan and Thomas O'Crohan. (Michael MacLeod thinks these pen and wash drawings are probably the best existing portraits of the two men.)

His first job, teaching at Manchester Boys High School lasted only a term or so – he 'detested' the city itself, so much so that he lived in a caravan outside its bounds – before he moved to Bradford College of Art. In 1933, while Vincent was at Bradford, A S Hartrick wrote a formal testimonial for him, commenting on his artistic talents and remarkable intelligence, and including the delightful sentence 'Physically he is healthy, hefty and good tempered – the kind that is competent to throw out disturbers of the peace with one hand'.

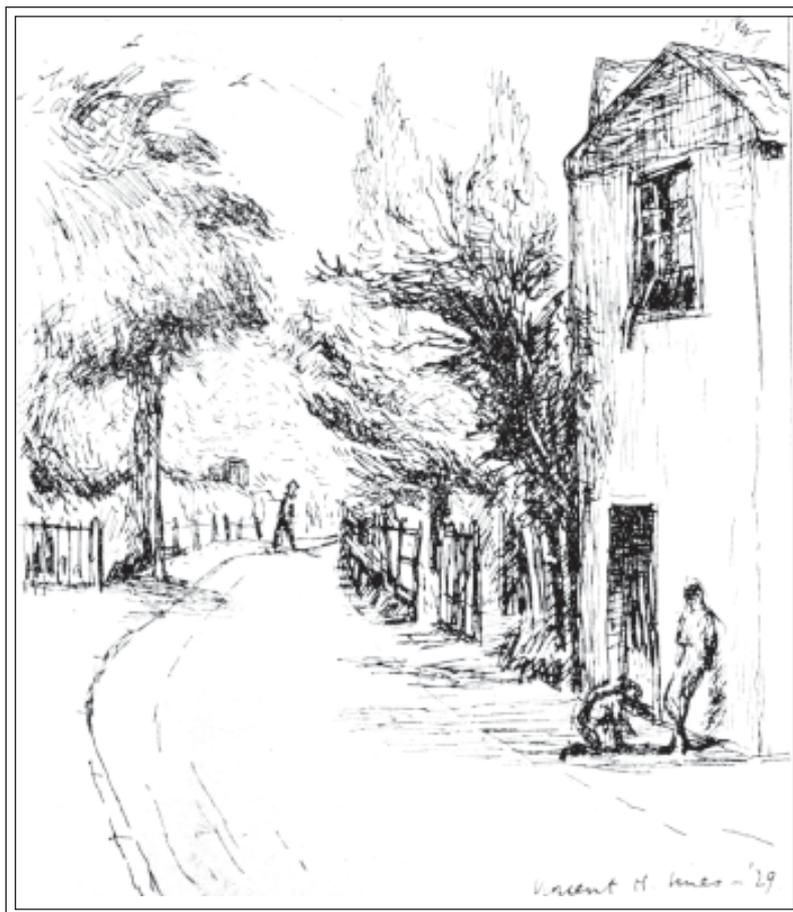
Whatever the effect of this letter, in September 1935 (or 1934 – my sources differ) Vincent was appointed Principal of Horsham School of Art, in West Sussex, aged only 26 (or, of course, 25). Under his leadership the School rapidly gained a lively reputation, producing carnival entries, puppet shows, exhibitions of student work, theatrical sets and so forth, and the number of students rose ‘phenomenally’. (The School of Art itself was later incorporated as the Horsham campus of Worthing University, but was later closed down as a campus.) As was now becoming his habit, Vincent established a home some distance out of town, at Meadow Cottage, Tower Hill, on the Worthing road. As the decade wore on he executed fewer oil paintings, preferring to use water-colour. He was beginning to sell his work, and exhibited successfully at the New English Art Club.

In wartime, Vincent was not called up, as he was a Principal Teacher. Perhaps because he was a friend of Sir Kenneth Clark, he was commissioned to do some water-colours for the *Recording Britain* series (which had been instigated originally by Winston Churchill). They are reproduced in Vol. III (1948, three pictures) and Vol. IV (1949, fourteen works). (The surviving pictures from this project are now collected in the V&A Museum.) Another, Royal, commission was to record the progress of the felling of the elm trees in Windsor Great Park, in a series of eight water-colours; these now reside in Windsor Castle Library. A rather different commission was to decorate the walls of Horsham British Restaurant, which Vincent and his students completed during a bitterly cold winter. A new departure was the writing of *Shaping and Making*, a book for school-children, illustrating country crafts, with a colour lithograph on each page, which was published after the war (undated).

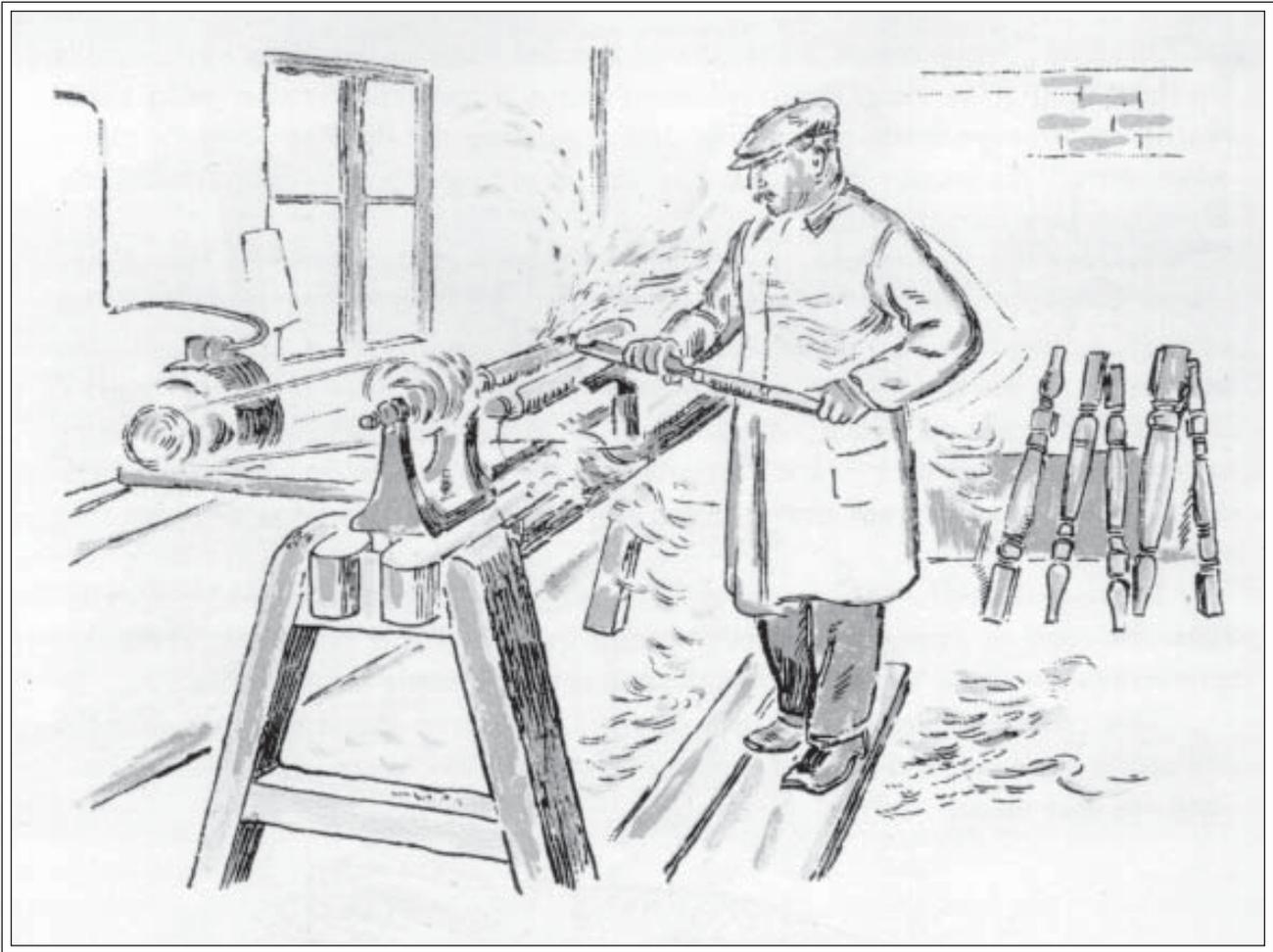
In 1945 Vincent Lines moved to a new appointment, as the Principal of Hastings School of Art, in East Sussex, a position he occupied until his death. As at Horsham, he enthused his students and greatly expanded the range of activities (and numbers of students) at the School. Presumably it was on the strength of his multi-disciplinary work at Horsham and Hastings that Vincent was elected a member of the Art Workers Guild, the Arts and Crafts organisation which encourages communication between artists and craftsmen working in different spheres. Personally, he returned to oil painting, though without neglecting his accustomed prints and water-colours. He generally entered two or three pictures in the twice-yearly London exhibitions of the Royal Water Colour Society. These were mostly landscapes, town views or harbour scenes drawn in southern or western England or in France. Across the Channel, he principally painted in Brittany, Normandy and Provence (he bought a favourite farmhouse ‘Mas Carrière’ outside the village of Vaugines, in the département of Vaucluse, for use over long academic holidays). Despite his dislike of mechanical objects, in France he surrendered to the convenience of a ‘mobylette’ (a type of motor-assisted bicycle). In England, he lived in a flat in Hastings during the week, but at the weekends escaped to his coastguard’s cottage at Pett Level.

Vincent produced the drawings that illustrate Rex Wailes’ book *The English Windmill* (1954), which include both careful technical sketches, and studies of the people who in those days still ran the mills (confusingly, he had previously drawn the frontispiece to Wailes’ similarly-named *Windmills in England* (1948)). He contributed articles to various publications, notably the annual volume of the Old Water-colour Society’s Club, and wrote a book about two artist friends *Mark Fisher and Margaret Fisher Prout* (1966). Our second photograph of Vincent is taken from a series of articles about sketching, that he wrote in 1966 for *The Artist*, a monthly magazine.

Vincent died unexpectedly in 1968, on the day after he returned from an Easter holiday in Provence, aged only 58. A large and cheerful man, with a large and cheerful outlook on life, he enjoyed a vast circle of friends that included many English artists, farmers and craftsmen, Irish writers and



'Watery Lane' from the series 'Old Merton Today' – Wimbledon Boro' News 1929



'The Wood-Turner' Shaping and Making OUP (nd) p26

French 'vine-growers and wine-makers'. In 1975 Hastings Museum and Art Gallery mounted a Vincent Lines Memorial Exhibition, and, at about the same time, Hastings School of Art (later the Hastings College of Art and Technology) instituted an Award for Creative Excellence in his memory, administered by the Vincent Lines Memorial Trust. This is still awarded annually.

Acknowledgements

My thanks are due to Neil Jennings, of Jennings Fine Art, 1 Preston Close, Twickenham, Middlesex, TW2 5RU, who most generously provided copies of the first three sources listed below, and of the cutting from the *Daily Sketch*. Neil's particular interests lie in twentieth century prints and drawings.

Thanks also to Brian Slyfield of the Horsham Society for locating and supplying Vincent Lines' Horsham address 'at a moment's notice'.

1 According to his sister. However, other sources say 1928. Vincent turned 18 in June 1927, so both statements may be reconciled if the RCA accepted a student intake in Spring 1928. This would not be unusual for an advanced education college in London: in the 1920s the Regent's Street Polytechnic started its academic year in May.

Sources

Sheila Clarke 'Vincent Lines' (nd)

[This is a three-page typed note by Vincent Lines' sister, possibly prepared for a eulogy. All unattributed quotes in the article are from this document.]

Michael MacLeod *Archibald Stanley Hartrick, Thomas Barclay Hennell, Vincent Henry Lines* (1979)

[Notes to accompany the exhibition *Drawn from Nature* (January – July 1980). Whereabouts not stated, but from the list of sponsors presumed to have been in Sussex or Kent.]

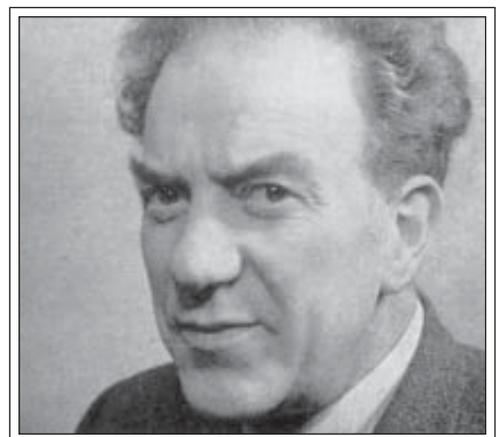
A S Hartrick Testimonial letter (March 1933) [No addressee.]

Anon Pers. comm. (Sept 2008)

[Note on early addresses by the sometime agent for Vincent Lines studio.]

John W Brown (Society member) Pers. comm. (August 2008)

[Letter on Streattham aspects.]



MISS C E M (MAUD) GUMMOW MBE



Maud Gummow aged about 50

The late Maud Gummow was one of the early members of the Society, which was formed in 1951 as the Merton and Morden Historical Society. In the June 2008 issue of the *Bulletin* was reported that she had generously bequeathed to the Society more than £5000. In fact the total we finally received was £7769.69, an amount that makes a significant difference to the finances of the Society. We thought we would pay a tribute here to Miss Gummow and her life and work in Merton.

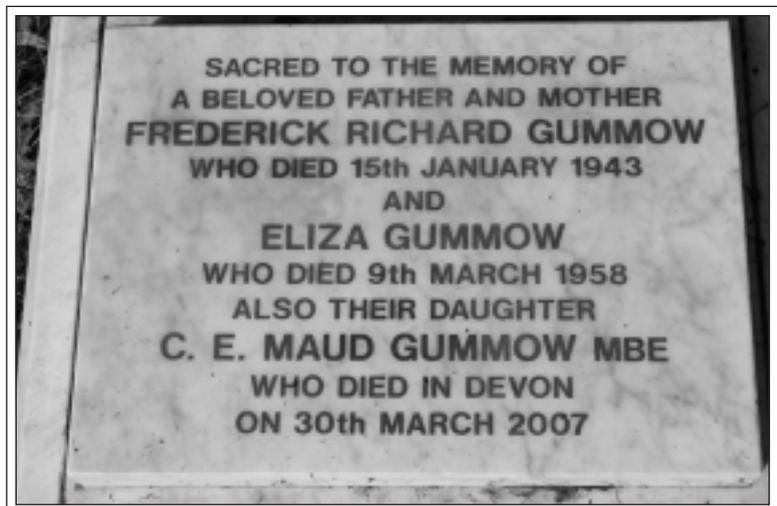
Maud was born on 13 May 1907, when her parents were living at 8 Branksome Road, Merton. This house, which would have been new then, was the home in which she grew up, but around 1930 the family moved to 14 Melrose Road, Merton Park, which became her home until she was sixty.

Maud gained a scholarship to Tiffin Girls' School in Kingston, and would have liked to go to University, but circumstances and the expectations of the time dictated that she trained in shorthand and typing. She joined the Merton and Morden Urban District Council, rising from shorthand typist to Assistant Clerk (in effect second in charge of the Council's administration). During World War II she was engaged in various war work, including assessing bomb damage to local houses, overseeing emergency food storage,

and organising the ARP workers on night-duty watching for bombs. She was in the council offices at Morden Hall when they were severely damaged by a bomb. After the war, while still working for the Council, she became involved in the National Savings movement, and in January 1956 she was awarded the MBE for her work as chairman of the mid-Surrey branch. The report of this event in the local press also states that at this time she was chairman (for the sixth year) of the National Streets and Villages Committee, and a member of the regional conference. She also became UK chairman of the Soroptimists Club, a worldwide organisation for women in management and the professions, working to advance human rights and the status of women.

While she was working, and active in voluntary service, what little spare time she had she devoted to research into the history of Merton. Maud served on the Committee of the Society for 11 years from 1957. She was an authority on Lord Nelson, and it was said that she had unearthed hitherto unknown facts about his connection with Merton. She gave two lectures on Nelson at Merton to the Society, one just before she left in early 1968 to move to Seaton, Devon, on her retirement. She was an accomplished pianist and artist, and after retirement she devoted more time to music and painting, as well as taking up an interest in the history of Devon. She was an animal lover and a long-time dog owner.

Maud Gummow died on 30 March 2007, a few weeks before her 100th birthday. The interests in her life, and her dedication to helping others, are reflected in her will: as well as bequests to family and friends, she left money to a wide range of charities and other organisations, including ones concerned with local history and heritage, music, animal welfare and wildlife. Her ashes were interred in her parents' grave in the churchyard of St Mary the Virgin, Merton Park.



I am grateful to Mary Turner, who kindly sent a copy of the funeral tribute that she wrote, as well as photos and press cuttings. Thanks also to Judy Goodman for additional information on Maud's time in Merton.

David Roe

LIONEL GREEN remembers

ANOTHER AIR-RAID

When World War II began I was 13, and the air-raids started in August 1940. From demolished houses it became clear that the staircase often remained standing when other parts were in ruins around. So when the nightly air-raids began my sister and I sat on a box in the cupboard under the stairs. Sometimes the 'all clear' sounded in the early hours, and we would go to our beds upstairs. Otherwise we slept in a sitting position.

One night we all heard a loud thump in the back garden. Dad thought it may have been an unexploded bomb and that we ought to evacuate the house. We gathered some warm clothing to take with us, and Dad produced a suitcase holding valuable documents – deeds of the house, insurance policies etc. We assembled in the front hall and opened the front door. But where should we go? The air-raid was still on and it seemed strange for the family to walk the roads of Merton Park in the middle of the night, with suitcases. After some deliberation we decided to sit it out, and my sister and I went back under the stairs.

It seems unlikely to have been an unexploded bomb, but, if it was, it remains at Leafield Road.

On the night of Thursday 26 September 1940 the sirens wailed again and we heard many local explosions, but our house was not damaged. When morning came it seemed like a normal day, and I left home to go to Rutlish School as usual. The siren sounded for another raid and I had to go to a public shelter, which made me late for school. I missed morning assembly and went straight to the classroom. This was in the Technical College in Gladstone Road, because my form room at Rutlish, Remove B, had been destroyed by a bomb in August. Each desk was for two pupils, and I sat with a friend called Colin Lawrence. He was not present, and as the morning lessons proceeded I became anxious about his lateness. I knew that he spent nights with his family in an air-raid shelter built at the bottom of his garden in Kenley Road. Rumours began to circulate that he had been involved in the previous night's air-raid. At lunchtime the class was informed that Colin had been killed. Unfortunately a bomb had hit the garden shelter, killing Colin and severely injuring his father. The house had had its windows shattered but was not otherwise seriously damaged.

As I walked home from school I found it hard to realise that I would never see my friend again, or share thoughts and experiences. The secrets he had confided in me were worthless. I arrived home and informed my mother of his death. Naturally she burst into tears, but I was puzzled. Why was she crying when Colin was *my* friend, not hers? Should I be crying?

At school the next day the boys in the form were remembering past events. One shouted, 'What are you going to do, Green, now you have lost your bosom friend?' Not the kindest remark, but one which helped me to de-select him as a possible replacement.

Noel Laura Nisbet

At the Olympia Art & Antiques Fair in June three dealers were offering paintings by Noel Laura Nisbet. Noel and her husband Harry Bush, the topographical artist, lived for the whole of their married life in Queensland Avenue, Merton (see *Bulletin* 137). Noel is classed as one of the 20th-century 'romantic' painters, and her works are full of colour and drama.

I would be thy Slave
Noel Laura Nisbet 1923 watercolour

