



PRESIDENT: Lionel Green

VICE PRESIDENTS: Viscountess Hanworth, Eric Montague and William Rudd

BULLETIN NO. 163

CHAIR: Judith Goodman

SEPTEMBER 2007



PROGRAMME SEPTEMBER–DECEMBER



Thursday 20 September 2.00pm **Visit to the London Fire Brigade Museum**
Meet outside the Museum. Cost £3 /£2 concession, to pay on the day.
Book your place by ringing Sheila on 020 8540 6656.

Saturday 29 September 2.15 for 2.30pm **Meet at Vestry Hall, London Road**
Tony Scott will continue his guided walk around **Mitcham Cricket Green**. See page 5.

Saturday 13 October 2.30pm **Raynes Park Library Hall**
The topic of this year's **Evelyn Jowett Memorial Lecture** is
'Literary Connections of Merton and Morden', to be given by **Judith Goodman**.
*The library is on or close to several bus routes, and very near Raynes Park station.
Please enter the hall from the Aston Road entrance.*

Saturday 24 November 2.30pm **Snuff Mill Centre, Morden Hall Park**
Annual General Meeting
After the business part of the meeting there will be a presentation of
'Untold Stories of Morden Hall Park'.
*To reach the Snuff Mill Environmental Centre from Morden Hall Garden Centre car-park,
cross the bridge between the café and the garden centre, go through the gateway in the wall,
turn right and follow the main pathway to the right, which leads to the Snuff Mill Centre.
Please note that numbers are limited at this venue.
The bus stop near the car-park is served by many routes.*

Saturday 8 December 2.30pm **St Mark's Church Centre, Mitcham**
'Remembering the Mizens'
A speaker from Groundwork Merton will give an illustrated talk on this important family of
Mitcham market gardeners.
The Centre is in St Mark's Road, Mitcham, close to the town centre and bus routes.

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.

LOCAL HISTORY WORKSHOPS

At Wandle Industrial Museum on Friday 19 October at 7.30pm
and Friday 30 November at 2.30pm. All are welcome.



VISIT TO PARK HILL, STREATHAM, WITH A WALK ON STREATHAM COMMON

Those of you who couldn't make this visit on 5 May missed a treat, as the guided tour at Park Hill was excellent, and the walk which preceded it, led by Judy Goodman, proved interesting and informative. The weather was kind to us and the Common was looking its best in the spring sunshine, causing many members to reach for their cameras.

Most of the group met at Sainsbury's café housed in the original building of **Streatham silk mill**, built c. 1820 for Stephen Wilson, famed for his use of the Jacquard loom in Britain, with 18 silk weavers working there in 1831. Later the building was sold to P B Cow and became a rubber factory, continuing until 1986. Many of the group remembered the large chimney and the pungent smell of the rubber. The chimney was demolished in 1987 and Sainsbury's restored the main building when they built the store in the '90s. It is now a listed building. We also noted the building opposite – built as the **Beehive Coffee House** for the temperance movement in 1878, and now also a listed building.

We crossed over the busy main road to the Common, bought by the Metropolitan Board of Works in 1883, transferred to the LCC in 1888 and to the GLC in 1965. The 70 acres are now managed by the London Borough of Lambeth and are for everyone to enjoy. Judy led us up the hill to **Rookery Gardens**, which local man Stenton Covington saved from being built on. The site was that of **Streatham Wells**. The grounds were opened to the public in 1913, after the house was demolished. We saw the one remaining well of the three that formed the spa. The original spring was discovered in 1659 by some ploughmen, and was developed as a spa in the 18th century. The waters were similar to Epsom waters, but stronger. The spa was in decline by the 1760s.

After viewing the attractive park we walked on to **Norwood Grove**, an early 19th-century stuccoed villa on rising ground, with beautiful gardens, from which one has an excellent view of Norwood, Croydon and out to the hills beyond. From 1878 to 1913 this was the home of Frederick Nettlefold, manufacturer of screws, nuts and bolts. It became a public park (Covington was again involved), opened by the Prince of Wales in 1926, in the ownership of Croydon Council.

After enjoying a rest here we walked through woodland and rejoined the path on Streatham Common, from where we crossed to the main gates of **Park Hill**, or Tate Mews, which is its name today, where we met other members of our group, who had joined us for the guided tour.

Members may remember a talk we had last year by Brian Bloice of the Streatham Society, who spoke about famous houses of south London. We were pleased to find that Brian was to be our guide round the grounds of Park Hill. The house was built in 1839, on the site of Hill House, for the family of William Leaf, a soft-goods merchant, and was designed by J B Papworth. From 1880 to 1899 it was the home of industrialist and benefactor Sir Henry Tate, of Tate & Lyle sugar, and founder of the Tate Gallery and various libraries, including that of Streatham. He built additions to the house, including a carriage porch, and a gallery for his collection of paintings, later donated to form an important part of the Tate Gallery collection at Millbank. He also beautified the grounds with bridges, an ornamental lake, grottoes and follies.

After his death it was sold to the Congregation of the Poor Servants of the Mother of God, and became St Joseph's Convent, with the nuns remaining in occupancy until the late 1990s. They provided a home for young women who needed support, funded by running a commercial laundry. Subsequently Park Hill was sold for redevelopment to Barratt and CPS.

The Grade II* listing of the mansion as a building of special architectural and historical interest means that it had to be extensively renovated and refurbished. The chapel – built by the nuns – has been adapted for residential use, as has the art gallery. Additional townhouses have been built in sympathy with the original architecture, plus a small development of social housing. All residents have a share of the beautiful and extensive grounds, which are still in the process of being restored to their original condition.

As part of their planning agreement Park Hill grounds have to be open to the public twice a year. Our tour of the grounds was an experience not to be missed. It is an oasis of peace and tranquillity just minutes away from the noise and bustle of Streatham High Road. I urge you not to miss the next Open Day, which is on Saturday 13 October. Tours are at 2.30 and 3.30 pm and are free.



Terrace at Park Hill 2007 JG

Sheila Harris

A VISIT TO BOGNOR REGIS

Our trip to the south coast on 17 May was blessed with good weather, and trouble-free travel. Sylvia Endacott, who entertained us last year with a lively lecture about Bognor, was not kept waiting at the station. (Why does Bognor greet its visitors with a collection of garden gnomes near the buffers?)

The link between Merton and Bognor is of course Sir Richard Hotham (1722-1799), hatter, speculator, self-publicist and MP, who lived some years in the former place and founded the latter as a resort. Just a short walk from the station Sylvia pointed out the boundary wall, built of Bognor rock, of Hotham's estate. His icehouse stands close by, a brick structure from the 1790s, once covered with earth, where ice gathered in the winter months was stored in straw, to preserve food and to make chilled desserts. As we entered Hotham Park we crossed the fishermen's footpath that still connects the seashore with the church in South Bersted. Here, in the old village that predates the resort, Hotham is buried, but not forgotten. An annual service commemorates him.

In the park, large, with many mature trees and unexpectedly wild in parts, which was once Sir Richard's private grounds, there is a pond, a miniature railway, and a rose garden. In the middle is Hotham's own house, which has undergone many changes of name, and of fortune, since Sir Richard built it in 1793. Now known as Hotham Park House, and privately occupied as several expensive apartments, it is a graceful building, with bay windows, a balcony, a verandah and a small tower.

After a pleasant lunch at the friendly park café Sylvia escorted us the short distance to the Bognor campus of the University of Chichester and introduced Janet Carter, the university's archivist.

We learned that the campus's three principal buildings, now known as Mordington, The Dome and St Michael's, were originally built by Hotham as seven large handsome houses, intended to attract rich and grand families to Bognor for the summer season. Mordington and St Michael's, symmetrical, stuccoed, and bay-windowed, each consisted of two dwellings. In the centre, The Dome, a larger, brick building, with stone ornament and small central dome, was once divided into three. It bears a stone plaque carved with the coat of arms used by Hotham. The three buildings were collectively known as Nos 1-7 The Crescent.



*Hotham Park House
17 June 2007 JG*



*The Dome, Bognor
17 June 2007 JG*

Though Princess Charlotte did once stay at The Dome Bognor never quite became the aristocratic resort hoped for by Hotham, and no more houses on the same scale appeared. The Crescent in its later years was occupied by a girls' boarding school, and after the last war it was purchased as an 'Emergency Training College' for teachers. More recently it was first an Institute of Higher Education, and then a university college, before becoming a full part of Chichester University in 2005. Janet gave us an interesting slide show about the history before taking us on a little tour of some of the campus. There are buildings of many styles and periods, including an attractive chapel, and we all admired an old 'crinkle-crinkle' wall.

There was time for some of our group to have a quick look at the sea, while the rest had a cup of tea at the station before we all caught our train home. We had had a most interesting visit, thanks to both Sylvia and Janet. We were tickled to see that in one of her regular articles for the local paper the previous week Sylvia had written that a group from Merton were coming to Bognor. The following week a photograph of the Merton visitors appeared in the paper.

Judith Goodman

‘A WALK AROUND THE CRICKET GREEN’

About 20 seekers of knowledge, including several visitors, turned up on the warm afternoon of 9 June for **Tony Scott**'s guided walk. He began by reminding us that at the time of the Domesday survey there were two distinct settlements – Michelham and Witford, and where we had assembled was then in Witford. Earlier the Romans and their immediate successors had left a few traces of their presence, and mentions of ‘Micham’ appeared in the records of Chertsey Abbey in the eighth century. Over time the two communities merged into one, but their two greens survived – the Upper or Fair Green and the Lower Green. The eastern half of the latter is more familiarly known as Cricket Green.



*Cricket at Mitcham
9 June 2007 JG*

Mitcham's **Vestry Hall** is what Tony called an example of Victorian civic pride. Not lovely, perhaps, but certainly noticeable. The design was by no London architect, but by Mitcham's very own Robert Masters Chart, local surveyor, and son and grandson of vestry clerks to the village. The building opened in 1887, the year of the Queen's Golden Jubilee, and originally housed not only offices and meeting-rooms but also Mitcham's new fire appliance, its steam pump. Close by on this part of the Green once also stood the lock-up, the stocks and the pound.

Now rather isolated by swirling traffic, Mitcham's **war memorial** is often passed by. When it was unveiled neither the large rear extension to the Vestry Hall nor the **fire station** of 1927 had been built. Its setting would have been both more open and more accessible.

Across the road in Lower Green are three charming late 18th-century cottages, **Kingdene**, **Ivy Cottage** and **Elm Cottage** and, of a similar date, the building that housed Mitcham's first Sunday school and dates from 1788, though its little bell turret was not added till three years later. Later enlarged as the National Schools, it went on to serve as the parish rooms. Finally, redundant in that role, and Grade II listed, it was converted into apartments and survives, renamed **School House**, as an attractive feature of Lower Green.

We then crossed over to Cricket Green, where a match was going on. We heard how the old King's Head had been renamed after mid-20th-century licensee Bernal (**'Burn'**) **Bullock** who was also a fine cricketer. The main building, which was refurbished in the Edwardian period, is 18th-century, but the back is earlier. Across the road stands the attractive White Hart, rebuilt in the mid-18th century, but incorporating some earlier fabric. It is now burdened, only temporarily one hopes, with the name **Hooden on the Green**.



*The White Hart
9 June 2007 JG*

Nos 8 and 10 date from 1838 and housed the master and mistress of the then new infants' school at the rear, which was an offshoot of the National Schools. A lettered panel used to be visible between the upstairs windows.

The pretty Tate almshouses, now known as **Mary Tate Cottages**, were founded in 1829 by a member of a family who had had long connections with Mitcham. Originally for 12 poor women, widows or unmarried, of good character, who had not received parish relief, they provided decent but spartan accommodation. They have now been refurbished as seven comfortable self-contained dwellings.

Having by now somewhat overrun his planned time of 1½ hours, Tony briefly mentioned the 1960s **police station**, further on, which replaced a Victorian one, and agreed to offer another walk at a later date, to cover the rest of the Cricket Green. He was thanked for a very enjoyable afternoon.

Judith Goodman

Date of second walk: Saturday 29 September 2.15 for 2.30pm. Meet at Vestry Hall, London Road

VISIT TO BISHOPS STORTFORD AND CAMBRIDGE

Pat Kilsby worked her usual magic with the weather and Saturday 14 July was fine and not too hot for sightseeing. More than half the party consisted of MHS members, and our compensation for an early start was first choice of seats on the coach, ahead of Pat and Ray's WEA contingent at Sanderstead.

We had a trouble-free journey to our morning stop, the Cecil Rhodes Museum at the agreeable Hertfordshire town of Bishops Stortford. The empire builder and diamond magnate's birthplace is a plain early 19th-century house with a Tuscan porch. Behind it now is an impressive new arts centre, housing an enlarged museum, hall, temporary exhibition space, café, shop and so on – an enviable facility for the town. Cecil Rhodes (1853-1902) was the son of the local vicar, and his upbringing, we were told, was very rigid. The enthusiastic young curator explained how, in the displays, she tries to set the man and his career, controversial even in his lifetime, within the context of 19th-century society and attitudes. Next door to the museum is a large 18th- and 19th-century maltings complex with well-maintained buildings, which now house a big mail-order business.

Our lunch stop was the Harlow Mill, Old Harlow, a pleasant old pub by a lock, with waterfowl.

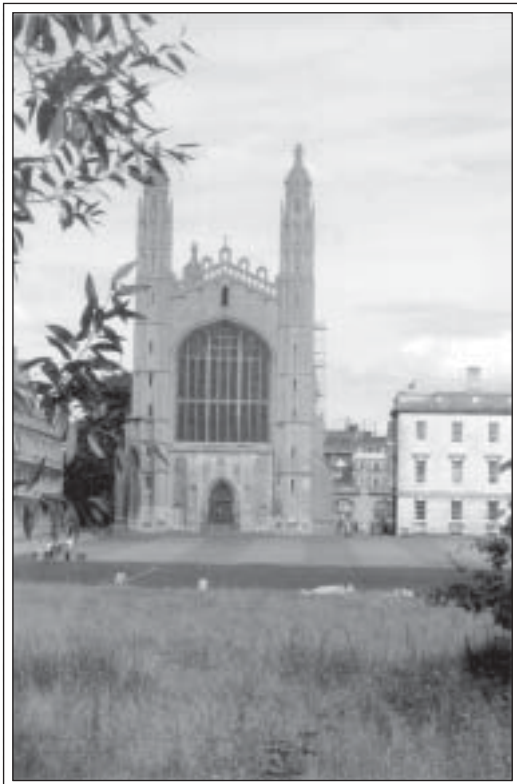
Then to Cambridge, where we met our three guides at the Backs. The group I was in was led by a very knowledgeable and amusing Wokingham-born Scot. Queens' College (note the placing of the apostrophe, unlike King's) had two royal patronesses, and for a time played host to Erasmus, who complained a lot, especially about the beer, but admired the local young girls. The pretty 'mathematical' bridge, we heard, was *not* designed by Newton, *nor* was it ever (certainly not now) built without nails, screws or bolts.

It was interesting to learn that some Cambridge buildings are not quite so grand as they look. A back view of one range of buildings at Peterhouse for instance revealed it to be built of chalk (clunch), while the frontage is faced with finely cut stone.

We admired the monumental façade of the Fitzwilliam Museum (by Basevi, a pupil of Soane, opened 1840) and, opposite it, the old Addenbrooke's Hospital building, now, with alterations and interesting additions by John Outram, adapted to other purposes.



*Cambridge
Punts at Mathematical Bridge
Queens' College
14 July 2007 JG*



Pembroke and Corpus Christi Colleges have typically complicated architectural histories, and in this part of the walk we also saw the church of St Botolph (once the patron saint of travellers) and a modern community centre for families of postgraduate students. Then King's and its wonderful chapel (not open that day, sadly). We were reminded that much of the college, as distinct from the chapel, is 19th-century work by Wilkins. It impresses, even so. Cambridge on a sunny Saturday in July is packed with visitors, but we had a wonderful taster of one of the great cities of England. The journey back was complicated by an accident and long tailback on the M25. Our driver took evasive action by staying on the M11 and taking the A13 to the Dartford Crossing – a journey that this participant found very interesting. It was disturbing to see the weeds growing at what was Ford Dagenham however.

Many thanks again to the Kilsbys for their planning, and to the driver for his resourcefulness.

Judith Goodman

Cambridge – King's College Chapel 14 July 2007 JG

DAVID HAUNTON has been investigating an aspect of Merton's war effort:

LINES BROS' WARTIME PILOTLESS AIRCRAFT

Introduction

I have always had an interest in aeroplanes, and was much intrigued by claims about a jet-propelled aircraft made by Walter Lines in his history of Lines Bros.¹ My digging has revealed some details of four wartime pilotless aircraft projects from Lines Bros, though in truth two of the 'aircraft' are only model gliders. I apologise for all the acronyms.

There were actually two firms involved. Lines Bros established their Triang Works on Morden Road, Merton, in 1924, where they made prams and toys (particularly model cars) and built a reputation for high-quality products. Lines Bros founded International Model Aircraft (IMA) in 1931, together with Joe Mansour, an expert modeller and an innovator in plastic and paper moulding. IMA made model aircraft, particularly the FROG ('Flies Right Off the Ground') range of flying models. Their works lay immediately to the east of the Triang factory sports field.

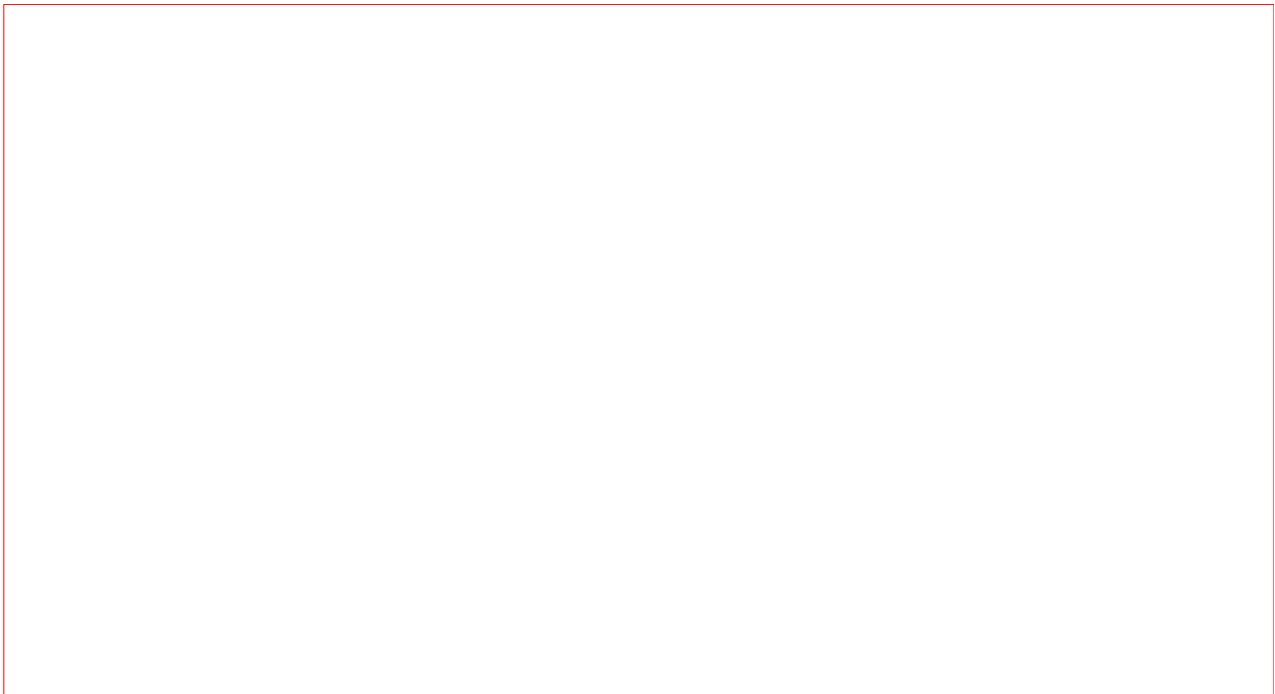
Admiralty Glider Target

The model gliders are not mentioned by Walter Lines, so these notes are based mainly on information in The National Archives (TNA)² at Kew, and in a book by Gerald Pawle,³ a member of the wartime Admiralty Department of Miscellaneous Weapons Development (DMWD). The project originated in 1941. A cheap way was needed to train the civilian seamen on Defensively-Equipped Merchant Ships (DEMS) to aim their anti-aircraft guns accurately. DMWD proposed that the trainees should fire light guns at model aircraft, the idea being that shooting slow bullets at a slow aircraft would give the gunner a good idea of just how far in front of a fast enemy aircraft he should aim his own 'real' bullets.

The officer in charge of the project, Lieutenant-Commander N S Norway (alias Nevil Shute the novelist), consulted Joe Mansour, whom he had met previously. The first model was a 3½-lb glider of 6-ft span, designed by A A ('Bert') Judge of IMA⁴ and constructed mainly of balsa wood and silk. It was winched up to a height of 200 feet by a long cord slipped onto a hook under the nose, and then circled down in free flight. It was used on several UK DEMS firing ranges, but launching a reasonable number of targets in a short time involved too many people making too many adjustments for wind speed and direction, etc. In addition, the government Controller of Timber forbade further supply of balsa wood for the project. DMWD decided to modify the design and add rocket power.

Rocket Glider Target (*see Illustrations 1 & 2*)

The new requirement was issued in January 1942. In a very short time (legend says overnight) several IMA designers each produced a sample model, and a single design evolved from these over the next few days. The new model was soon placed in production, now officially as the Rocket Glider Target, and it was issued to DEMS firing ranges "throughout the British Isles".⁵



1. Rocket Glider Target: Cutaway diagram showing construction
The National Archives, ref. ADM277/11

We know quite a lot about these little aircraft, as a copy of the ‘Instructions for Use’ survives in TNA. The new glider itself resembled a large toy, some 43 inches long, with a wingspan of 45 inches, weighing about 6½ lbs. It was mostly made of moulded paper, impregnated with glue or size, with some local strengthening of plastic and wood. A fitting under the nose held a small solid-fuel rocket, which produced a 2-lb thrust for 40 seconds, really no more than a firework. This was sufficient for sustained flight, but not for take-off, so the glider was launched from a catapult. Each glider was composed of six parts – fuselage, left wing, right wing, “left and right tailplanes (interchangeable)” and fin – which were assembled by the operator, using small nuts and bolts. Wings, fins and tailplanes were fully interchangeable between gliders.

The ‘Instructions for Use’ list the contents of a target set, which consisted of 100 gliders and rocket cases, 1000 rocket charges, a catapult, and a maintenance kit. They also state that the gliders are “immensely strong” and should each last for ten flights on average (hence the provision of ten rocket charges for each glider). One photograph of a catapult, an open framework bench equipped with bungee elastic, shows a WRNS rating standing beside it, a reminder that Wrens were the usual operators.

Once assembled, a rocket charge was placed in the nose fitting, the glider placed on the catapult, and the rocket charge lit. With the rocket burning well, the operator triggered the catapult, and the Target Rocket Glider climbed away on its short mission, reaching some 80-90 mph and 250-ft altitude, circling gently down once the rocket had burnt out. Meanwhile, of course, the trainee gunners blazed away at it. They had Sten sub-machine guns, fitted with sights from the Vickers heavy machine gun they would later use in anger. Lines Bros produced Sten guns later in the war, so it is entirely possible that some sailors used one Lines Bros product to try to destroy another.



2. Rocket Glider Target: Glider on catapult, ready for launch
The National Archives, ref. ADM277/11

Destruction was quite difficult, as “0.303 bullets do not cause much damage” and the operator could repair any holes with the orange cellulose tape supplied. “Discard a part if it is flexing or if one of the plastic members is hit” say the Instructions. They warn that left and right wings “are not interchangeable”, but assure us that it is perfectly safe to handle the glider when the rocket is burning, provided that “the jet of flame is kept pointing away from the operator”.

The number built is unknown, but, as Target Gliders were supplied for two or three years to about ten DEMS ranges in Britain, to at least one in Egypt, and to five or six in Canada,⁶ we can estimate that Lines Bros made a total of at least 5000 of the two versions (and possibly twice that number). Of all these, the sole ‘rocket’ survivor that I have traced resides in the Tangmere Aviation Museum, West Sussex, still in its original bright orange finish, but with a sadly misleading label. The Royal Naval Museum, Portsmouth, has an example of the original winch-launched version, but this is not yet on display.⁷ Found by a Devon farmer in his field in the 1950s, it was given to his son as a toy, despite the label on it saying “Admiralty Property. If found, please return to ...”.

Project Swallow

This was another Admiralty project from DMWD, again led by Nevil Shute and involving Joe Mansour, and I have again used a TNA document⁸ and Pawle⁹ as principal sources. Dated June 1942, the requirement was to lay a quarter-mile-long smokescreen at a distance from a ship, with a demand for 1000 units to be ready by April 1943. The need was to obscure invasion landing beaches, after analysis of the disastrous Dieppe raid. The Swallow was a real aircraft, not a model. It was designed by IMA in consultation with RAE Farnborough and Stanley Hansel (a consulting aerodynamics engineer), and built in an officially ‘restricted’ area in the Triang factory.

The design was mostly of wood, with a steel centre section on which were hung the 19-ft-span wings,¹⁰ the close-set twin booms that supported the tailplane, and a nacelle. The overall length was 12ft, the wings could be folded for storage aboard ship, and the whole thing weighed about 820 lbs when ready for flight. The nacelle contained a gyroscope, a standard naval smoke generator and four 50-lb thrust rockets. The generator weighed about 300 lbs, but when ‘making smoke’ it added a 130-lb thrust of its own to that of the rockets. Flight was controlled by an ingenious clockwork-driven camshaft, which commanded the various actions required in the correct sequence. Launch must have been spectacular, as it was powered by no fewer than 20 50-lb thrust rockets.

Development was rapid, with the first flight of the prototype on 19 December 1942. The initial trials were completed by 25 March 1943, all within the naval field at Worthy Down, Winchester, to preserve secrecy. There was much unexplained delay with sea trials, which faced and overcame numerous technical problems, but sadly the Swallow project was eventually cancelled in July 1944.

It would appear that only 20 or so of these interesting aircraft were built. After the full set of 32 officially observed trials “two Swallows were left over”, so Nevil Shute fired them anyway, getting near-perfect results, but ensuring that none now survive. Pawle notes that data collected during the Swallow trials helped to produce some of Britain’s earliest guided missiles. It is pleasant to record that Shute states in his formal report “the [Lines] team cooperated with enthusiasm throughout the development”.

Walter Lines claimed this as the “first rocket jet-propelled aircraft ... in 1941 ... that preceded Jet Aeroplanes by many years”. Well, as managing director he should enthuse about his products, but I am afraid he got the year wrong, and the Swallow was neither the first jet-propelled nor the first rocket-powered aircraft.¹¹ However, I contend it must be the only aircraft ever powered by a smoke generator.

Towed Target Glider (*see Illustration 3*)

The main historical source for this aircraft is the RAF handling manual.¹² Apparently the glider was built to satisfy a joint RAF/Admiralty need for a full-size target. It was used for gunnery training, “being towed by an aircraft (some considerable distance in front) while being shot at by a fighter pilot, or anti-aircraft gunner on the ground”.¹³ A glider target was more realistic than a traditional sleeve target, both in appearance, and because it could be towed at much higher speeds.

Again designed by IMA, and built in the Triang factory, the Target Glider was a simple aircraft, 26 ft long, with a 32-ft wingspan and a fixed undercarriage with a nose-wheel – most unusual for those days when aircraft normally had tail-wheels. One simple but ingenious feature forced a nose-up attitude for efficient take-off, but a nose-down one during landing, ensuring that the glider stayed on the ground once it had landed. Another neat device released the tow cable on landing, and turned the nose-wheel a few degrees to one side, so the glider would be steered gently off the runway, to avoid any potential collision with the towing aircraft. Though wood was used in some areas, notably the wing structure,¹⁴ much of the glider was built of duralumin. This material was carefully controlled in wartime, so its allocation in quantity to Lines Bros shows the toy-makers were well reputed in Whitehall.

Walter Lines published several pictures of these gliders under construction. I worked for some years in the aircraft industry, and the factory floors in these photos appear suspiciously clean and uncluttered. I imagine the photos were specially posed, soon after the start of production. Helpfully, one picture appears elsewhere,¹⁵ where it is labelled “about 1942”. We know that production continued for some time after the war, and I see no reason to doubt Walter Lines’s total of 3500 Target Gliders built. In February 1944 Lines Bros were making an average of 39 “sets of wings” per week.¹⁶ This indicates that Lines supplied separate fuselages and sets of wings, to be finally

3. *Towed Target Glider: Cutaway diagram showing assembly*
Air Publication AP1492A (1947) Crown Copyright
Courtesy RAF Museum, Hendon

assembled and test-flown elsewhere (certainly at Thame airfield in Oxfordshire,¹⁷ and possibly at Beaulieu in Hampshire,¹⁸ where IMA later had small factories). A minor point: Walter Lines made a curious claim about a very tight tolerance (“0.022 ins in 32 ft”) in manufacture: I think he meant the product “should not deviate from the required *profile* by more than 0.022 ins anywhere along the 32-ft length”.

There seem to have been three service versions: the wartime 32-ft span glider¹⁹ with partly-wooden wings; the post-war 32-ft span Mark 2, with metal wing structure,²⁰ and a subsequent version with reduced wingspan, which was not designated Mark 3, but known as the ‘25-ft Target Glider’.²¹ Gliders were normally towed by powerful machines such as the Bristol Beaufighter Mk10 and the Gloster Meteor Mk7, either using a fixed tow rope 1000 ft long, or a winch that payed out a cable up to 6000 ft long.²² There is an Internet tale of a near-disastrous attempt to tow one using a low-powered Miles Martinet trainer,²³ but this was not typical. The Target Glider remained in use until about 1955.

If you want to see one, you will need to travel some way; the only one in captivity that I know about is a Mark 2 hanging from the ceiling of the Queensland Air Museum in Australia, in all the yellow and black glory of its ‘Beware – Danger!’ paint scheme. The location is itself a tribute to the quality of the design, as HM Forces do not ship useless items halfway around the world. This was certainly the largest product Lines Bros ever made – the size of a Spitfire, it was far too big to fit in the average Merton front garden. And this from a company whose largest manufactured item pre-war was a baby carriage! All in all, the Target Glider must be accounted a most serious and successful spot of engineering.

Now – Over To You

- 1) Where did Nevil Shute meet Joe Mansour? From 1931 Shute was in York and then Portsmouth,²⁴ while Mansour was in Merton. Prior to that, Shute worked for Vickers on the R100 airship. Did Mansour also work for Vickers?
- 2) I have seen mentions of a 16-ft span glider. Was this an early Target Glider?
- 3) Has anyone got a photograph of any of these aircraft? Or any other information?

Acknowledgement

My thanks to the staff of the Reading Room, Royal Air Force Museum, Hendon, who were extremely helpful in discussing possible sources for my research.

1. All references to ‘Walter Lines’ are to the brief details about the company’s wartime activities in Lines, Walter Lines Brothers: *Looking Backwards, Looking Forwards* (1958) private publication (reference copies available in Merton Local Studies Centre).
2. TNA ADM277/11 DMWD Gliders, Pt 2 Project 38 Rocket Glider Target (1 October 1945) and BR 1204 (Restricted) Instructions for Use (n.d.)
3. Pawle, Gerald *The Secret War 1939-45* (1956) George Harrap, London pp.178-82
4. Website nevilshute.org: interview with Bert Judge, IMA modeller, 2006 Newsletter
5. So ADM277/11, *contra* ADM 277/1 History of DMWD, where a brief project summary implies the rocket glider was abandoned in mid-1943
6. TNA ADM1/12919 Inspection of DEMS Gunnery Training, Canada (September 1943)
7. *Pers. comm.* Richard Noyce, Curator of Artefacts, RN Museum, 11 June 2007
8. TNA ADM277/11 DMWD Gliders, Pt 1 Project 59 Swallow Report (8 October 1945)
9. Pawle *op. cit.*
10. For this measurement I follow a dimensioned drawing in the TNA file, *contra* Walter Lines’s 18 feet.
11. Swallow was preceded by the turbojet-powered Heinkel He 178 (1939), the Caproni-Campini SS.1 ducted-impellor (1938), the Heinkel He 176 rocket (1939), and the Gloster-Whittle E.28/39 turbojet (1941) (all research aircraft), while the Heinkel He 280, Messerschmidt Me 262 and Bell XP-59A jet fighters all first flew in spring or summer 1942. The Soviet Union experimented with ram-jets and rockets on aircraft in the period 1934-40. Claims are also made for the Coanda ducted-impellor biplane of 1910. (Serious historians discount the hare-brained RAK rocket-boosted gliders of publicist Fritz von Opel (1929).)
12. Vol 1, Section 2, Chapter 6 25 Ft (or 32 Ft) *Winged Target* in Air Publication AP 1492A *Airborne Towed Targets, Winches and Ancillary Equipment* (various dates) Air Ministry, London
13. Letter from RAF Museum to author 2 January 2007
14. TNA HO 192/1524 Bomb damage investigation, Lines Bros 19/20 February 1944 [The bomb landed on and destroyed the special woodworking machine tool used to produce the wing spars.]
15. Lines, Richard and Hellström, Leif *FROG model aircraft 1932-1976* (1989) New Cavendish Books
16. TNA HO 192/1524 *op. cit.*
17. Lines and Hellström *op. cit.*
18. Website Jetex.org [Seems mostly oral tradition, variable reliability in author’s opinion]
19. ? Perhaps ‘Mark 1’ was only used as a retrospective designation?
20. AP1492A *32 Ft Winged Target Mk.2* (1947, modified 1950) [No reference to 25-footer]
21. AP1492A *25 Ft Winged Target* (1950, modified 1953) [No reference to 32-footer. Apart from wingspan, the technical drawings and wording are identical in the two issues of this document.]
22. Evans, Don *The Long Drag: A short history of British target towing* (2004) Flight Recorder Publications, Ottringham, E. Yorks
23. Website qam.org.au, Queensland Air Museum
24. Shute, Nevil *Slide Rule* (1954) William Heinemann (reprinted 2000, House of Stratus) [Autobiography, stopping in 1938. Annoyingly. DJH]

DAVID LUFF has strong views on

MERTON ABBEY MILLS: HERITAGE SITE OR COMMERCIAL TAT?

A couple of years back Merton Abbey Mills acquired a new owner and management team. They promptly announced in our local newspaper that they intended to revamp the site and remove all forms of tat.

Far from implementing this bold statement, they have in my opinion totally endorsed the ‘tat’ with the erection of their mural, or graffiti, hoarding. This is in bright primary colours, with black outlined drawings depicting local historical and present-day events. It has been placed alongside Merantun Way precisely between a busy roundabout and a pedestrian crossing – surely not the most suitable location.

Its purpose I find rather obscure, as very few visitors pass this way, with the vast majority coming from the Mills car park or the free Sainsbury’s one. The Mills car park would be a far better site, or was it considered too tatty for such a prominent location? Personally I think it would be of little consequence, as the whole site has now become commercially tatty. Advertising boards cover most of the heritage workshops, and they are also indiscriminately prominent along the access road.



No consideration has been given to the positioning of the service areas, add-on structures and style of the food/sale stands with regard to the environs of the heritage workshops. The open space is a car-park Monday to Friday and a market at the weekends. The architectural splendour of the workshops, such as the Long Shop [left, photographed in 1989], can now no longer be viewed due to the clutter around it.



photographs by David Luff

Countryside Properties, as I predicted, did not build Merton a museum, but, to be fair to them, I very much doubt if they ever intended to do so. It should have been part of their planning acceptance, and built on the land to the south of the Abbey Mills, along with a leisure complex. The leisure complex has been built, although elsewhere on the site, but, being realistic, did anyone expect to see a museum? No matter what planning obligations had been agreed, no one was ever going to enforce them, and is Merton Abbey Mills an appropriate location? Would it not spend a good deal of its time, like the Chapter House, as an annexe to some theatre or cottage pottery industry?

Very little of the site’s history is on display for the visitors, with just a token in the mill and alongside. The workshops’ history plaques range from the inaccurate William Morris public house to the ivy-covered Coles Shop [right], now always referred to as ‘The’ Coles Shop. The ‘The’ was added when the Mills complex opened in 1989 and was never used in my 18 years at Liberty’s.



The ‘Showhouse’ proudly displays its name for all to see, so is it not time for a plaque to be placed here commemorating Joan Mills, who in 1983 gave this building its name, along with a new history? It is the only workshop on site where the complete history of the name is known.

Heritage site or commercial tat? There are no prizes for correctly guessing my view. I would suggest you take a look for yourself, and remember that some of these workshops, with their add-on clutter, are Grade 2 listed.

MITCHAM HISTORIES 9: COLLIERS WOOD OR 'MERTON SINGLEGATE'

Eric Montague's latest study is a bumper volume at 240 pages with 70 maps and photographs – and still at the same price as the other volumes – a bargain indeed!

Colliers Wood owes its existence to its position straddling the old Roman road to London and its industrial development to its proximity to the River Wandle. Eric follows the history of a Saxon estate on which was later built a substantial medieval house, the final successor to which survived until 1904 when it succumbed to the encroachment of suburban villas. A period of neglect and decline preceded the present thriving residential area with a strong retail component, enhanced by Wandle Park and Wandle Meadow Nature Park.

The book is obtainable from our Publications Secretary at £5.95 (£4.80 to members + 90p p&p) cheques payable to Merton Historical Society.

THE AUGUSTINIAN PRIORY OF ST MARY MERTON: EXCAVATIONS 1976-1990

Museum of London Archaeology Service (2007) ISBN 798-1-901992-70-0 pp296 £27.95

This new Museum of London Archaeology Service monograph deals with the excavations at Merton priory 1976 to 1990. The early 'digs' were carried out by our former president, Scott McCracken, and the most recent by Dave Saxby. The principal authors are Pat Miller and Dave Saxby who are to be congratulated on bringing such diverse contributions together to produce this volume of almost 300 pages. It covers every aspect of the excavations and is well illustrated.

The monograph describes four building periods and each section begins with the documentary evidence provided by Tony Dyson. This is extensive, revealing new information and giving clear documentary sources. Errors are inevitable in such a comprehensive publication. It is wrong to say that the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* of 1535 failed to include the London properties of the priory (pp.145, 156), as the London income of £57 is included in the £961 total.

A conclusion of the report is that excavations revealed a stone church begun about 1170 and completed by 1200. The foundations unearthed by Col. Bidder in 1922 are not now considered to be the church of the founder. Fragments of an earlier stone church were found, but not the foundations. A large infirmary and cloister was constructed c. 1230-50, which "formed a self-contained complex where servants, corrodians (pensioners) and other laity might sometimes be admitted, with buildings paralleling the functions of the main claustral complex" (p. xvii).

The eastward extension of the priory church was such, that the building "should be considered... as a major lost work of the Decorated period in south-east England" (pp. xvii, 119).

Information gained from the 721 burials will be a rich source for students, not only for archaeology but for medicine, hygiene, diet, demography, burial practice and cemetery use.

A number of thematic essays are contained in one chapter, with new ideas which raise additional questions requiring further answers. Here are a few:

The location of the first stone church of 1125 may have been built on higher, drier ground (p.111).

There is little evidence of a stone cloister arcade, although there is of the intention to build it (pp.111, 112).

Evidence found that domestic buildings of the twelfth century were situated well south of the church (p.112).

There may have been no access from the cloister to the south aisle of the nave (p.113), which would mean an absence of processional doorways.

Conceivably the only access from the cloister to the church may have been through the south transept via a slype (passageway) (p.112).

The large infirmary cloister may have been used by healthy canons, as well as the infirm (p.113).

An aisled hall, discovered between the claustral buildings and the monastic mill to the south, could be part of the prior's dwelling (p.114).

There are excellent plans throughout the book, all carefully drawn. However, the water management plan (p.115), in the view of the reviewer, is incomplete. There were normally two sources of supply; one for domestic purposes and the other for flushing the sewer drain. No attempt has been made to show the former. Was no well discovered anywhere in the precinct? Traces of a lead waterpipe supplying the infirmary kitchen were found (figs.34, 62), but not shown on the plan. There was a "possible laver (washplace) or storage cistern in the infirmary cloister garth" (pp. 50, 116). The plan fails to show the drainage ditch across the infirmary cloister (fig.61), which was found to contain possible kitchen waste (p.54). It is difficult to believe that the unwholesome latrine sewer "finally exited east, enriching fishponds..." (p.114).

The new information on design, construction, materials, tiles, pottery, mills, plant and pollen analysis will stimulate further reports.

Lionel Green

BILL RUDD responds to a query about THE SEARCHLIGHT COTTAGES

Early last December Peter Hopkins sent me a letter in which a lady had asked him about the Searchlight Cottages, as her daughter, a leader of the 1st Morden Scouts, was writing a history of the group. Apparently the group first met at the cottages.

My vague remembrance of them was that they were on a piece of ground sandwiched between the Southern Railway station, Morden South, and the entrance to the London Transport Northern Line depot, in London Road.

Research showed that on the OS Revision 1932 Surrey sheet XIII.3 there were three buildings – two rectangular and a narrow one. Clearly a part of the Great War (WW1), later converted into cottages.

In the Merton and Morden UDC Council Minutes a letter dated 12 January 1920 was received from Mr J H Rewcastle about their possible use as dwellings. At a meeting on 4 February they were considered for human occupation, subject to the surveyor's report on being roofed with fire-resisting material, which suggests that the buildings were of wooden construction on brick and concrete foundations. The buildings were licensed for human habitation for a period of three years from 22 March 1920, presumably subject to renewal. The electoral registers show the names of the occupants up to 1934, when they cease. Was this when the 1st Morden Scouts took over?

At the time the buildings were constructed, in wartime haste, they were in an open field. The nearest building was across the road, a house called Hatherleigh, which was unoccupied during the war.

In their rundown state after World War 2 the buildings were demolished when the Express Dairy built their bottling plant. Since then, after they left, the site has been developed as a mosque by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association UK.

On Friday 2 February 2007 on BBC2, as part of the documentary *Timewatch* series *The First Blitz*, the programme showed the full horror of aerial bombardment on British cities, when we were totally unprepared in every way. The German Zeppelin airships were out of the range of hastily converted guns and the Royal Flying Corps. The Morden searchlight must have played a part. Improved fighters plus the invention of the incendiary bullets put a literally fiery end to it, as the airships contained hydrogen gas.



Annotated extract from
OS 1:2500 map of 1933

50 YEARS AGO

We are delighted to have had a letter from **Hilary Nethersole**, a long-time member who now lives near Reading. She says:

I am writing with reference to the photograph of the summer ramble group ... in the *Bulletin* for June 2007.

In fact my whole family were there – my father Mr Want – 2nd from left on back row; my mother Mrs Want (a founder member) 2nd from left on 2nd row front. Next to her on the end is my sister Jeanette Want (also a founder member). On the front right is my sister Frances (age 10 years) and next to her myself (13 years). Also in the photograph is Norman Black, next to Lionel Green.

When this was taken who would have guessed the Society would turn out to be such a marriage bureau!

Hilary Nethersole (née Want)

‘THE NELSON MONUMENT, PORTSDOWN HILL’

One of our members, Jane Smith of Portsea, but once of Mitcham, has researched and written an interesting account of this important structure – a monument that not only celebrates the memory of Nelson but also serves as a seamark. Thomas Fremantle, who commanded the *Neptune* at Trafalgar, was the driving force behind the construction. The monument's design, surprisingly, is based on Ethiopian obelisks or stelae. The architect was John Thomas Groves (c. 1761-1811), who held various posts such as architect to the Post Office and Clerk of Works at Whitehall, Westminster and St James's. He also designed Abraham Goldsmid's house at Morden (demolished before 1820)!

Jane's booklet is published jointly by the Nelson Society and is obtainable for £2 including postage (cheques payable to the Nelson Society) from their sales manager.

**Following on from his article in *Bulletin 157*, PETER HOPKINS has found more about
PROBATE INVENTORIES FOR LOCAL RESIDENTS**

As well as transcribing the Elizabethan Probate Inventories for Surrey, Marion Herridge also collaborated with Joan Holman to produce an *Index of Surrey Probate Inventories 16th–19th Centuries*, published by the Domestic Buildings Research Group (Surrey) in 1986. The local entries are reproduced overleaf.

One of these was transcribed by our member, John Pile, some years ago.¹ In the full transcription below, original spellings have been retained but values have been changed from Roman to Arabic notation.

George Garth had been lord of the manor of Morden since 1613, the second son of the Richard Garth who purchased the manor in 1553/4. It is not known where in Morden George lived. The first Tudor lord, Edward Whitchurche, had occupied a ‘new builded mansion house called Growtes’ on a former copyhold property now known as Morden Lodge,² because the medieval manorial centre, on the site of the present Morden Hall, was leased to tenants until 1568.³ In 1588 and again in 1598 Richard Garth granted new 10-year leases of the former manorial centre, but he reserved to himself ‘all the new Parlor behynde the hall and the Chamber on the same, with free ingress, egress and regress unto the same when and as often as need shall require’, which suggests that he was not normally resident in Morden.⁴ In 1590 Richard leased what became Lower Morden Farm (on the site now occupied by Hatfeild School) to his son George, but it was in other occupation by 1615.⁵ The probability is that George then occupied Growtes, which remained in the family until 1682.⁶

An Inventory of all and singular the goods, chatlis, debtis, and ready money of George Garth late of Moredon in the County of Surrey Esquier deceased which were found at his house at Moredon and valued and prized by Richard Ferrand, Alexander Garth and Robert Greenwell gent the nineteenth of July anno Dni 1627.

<i>Imprimis</i>	in ready money	£245		
<i>Item</i>	his wearing apparell	£20		
<i>Item</i>	linnen and yarnis	£25		
<i>Item</i>	carpetts, coverings, hangings, cupboard clothis, cushions, and stoolis of tapestrie and upholsterers worke valued at	£100		
<i>Item</i>	bedds, bolsters, pillowes, blanketts, ruggis, coverletts, curtens and other furniture	£70	11s	8d
<i>Item</i>	bedstedds great and small valued at	£8	3s	4d
<i>Item</i>	tablis, stoolis, chairis, cupboardis, formis, deskis and cabbinet valued at	£6	13s	4d
<i>Item</i>	chestis and other lumber valued at	£6	12s	4d
<i>Item</i>	bookis and picturis valued at	£4		
<i>Item</i>	armour and weapons valued at	£3		
<i>Item</i>	brass and ironworke	£10		
<i>Item</i>	lead, tynn and pewter valued at	£6	13s	4d
<i>Item</i>	earthen potts and pannis wooden vessells and leather bucketts valued at	£1	13s	4d
<i>Item</i>	butter and cheese valued at		15s	
<i>Item</i>	six hoggs valued together at	£2	10s	
<i>Item</i>	eleven horses & coltis	£40		
<i>Item</i>	twenty eight cowis, twelve calvis and twoe oxen att	£85		
<i>Item</i>	cartis, ploughis & harrenis with other furniture for husbandry	£6	13s	
<i>Item</i>	wood, timber and other lumber	£10		
<i>Item</i>	six quarters of wheate and five of barley	£12	13s	4d
<i>Item</i>	greene corn growing on the ground	£30		
<i>Item</i>	coach harnis and bridlis and saddlis	£15		
<i>Item</i>	soyle in the yard valued at	£2		
<i>Item</i>	a clocke and bees together	£1	10s	
<i>Item</i>	poultry about the house		10s	
<i>Item</i>	plate 378 oz $\frac{1}{4}$ $\frac{1}{8}$ at 5 ^s per ounce	£94	11s	10d
<i>Item</i>	new bricks valued at	£8		
<i>Item</i>	in good debtis the some of	£1036		
<i>Item</i>	in desperate debtis the some of	£250		
<i>Item</i>	hay and strawe in the barne valued at	£8		
	The some of all the goodis at Moredon is	£2110	10s	10d *
	More goodis of the said deceased remaining at his mannor of Kenton in the County of Southhampton valued and prized by Robert Greenwell, Alexander Garth and Lawrence Fledger as followeth <i>viz</i> [not transcribed] The some of all the goods at Kenton is	£385	2s	10d
	More goodis of the said deceased remaining at Lurgeshall in ye County of Bucks valued & prized by Robert Greenwell, John Greenwell & John Rigson as followeth, <i>viz</i>			
<i>Item</i>	one cocke of hay at	£1		
	Suma tottis huius Inventory [Sum total of this Inventory]	£2496	13s	8d

* These figures only total £2110 10s 6d.

NAME	QUALITY	YEAR	REP	CALL NO.	
MERTON					
BLANKER David		1739*	PR	Prob3/38/59	
COLLINS James	Widower	1676	PR	Prob4/10244	
COX Anthony		1666	PR	Prob4/25541	
HERDSON Anne	Widow	1668/9	PR	Prob4/12484	
MORRELL Thomas	Tailor	1565*	HW	B	#
PHILLIPS Oliver	Gentleman	1681	PR	Prob4/2917	
SUTTON William	Yeoman	1679	PR	Prob4/17943	
MITCHAM					
ANDREW John	Widower	1793	PR	Prob31/842/760	
BATT William		1734	PR	Prob3/33/149	
			PR	Prob31/135/816	
BENIFOLD Roger	?Grocer	1766	GL	Ac 73.79	
BOWMAN Matthew		1669	PR	Prob4/3049	
BROWN Peter	Nail Shopkeeper	1753	PR	Prob3/52/32	
			PR	Prob31/358/580	
BUSICK William	Bachelor	1769	PR	Prob31/546/187	
			PR	Prob31/546/192	
COLEMAN Richard	Butcher	1835	PR	Prob31/1344/1407	
COOPER Matthew	Widower	1786	GL	DW/PC/6/1786/2	
CRANMER Anne		1673	PR	Prob4/1950	
CRANMER Rebecca	Widow	1816	PR	Prob31/1111/376	
CRANMORE Robert		1667	PR	Prob5/2160	
DENNYER John	?Whitster	1696	PR	Prob4/1596	
GARTH Richard		166(4)	PR	Prob4/21100	
HANNIM Owen			PR	Prob5/2183	
INWOOD John		1733	PR	Prob3/32/163	
			PR	Prob31/121/612	
			PR	Prob31/122/696	
LAMBE (Samuell)	Gentleman	1687	PR	Prob4/3970	
LATTER Thomas		1757	PR	Prob31/405/308	
LATTER Thomas		1760	PR	Prob31/439/259	
LYNCH John F	Esquire	1807	PR	Prob31/1002/402	
MIDDLETON Benjamin		1724	PR	Prob3/23/64	
OXTOBY William		1812	PR	Prob31/1068/786	
PAYNE Joane		1716	PR	Prob5/2135	
PEACOCK Thomas		1756	PR	Prob31/398/764	
PIKE Edward	Chandler	1755	PR	Prob3/54/49	
POLLARD William	Esquire	1816	PR	Prob31/1111/388	
SANDERS Samuel	Victualler	1799	PR	Prob31/911/675	
SEITH Robert	Yeoman	1592	HW	B	#
STEDALL John	Farmer	1767*	GL	DW/PA/5/1767/43	
STEVENS Edward	Gardener	1800	GL	DW/PA/5/1800/30	
STYLE Henry	Mercer	1675	PR	Prob4/4651	
WALTER William	Husbandman	1585	HW	B	#
WATTS Elizabeth	Widow	1664	PR	Prob4/7571	
WEBB Thomas	Clerk Bachelor	1799	PR	Prob31/905/186	
WHITE Thomas	Innholder	1772	PR	Prob31/590/812	
WOODS Thomas		1734	PR	Prob31/130/436	
MORDEN					
BISHOP John	Farmer	1742	GL	DW/OP/1742/1	
BOOTH William	Clerk	1671	PR	Prob4/3024	
FRYSBEE John	Husbandman	1558	GL	DW/PA/5/1559/117	#
GARTH George		1627	LA	I/264	\$
GORYNG Nycholas		1558	GL	DW/PA/5/Oct 1557	#
			GL	DW/PA/5/Mar 1558	

NAME	QUALITY	YEAR	REP	CALL NO.
WIMBLEDON				
ARNOLD Frances		1676	PR	Prob4/275
BACON Robert		1668	PR	Prob4/1948
BARNES James		1684	LP	VH96/154
BEEKE Samuel	Victualler	1686	LP	VH96/201
CARTER Philip	Gardener	1709	LP	VH96/478
COOPER Daniel		1666	LP	VH96/634
COTTERELL Jonas		1674	LP	VH96/660
DOWNES Grace	Widow	1689	LP	VH96/773
FELLER Alice		1686	LP	VH96/916
FIELDER Samuel	Mariner	1698	PR	Prob4/1911
			PR	Prob5/2182
GANSTON William		1803	PR	Prob31/956/583
GARRETT Margaret	Widow	1712	LP	VH96/1448
GONSTON William	Gardener	1831	PR	Prob31/1298/1845
HORTON Jarvas		1686	LP	VH96/1362
LISTER Thomas		1673	PR	Prob4/22029
LOCK Susanna	Gent's Widow	1674	LP	VH96/1653 §
MAYBANCKE Phaniel	Bachelor	1684	LP	VH96/1740
MITCHELL Frances	Widow	1732	PR	Prob31/108/521
MORLAND Jane	Spinster	1689/90	PR	Prob4/2505
MORRIS Elizabeth		1662	PR	Prob4/4623
MURFITT John	Victualler	1755	PR	Prob31/376/31
OSBORNE Hugh		1668	LP	VH96/1899
OSBORNE Joseph		1668	LP	VH96/1900
PACK Robert	Husbandman	1683	PR	Prob4/16905
PACKE Elizabeth	Widow	1673	PR	Prob4/15052
PELLHAM Abraham		1677	PR	Prob4/4054
PITT Thomas		1699	PR	Prob4/11505
RUSSELL Robert	Yeoman	1717	LP	VH96/2238
SHORTER John	Husbandman	1693	LP	VH96/2328
STEVENS Edward		1681	LP	VH96/2464
TANNER William	Yeoman	1684	PR	Prob4/17063
THACKSTON Lancelott	Yeoman	1714	LP	VH96/2570
THACKSTON William	Yeoman	1678	LP	VH96/2569
WEST Edward	Bachelor	1680	LP	VH96/2762

- 1 Lambeth Archives I/264
- 2 SHC K85/2/12
- 3 SHC K85/2/6-8
- 4 SHC K85/2/21-22
- 5 SHC G1/1/47; G6/1/39(1)
- 6 SHC K85/2/12; K85/2/36

Abbreviations and symbols used in this article:

- SHC Surrey History Centre
Transcribed in Surrey Record Society volume XXXIX and in MHS *Bulletin* 159
\$ Transcribed in this article
§ Summarised by Richard Milward in *Wimbledon in the Time of the Civil War* (1976) p.127

Abbreviations used in the *Index*:

- Adm. Administration
GL Greater London Record Office, now The Metropolitan Archives
HW Hampshire County Record Office (Winchester Diocesan Records)
LA London Borough of Lambeth Archives, the Minet Library, Camberwell
LP Lambeth Palace Archives
PR Public Record Office, now The National Archives
Prob. Probate
REP Repository
SG Surrey Record Office, Guildford Muniment Room, now part of Surrey History Centre, Woking (SHC)
SK Surrey Record Office, Kingston, now part of Surrey History Centre, Woking (SHC)
* Rooms separately indicated in the inventory, or the inventory is of special interest

DAVID LUFF reflects on

MERTON PRIORY AND THE ‘CURSE’: IS IT ABOUT TO STRIKE AGAIN?

Some years ago I had a long discussion with Richard Alexander, who was Merton’s local history librarian then, about the Merton Priory curse.

This alleged curse is said to affect the families of those owning land of the former priory, in that they would not have a direct descendant that would inherit. Richard’s research had confirmed this, going back as far as he could to the dissolution of the priory in 1538.

He could give no explanation as to the origin of the curse, and I have never heard of any. It could predate the priory. The Romans are thought to have had a settlement of some kind at the river crossing, and who knows what might have taken place even earlier? Folklore tales do get passed on from one generation to the next, and on the way events and locations can be changed.

The reason I am referring to it once again is the possibility that the Sainsbury family may be about to relinquish their ownership of their brand-named stores. If this comes to be then the Sainsburys will be another former priory landowner that does not have a direct family inheritance.

At the public enquiry in February 1986 I met and spoke to one of the family, and, if my memory serves me, it was David Sainsbury. I asked him if he knew that the land he was purchasing had a curse on it. He replied that he did, and, with a laugh in his voice, said, ‘It will be death to the owner’. I informed him that it was not so terminal, and all that may happen would be that no member of his family would inherit the Merton Abbey store. As you would expect, he took neither explanation with any seriousness. Yet, if it does come to be, then it will be another strange coincidence.

The curse, true or false? I will leave the reader to consider for him or herself the evidence, both historical and futuristic – if it happens. You will come to your own conclusions, but there is one point that interests me. If such a concept as a curse could exist, what sort of mechanism could keep it alive and functioning over the centuries?

David Luff has photographed two stretches of the priory wall in Station Road that have recently been repaired and made safe.



MERTON HERITAGE CENTRE

The current exhibition, until 27 October, is *Bless 'Em All: Merton During World War II*.

From 6 November *Life Through a Lens: Tom Francis's Mitcham* looks at life in Mitcham from 1870 to the 1920s.

The Canons, Madeira Road, Mitcham Admission free. Open: Tues & Wed 10-4, Fri & Sat 10-4.30.

Tel: 020 8640 9387. www.merton.gov.uk/heritagecentre

Look out too for the events the Heritage Centre are putting on for Merton’s Celebrating Age Festival 2007 in September.

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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