Hon. Secretary:

Membership Secretary:

MERTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

PRESIDENT: Lionel Green

VICE PRESIDENTS: Viscountess Hanworth, Eric Montague and William Rudd

BULLETIN NO. 161 **CHAIR: Judith Goodman** **MARCH 2007**

PROGRAMME MARCH–JUNE

Saturday 24 March 2.30pm **St John's church hall, High Path, Merton**

'The Croydon Merstham & Godstone Iron Railway'

Paul Sowan of Croydon Natural History & Scientific Society will give an illustrated lecture on this sometimes overlooked extension to the Surrey Iron Railway.

High Path is close to bus routes and to the Northern Line at South Wimbledon. There is no vehicular access from Morden Road. Limited parking will be available in Merton Abbey Primary School grounds opposite the hall.

Saturday 21 April 2.30pm **The Parish Centre, off Church Road, Mitcham**

'Memories of Mitcham 1965-70'

Vice-President Eric Montague, will take a knowledgeable look at the local scene of 40 years ago, with some of the many slides he took at the time.

The Parish Centre is in Church Path, opposite the church of St Peter and St Paul, only a short walk from Mitcham's Vestry Hall. The 200 bus serves Church Road, and the Belgrave Walk Tramlink stop is close by. There is some parking possible.

Saturday 5 May 3.30pm **Guided tour at Park Hill, Streatham Common**

This event is free, and courtesy of the Streatham Society.

Sensible shoes advised. Those who wish can meet at Sainsbury's café in the High Road, opposite Streatham Common, at 1.00pm, for a snack lunch, a look at the former silk mill and a walk to The Rookery and Norwood Grove before the visit.

Nearest station Streatham. Short walk from the 118 bus route.

Thursday 17 May **All-day visit to Bognor Regis**

Travel will be by train. We shall have a guided tour of historic sites by **Sylvia Endacott**, who talked to us so entertainingly last year about Bognor, and there will be free time to explore.

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Saturday 9 June **Guided walk round Cricket Green, Mitcham**

Meet **Tony Scott** outside the Vestry Hall at 2.15 for 2.30pm for an informative tour of this picturesque and historic area. No need to book.

The Vestry Hall is on several bus routes and a short walk from Mitcham Tramlink stop.

The Kilsbys' coach trip to Cambridge in July

See information and booking details on separate sheet enclosed.

The Society's events are open to the general public, but entry to lectures for non-members is £2 per head towards our running costs.

RICHARD MILWARD, 20 APRIL 1924 – 7 DECEMBER 2006

For 40 years Wimbledon enjoyed the services of a local historian that would be difficult to rival. He produced many books, gave hundreds of talks, chaired the local history group of the Wimbledon Society, and was always active in its local history museum. Furthermore all the royalties from the books and the fees for the talks were paid over to the museum, which is run by volunteers, with no admission charge.

Apart from his great capacity for detailed work and research Richard had a natural talent to hold the interest of the audience, with little reference to his notes. One remarkable characteristic was the genuine enthusiasm with which he greeted a proposal for a new endeavour, no matter how small.

The community also benefited from Richard's 40 years as history master at Wimbledon College, the school he had attended as a pupil and where he had been made head boy in 1941. Sadly, two years earlier, he had contracted polio, and his twisted back was a cross he had to bear for the rest of his life. But, thankfully, his good humour and cheerfulness would never leave him. He became the first pupil from the College to win a state scholarship to Oxford, reading history at New College.

As for his skill as a teacher, Paul Merton, the comedian, said in 1999, "I liked Mr Milward and so I worked hard. He in his turn realised that I (a comprehensive boy) was working hard, and gave me some of his own time to help me through the exams. He taught me a valuable lesson. It was his belief that a second draft of written material improves the thought processes and makes for better work."

Cyril Maidment

David Luff writes:

Dear Merton Historical Society

Many thanks to you all for the presentation and gift at our last AGM. It was certainly a big surprise and very unexpected. The twelve years as treasurer have flown by. I took on the position as a complete novice, never having done anything like it in the past, and this could be why my way of running the Society's accounts has often seemed to be rather controversial at AGMs.

My special thanks go to both the late Winifred Mould [the previous Treasurer, and, later, the Hon. Examiner] and to Edna Duke [her successor as Hon. Examiner] who were a great help to me over these years.

Many thanks to you all

The book I am awaiting and hopefully will be reading by the time this appears in print, is the updated history of O V Bulleid's Leader class steam locomotive, by Kevin Robertson.

Leader was a revolutionary design of steam loco, with a cab at each end. Constrained by a rush to complete before the nationalisation of the Southern Railway in 1948, some design faults occurred. They could have been rectified, but by the time she commenced track running, her designer had left BR for a position in Ireland's CIE.

Leader was never allowed to shine in full glory, and not really surprisingly, with a nationalised railway almost entirely of died-in-the-wool Midland personnel. The CIE considered buying the three locos built but it did not come to be.

Any modeller reading this may be interested in that Chris of Golden Arrow Productions is intending to produce 160 models of Leaders. They are an updated version of his previous models. You need to be quick. I could certainly find use for them all.

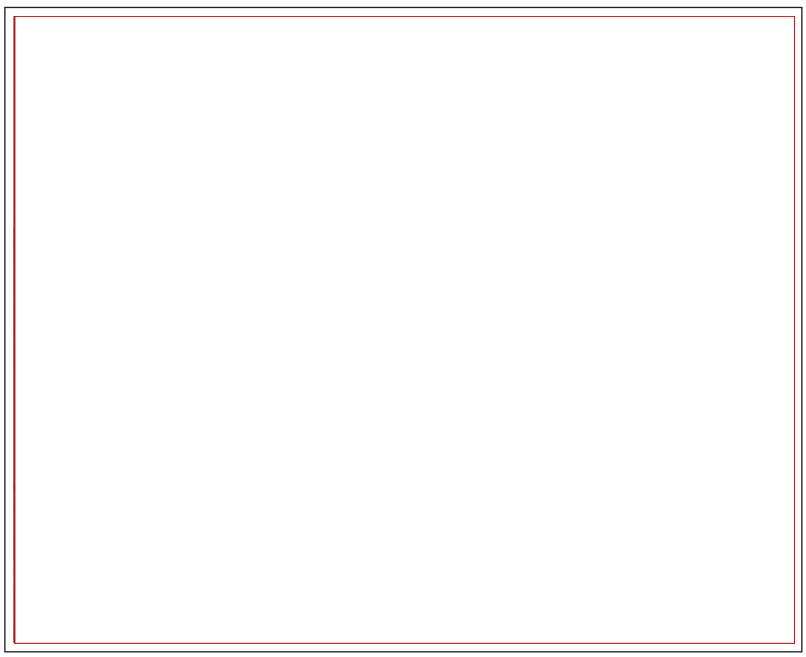
David

'THE BATTLE OF THE SOMME'

After the AGM on 11 November last year member Vince Webb spoke about the Battle of the Somme. This was at a most appropriate time, as it was Armistice Day, and it was in November 1916 that the Battle of the Somme ended 90 years ago. Vince is a keen student of the battles of World War I, his interest having been sparked by a TV documentary series in the 1960s, and having deepened over several visits to the battlefields.

The Battle resulted from French pressure on its allies to bring forward the 'big push' in order to deflect the Germans from Verdun, where French forces were incurring heavy losses. The British generals planned to attack the Germans over a 16-mile line, aiming to end the battle in five days. The Germans had established heavily fortified positions along the front line, many on high ground. The British strategy had little basis in experience or proper study. It was assumed that a massive week-long artillery bombardment, in conjunction with mines exploded under some of the German positions, would wipe out most of the German defenders. As there would be little or no defensive fire, the allied soldiers would be able to walk in broad daylight across 'no man's land' through gaps opened by the shells in the barbed-wire defences, towards the unoccupied German trenches. The reality was very different. The shelling had no effect on many of the well-fortified German positions deep underground. The infantry attack that started as soon as the shelling stopped had no element of surprise owing to the explosion of one of the mines eight minutes early. The shells falling on the barbed wire did not blast holes through it, but threw it up in the air so that it fell to the ground even more tangled than before, making an impenetrable barrier. Many of the allied soldiers were mown down by machine gunfire before or when reaching the barbed wire. Vince's photographs from some of the German positions showed clearly the good field of view they would have had of the British attackers.

On the first day of the Battle, 16 July 1916, there were nearly 60,000 British and Commonwealth casualties, one-third of them killed. On the second day the commanders of the allied forces could have concentrated on attacking the few points of the line where the previous attack had been successful, consolidating the positions that had been taken. Instead they ordered another general attack over the whole line, resulting in further heavy casualties. After five days the Germans fell back to defensive positions in woodland not far behind the line. When the woods were shelled by the British artillery the Germans withdrew to the rear, returning at the end of the bombardment to improved defensive positions created by the trees felled in the shelling. Vince described the ebb and flow of the remainder of the Battle, with attack and counter-attack, little ground won or lost, and further large numbers of casualties on both sides. Eventually the Battle came to a halt in the rain, mud and cold of November, when troop movements became nearly impossible. There were no winners. In total the Somme resulted in 420,000 British and Commonwealth casualties, 200,000 French and 500,000 German. This was a largely pointless waste of life, although Vince said in answer to a question that the German losses had a crucial effect in the longer term, when this serious depletion of their forces contributed to their losing the war in 1918.



In a futile attempt to achieve a breakthrough on the Somme, British troops rise from their trenches and proceed towards the enemy on 25 September 1916. Imperial War Museum

Vince gave moving accounts of the heavy losses suffered by individual regiments, many of which were 'pals' regiments' recruited from just one district or town. Others were Commonwealth regiments, such as the Newfoundlanders, with 91% casualties; he showed a slide of the land at the Somme bought by Canada to commemorate their dead. One of the most poignant memorials commemorates the Devonshire Regiment; the trench from which they advanced was later used to bury their dead. The inscription on a monument there reads 'The Devonshires held this trench; the Devonshires hold it still'.

Vince Webb's own slides illustrated his talk, which revealed his comprehensive knowledge of his subject.

David Roe

'FROSTS, FREEZES AND FAIRS'

On a remarkably mild December day we were entertained by meteorologist Ian Currie to a history of freezing weather and festivities, illustrated with many fascinating prints and views, and enlightened by many a wise weather saying.

He began by pointing out that average temperatures in Britain have varied considerably over the last 2000 years, not only from year to year, but in the long term as well. The climate now is in fact similar to that in Roman times, but by AD400 the weather was colder and wetter in the summer; by AD800 it had become warmer, with droughts in the summer; but from 1300 onwards winters became colder, reaching a peak in the late 1600s when there were 22 severe winters in the 50 years 1650-1700.

The first documented frost fair on the Thames was in December 1564, when it was recorded that Queen Elizabeth visited the fair and shot at targets on the ice. Other big freezes occurred in 1716, and in 1788 when the river froze all the way to the sea, and elephants were taken onto the ice at Woolwich. There was also a great freeze in 1739-40 when the temperature reached only 5°F (-15°C) and the river froze in three days. The last frost fair, in 1813-14, began with eight days of dense fog (a 'London Particular') in December and lasted to the end of January, with the river frozen over between Blackfriars and London Bridge.

The Thames froze over much more readily than now, because of a number of factors, not least of which was Old London Bridge, with its many openings, each of which was narrowed even further by the 'starlings' (timber reinforcements to prevent damage by boats). The inhabitants of the houses on the bridge would also discard their rubbish into the river, making it shallower. This meant that the tide hardly reached above the bridge, and any floating ice coming down the river would quite easily build up above the bridge.

When the river froze, the watermen (ferrymen and wherrymen) would be put out of business, so they would set up tents on the ice and organise activities such as bear-baiting, cock-fighting and bowls, charging a penny entrance. Iron skates, introduced from Holland, made skating popular. There were stalls selling fruit, flowers, gingerbread, coffee and beer, and minstrels, circuses and theatres to entertain the crowds. There were printing presses producing mementos of the occasion. Barbers would also set up booths, with lute-players to entertain waiting customers, the strings also coming in useful for removing teeth, as they doubled as dentists too.

In later years there were also big freezes, but the Thames in London never again froze totally. Ian picked out a number of years for mention. In 1836 a temperature of 1°F (-17°C) was recorded inside, and gin froze in the bottle. In 1867 thousands were plunged into the river when the ice broke under the strain, and 47 died. In 1881 there was a snowstorm for two days with 80mph winds and the temperature down to -18°C; hundreds of people died, and there were ten-foot snowdrifts in Oxford Street. In 1895 the temperature sank to -17°F (-27°C), the all-time record, and the Thames froze over at Kingston.

In the 20th century there was a blizzard at Christmas in 1927, and in 1947 there was a prolonged freezing spell from mid-January to mid-March. The most recent big freeze was in 1963, when the Thames estuary froze at Margate and it was possible to drive across the river at Hampton Court. Other recent freezes were in 1981, when the Queen was trapped in snow, in 1987, when the lowest temperature was -9°F (-23°C), and in 1997 when the Thames froze at Kingston in early January.

Some of the reasons the Thames no longer freezes have been mentioned. Other more recent developments have also lessened the likelihood – increased dredging for shipping, Victorian embankments which reduced the width of the river and increased the speed of flow, power stations pumping hot water into the river, 'heat islands' in the city resulting from large buildings, even the gradual tilting of the south-east of England downwards, which increases the height of the tides. Finally there is Climate Change: in 2006 we experienced the warmest autumn on record, with the ten warmest years overall since records began all being after 1988.

The Frost Fair 1739-40

Ian concluded by forecasting very high winds for the following 12-18 hours and advising everyone to 'batten down the hatches'. Even now the weather can spring surprises, or as Ian put it in his concluding rhyme:

Whether the weather be hot,
or whether the weather be not,
We'll weather the weather whatever the
weather – it's the only weather we've got!

Desmond Bazley

ROMAN TIMES IN SURREY

There was a good turnout on 27 January for our first meeting of 2007, which was also the first time we have used St James Church Hall, Martin Way. A spacious hall with blinds to keep out the glare of the winter sunshine, the only drawback was the public transport service which tried its hardest to delay the arrival of our speaker! Dr David Bird, recently retired as County Archaeologist for Surrey, finally arrived by taxi, having been thwarted by both train and bus, and was a few minutes late in starting his lecture. However, it was worth waiting.

Although Britain became part of the Roman world in 54 BC, it was not yet made a province of Rome. Instead local tribal rulers had to pay tribute. In the southeast the Catuvellauni were dominant in the Essex and Hertfordshire region and the Atrebates in the Sussex, Surrey and Hampshire area. There was frequent conflict between these two power blocs during the century following Julius Caesar's campaign, as well as internal struggles, which ultimately provided the excuse for a second invasion in AD 43. David believes that the main landing was probably in the Solent area, rather than on the Kent coast, and that the famous battle often attributed to the Medway was more likely to have been on a Surrey river such as the Wey or even our own Wandle.

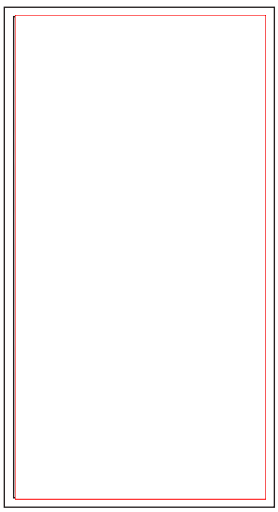
There seems to have been little opposition to the invasion and there are few military sites in the southeast. It is likely that much of southern Britain had become so much part of the Roman world that many welcomed the opportunity to embrace a Roman lifestyle.

The province was administered through the tribal areas, with local government in the hands of the tribal 'upper class'. City states were centred on newly-founded capitals, such as Silchester, the capital of the Atrebates. London, founded around the middle of the 1st century as a distinctive Roman trading base, became a focus for our area, with new roads leading to it. Stane Street, linking with Chichester, had official posting stations at regular intervals, often at river crossings, and Merton, at the crossing of the Wandle, is likely to have been the nearest to London, providing a watering place for livestock. London and its road network attracted the next generation, who created a ring of settlements, such as Ewell and Brentford. Ewell has produced archaeological evidence for several sites of a 'sacred' nature. Southwark and Staines were also key settlements in the area.

There is little evidence of change in the management of the countryside during the first 150 years, the Iron Age field systems and their settlements continuing in use. There is scattered evidence for landscape changes around AD 200, with new ways of land management being introduced, but there are huge gaps in our knowledge.

Villas seem to have favoured the edges of geological zones, where they could exploit the potential of the varied geology. They seem to have avoided the Weald and the gravel zones, but the wooded areas on the London Clay would have provided a useful 'crop' for both fuel and timber – much in demand in London – and woodland management would have been an important part of the local economy.

The villas themselves, with their bath-complexes and their mosaic floors, are well known, but less is known about their surroundings. Beddington has provided evidence from different periods, including postholes from large buildings around the villa. Tilford, near Farnham, was a centre for pottery, producing a wide variety in large quantities, though using unsophisticated kilns. Tileworks have been found at Reigate and at Ashtead Common. Ashtead-patterned tiles have been found over a wide area, but as the pattern was applied by roller, it is not clear whether all the tiles were made at Ashtead or whether the tiler took his roller from site to site! Tiles were heavy, but these sites were only served by road transport, not rivers.



Keyed flue tile from Ashtead. Photograph from Surrey Archaeological Collections *XXXVIII pt I (1929)*

Britain was part of an empire-wide trade network. Surrey roads brought Samian ware from Gaul to Titsey (as well as good Oxfordshire copies!), and exotic goods to Rapsley, alongside coarse pottery from the Alice Holt Forest area in Hampshire.

There were Romano-Celtic temples at Southwark, Titsey, Farley Heath and Wanborough. These were not 'Roman' temples for the worship of 'Roman' gods, but centres for the veneration of local deities, though some shared a 'Roman' name, such as *Mars Camulos* recorded in an inscription at Southwark. There is little evidence of Christian worship outside of the towns. Burial rites also changed over the centuries.

There were many changes in the period of Roman rule. David stressed that we shouldn't think of 'The Romans' as a discrete group who arrived in the 1st century and departed in the 5th. The army that left Britain was mostly of Germanic origin, whereas the British who remained were mostly Roman citizens with a Roman lifestyle!

Peter Hopkins

LOCAL HISTORY WORKSHOP

Friday 24 November, evening meeting. Four present. Lionel Green in the chair.

- **Bill Rudd** had more to say about the Merton priory section in Time Team's book, and the errors therein – for instance, the mention of a 'dock' in the River Wandle, and muddling the technical terms relating to block-printing. The accompanying drawings were also inaccurate.
- **Rosemary Turner** had decided to learn more about the 'Spital' area of Morden. Her preliminary notes appear on below.
- **Judith Goodman** had been to the National Art Library at the V&A to read a manuscript treatise on calico-printing written by John Leach of Merton Abbey in 1792. Leach was the writer of several of the letters in the Bennett/Leach collection lent to us by the owner for editing. The V&A document, nicely bound in vellum, contains directions for dyeing and printing calicos, mainly with madder, which was used in different ways to produce a great variety of colours. Weld, indigo and orpiment are also mentioned. Pasted in are also many swatches of cotton and linen, some showing gradations of plain colours and some with patterns printed from blocks and from copper plates. John Leach took his son-in-law Thomas Bennett on as partner before handing the business over to him around 1812.
- It was an exhibition about John Betjeman and architecture that had caught **Lionel Green**'s interest. This was at Sir John Soane's Museum, and the rest of the session passed pleasantly in an enthusiastic discussion of that institution, of its founder and of the late and much missed poet and architecture critic.

  Lionel had also been putting together the story of the connection between Merton and Cahagnes, a small town (famous for prize-winning tripe) in Normandy. [See pp8-9.]

Judith Goodman

SOME NOTES ON SPITAL AND THE HOARES

At last October's workshop Peter Hopkins spoke about his study of medieval Morden, and questions that arose from it [*Bulletin* 160 p.3]. He mentioned the area called Spital which now contains the area where Bill Rudd lives and I used to live. In the following discussion a site in the woodland of Morden Recreation Ground was mentioned. My ears pricked up, as this used to be at the end of my garden for about ten years. Prior to that our family had lived in the Carshalton side of the Estate. I knew it as a bird sanctuary and allotments. There were several rumours of a tunnel which supposedly led to Nonsuch Palace or was an unused extension of the Underground.

I decided to try to discover more about the site. Peter and Bill were not sure whether it had been recorded, but the foundations of a medieval hall had been found amongst the trees.

Merton Local Studies Centre had no mention of this. Kathy from the Heritage Centre did a further search for me and found nothing. I contacted the NMR [National Monuments Record], but apart from acknowledging my enquiry they have not got back to me.

I was aware that although this was all new to me Peter and Bill have probably looked into this previously, so I went through the books, leaflets and *Bulletins* at home, which related to the area.

I obtained copies of maps covering the area dating back to 1816, and I looked at Peter's publication *Morden Tithe Apportionment*. The property was occupied by George Matthew Hoare in 1838.

I had a few books on the St Helier Estate, and in one it states that 'where possible the roads followed existing boundaries'. It included a small plan of the Estate, and I have roughly plotted the position of the roads on an old map. (The copy of the original plans of the Estate, at the Local Studies Centre, did not help.) My first thought had been that the raised area shown on the map could have been the site of the manor house, and later became covered in trees, but according to Lionel Green it was a pond.

I do not think I will be able to go back to the early records, as my Latin lessons were discontinued after one term. I will have to leave this to Peter. I did wonder if it was worth trying to track down the LCC records to see if there is anything recorded.

At this point I got sidetracked into wondering about the Hoare family: according to Peter's Tithe paper they occupied quite a large area. Various publications by the Society mention the Hoares, who were connected to Hoares the London bankers who married into the Coutts Family and were the owners of Watts the ecclesiastical suppliers. They have a long history with Westminster Abbey, and one of the family married Gilbert Scott.

Rosemary Turner

LOCAL HISTORY WORKSHOP

Friday 19 January 2007, afternoon meeting. Eight present. Judith Goodman in the chair.

- **Peter Hopkins** reported on his Medieval Morden project. His translations of the manorial accounts have been checked by an expert, who is now checking the court rolls. So Peter has started to write up the account rolls. He brought along drafts relating to land use, crops and livestock, but there is much more to research.
- **Bill Rudd** had been responding to several enquiries. The local scout group asked about Searchlight Cottages, which were near the mosque site. They first appear on post-WWI maps, and Bill believes they were part of the defence of London searching for Zeppelins. These huts were later converted to cottages, and later still were used as the scout HQ. Other enquiries related to Hazelwood in Central Road, and the Hatfeild family.
- **Cyril Maidment** donated to the Society a set of *The Merton Story* articles from local newspapers.

  He brought along photos of the 1933 tapestry at Lancing College, woven at Merton Abbey, and a photograph (right) that he took six years ago to parallel the wartime view by Harry Bush entitled 'A Corner of Merton, 16 August 1940', printed in Judith's *Merton & Morden: A Pictorial History* 158.

  Cyril also reported the death of Wimbledon historian and MHS member Richard Milward (see p2) and the threatened closure of Wandsworth Museum (see p2).

- **Madeline Healey** brought along copies of old photographs of Lower Morden, including a view of Bishops Cottages (right), now replaced by 154-170 Lower Morden Lane. The originals photos were donated to Lower Morden Library some years ago.

- **Rosemary Turner** had been trying to find out about the excavations in the 1970s on the site of Merton Priory's Spital Farm at the junction of Central Road and Farm Road, Morden. The medieval building was replaced by The Lodge, and in the mid-19th century it was the property of George Matthew Hoare, son of Henry Hoare of Mitcham Grove.
- **Lionel Green** has discovered more on Faramus of Boulogne, who donated Carshalton church to Merton Priory. Lionel recently found the research notes he made on this subject 50 years ago!

  He has also been investigating Merton Priory's holding of Fifide near Shellwood, in Leigh and Horley, and part of the priory's manor of Ewell. Each of these topics will be the subject of articles in future *Bulletins*.
- In September **Eric Montague** went on a cruise on the River Seine, visiting Richard Lionheart's castles, Monet's garden, and Rouen – the scene of the burning of Joan of Arc. But for Monty the jewel in the crown was his visit to Honfleur, the seat of the Tankerville family who became lords of Ravensbury. Monty 'floated' the idea of an MHS cruise! Let him know what you think.

  As he now lives in Sussex, Monty has been reading the published diary of a Horsham tradesman in the late 17th century, who noted every time he went to church and what the sermons were about, probably as proof that he was a practising Anglican. Monty linked this to the Test Act of 1673, which prohibited from office any who refused to take oaths of allegiance and of supremacy, or who rejected the Anglican beliefs regarding Holy Communion. He wondered whether any similar material survives locally.
- **Judith Goodman** had been continuing her researches into the Bennett and Leach families of Merton Abbey. A cousin of John Leach Bennett was a student and then a master at Eton, before becoming bishop of Colombo in Sri Lanka. Looking through back copies of *Etoniana*, she found excerpts from the diary of his future wife's aunt, commenting on their burgeoning relationship! A few pages further on she happened to spot extracts from letters written by a pupil at Dr Roberts's school in Mitcham (see p12). Serendipity indeed!

Peter Hopkins

LIONEL GREEN looks at the connection of Merton priory with

THE CHURCH AT CAHAGNES, NORMANDY

This is the story of a church in Normandy, whose medieval structure no longer exists, but which was often the subject of discussions in the chapter house at Merton priory from 1170 until 1267. Cahagnes is a town between Caen and Vire, and gave its name to the family of Keynes.

Ralph de Cahagnes (d.1174) was a benefactor of Merton priory, granting it the advowsons of churches in Cambridgeshire, Dorset, Gloucestershire and Northamptonshire, as well as Cahagnes in Normandy. Both his mother-in-law Emma and his wife Alice were buried at the priory.[1] His beneficence has already been recounted in *Bulletin* No.138 (June 2001 pp.8-9), but the present article is confined to this single gift. It is only because the canons, over many years, recorded in their cartulary the occurrences of the 12th and 13th centuries that we today are able to piece together even part of a story which demonstrates both the comparative ease with which ordinary folk could invoke litigation, and the usefulness of a common language, Latin, in the courts of England, Normandy and France.

In about 1150 Ralph de Cahagnes granted an estate of the church and 30 acres (12ha) at Cahagnes to a French knight, who was then condemned for killing a man. As lord of the estate Ralph took possession and granted it to William Postell, the parson of the church, and he was able to take an annual rent for the land. Postell then married a cousin of the knight, who bore him four daughters.

Wimund of Courvaudon, a priest and also a cousin of the forfeiting knight, claimed the estate, and the matter went to the court of Ralph de Cahagnes. He ruled that the land belonged to the church, and the suit was 'laid to sleep'.[2] William Postell was left in possession, and the king's court confirmed the decision.

Ralph de Cahagnes then granted the advowson of the church and the estate to Merton priory in about 1172, but allowed Postell to continue as parson. Scandalous behaviour was rife at this time, and a knight, Ralph de Grainville, whose wife was ill, had an affair with Beatrix, one of Postell's unmarried daughters. The relationship produced two sons; the woman was excommunicated for adultery, and died soon afterwards.

A distant cousin of Beatrix, Robert de Courvaudon, brought an action against the canons of Merton to obtain the advowson, which resulted in a fine payable by all parties, including the priory.[3]

As Beatrix had died excommunicate, her sons Robert and Ralph were disregarded over her inheritance, but when they came to manhood they too claimed the advowson of Cahagnes, including the ancient estate. The claim was to be heard in the ducal court, but Henry II was in England, and William fitzRalph, the seneschal of Normandy (1179-1200) presided, probably about 1184-87.[4] Merton priory was represented by the bishop of Bayeux (1164-1205), Henry de Beaumont, former dean of Salisbury, but the verdict went against the priory, although judgement awaited reference to the king. He ordered a jury to determine whether the sons were born in adultery. If so the claim would fail.[2] The final decision favoured the priory. The evidence of the bishop of Bayeux is interesting. He wrote to the prior informing him that the jury had established that William Postell was a deacon, son a priest. He recites the circumstances of the adultery and the burial of Beatrix at the leper chapel. The estate involved 'the old iron mine within the deanery of Bayeux'.[5]

Whilst litigation continued Merton priory sought an arrangement with a monastery in Normandy to exchange foreign properties. An agreement was drawn up for the church at Cahagnes to be transferred to the Benedictine abbey of St Fromond near Vire. In return Merton priory would receive the tithes of Stamford castle and the advowsons of five churches in that town – St John the Baptist, St Paul, St Michael Cornstall, St George and All Saints in the Market (with a pension of two silver marks [£1.33]), and, in addition, the advowsons of two other churches in Lincolnshire – All Saints, Saxby, and St Andrew, Bonby. Pope Lucius III (d.1185) issued an indulgence, and king John confirmed arrangements by royal charter in 1200.[6] However, the exchange was never put into effect, and in 1203 king John lost the dukedom of Normandy.

Robert and Ralph de Grainville, grandsons of William Postell, complained to the king of France that Merton priory had deprived them of their rights. A fresh action in the royal court commenced, and the canons persuaded the seneschal of the count of Boulogne to petition for the action to be heard in the count's court.[7] Robert (Ralph may have died) refused to acknowledge the count's jurisdiction. The case was heard in the court of the count of Boulogne, who at the suggestion of Robert de Geldeford, canon of Merton, sent his steward Peter Leschaut. No adversary to the canons appeared, and the claim was dismissed. Eventually it was agreed to go to the French king's court, and Robert de Grainville promised to present Ralph's son to the church of Cahagnes.[8] The king of France requested a copy of all title deeds from Merton priory, under the seal of the priory and the seal of the archbishop of Canterbury.

The bishop of Bayeux continued to act for the priory and informed them of the low prospects of success. His assistant was 'L', his clerk, 'who was useful for speaking but slow of counsel',[9] whilst the adversary had the whole court of the king and the clergy and province. There was also the abbot of Caen, whose nephew supported Ralph de Grainville. The bishop nevertheless succeeded in transferring the hearing from the Curia Regis to the Curia Comitis.[10] Unfortunately the cartulary fails to record the result of the hearing, but clearly the priory continued to possess Cahagnes well into the 13th century.

A further attempt to exchange properties with a Norman monastery began in 1266. This was with the Augustinian abbey of St Mary du Val(le), close to the Orne river, south of Thury-Harcourt. Each house was to give a cell to the other, 'by the will of the patrons of both places'.[11] On 28 June 1266 the bishop of Exeter issued a licence for the exchange of properties in his diocese to take place.[12] This included the priory or cell of Tregony, Cornwall.

The abbot of Valle sent his proctor to Merton to effect the exchange on 16 March 1267. A charter was finally drawn up on 15 July 1267, which granted to the abbot and convent of Valle all land in lay fee at Cahagnes and elsewhere in Normandy, 'as well of wood as of plain, and in corn-land, pasturages, and commons, but subject to due and accustomed fees and services. Dated at Merton, the ides of July 1267'.[13] Each year Merton was to pay Valle 13 marks (£8.67) at Merton, and they also received 'the crops and fruits of the land and movables at Cahagnes for the present year'.[14]

From the exchange Merton gained the cell of Tregony, the churches of St James and St Kybi at Tregony and the church at St Issey, also in Cornwall. They also received the advowsons of Ashcombe, Buckerell, Clyst St George, Stockleigh Pomeroy and Upottery, and St Lawrence, Exeter, all in Devon, and of Oare church, just over the border in Somerset.

Why was there such persistence in going to court? Was there antipathy towards foreign ownership, or were lawyers encouraging litigation?

1. BL Cotton Cleop.C VII (Merton priory cartulary) No.69 fo.lxxxvi; A Heales *Records of Merton Priory* (1898) p.29
2. Merton priory cartulary No.160 fo.ciii translated in Heales *op. cit*. p.56. Note that Heales mistakenly took 'Kaham' to be Cheam.
3. Concord was made in the Curia Regis concerning patronage by brother Roger de Want.
4. The royal itinerary in Normandy precludes certain dates, and it was probably between June 1184 and April 1185, or between April 1186 and February 1187.
5. Heales p.57; L F Salzman 'Sussex Domesday Tenants' *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 63 (1922) pp.191-2
6. Charter rolls 17 Feb. 1200 1 John m.25; L F Salzman *op. cit*. p.192
7. Renaud of Dammartin was president at the hearing. He claimed the title of count of Boulogne following his marriage to Ida the granddaughter of countess Matilda, wife of king Stephen. The king of France began occupying the county of Boulogne in 1211.
8. H G Richardson 'A Norman Lawsuit' *Speculum* 7 (1932) p.389
9. Heales p.57
10. Merton priory cartulary No.163 fo.cv. Heales p.57. From the king's court to the county court. This must have been one of the last acts of the bishop of Bayeux, for he died in 1205.
11. Heales p.146
12. Heales p.149
13. Merton priory cartulary No.343 fo.cxlvii; Heales p.148
14. Merton priory cartulary No.348 fo.cxlix; Heales p.148

The 19th-century bells from the old church at Cahagnes. The centre of the village, including the church, was destroyed in the D-Day aftermath, and has been rebuilt in utilitarian style.
Photo: J Goodman

TONY SCOTT outlines the story of

THE MIZENS OF MITCHAM

Groundwork Merton has recently produced a teaching pack for Key Stage 2 children, which enables them to discover the history of this family, who were once very important locally.

Many members may be familiar with the name Mizen Brothers in connection with horticulture and market gardening in Mitcham, and some may even remember their Eastfields Farm in Grove Road, Mitcham, which closed over 45 years ago. Not many people nowadays appreciate how great an influence the Mizen family had on the way Mitcham developed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Edward Mizen, a market gardener and horticulturalist, had a farm in the area which later became Battersea Park. In 1866 Edward and his wife Sarah and their five children moved to Mitcham and bought land which was being sold on the break-up of the Moore/Bridger physic gardens. The farm at Battersea was retained until the land was bought by the London County Council, at its formation in 1888, to provide a park for Londoners.

By the late 1880s Eastfields Farm was a thriving concern, covering land between Grove Road and the present Acacia Road, both north and south of Tamworth Lane. By 1895 Mizens had created the Elm Nurseries on the site of Pound Farm in London Road, an area now covered by Armfield Crescent and its four blocks of flats and maisonettes.

Edward Mizen died in 1911, leaving his three sons, Edward Johnson, Edward Ernest (known as Ernest) and Alfred to carry on the business. He also had two surviving daughters, Alice and Elizabeth. The family firm took the name 'Mizen Bros', and by 1928 owned over 128 acres of land in Mitcham and 120 acres in Streatham. In the 1920s Mizen Bros had three stands for plants and two for flowers at Covent Garden Market. Each night at about midnight three or four carts, each drawn by a pair of horses, would leave Mitcham for the three-hour journey of eight miles to Covent Garden, arriving there with sufficient time to get the plants and salad crops arrayed before the market opened at 4 am. The carts would return loaded with manure bought at the market from the livery stables in central London.

The Mizen Bros firm built houses for rent in Landsdell Road, Carew Road, Feltham Road and St Mark's Road, Mitcham. The houses in the first three roads were built cheaply, but satisfied basic needs; the houses in St Mark's Road were of a higher standard. All these houses still exist. The houses were not solely for employees, but employees paid a discounted rent. For the smaller houses, in the 1920s, the rent was 7/6d (37.5p) per week for non-employees and 3/- (15p) per week for employees. If a tenant left Mizens' employment they could remain in the house but had to pay the full rent. The Mizens owned over 60 houses in Mitcham in the 1890s.

The family was very prominent in local affairs. Alfred, the youngest son, was one of the members of the Mitcham Common Conservators at their formation in 1891 and fought vigorously against encroachment of the Common by the Princes Golf Club. Alfred Mizen was a member of Mitcham parish council during the whole of its existence from 1894 to 1915, and was its chairman from 1897 to 1903, and again in 1914. He became an elected member of Mitcham Urban District Council at its formation in 1915 and was its chairman in 1915/16.

In 1910 Alfred Mizen was elected to represent Mitcham as a member of Surrey County Council, and in 1921 he was made an alderman. He was at one time vice-chairman and then chairman of the County Education Committee. During his time on the Education Committee two 'County Schools' were opened in Mitcham. These were effectively grammar schools, and had entry by examination. Mitcham Boys County Secondary School was opened in 1922 on the site of the former Upper Mitcham Boys County School. The buildings are now part of St Thomas of Canterbury Primary School in Commonside East. In 1929 Mitcham Girls County Secondary School was opened on the site of Cranmer Farm. The buildings are now part of Cranmer Primary School in Cranmer Road. Alfred was appointed a JP in 1925.

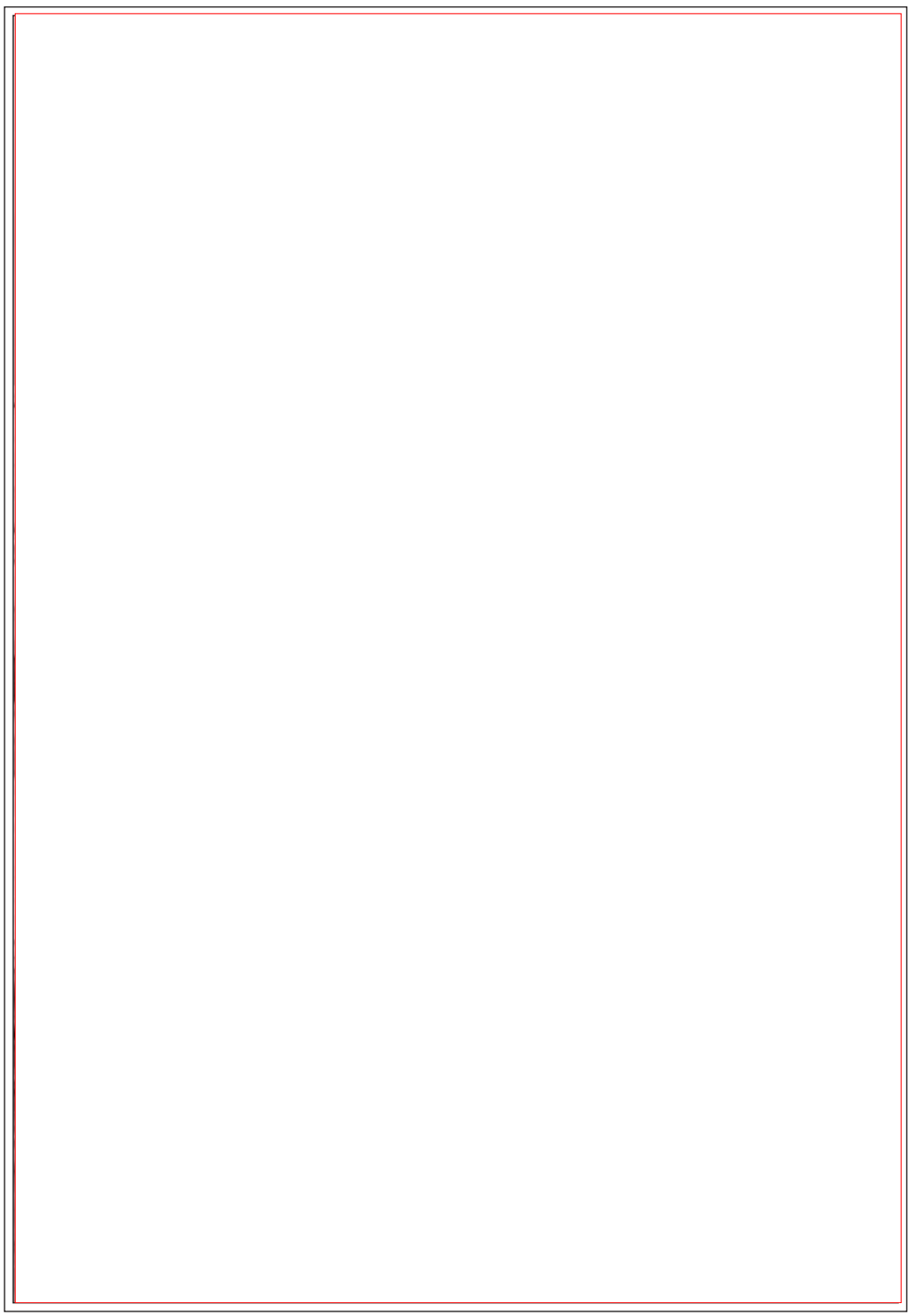
Alfred lived, with his wife Emily Jane and his five daughters, in Brook Cottage, Grove Road (near the present Firs Close) until his death on Christmas Eve 1945, aged 84. Two of his daughters, Kate and Freda, ran Eastfields Farm until the last harvest there in autumn 1960, and remained in Brook Cottage until Kate's death in 1975 and Freda's death in 1980. Freda used to worship at St Olave's church, and at one time was the President of the Mitcham District Girl Guides. Mildred, another sister, was the chair of the District Guides.

The eldest of the three brothers, Edward Johnson Mizen, was also active in local politics, although not with such a distinguished career as his youngest brother. He was a member of Mitcham parish council and, at the formation of the Urban District Council in 1915, was its first chairman. Edward J married Mary Ann Oakley and lived at Eastfields Farm house in Grove Road, where he died in 1933 aged 74. He left one son, Edward Oakley Mizen.

The middle brother, Edward Ernest, was apparently not involved in local politics, and instead devoted himself to the business and to St Mark's church. Edward Mizen senior gave the land for the church to be built. Construction commenced in December 1897 and the church was dedicated in March 1899, and consecrated in 1901. Ernest was its first churchwarden. When St Mark's was substantially rebuilt after damage in the Second World War, the bell was donated by Mildred and Kate in memory of their parents, Alfred and Emily Mizen.

The three brothers, Edward J, Ernest and Alfred had two sisters, Alice and Elizabeth. Elizabeth became a schoolteacher and both remained unmarried. Soon after Alice's death in the 1920s Elizabeth donated a plot of land, Long Bolstead, to Mitcham Urban District Council as a recreation ground, in memory of her sister. This is still a recreation ground, in Woodstock Way at its junction with Clay Avenue.

When Eastfields Farm closed in 1960 the part of the land on the Acacia Road side of Grove Road was soon sold to Mitcham Council for a new school. It became Eastfields School, now St Mark's Church of England Academy. The land between Grove Road and the railway could not be developed, as it was set aside for the M23 extension. After a public enquiry in the summer of 1970 the motorway extension plans were eventually dropped in September 1978, and Firs Close and a block of flats were built on the site.



One of the photographs from Groundwork Merton's 'Remembering the Mizens Key Stage 2 History Project'.

For more information or for a copy of the pack visit ***www.groundwork-merton.org.uk/mizens***

A GEORGIAN SCHOOLBOY IN MITCHAM

In the Eton miscellany periodical called *Etoniana* there appeared in issues published between July 1935 and February 1937 a series titled 'The Letters of James Milnes Gaskell, 1824-7'. Most of the letters were written during Gaskell's time at Eton, but some are of more direct interest to us. The texts which follow are taken from the first and last articles in the series.

'James Milnes Gaskell was the only child of Benjamin Gaskell, of Thornes House, co. York, and of Clifton Hall, M.P. for Maldon, 1812-26, by Mary, eldest daughter of Dr. Brandreth of Liverpool.

'He was born on October 19, 1810, and must have been a precocious boy from the start, for as early as 1821 his letters are like the letters of a grown-up person. In that year he was sent to **Dr. Roberts' school at Mitcham**, which was to all intents and purposes a preparatory school for Eton, William Roberts,[1] the master, being a brother of William and John Roberts, Fellows of Eton, and a son of William Hayward Roberts, Provost of Eton. A long account of the school written by the 6th Lord Monson, who was a pupil there from 1804 to 1809 was printed in Nos.39, 40 and 41 of *Etoniana*.[2] Gaskell wrote frequent letters home from Mitcham, describing the curriculum of the school and it is interesting to note that it had undergone few changes. Mr. Roberts apparently still did all the teaching himself, except writing and arithmetic: industrious boys were still rewarded by being allowed to sit up for supper with Mr. and Mrs. Roberts: the number of boys received at the school was still about sixteen to twenty, but the master himself seems to have become with advancing years more sparing of the rod. In Monson's time, Roberts was said not to flog often, but to cane most furiously, so much so that every room of his house had a cane on the ledge over the door; in Gaskell's time much less is heard of this propensity. But it must be remembered that Gaskell's main desire was to do as much work as possible, while Monson was much fonder of games. … [I]t is of some interest to note who were [Gaskell's] contemporaries, as so many of them became his school-fellows at Eton.

'Thus in 1821, Gaskell mentions J. Edward Ellice, Thomas Bankes, Meyrick Bankes, Baker, Charles R. Cockerell, Thomas Egerton, Henry Bourdieu, Arthur J. Egerton, Thomas Acland, Apsley, Lord Bruce, Lord Boyle, N.V. Nash, John Hope, George Legh, Henry Glynne, Albemarle Bertie, Henry Bertie, Lord Sandwich, Matthew Rushout, Lord Boyle (who went to Harrow), Lord Eglinton, Bertie Matthews (who ran away and was sent home), G.V. Edwards, Mathew, Ackers, Francis Kemp, son of a Brighton magistrate, Nash Edwards, John Ashley, Wigram, Lord George Loftus, William and Charles Chambers, Philip Kemp, Buck (son of William Buck of Devon), Edward (?Ernest) Bruce, Daly (son of an Irish M.P.), Augustus Villiers, and Villiers *mi*.[3]

'Gaskell seems to have been very happy at Mitcham; he worked hard, and already took a deep interest in current politics. There is not much mention of games, but he seems to have been proficient at "trap".[4] He was frequently allowed to sit up to supper, which was a mark of merit, and on one occasion Mr. Roberts compared his Latin verses with those formerly made by W.N. Lettsom,[5] who had been at the school, 1804-9 and is mentioned in Lord Monson's article. …

'Gaskell describes the daily curriculum at Mitcham as follows:

I will now proceed to give you an account of business in my day. Calling – the maid comes through all the rooms at half-past six – and we dress as fast as possible; then with our shoes in our hands we hasten downstairs; then we learn our Farnaby by heart – that is eight lines of Greek Farnaby, then 8 lines of Ovid to repeat, then a quarter of a page of Greek Grammar, then [do] 12 verses out of our own head on anything Mr. Roberts sets us. All this takes us up to half-past eleven o'clock. Then comes our Cake- or Pie-woman, or whatever you please to call her and we buy, you know, threepennyworth of whatever we like; then we go out till one o'clock generally, then we come in, and till 4 o'clock those that have done read and the others do their arrears. Then at 4 we dine, and after that do our Ovid for the next day, and then that takes us to about half past 5, and then we go into prayers, come into pupil-room again at 6 o'clock, then have our supper and after that employ ourselves in different ways till 8 o'clock; then about 2, 3, 4, or 5 of us sit up to supper, then the rest march off to bed.'

Gaskell entered Eton in 1824 and went on to Oxford. The anonymous writer in *Etoniana* comments:

'[Gaskell's] later career hardly showed all the brilliancy that might have been expected. It is true that he found a seat in the House of Commons for Much Wenlock in 1832, and retained it (with the exception of the 1835 election) uncontested till 1868, but beyond holding the office of a Lord of the Treasury from 1841 to 1846, he achieved no distinction. He died February 5, 1873.'

1. This is an error. He was *Richard* Roberts.
2. The version of Lord Monson's reminiscences published in *Etoniana* is slightly shorter than the version held at Merton Local Studies Centre, and has one or two errors and omissions. Merton Historical Society has published the latter version, as Local History Notes – 17: *Lord Monson's Schooldays*. It is obtainable from the Publications Officer, Peter Hopkins, 57 Templecombe Way, Morden SM4 4JF, 020 8543 8471.
3. Minor
4. Using a bat to hit a ball propelled from a wooden 'trap'
5. William Nanson Lettsom (1796-1865) devoted his life to literature, particularly the works of Shakespeare. Translated the *Niebelungenlied*.

Judith Goodman

GEOFFREY WILSON has lived most of his life in Wimbledon or Merton Park. A historian and writer with a special interest in transport, he is the author of, among other titles, *London United Tramways, A History, 1894-1933* Allen & Unwin (1971). He has kindly contributed the following article:

TRAMS IN MERTON – a Centenary

Just a century ago electric trams began running through the Urban District of Merton & Morden, the Borough of Wimbledon and a corner of Mitcham.

They were owned by the London United Electric Tramways (LUT), a company-owned system that had expanded its operation from Shepherds Bush to Uxbridge and from Hammersmith to Hounslow, Twickenham, Teddington and Hampton Court. In 1905 the tracks entered Kingston, where a local network of routes was opened, and thence to New Malden Fountain.

The company's energetic managing director Clifton (later Sir Clifton) Robinson, aimed to link his system with that of the London County Council (LCC) by an extension from New Malden to Raynes Park, Wimbledon, Merton and Colliers Wood to a terminus just over the county boundary at Longley Road, Tooting, there to meet, but not physically connect with, an LCC route from Westminster and Blackfriars through Clapham and Balham.

The extension from New Malden had been expensive. The route lay first along Burlington Road, West Barnes Lane and Coombe Lane. In West Barnes Lane many trees had to be felled to widen the road sufficiently for a double line of rails. The LUT had to pay the London and South Western Railway for a new girder bridge over West Barnes Lane to replace a low arch.

The New Malden – Tooting line opened in three stages in 1907, first to Raynes Park, then to Ely's Corner, Wimbledon, and finally to Tooting. The New Malden - Raynes Park section opened after being passed by Colonel Yorke, the Board of Trade's Inspecting Officer, with the proviso that the LUT should improve the wood paving it had had to lay in Burlington Road. A photograph exists showing the first tram rounding the curve at the junction of West Barnes Lane and Coombe Lane. It shows Colonel Yorke with Robinson and other officials of the LUT on the tram's front platform. The tram was new and may well count as a 'state of the art' electric tramcar of its day. Trams of this type had inaugurated the Kingston services, but they were soon withdrawn to run on the long, busy route between Shepherds Bush and Uxbridge through Acton, Ealing and Southall.

Opening day of the New Malden – Raynes Park section, with Board of Trade inspectors and LUT chief officers on a new 'T' class tram.
All the postcard views are from the collection of Alan A Jackson, to whom we are most grateful.

Unlike the earlier LUT trams introduced in 1901 and the next two years for the Middlesex routes, the new cars had covered top decks, with open balconies at each end whose projection afforded the drivers below some refuge from the elements.

The New Malden – Tooting route had therefore to be served by the older open-top trams, some of which were later given covered tops of a rather inelegant type.

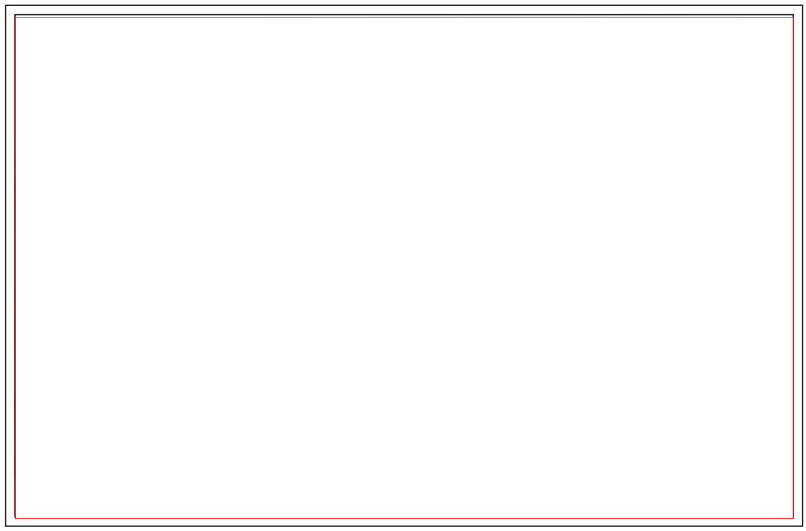
At the Tooting terminus, a gap of a few yards separated the termini of the LUT and the LCC, so that there was a necessary change for through passengers in the middle of High Street, Colliers Wood, facing Waterfall House.

The gap was closed in 1922 when the LCC took over the working between Tooting and Wimbledon. For this purpose the LCC's trams had to be equipped with trolleys to engage with the LUT-installed overhead wires. When on their own system the LCC trams drew their power from a sub-surface contact. Engaging with it was a removable 'plough' which ran in a slotted rail between the running rails.

When the LCC began to run through Wimbledon the LUT service was cut back to Wimbledon – Hampton Court. On summer Saturday afternoons and Sundays some LCC trams continued over LUT tracks to Kingston and Hampton Court, giving through passengers a very long ride from the Embankment. By this time the original LUT trams had begun to look rather archaic alongside the then new 'Pullman' cars of the LCC.

At fine weekends the LUT was sometimes hard put to it to find enough trams to carry passengers to the Thames riverside and Hampton Court, whereas the rather sporadic traffic at other times would have been catered for by a reduced fleet. The seasonal nature of the traffic meant that more trams had to be maintained than would otherwise have been necessary.

Soon it became clear that insufficient funds had been set aside for upkeep of cars and tracks. The LUT was never a 'bullish' concern and it might be argued that only its absorption into a bigger group kept it sufficiently alive.



An LUT tram for Hampton Court in the foreground, and an LCC car from the Embankment in background, at the LCC border in Tooting. Probably a bank holiday crowd.

A fine new fleet of trams for the most remunerative line, to Uxbridge, came rather late in the day. These 46 trams, perhaps the most advanced in the country at the time, did not run more than a few years on their first habitat. With the formation of the London Passenger Board in 1933 they were transferred to the former LCC's long Embankment to Purley route.

It has to be said that had the design and performance of motorbuses been sufficiently advanced at the time it is doubtful whether the LUT would have extended into the Thames Valley and Surrey. This part of the system was never remunerative enough. As early as 1909, at the company's general meeting, the chairman Sir James Cater Scott admitted that too little had been set aside to cover depreciation of trams and track. He declared that with the advent of higher capacity and more reliable motorbuses no sensible person would now promote a company tramway. Indeed, the appearance on the market of reliable buses suitable for rugged town work showed up the limitations of company tramway systems ever more clearly.

The LUT never paid more than 2.5% on even its preference shares. However, even the Metropolitan Electric Tramways, serving a much denser population in north London, was not much more profitable.

All the LUT trams were stabled at a large, fully equipped, depot at Fulwell, near Richmond. Although efforts were made to find a suitable site for a small depot in West Barnes Lane, Colliers Wood or Plough Lane, it is curious that the LUT did not make a greater effort to secure such a site, for running empty cars to and from Fulwell at the beginning and end of the day's service was time-wasting and expensive.

In 1916 the LUT routes in the Thames Valley and Surrey first faced a competitor, the London and South Western Railway (LSWR), which inaugurated electric trains on its suburban routes. Wimbledon had already enjoyed electric trains since 1905 when the District Railway was wholly electrified, including the Putney Bridge – Wimbledon route of the LSWR over which its trains ran.

A 'flood car' in Burlington Road. A corner of Shannon's building can be seen on the right. 'Flood cars' were adapted from existing cars to afford service when part of Burlington Road was flooded by the Beverley Brook.

Nevertheless the LUT was able to weather the storm from Waterloo, and the subsequent appointment of former Bradford tramways manager C J Spencer as manager and engineer was an excellent one and revived the company's fortunes to a marked extent, though the need to maintain a large number of trams for summer weekend traffic remained a burden.

Ten years later, in 1926, the LCC had to contend with the new competition of the tube railway extension from Clapham Common to Morden, which included stations at Colliers Wood and the

inaccurately named 'South Wimbledon' at Merton Grove.

Spencer had pioneered trolleybuses on one route in Bradford back in 1910, and in 1931 he introduced London's first trolleybuses, nicknamed 'Diddlers', between Twickenham and Teddington. Powers were obtained to convert the whole system, and eventually trams were only retained on the busy Uxbridge and Hounslow lines.

When in 1931 trolleybuses replaced trams between Wimbledon and Hampton Court LCC trams continued to run between Tooting and a new Wimbledon terminus in the Broadway facing the town hall, replacing that at the foot of Wimbledon Hill.

A tram for Hampton Court in West Barnes Lane.

The 'Diddler' trolleybuses were later replaced by a new type which became standard for the expanding London network. When they in turn were displaced some went to Spanish cities, a far cry indeed from their former haunt.

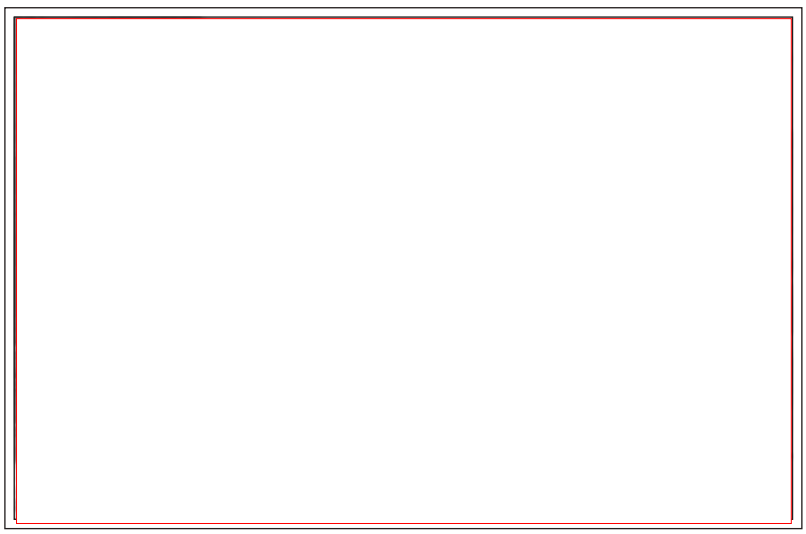
In 1933 all public transport in London became the responsibility of the new London Passenger Transport Board (London Transport for short), but in our district there was no drastic change until 1951 when all London's remaining tramways were abandoned. In 1961 trolleybuses followed suit, from which time London Transport concentrated on diesel buses. Between 1891 and 1961 the Tooting – Raynes Park section had seen horse buses (between Peckham and Raynes Park), trams, trolleybuses, and finally diesel buses.

Once again a 'London United' operator, but of buses, now covers the former Tooting – Kingston line, although a change is needed at Kingston for Hampton Court, Teddington and Twickenham.

In a sense, though, the tram wheel has turned full circle in the London Borough of Merton, which in recent years has seen a new brand of tramway – the Tramlink – embracing the former Wimbledon – West Croydon suburban railway line.

Having looked at the history of trams in Merton it is worth examining briefly some aspects of trams and tramway operation.

Apart from some sections in Worple Road and in Merton Road, the Hampton Court – Tooting route was double-track. The LUT had been put to extra expense by the cost of widening in Worple Road and the Broadway in Wimbledon. However, the High Streets of Merton and Colliers Wood were wide enough for the most part already.



An LUT tram turning from Merton Road into Merton High Street.

As motor traffic grew it became increasingly risky to board or alight from a vehicle bound to the centre of the road, although on some provincial systems where the road was wide enough a central loading platform lessened the danger. Trolleybuses obviated the problem, and their introduction between Wimbledon and Hampton Court was certainly welcomed in this respect. The layout of modern tram systems has to take passenger safety very seriously and this is much in evidence on the Tramlink system in Croydon's inner streets.

Compulsory and request stops were clearly marked by roadside signs on the standards supporting the overhead wires. The standards themselves were numbered in sequence.

Fare stages were introduced in the 1920s. One (old) penny (1d) was charged for a journey of two stages, with 20 stages costing a shilling (5p in today's currency). In general fares for children were half those for adults. Workmen were entitled to reduced fares, for example 1d single and 2d return between Tooting and Kingston.

Drivers, conductors and inspectors all wore uniforms, and woe betide any who came on duty looking less than immaculate. In the earlier trams in particular the drivers were unprotected. In bad weather they donned a mackintosh and sou'wester, which, with the twirl of the handbrake, gave a nautical touch to the proceedings!

No time was allowed for a midday break. However, crews on the short Kingston Hill route were lucky in having a Lady Bountiful living near the terminus who regaled them with a snack and a drink during the brief turn-round time.

The conductor's duties were varied. Not only had he to issue tickets from a rack he carried, and give change, but he had to ensure that the tram was not overcrowded, that smokers were confined to the upper deck and, after motor traffic grew, extend an arm to protect passengers boarding or alighting from his tram. At the terminus he had to swing the trolley arm round by means of a rope to the trailing position for the return run.

Trolleybus conductors sometimes had another duty. If one of the two trolley arms left the wires because the vehicle had been driven too fast over a junction or round a corner the conductor had to go 'fishing' with a long bamboo rod carried on the bus's side, retrieve the offending arm and set it on the wire again, a procedure which rather detracted from the image of the new form of transport!

A removable board at the outer end of the upper deck of tramcars carried the name of the destination. The lower sides carried a full-length board detailing the main places served. Commercial advertisements were carried on the upper ends and sides of trams. The products advertised included Lipton's Tea, Epps's Cocoa, Black & White Whisky, Matinée Turkish Cigarettes, Zebra Grate Polish and Borwick's Baking Powder.

The lower deck was equipped with moquette-covered longitudinal seating, but the top deck had only wooden transverse seats, with backs that were thrown over to correspond with the direction of travel.

Although comparatively rare, occasional accidents and derailments were inevitable, and I recall an instance of the latter in Wimbledon, where an LCC car coming from Hampton Court on a Saturday was partly derailed when turning from Worple Road into Hill Road. The errant front bogie wheels were coaxed back onto the rails with bars wielded by the crew.

Between 1925 and 1940 my parents lived fairly close to the Wimbledon – Hampton Court route, in Wimbledon and Raynes Park. I came to know the route intimately. It was a childhood delight to ride on the upper deck of an open-top tram and watch the trolley arm dip as the car passed below a bridge. We would often visit Hampton Court at summer weekends, and my parents would choose to wait for one of the more modern and comfortable LCC trams.

WANDSWORTH MUSEUM

You may have heard that Wandsworth council has voted to close Wandsworth Museum. This excellent local museum, which is well supported by local people and was one of the first Greater London museums to be accredited, celebrated 20 years of existence in 2006.

Your committee has written in support of the Museum, as have individual committee members. Letters count for much more than signatures on a protest sheet, and it is not too late to register your opposition to the closure by writing to the Leader of Wandsworth Council and/or the Chair of its Environment and Leisure Overview & Scrutiny Committee:

Cllr Edward Lister
Leader's Office
Wandsworth Town Hall
Wandsworth High Street
London SW18 2PU

Cllr Paul Ellis
Chair ELOSC
The Members' Room
Wandsworth Town Hall
Wandsworth High Street
London SW18 2PU

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.

Printed by Peter Hopkins