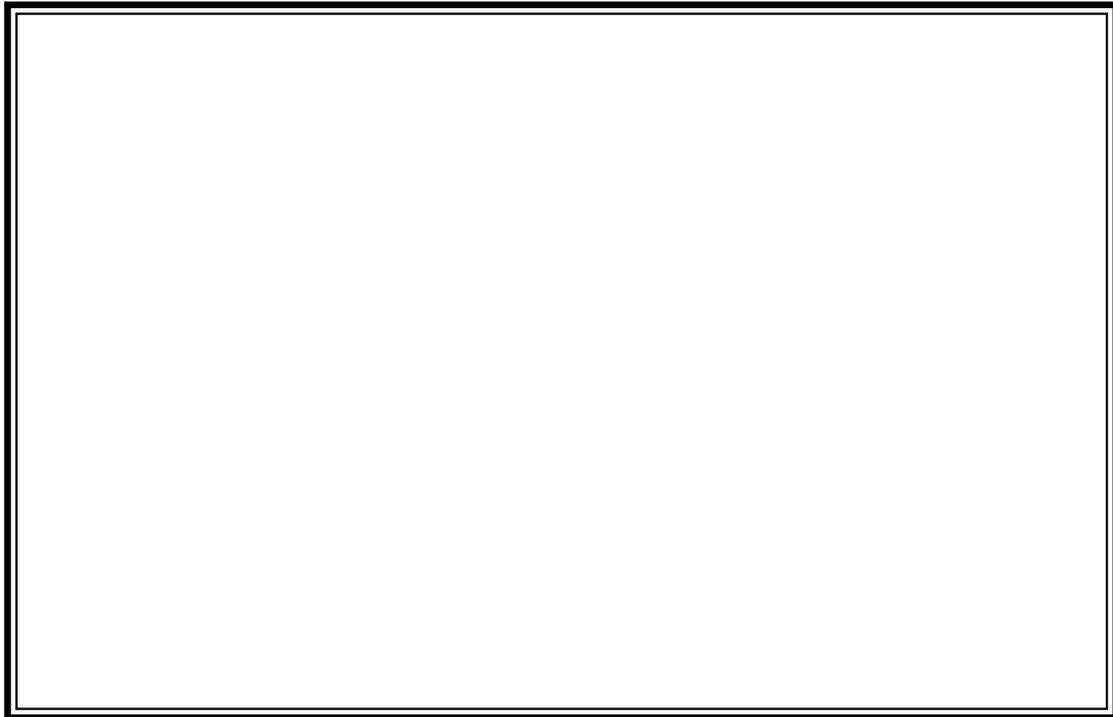




PRESIDENT:
VICE PRESIDENTS: Eric Montague and William Rudd
CHAIR: David Haunton

BULLETIN No. 184

DECEMBER 2012



The old church hall and the new one under construction at St Mary's church, Merton, in 1964: Photo courtesy St Mary's church

CONTENTS

Programme December – March	2
Reports:	
‘Memories of Morden between the Wars’	3
Visit to Freemasons’ Hall	4
Local History Workshops:	
3 August: archaeology in Beddington; other Mertons; a Merton benefactor; church halls at Merton; a new Wimbledon book; news of Surrey History Centre and Surrey Record Society; suburban development	5
14 September: Morden reminiscences; Vincent Lines (local artist); archaeology in Beddington; the Boys’ Brigade in Mitcham; medieval estates; local prints etc at the Guildhall Library	6
19 October: Merton priory’s granges; gifts to the Society; more of Bill Rudd’s Morden; and more on the Station Road arch; Wimbledon graveyard walk; Jessup’s grocery shop Mitcham; buses and flooded roads; Morden in 1910	6
Evidence for the Construction and Development of Grove Mill, Mitcham – Geoff Potter	7
Newton House, Commonside West, Mitcham – Tony Scott and David Haunton	11
Ravensbury Mills in 1910 – Rosemary Turner	12
‘One of Merton’s Benefactors’ – Judith Goodman	13

PROGRAMME DECEMBER – MARCH

Saturday 8 December 2.30pm

Christ Church Hall, Colliers Wood

‘The History of the Christmas Card’

This illustrated talk will be given by **Anna Flood**, archivist of the British Postal Museum & Archive.

Saturday 19 January 2.30pm

Christ Church Hall, Colliers Wood

‘Heraldry – Mostly Local’

a talk by the Chair of Merton Historical Society, **David Haunton**

Saturday 16 February 2.30pm

Christ Church Hall, Colliers Wood

‘Local Celebrations of Events and Heritage’

An illustrated talk by **David Roe and Mick Taylor**, both of the Society’s Photographic Record Project

Saturday 16 March 2.30pm

Christ Church Hall, Colliers Wood

‘Archaeology of the Thameside Project’

An illustrated talk by a speaker from **Pre-Construct Archaeology**

Christ Church Hall is next to the church, in Christchurch Road, 250m from Colliers Wood Underground station. Limited parking at the hall, but plenty in nearby streets or at the Tandem Centre, 200m south.

Buses 152, 200 and 470 pass the door.

Visitors are welcome to attend our talks. Entry £2.

ANNUAL LUNCH, THURSDAY 28 FEBRUARY 2013

As *The Restaurant in the Park* is closed for refurbishment this year, it has been decided to hold the Annual Lunch at *The Ravensbury*, 260 Croydon Road, Mitcham. This is the extended *Ravensbury Arms* near the roundabout on the edge of Mitcham Common and now run by the Butcher & Barrel pub chain. A three-course meal with several choices is available for £10.95. The Conservatory restaurant area will be available to us and *The Ravensbury* comes recommended by members of your committee. A booking form is enclosed.

Sheila Harris

VISCOUNTESS HANWORTH FSA

We are sorry to learn that Lady (Rosamond) Hanworth has indicated that she wishes to cease active membership of the Society and step down as a Vice President. She has had a most distinguished career in archaeology, and the Society was honoured when she agreed to become our President in 1969, after the death of Colonel H F Bidder. She has been a Vice President since 1998.

We are grateful for the support Lady Hanworth has given us over these many years, and we wish her well in her new home at Whiteley Village.

SUBSCRIPTION REMINDER

Subscriptions for 2012-13 are now overdue. Please note that this will be the last *Bulletin* to reach you if we have not received your payment by the time of the next issue.

A membership form was enclosed in the September *Bulletin*. Current rates are:

Individual member	£10
Additional member in same household	£3
Student member	£1
Overseas member	£15

Cheques are payable to **Merton Historical Society** and should be sent with completed forms to our Membership Secretary.

‘MEMORIES OF MORDEN BETWEEN THE WARS’

Equal numbers of MHS and St Martin’s church members assembled at St Martin’s for the September meeting. It was to have been part of Merton’s *Celebrating Age*, but was omitted from their booklet, so was not so widely advertised as expected, though some 60 people attended.

Peter Hopkins had produced displays of photographs, memorabilia, records and books relating to the area during the period, including wartime, and the vicar, Dan McGowan, did a sterling job with the sound system.

Peter started by saying that his interests had been concentrated on Morden in medieval times, but when he was helping Rosemary with the 1910 Valuation records he realised how little the area had changed. Then during conversations with Gladys, Betty and others who had lived in the area during the 1930s he learnt how it continued to be a rural community, with large estates, until the coming of the various housing projects.

He had produced a prompt-sheet prior to the meeting, which included extracts from the electoral rolls, and he had on-screen photographs to complement and encourage the memories of those taking part.

Gladys told us she had come from Middlesbrough to Morden as a young child in the 1930s. Her mother had died, so her father had brought her and her siblings to live with their grandmother and other members of the family in Garth Road. The only family she had really known until then were in Middlesbrough. She said that the cottage already had a large number of people living there before they arrived. An aunt and uncle lived further along the road, and an uncle and aunt had formerly lived at a pig farm in Garth Road, though they had moved away before Gladys arrived.

Betty was born in Garth Road in 1926, and her grandfather also owned a piggery. Peter said he was surprised to discover that the piggeries were still there in the 1960s. Betty moved to a modern house in Garth Road when she got married, and is still living in the same house today.

Peter introduced Madeline by saying that at our workshops you could guarantee that she or her family had connections with one of the subjects raised. He said that as her family had lived in Mitcham and Morden since the 1740s this was not surprising.

Madeline was born in the 1940s and grew up in New Cottages in Lower Morden Lane, but her parents had lived in Garth Cottages, Garth Road, in the 1930s. Her father was given the chance to buy their Garth Road cottage, which still had gas lighting, for £200. He did not take up the offer because it was so badly built. He thought it would not last, but he was wrong, because the cottages are still there. Gladys said they were condemned before the war and are pinned at each end. In the 1910 valuations they are described as not well built, with inferior brickwork, and roofs slightly ‘saggedy’.



Madeline’s brother outside the cottages in Garth Road

Peter displayed views of the various houses mentioned by Gladys, Betty and Madeline, and other photographs they had lent him. He had also photographed the houses today, and showed some of Vincent Lines’s drawings c.1930 of the area.

Peter asked questions about their life at the time. Memories of cows and horses (which he also remembered) were exchanged. They talked about long distances walked to school and church; tradesmen delivering to the door by horse and cart; whether they were able to go on holiday; how they entertained themselves.

After the tea-break the audience were asked for their memories. Muriel said that in the 1930s her father built some of the houses in the Arundel Avenue area, and she was still living in one of them. Ann spoke about Mr Hatfield’s children’s parties in Morden Hall Park and the fun had there. They walked from her school at Merton Abbey. It was recalled that the hospital then on St Anthony’s site had open-air wards for the TB patients sent there, but given the number of piggeries and sewage works in the vicinity it is debatable how fresh the air was!

David Haunton asked if anyone knew anything about Alan Cobham’s Flying Circus, which gave aerobatic displays and offered short flights for the paying public. Betty had been on one of the flights, as had Madeline’s father and brother.

Mention was made of having only one electric socket in the house, which reminded me that in the 1950s my mother used to plug her iron into the light socket. That was after she stopped heating one on the fire.

I always enjoy older generations recounting how our area was during their earlier life. It is often hard to imagine vast tracts of fields where housing estates now reside. Vincent Lines describes this when writing about the start of the St Helier Estate in the articles that accompanied the drawings which he did for the local newspaper in 1928-31. The Wimbledon Society has published them as a book.

It is important to record the changes, which may have been slow in earlier years but are no longer so. You only have to drive along a road, see a gap, and try to think what was there. This is where the collections of Frith, Chart, and now our Photographic Project are essential. Peter has put audio clips and slides of the event on the Society's website www.mertonhistoricalsociety.org.uk/projects/reminiscences.

Hopefully this meeting will encourage others to put their memories in print.

Rosemary Turner

VISIT TO FREEMASONS' HALL

On 11 October 19 members met in Great Queen Street for a tour of Freemasons' Hall. John, our guide, told us that it is generally accepted that Freemasonry descended in some way from the medieval stonemasons' organisational 'lodge'. Over time the lodges began to admit men who were not working stonemasons, and on 24 June 1717 four London lodges met at *The Goose and Gridiron* near St Paul's, where they declared themselves a Grand Lodge, and elected a Grand Master. A rival, formed in London in 1751, claimed the title 'Antients Grand Lodge', and the two co-existed until 1813 when they joined to form the United Grand Lodge of England.

The current hall is the third on the site. After many years of using local taverns and Livery Halls, the Masons decided to have a hall of their own. Opened in 1776, it was used by both Masons and non-Masons, for balls, concerts, dinners and so on. Despite alterations and extensions, by Sir John Soane, among others, by the middle of the 19th century it was decided to rebuild entirely. Frederick Pepys Cockerell (1833-1878) was the architect of this second hall, and the work began in 1864. It too was extended, in 1899, mainly for the library and museum.

Finally it was demolished and the present hall built. It was a completely new building, originally intended to be a memorial to Edward VII, who had been Grand Master from 1874 to 1901. However, following the First World War it was known for some years as the Masonic Peace Memorial. This wonderful Art Deco structure, the work of architects Ashley & Newman, was built in 1927-1933, and has beautiful ceilings, walls, stained glass etc. Our guide took us around the building explaining the use of the various rooms – robing, ceremonial, social. In one room there were portraits of past Grand Masters, many of whom were members of the royal Family. The duke of Kent is the current Grand Master. It was explained that the monarch cannot be Grand Master. The roles are not considered compatible – one might influence the other.

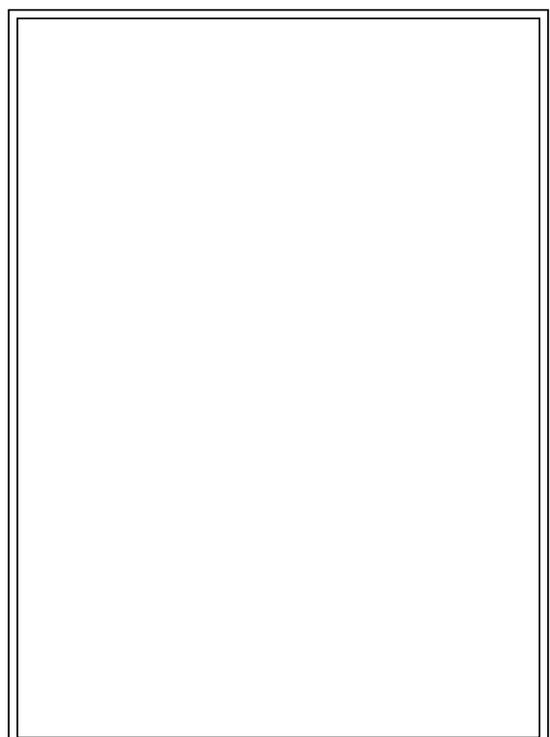
We were told that the Hall, with its striking décor, is often used for film and television (e.g. *Poirot*, *Parade's End*) – in fact that evening I watched a programme (*Hunted*), part of which was set in the Hall.

One of the processional corridors brought us to the beautiful Memorial Window (*right*) and Shrine to Freemasons who fell in the First World War. The work is by Walter Gilbert and the themes of both are peace through sacrifice and the attainment of eternal life.

On then to the Grand Temple, entered by the great bronze doors, also by Gilbert, each cast in one piece 12ft by 4ft and weighing 1½ tons. They are so evenly balanced they can be opened by the slightest effort – Pat Kilsby was asked to try this by using just one finger on the handle. She succeeded. The Grand Temple is a hall of great beauty and 'opulence'. What immediately catches the eye is the ceiling – a 'celestial canopy' with a richly decorated border. The cove is entirely of mosaic, allegorical in composition.

We spent a while admiring this lovely hall, and then we were taken to the Museum, where John our guide, whom we thanked for a most interesting and informative tour, left us to wander at our leisure. There were many items of historical and ceremonial importance in this absorbing collection.

Bea Oliver



LOCAL HISTORY WORKSHOPS

Friday 3 August – five present. Peter Hopkins in the chair

- ◆ **Rosemary Turner** reported on an excavation in Beddington Park, close to the church. The Portioner's House (demolished c.1843) was originally occupied by a priest entitled to tithes, and known as the Portioner. The last Portioner was appointed in the mid-16th century, and the Portionary tithes then passed to the Carew family. A limited evaluation is proposed, aimed to throw light on the structural history of the house, which at one time served as the rectory.

- ◆ **Judith Goodman** referred to a previous workshop when David Haunton had mentioned the 'other' Mertons – in Devon, Oxfordshire and Norfolk. JG had visited the latter two, and had since come by an early C20 postcard showing a group of children with two adults, and a board reading 'Merton C.E.School Group I'. They are grouped in front of a stone building. Which Merton? Not ours, anyway.

She had come across an obituary for Richard Thornton, Merton benefactor, with some interesting details about how he acquired his fortune [see page 13].

She showed copies of photographs of Merton's old, corrugated iron, church hall, just before demolition, and of the present one under construction (opened October 1964) [see photo on front page].

Finally, she had been sent by an occasional correspondent two photos of buses at Morden, one from 1949 and one from 1982.

- ◆ **Cyril Maidment** recommended *Wimbledon's Belvedere Estate* by Dr Elspeth Veale, a new publication from Wimbledon Society Museum Press. The estate covered a large tract of Wimbledon and was the home of some remarkable residents. Copies are available at the museum or via wsmp@aapl.com. The price is £8.99.
- ◆ **Peter Hopkins** had brought along copies of beautifully handwritten facsimiles of Merton's two Saxon charters.

He also had something to say about Surrey Record Society and its publications, and about new acquisitions, of local interest, at Surrey History Centre.

There was then some discussion about topics that might be aired at the Morden 'chat show' on 22 September.

- ◆ Prompted by reading about the 1910 Valuation of Morden, and its frequent references to making up roads and installing drains, **David Haunton** had brought along photographs of roads in Ealing at that period undergoing this sort of upheaval.

He also reported making contact with the granddaughter of Jean Reville, Merton's racing motorist – and fantasist (see *Bulletins* 169, 170, 171)? She had sent him the cutting reproduced below.

Judith Goodman



**Dates of next Workshops: Fridays 7 December, 25 January, 15 March
At Wandle Industrial Museum. All are welcome**

Friday 14 September – Five present. Judith Goodman in the chair

- ◆ **Madeline Healey** anticipated the planned ‘chat show’, referring to the prompt-sheet produced by Peter Hopkins. She said that there were people known by her parents from c.1910, and the same names appear in the area now. She had some photographs from her childhood, showing Morden Common, open land from Garth Road, and a view towards Stonecot Hill. Peter would scan these to use at the September meeting.
- ◆ **Dave Haunton** had been doing some more research on Vincent Lines and his friend Thomas Hennell, another artist. Hennell was born in 1903 in Ridley, near Meopham, Kent. He used to cycle around (like our Bill Rudd), drawing countryside, people and places. He became a member of the Seinfelder Club. Dave had found a drawing of Vincent aged about 20 by Hennell, and a drawing of Hennell by Lines. Hennell later became a war artist.
- ◆ **Rosemary Turner** had brought newspaper photographs of the archaeological dig that she had taken part in at Beddington during the summer. She also had the article from the local *Guardian* about the revised plans for the Nelson Hospital.

Referring to the back page of the September *Bulletin*, she said it would be good to be able to identify the lady in the photograph. She might be one of the ladies of the parish mentioned in Revd Herbert Randolph’s Notebook (published by the Society as Local History Note No.20).

- ◆ **Peter Hopkins** reported on a letter to Sarah Gould from Leslie Leney, saying he regretted that the Methodist Boys Brigade had not been mentioned in Eric Montague’s *Cricket Green* (Mitcham Histories No.1). Mr Leney had now sent an article and a photograph for a future *Bulletin*.
Peter’s latest report on his medieval researches concerned the link between the fitzAnsculf Mitcham holdings, the later Carew estate within Mitcham, and Barnack, Northamptonshire.
- ◆ **Judith Goodman** had brought along some photocopied pages from a Victorian catalogue (1868) of ‘Sculpture, Paintings, Engravings, and other Works of Art’ belonging to the Corporation of London. A number related to Merton, Mitcham and Morden. Most sounded familiar, but not all. It was suggested that a trip could be arranged to view them – at the Guildhall Library?

Rosemary Turner

Friday 19 October 2012 – seven present. Rosemary Turner in the chair

- ◆ **Janette Henderson**, of Colliers Wood, has just completed a MA in landscape archaeology at Bristol University. Her topic was the granges of Merton Priory, and she gave us an illustrated presentation about the ten possible sites she had identified, including any contemporary remains, effects on the landscape, and influence on street patterns in built-up areas. We look forward to seeing her dissertation in the near future.
- ◆ **Peter Hopkins** reported a gift from member John Pile [see page 15].
Peter had brought to the workshop a printout of a well illustrated article from c.1950 about block-printing at the Liberty’s site, donated by Allen Clark, who worked at Liberty’s at the time.
- ◆ **Bill Rudd** told us that the black-and-white photos, colour prints and colour slides that he had taken over the years, starting with a Box Brownie and moving on from there, totalled several thousands. Some that he showed us included views of St Helier station and of the Ivy Coleman School of Dancing in Worple Road, Wimbledon.
- ◆ **Cyril Maidment**, commenting on the article about the Station Road arch in the September *Bulletin*, told us that the Wimbledon Society’s museum has a large file of correspondence and other papers from 1912 to 1914 relating to the arch and its preservation.
Cyril reported that he had prepared a guided walk round the graveyard of St Mary’s, Wimbledon, to look at all 27 listed monuments, and he showed us his file of maps, drawings and photographs. Look out for details!
- ◆ **Celia Bailey** reported correspondence with someone who had spotted *Bulletin* No.182 at London Metropolitan Archives and seen mention of Celia’s photograph of Jessup’s grocery shop in Mitcham. He is a family connection of the Jessups, and Celia hopes to learn more.
- ◆ **Judith Goodman** had been sent, by intermittent correspondent Mr Hotchin of Stanmore, (photocopies of) photos of buses from the 1950s – parked in Kingston Road, Merton Park, and in Crown Lane, Morden. Views of flooding under a bridge were, Cyril thought, of Kingston Road, New Malden.
- ◆ The 1910 Valuation of Morden was continuing to interest **Rosemary Turner**, who had been looking at the description of Bishop’s Cottages in Lower Morden. Roofs, walls and paintwork all needed attention, according to the report.

Judith Goodman

We are grateful to have received the following report from GEOFF POTTER of Compass Archaeology EVIDENCE FOR THE CONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF GROVE MILL, MITCHAM: A POST-MEDIEVAL WATERMILL ON THE RIVER WANDLE

An archaeological investigation and historic building record was carried out by Compass Archaeology in 2004 on land at Grove Mill and the former Crown Mill, London Road, Mitcham. The project was commissioned by Bewley Homes Plc in advance of redevelopment and conversion of the site, and followed a desk-based assessment.¹ The English Heritage Greater London Archaeology Advisory Service monitored the work on behalf of the LB of Merton.

This paper focuses on the 18th- to 20th-century development of Grove Mill. At the time of the archaeological work this was vacant but locally listed, the standing building dating to c.1870 with major additions of 1907/8. There was also some evidence for earlier activity, and for the layout of the later 19th-century Crown Mill that stood just to the east prior to its destruction by fire in 1964.

Location and historical background²

The site lies just upstream of Mitcham Bridge, on the north bank of the present course of the River Wandle

(Fig 1). It is likely that one or more of the medieval mills of Mitcham were located here, and Grove Mill itself may be on the site of the Whitford Mill that is mentioned in Domesday. The existence of three watermills in the area is documented from the 16th century, and is borne out by subsequent cartographic evidence.

There is a reference in 1698 to Tower Copper Mills, supplying the blanks from which the Royal Mint struck farthings and halfpennies. This was apparently located on the Grove Mill site and is probably the 'Perry's Mill' marked on Rocque's map of c.1745. Copper working declined in the second quarter of the 18th century, and by 1764 there is a reference to 'three water corn mills' on the site, two of which were acquired by Richard Glover in the 1770s.

In 1788 *Mitcham Corn Mill* (otherwise Grove Mill, occupied by Samuel Chesterman) was rebuilt after a destructive fire, with insurance particulars describing the new mill as '*brick built and timber... cover'd with Tarr'd Paper and Gravel*'. Estate and Tithe maps of 1828 and 1847 depict this mill (and Crown Mill), and show that the later layout of watercourses was well established. A large millpond fed by a diversion of the Wandle lay to the east of Grove Mill, and by the 1840s the mill itself contained a metal waterwheel capable of generating 24 horsepower (1hp = 745.7 watts). On the OS 25 inch map of 1865-7 the major buildings are shown as timber or metal, with Grove Mill producing flour.

By 1871 Grove Mill had been rebuilt in brick. Flour milling came to an end in 1903 with the arrival of the 'Patent Horse Hair Co. Ltd.' (later Lyxhayr Ltd), and the mill began producing fibre for packing and upholstery. A further devastating fire in 1907 resulted in rebuilding and a virtual doubling in size; later OS maps (1932+) record additions and a move to soap manufacture. However the use of water as a power source had clearly ended by the 1960s with the infilling of the millpond.

The archaeological and structural investigation of Grove Mill

The investigation revealed at least seven separate phases of mill construction, from probable early post-medieval through to the mid-20th century (see Fig 2).

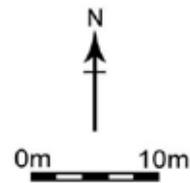
Evidence for a pre-1789 mill

The watching brief revealed a few features predating the 1789 development, including two sections of chalk wall base each about 0.65m thick in the northern part of the mill: one of these appeared to cut into a deposit containing green glazed slipped redware pottery (c.1480-1650). Also of apparently early date was a substantial timber platform or raft underlying a wall on the western side of the mill, over 3m below present ground level. This presumably represents part of an earlier mill, perhaps lining a channel to prevent water erosion in proximity to a sluice or waterwheel. Elsewhere within Grove Mill thick waterlain deposits below 18th-century development indicated an originally much wider channel or millpond.



Fig 1 Principal features of the site, based on the OS 1:1250 map with the permission of the Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of HMSO. ©Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Compass Archaeology Ltd SE1 1SG, licence number AL 100031317

Fig 2
The development of
Grove Mill



- Line of section from the 1789 mill (Fig 3)
- c.1871 building
- 1907-8 extension
- 1930s extension
- Northern extension, probably post 1945
- Waterwheel housing, ?rebuilt early 1940s
- Timber addition – 1940s or later

The 1789 Grove Mill

Removal of the modern floor revealed a number of brick features that almost certainly relate to the 1789 mill, notably the remains of the housings for two internal waterwheels. Unfortunately the central area was removed by a large channel (some 4 to 5m wide) that was apparently constructed as part of the later (c.1871) mill, to accommodate the tailrace below the external waterwheel. However, a series of 18th-century remains survived on either side of the channel.

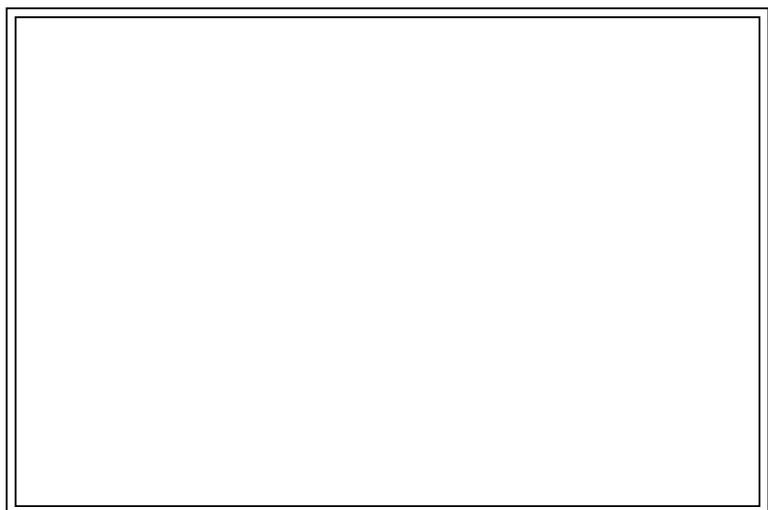
The most significant remains, to the north of the channel and in the eastern part of the present mill, comprised an area of solid brickwork on a substantial timber raft. This formed the northern side of the housing for a waterwheel some 5m (16' 6") in diameter, fed from the east by a brick-lined millrace with a base just above that of the wheel (Fig 3).

To the west (downstream) of the waterwheel housing one side of the tailrace channel was indicated by two sections of brick wall, covering an overall distance of c.10m.

Although much less well preserved, there appeared to be another waterwheel housing and tailrace on the southern side of the later channel, in line with that described above.

The intervening area – nearly 4m – was too great for a single wheel, so this must indicate the position of a second wheel. Because the central area is lost the width of the waterwheels is unknown, but the remains to the north indicate a minimum of 2m (6' 6"). It is possible that there was solid ground between the two wheels, but this area may have contained the sluice channel that allowed the flow of water to be regulated. Significantly the 1847 Tithe map appears to show three separate channels issuing from the western side of the mill, which may well equate to the north and south tailraces plus a central sluice.

Fig 3 Elevation and photograph of the 18th-century waterwheel housing below Grove Mill



The c.1871 and 1907/8 Grove Mill

Standing building recording of Grove Mill concentrated on the c.1871 & 1907/8 developments. Together these formed a brick-built building of two storeys with a double-pitched gabled roof, measuring some 29m by 18.5m in plan (Fig 2).

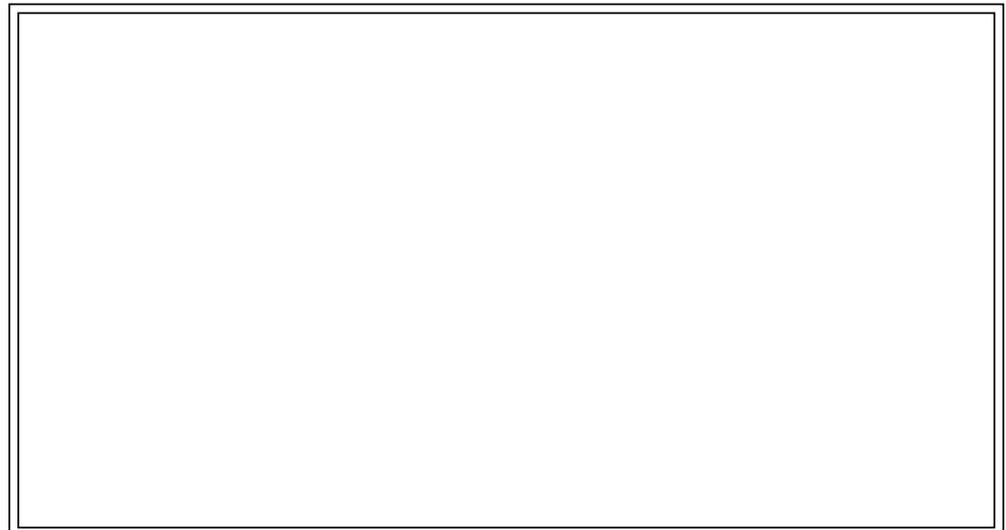
Evidence for the 1871 mill consisted of a brick shell, originally constructed to three storeys but gutted by fire in 1907. A similarly-sized two-storey extension was built onto the western side of this shell after the fire, and the 1871 building reduced in height. The lower part of the 19th-century west front survived as an internal wall between these two elements, and retained some original features.

This survival plus several contemporary views has allowed the west front of the 1870s mill to be reconstructed (Fig 4). On the ground floor, the internal wall retained the basic outline of windows and doors with their distinctive sandstone lintels and carved roll decoration, including two blind windows that are clearly seen in a photo taken immediately after the 1907 fire. On the first floor the original openings also survived, but had been lowered and given arched heads in the post-fire rebuild. The upper storey was removed after the fire but was of broadly similar form to the floor below; one window opening is shown to its full height in the 1907 photograph. The difference between the 1871 mill and the 1907/08 rebuild is clearly seen in a comparison between the 1871 western wall (seen in the reconstruction – Fig 4), and the 1907/08 western wall (seen in the photo – Fig 5).

The interior of the building was wholly reconstructed in 1907/8. This included the slate roof, supported by a double renaissance truss of timber beams secured by iron straps, and also a series of cast-iron columns at ground to first floor level. No remaining milling machinery or associated fittings remained within either part of the main building.

Fig 4 Reconstructed elevation of the c.1871 west front

Fig 5 Photograph of west front of the 1907/08 mill, photographed in 2002



The 20th-century wheelhouse

The remains of a later waterwheel housing adjoined the eastern side of Grove Mill, straddling the former millstream that ran east to west under the building (Fig 2). The structure incorporated modern frogged brick and was built between the OS plans of 1932 and 1953, probably as a result of bomb damage in November 1940: a direct hit is recorded here, blasting much debris into the tailrace.

Although the wheelhouse had lost its roof and most of its southern wall it retained some significant features, including a cast iron bracket for the wheel axle and parts of the former sluice mechanism (Fig 6). The wheel itself would have been some 4.2m (13' 9") in diameter.

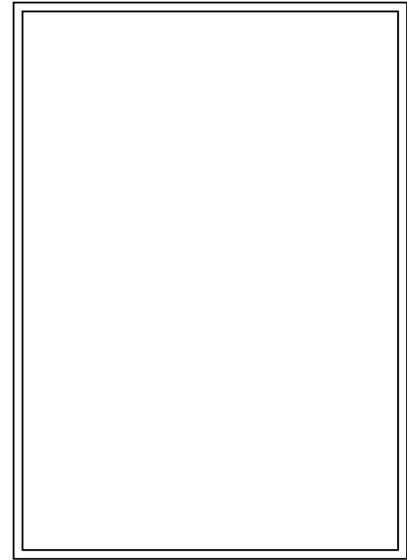


Fig 6 Elevation and photograph of the c.1940s waterwheel housing on the east side of Grove Mill

Conclusion

The investigation provided much evidence on the construction and development of Grove Mill, including the position and housings of two waterwheels within the late 18th-century mill. The new mill of c.1871 included a number of architectural details – stone mouldings, blind windows, etc. – but was rebuilt in a more basic style after the fire of 1907. The waterwheel housing to the east probably dates to the early 1940s, and represents one of the last applications of traditional milling technology.

- 1 CA 2002 *An Archaeological & Standing Buildings Desk-Based Assessment of a Proposed Development at Grove Mill and Former Crown Mill, London Road, Mitcham*
- 2 We are indebted to Eric Montague for his research and many published and unpublished articles: any errors arising from the condensing of these are the responsibility of the author. Further information was provided by the Merton Local Studies Centre and the Wandle Industrial Museum

PETER HOPKINS COMMENTS:

The statement above that “by 1764 there is a reference to ‘three water corn mills’ on the site” is misleading. The document of 1764, a bargain and sale, in fact lists: ‘All that messuage or tenement and the garden and yard thereunto belonging. And also all those two closes of pasture ground containing by estimation three acres or there about lying near the said messuage or tenement. And also **all that millhouse and the three water corn mills therein** near the said messuage with the barn and buildings thereunto adjoining. And all that small parcel of ground lying on the south side of the said buildings with the three small messuages or tenements and barn thereon standing. (All which said messuages, tenements, garden, yard, mills and premises are situate, standing, lying or being in Mitcham aforesaid, and were heretofore in the occupation of Charles Parry deceased, and now are or late were in the tenure or occupation of Edward Nash, his under tenants or assigns).’¹

So the three mills were within a single building, as revealed by the discovery of more than one wheel within the structure. The threefold name of the mill in 1645 probably refers to this single structure: ‘A Cornmill called Micham Mill als Wickford Mill als Marris Mill, with appurtenances, and a high drying room or loft adjoining’,² and a surrender on 8 April 1549 at the Ravensbury manorial court of ‘three mills heretofore one watermill lately new built by William Standon’ reveals that this triple mill was then in existence.³ Standon’s grandson mentions ‘two mylles under one ruff ... and an other mylle ... in Mycham’ in an appeal to Star Chamber in 1554/56,⁴ and ‘two watermills in one house in Mitcham’ are mentioned in an extent of the properties held in 1357 by Henry de Strete,⁵ who had bought the manor of ‘Rasebury’ in 1347,⁶ and who also held a 25-year lease of the neighbouring estate of William Mareys.⁷ In 1361 Mareys conveyed property including ‘two watermills’ in trust to the vicars of Mitcham and Morden in return for a £5 annuity,⁸ and it is likely that this became the Mareslonde estate of Merton priory. So multiple mills within a single building above Mitcham bridge are of considerable antiquity. In fact Domesday Book records a mill on the fitzAnsculf estate at ‘Whitford’ and half a mill on their estate at ‘Mitcham’. Could this also be a reference to two mills under one roof?⁹

¹ SHC 303/21/4/1; ² SHC 212/113/18a; ³ SHC 320/1/13 p.8; ⁴ TNA STAC 4/2/65 m.6; ⁵ TNA CP 25/1/229/49; ⁶ TNA C 131/20 (23) m.2; ⁷ TNA E 40/5695; ⁸ TNA C 54/199; ⁹ Domesday Book f.35v, 21: A Williams & G H Martin (ed) *Domesday Book: A Complete Translation* (Alecto 1992, Penguin 2001) p.84

NEWTON HOUSE, 1 COMMONSIDE WEST, MITCHAM

Mrs Monica Peck of Ash Vale has sent this photograph of the family home of her mother (b.1921). Investigating her family history, she has found that Newton House was bought (at an unknown date) by her grandparents Thomas and Annie Baker. Monica remembers that in the 1950s Thomas's office was in the front of the house (on the left as you look at the picture). The picture dates from before the Second World War, as the iron railings visible in front were then taken for scrap. The house itself was damaged by bombs during the war, after which the ladies of the family (Thomas' wife, daughter and mother-in-law) moved to the country. Newton House was still in the family's possession in the 1960s.

David Haunton



TONY SCOTT has written the following short history of the property.

As can be seen in the photograph, Newton House is a detached two-storey house of the early 18th-century style. The house is located in Commonside West at its junction with Commonside East and right opposite the Three Kings pond.

Its origins are somewhat obscure, but what we do know was that James Cranmer, the lord of the manor of Mitcham Canons, granted the lease of one of 'five new messuages with a garden by Mitcham Common' to Edward Foster in 1727 and this was probably Newton House. Mitcham Common, of course, extended unbroken right up to the Three Kings pond until the coming of the railway line to Sutton in 1869.

By the 1760s Mitcham land tax records indicate that Charles Foster, a millwright, who may well have been a son of Edward Foster, held the lease of various plots of land along 'the road to Croydon' (nowadays, Commonside West). He also had the lease of 'a house and mill' which was owned by James Cranmer, lord of the manor and son of the James Cranmer who had granted the lease to Edward Foster in 1727. Little is known about this mill except that it was not a very robust structure and that it disappeared from local records by the early 19th century when the post-mill, the base of which still remains, was erected in the centre of Mitcham Common. There is a strong probability that Charles Foster's mill was of a novel design with the sails mounted upon a horizontal wheel which rotated about a vertical axis. A mill of this type is illustrated in a little sketch of about 1800 and its location is merely given as 'Mitcham Common'.

The *Windmill* public house in Commonside West was almost certainly named after this mill when it was established under the Beerhouse Act of 1830. The pub must have started business between 1830 and 1838 since in the latter year it was recorded as The Windmill Beershop in Crawter & Smith's survey of the parish.

It would seem likely that Charles Foster died in about 1800 for, from that date until the early 1830s, Newton House was owned by John Oxtoby, and let to a succession of tenants. Crawter & Smith's survey of 1838 shows that ownership had passed to John Oxtoby's son, Samuel John Oxtoby, and the house was occupied by James Barber, and this is confirmed by the Tithe Apportionment Survey of 1846. It would appear from Census returns that James Barber was a stockbroker and lived in Newton House with his wife Sarah. The couple were followed in the 1860s and 1870s by John Coles and his wife. Little is known about them except that he was a half-pay naval officer and his wife was active as a voluntary worker for the parish church.

Not much more is known about the occupants of Newton House until Thomas George Baker (born in Mitcham 1885) and his wife Annie Alice Baker (born Annie Lawrence in Mitcham 1886) bought Newton House in the 1920s. Annie was a schoolteacher and Thomas was a master builder and had his small yard situated on the premises. At the rear of the house there was a large weatherboarded outbuilding which was used by the firm. The firm eventually closed and, after standing empty for a few years, the property changed hands in 1984. The old outbuilding was demolished, the house was renovated and Newton House became the local offices of the Southwest London Probation Service. The public footpath to the right of the house that leads from Commonside West to Langdale Avenue still retains the local name of Baker's Passage. In 1988 the building was given formal listing as Grade II. The Probation Service has now left Newton House and the building houses commercial offices.

**ROSEMARY TURNER has discovered details of
RAVENSBURY MILLS IN 1910**

While I was transcribing the Morden Valuation Records I came across three entries relating to the purchase of land by Capt. Harold Francis Bidder. One entry said that he had purchased land in 1910 for £1720 and had since built a house known as Ravensbury Manor. There were also two entries showing Mrs Bidder as the owner. They were recorded as a mill house and Ravensbury Mill. There was no description with these entries, just a note that they were included with Mitcham 5701.

Entry 5701 Mitcham was described as Ravensbury Mills, Tobacco Factory & Offices.

The Occupier was Messrs J Rutter & Co, and the Owner George Parker Bidder, Cavendish Corner, Cambridge – not Mrs Bidder.

The gross value was £4,880 and the value of the buildings £3640. The rent, estimated or actual, was given as £414. Rutter leased the mill for eight years from 29.9.1904 and then for a further term of six years from 29.9.1912.

There was a detailed description of the property, including the uses of various buildings. There were also details of the mill house.

Detached House – Mill House, built of brick cement faced & slated

Top floor:- 3 Attic beds

First floor:- 5 Beds used as offices & stores

Ground floor:- Hall, WC, 2 offices kitchen scullery Small Sitting Room

Garden at side front & back

A modern brick built & slate roofed Factory comprising grinding & cutting rooms men’s WCs & lavatory

Wheel House with 2 iron undershot wheels about 10 HP each

Warehouse stripping room & women’s lavatory above with part of roof floored for storage

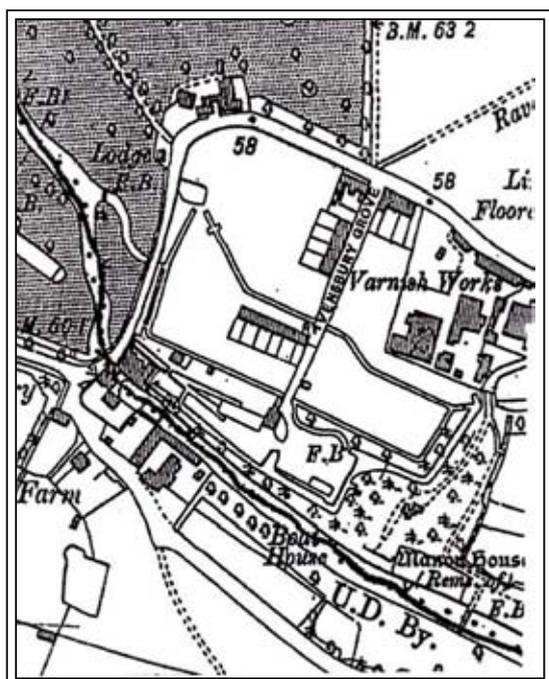
Fairly old brick & tile building comprising snuff grinding room (16 pestles) drying room packing & dispatching rooms with loft over also office men’s lavatory 2 stores (finished goods)

Timber & pan tile office packing room

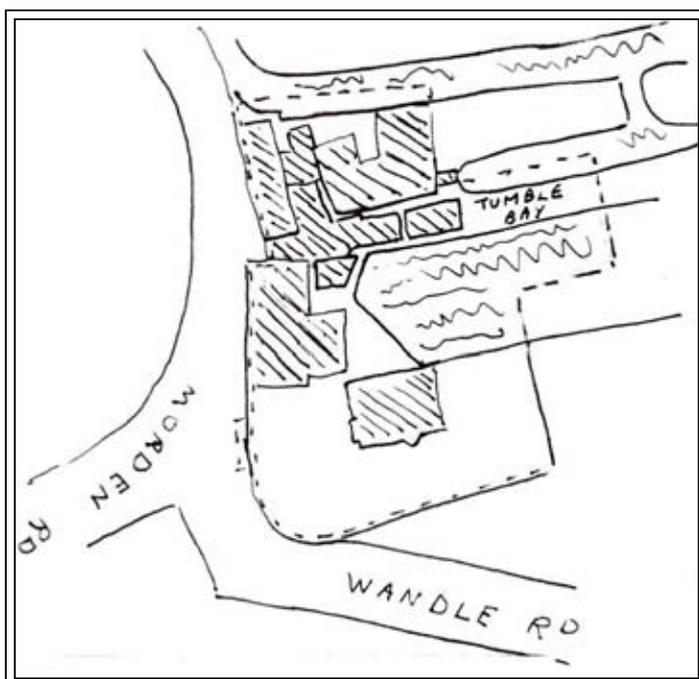
Timber & galvanized iron office laboratory bicycle shed mixing room cigarette room packet making room

Brick & slate mens & girls lavatories

Tumble bay small yard part river Wandle



Extract from 1912 OS Map



Copy of plan on entry 05701 of the 1910 Valuations for Mitcham

JUDITH GOODMAN finds a tribute to

‘ONE OF MERTON’S BENEFACTORS’

When going through the local newspapers from 1912 (looking for items of 100-years-ago interest) I came across the following item in the Wimbledon Borough News for 31 August 1912. It had the title shown above.

The following interesting extracts from the “Standard” of July 29th 1865 refer to Richard Thornton,¹ who gave the site for Merton schools and a sum for Merton charities:-

‘The will of Mr. Richard Thornton, so well known at Lloyd’s, the Jerusalem,² and almost every commercial establishment in the City, and who died some time ago, leaving the enormous wealth of £3,700,000, was proved at Doctor’s-commons shortly after.

‘Mr. Thornton’s career as a merchant in the City was most extraordinary. He was the son of a north country gentleman, and was born in 1776 at Burton, a village in Lonsdale, Westmorland.³ The tourist to that sequestered region will find a handsome monument of Mr. R. Thornton’s attachment to his birthplace in the Charity School, which he built at a cost of £40,000, and endowed, for the lodging, boarding and teaching of poor children in the parishes of Burton and Thornton. He was educated at Christ’s Hospital, and on leaving school he entered into business in Southwark; but very few of the oldest city men can remember Mr. Thornton’s first start in his commercial career. The circumstances of that time were very

different to our conditions in these later days. It was during our great war with the French Empire, when England was excluded from the markets of Europe, and when the continental trade was of immensely great importance to us, that Mr. Thornton, who was then carrying on business in partnership with his brother as a general merchant and shipbroker, threw himself, with fearless resolution, to break through the prohibition of English trade with the Continent. Napoleon had made the most desperate efforts to destroy the whole of our foreign commerce. To enforce his decrees, an entire division of the French Army, under the command of General Rappe, was stationed at Dantzic, and every port in Northern Germany was jealously guarded. On one occasion Richard Thornton was on board a vessel of his own, entering the Baltic, when she was encountered by a Danish gun boat, and the story goes that the Englishman, carrying a gun or two of his own, which was not unusual with merchant men in those days, refused the summons to surrender and showed fight, victoriously beating off the Dane after a vigorous cannonade. In that year, 1810, he got a commission from the Admiralty to purchase as much hemp as could be obtained from Russia, for the rigging of our fleet. This errand was, of course, attended with some personal danger, since all the English had fled from, or had been expelled from Riga and St. Petersburg. But Richard Thornton was not likely to be deterred by such risks. He landed at Memel⁴ and succeeded in obtaining and conveying to England many thousands of tons of hemp for the use of our government, in spite of difficulties which would have baffled any ordinary man. A splendid recompense awaited him two years afterwards. An express communication reached him from his brother who was in that country at the time of the French Invasion in 1812. He was apprised of the fact of Napoleon’s retreat from Moscow three days before it was known either to our ministers or to any other persons in London, and he profited by it to something over £200,000. The civil war which broke out, with a short interval, in the kingdoms of Portugal and Spain, excited Mr. Thornton’s sympathy. He saw the utter rottenness of the Miguelite pretensions in Portugal, as well as of the Carlist party in Spain, and he judged that by subscribing towards their overthrow, he might do a good act, and make a good thing by it.⁵ Military munitions were laid up in the Azores, to be ready for the use of Don Pedro’s adherents, either to replace him or his daughter on the Portuguese throne. It was Mr. Thornton who advanced a great deal of money for these preparations, and who, when Don Pedro’s army took the field, contracted for its equipment, finding everything the soldiers required. That enterprise was successfully concluded in 1834 by the friendly intervention of the English government. Yet scarcely had our young protégé got safely seated

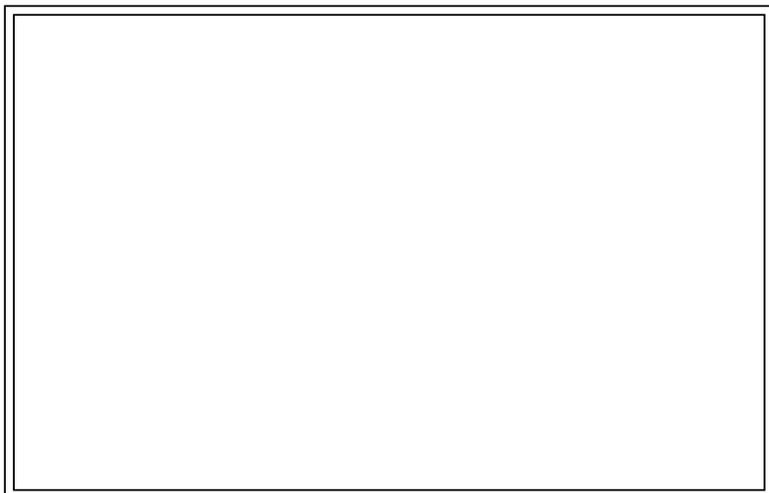


Drawing by Rosemary Turner from Richard Dighton’s *A Scene on the Baltic Walk, Royal Exchange (1822)*
The piece of paper ‘Dicky’ Thornton holds reads:
‘To the Superintendent of the London Dock
Please to deliver 4000 casks of Y.C.[?] Tallow’
Thornton notoriously made money by cornering the markets in various commodities. One such was tallow, that is animal fat used to make candles, which was imported in huge quantities from eastern Europe.

on the throne of Lisbon, than we had to assist another infant Queen against another pretender. Mr. Thornton did not hesitate to take the odds in favour of the Spanish heiress, as before of the Portuguese. He contributed much to the raising of the first loan on her behalf, and what with his claims as a bondholder, heavy debts which they owed him etc. he was a creditor to the young Peninsular government of not less than two million sterling. With this immense stake he never failed among the Peninsular bondholders to avow his own opinion that those governments would ultimately redeem their credit. Mr. Thornton's personal services to the Portuguese government were acknowledged by conferring on him the rank of a Knight Commander of the Tower and the Sword. Mr. Thornton was a member and underwriter at Lloyd's since the year 1796. Scorning the precautions of ordinary underwriters, who are in the habit of dividing their responsibilities with one another so that the loss of a single vessel and her cargo would fall perhaps on 20 or 30 persons, Mr. Thornton has taken a leonine share of the most tempting and lucrative hazards. No other man would be disposed, even for a premium of 70 per cent., to undertake the insurance of £100,000 on one bottom. Mr. Thornton, until his retirement from that scene of action, was beyond comparison the greatest man at Lloyd's, and, though single-handed, his operations rivalled those of the great marine insurance companies which have flourished so largely in these days. Previously to the late war with Russia he would sometimes insure for the Imperial government such a thing as a steam frigate built in the English dock-yards, and once, it is said, having entered into a similar liability towards that, or another foreign State, on being asked by a friend how he could insure the fleets of the different European kingdoms, he replied, "Oh, if they lose the men of war that I have insured I can pay for them in their own bonds." Besides being the largest owner of Consols⁶ in England Mr. Thornton was also one of the largest holders of foreign securities. He was noted for the extent and multiplicity of his investments as well as for his dexterous use of such opportunities as have frequently been presented by the various moods and opinions of the Stock Exchange. But ordinary trade had not been Mr. Thornton's only resource. He sometimes won largely on the affairs of the turf, and at other times has taken considerable bets on the results of a military campaign or a ministerial crisis. During our war with Russia it is said he laid the sum of £10,000 against £500 with a well-known Greek merchant that the price of Consols, which was of course somewhat declining, would never fall below 85 until the conclusion of peace. One dark morning, in the winter, which found us in a shocking mess at Sebastopol and Balaclava, the price actually came down to 85½, and those who envied Mr. Thornton's invariable luck were rubbing their hands at the prospect of his defeat. The Consols fell no lower, and Mr. Thornton pocketed the modest stake of his antagonist, having risked such odds against it. Before closing we should refer to his acts of charity and beneficence as a fitting accompaniment of such extraordinary good fortune. The schools which he has founded in his native village far away in the dales have already been noticed. But there is another pleasing trophy of his liberality – a double row of almshouses, neatly built and situated in a very pretty open garden at the edge of Barnet Common, just outside the neighbourly little town. The Leatherseller's [sic] Company, which boasted of him as father or senior member, erected one block of these houses in 1838 with money given by him when he filled the office of master in that worshipful guild. A second donation of his in 1850, enabled them to build a new range of these comfortable lodgings, in which altogether thirteen aged men and women enjoy a stipend each of 10s. weekly, with coals and candles. Every year he used to go to Barnet with the worshipful master and wardens, in the last week of May, to shake hands



*The central wing of the Leathersellers' almshouse in Barnet.
Photo October 2012 JG*



with the poor old pensioners, to compare their length of years with his own, and then to dine in good old English fashion with his colleagues in that ancient corporation. Such was the dignity and recreation of a London merchant of the old school. Mr. Thornton, in his will, makes the following bequests:--- £1,000,000 to Mr. Thomas Thornton,⁷ who likewise is to inherit the deceased's estates; £1,000,000 to Mr. Richard Thornton West;⁸ £500,000 to be divided among

The Merton schools in 1919. The building is now apartments. Postcard courtesy John Innes Society

other relations and friends; and handsome provision for Mr. Neal and other of the deceased's clerks; £100,000 to be divided among all the charities, hospitals, asylums, and benevolent institutions in London, etc., the sums are duly proportioned in each bequest:--- £15,000 to Christ's Hospital (where deceased was educated). £10,000 left in trust for the benefit of the schools in Merton in Surrey. £10,000 left in trust for the benefit of schools in Mr. Thornton's native village Burton; £1000 left for the benefit of the aged poor at Burton; £500 left for the benefit of the poor at Merton.⁹

There are many other legacies contained in the will.¹⁰

The executors are Mr. Thomas Thornton, Mr. R. T. West, Mr. Pulford, and Mr. Lee.

1. Richard Thornton (1776-1865) lived from about 1854 at Cannon Hill, Merton.
2. The Jerusalem Coffee House, in Cowper's Court, off Cornhill, was a resort particularly of merchants and brokers concerned with the East India trade.
3. Burton in Lonsdale is today located in North Yorkshire. The next village is called Thornton, suggesting perhaps that Richard Thornton's family acquired their name from a long record of living in Lonsdale.
4. A port in Lithuania, now known as Klaipėda.
5. Both countries in the Iberian Peninsula were overtaken by internal strife, in each case triggered by disputed succession to the throne. The Carlists in Spain supported the claims of pretender Carlos V, and the Miguelists in Portugal those of Miguel I. The period is the 1830s.
6. Short for 'Consolidated Annuities'. They were government securities created by an Act of 1786, and paid 3%. They could be bought and sold, but not redeemed.
7. Son of his elder brother
8. Son of a married sister
9. According to the obituary in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for September 1865, p386, his will 'contained a larger number of legacies for charitable purposes than, perhaps, has ever before been known'.
10. Including £400,000 to Richard Napoleon Lee, Thornton's son by Mrs Lee, his long-term 'housekeeper'. Thornton never married.

Other accounts:

W G Hoskins 'Richard Thornton 1776-1865: a Victorian millionaire' *History Today* XII (1962) pp574-579

H Barty-King *The Baltic Exchange* (1994) Quiller Press, London pp.6-9

A PRIZE PRODUCTION ...

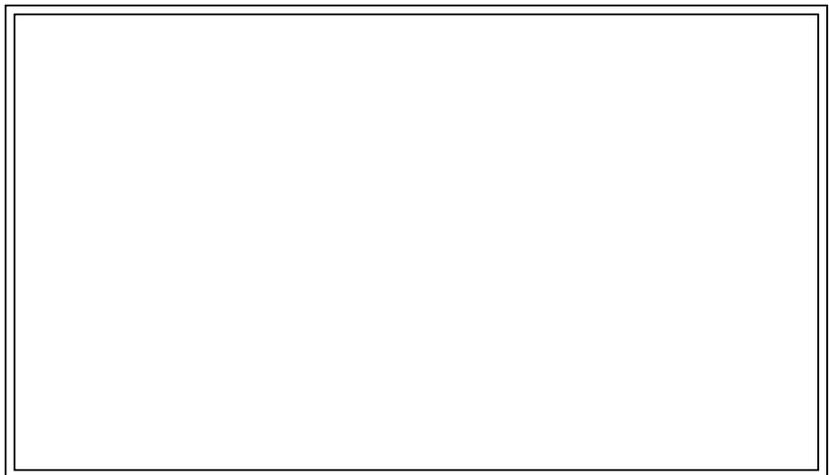
We are delighted to report that Eric Montague's *The Cranmers, The Canons and Park Place*, volume 11 in his *Mitcham Histories* series, has won the 2012 prize for best local history publication awarded by LAMAS (London and Middlesex Archaeological Society). The cheque for £100 was accepted on behalf of the Society by our Hon Secretary Rosemary Turner at the LAMAS local history event on 17 November.

Congratulations, Monty!

... AND A FUTURE CONTENDER?

Volume 13 of Eric Montague's *Mitcham Histories* is just out. He calls it *Willow Lane and Beddington Corner* and it deals with an often overlooked corner of Mitcham that has a long and varied industrial history. 144pp, copiously illustrated. £4.80 to members, £5.95 to non-members. Available at our meetings or from the Publications Secretary

A review is planned for our next issue.



From the front cover: Makepeace's former printing mill, seen from the south-west, with cress beds in the foreground – watercolour c.1921 by Arthur W Head, in a private collection, reproduced by permission

YET ANOTHER NEW PUBLICATION

John Pile recently picked up from a dealer's catalogue a privately published memoir from 1899 of Priscilla Pitt, wife of George Pitt, draper of Mitcham. The Pitts were Quakers and local philanthropists. The memoir is by their only son. John has given the little book to the Society, and a transcript has now been published as Local History Note 33. With eight A4 pages, including three photographs and other items reproduced from the original and a contemporary map, it is now available to members at 60p, 75p to non-members, at meetings or from Peter Hopkins (details above).

G C DRUCE AND 'PIERS' – corrections

Among the local personalities I listed in my article in the September *Bulletin* about the arch in Station Road, Merton, were a Mr Druce and a Mr 'Piers'. Charles Toase tells me that Druce was not the Borough Surveyor as I had him, but George Claridge Druce, a prosperous distiller, and the main contributor to the John Evelyn photographic survey of 1913. He was also the Hon. Local Secretary for Wimbledon of the Surrey Archaeological Society.

Mr 'Piers' was a misprint in the newspaper report for C R Peers, later Sir Charles, who was in fact the Chief Inspector of Ancient Monuments.

Both men were Wimbledon residents.

JG

Letters and contributions for the *Bulletin* should be sent to the Hon. Editor

The views expressed in this *Bulletin* are those of the contributors concerned and not necessarily those of the Society or its Officers.

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Printed by Peter Hopkins