



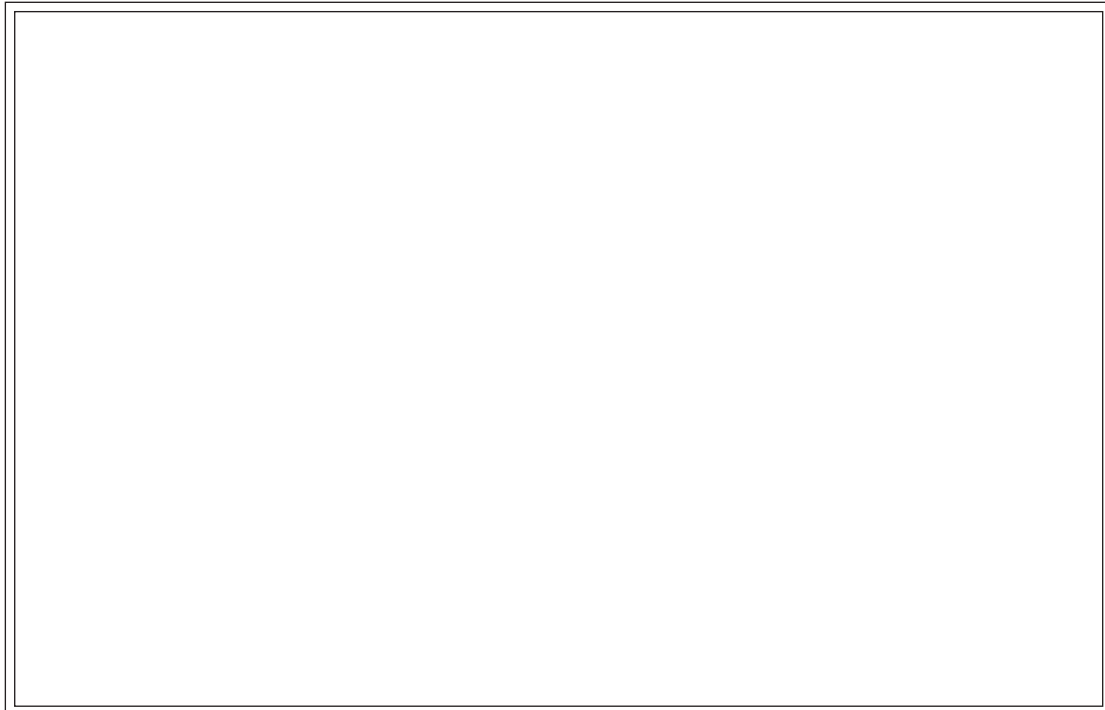
PRESIDENT: Lionel Green

VICE PRESIDENTS: Viscountess Hanworth, Eric Montague and William Rudd

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CHAIR: Dr Tony Scott

MARCH 2009



Jean Reville in action at Sydney, Australia (photo from website bsafwdc.co.uk) – see article on pages 10-14

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PROGRAMME MARCH–JUNE

Saturday 28 March 2.30pm

Raynes Park Library Hall

‘Archaeology in London over the Centuries’

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

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

Very limited parking.

Please enter the hall via the Aston Road entrance.

Saturday 25 April 2.30pm

Merton Park Primary School

‘Merton Park 100 Years Ago’

This talk has been arranged jointly with the John Innes Society. The speaker will be **David Roe**, our Hon. Treasurer, who is also a John Innes Society committee member, and has responsibility for its local history activities.

Merton Park Primary School is in Church Lane, Merton Park. It is a few minutes walk from Kingston Road buses and the Merton Park Tramlink stop.

Please use the Erridge Road gate.

Thursday 21 May

Visit to Godalming



Travel will be by train. We shall have a guided tour of the museum and a town tour.

Free, but donations welcomed.

Tuesday 16 June 11.30am

The Musical Museum, Brentford

We have booked a guided tour, which will cost £6.50 per person.



PLEASE NOTE !

At some of the venues used for our meetings Merton Historical Society has to accept a hiring condition restricting the number of people who can be accommodated. The restriction may be because of the age of the building and is for health and safety reasons and/or insurance purposes. If you arrive after the permitted number has entered you will be asked to leave, in the interests of the safety of our members and visitors and to conform with the hiring agreement. The meeting will not proceed until the reduction in numbers has been achieved. As you know, we use a variety of venues around the borough, and some of the large ones do not seem as popular as the smaller venues, such as the Snuff Mill – at which the permitted number is **only 50**.

It is for safety reasons that members and visitors are asked to enter their names both signed and printed on the list at the door.

Audrey King

TALK BY DAVID ROE – MERTON PARK 100 YEARS AGO

This talk is on Saturday April 25, at 2.30 p.m. in Merton Park Primary School, Erridge Road. It forms part of the Society’s programme, and is organized in conjunction with the John Innes Society, who will be celebrating this year the centenary of the opening of John Innes Park on August 1, 1909. The talk will be a slide presentation, and will draw upon the researches by Judy Goodman and others into the history of Merton Park, and the collection of photographs held by the John Innes Society. It will cover the nature of the developing suburb 100 years ago, and the people and events of this fascinating period, including

- ◆ The bequest of John Innes (died 1904) of land and money, which led to the establishment of the public park and the Horticultural Institution that still bear his name.
- ◆ The fine houses and other buildings designed by the architect Sydney Brocklesby.
- ◆ The activities of Rose Lamartine Yates, leader of the Wimbledon & Merton suffragettes, who lived in Dorset Hall, Merton Park.

‘CANNON HILL COMMON’

After the formal business of the Annual General Meeting on 8 November, the large audience was treated to a presentation by Carolyn Heathcote, who is secretary to the Friends of Cannon Hill Common. This energetic group was formed about ten years ago, and apart from keeping an vigilant eye on the Common, and effecting many improvements, they publish a regular newsletter and arrange two open days each year. Carolyn pointed out that it was never a real common. Before the purchase in 1926 of its 53.5 acres for £ 17000 by Merton and Morden Council it had always been part of a private estate. It was a council decision to call the new public open space Cannon Hill Common – for the sake of alliteration perhaps.

And the name Cannon Hill? Nothing to do with Cromwellian artillery during the Civil War, and everything to do with the fact that what is now the Common is a small part of the land once held by the Augustinian canons of Merton Priory. *Canondownehyll* was the medieval name. With the surrender of the priory in 1538 the land came to the Crown, and was later sold on to private individuals who at that time farmed it as non-residents, for the first evidence of a house at Cannon Hill dates only from 1763. It was probably built for a William Taylor, who held leases on other land nearby, and was described later in Edwards’ *Companion from London to Brighthelmston* as ‘a white house situated on an eminence commanding a pleasant and extensive prospect to the east’. The ornamental canal at the bottom of the slope may have originated as the clay-pit used for making the bricks for the house.

Cannon Hill was bought in 1832 by Richard Thornton (1776-1865), who made a fortune first in the Baltic trade, dealing in goods such as tallow, timber, furs and hemp, and earning himself the nickname ‘Duke of Danzig’, and later in shipping insurance and also the East India trade. He also served at one point as Master of the Leathersellers’ Company. He was generous to the poor of Merton, and on his death in 1865 left money for Merton’s National Schools. His total estate was about £3,000,000 and went mainly to a nephew, though Thornton’s children by his long-term mistress were not forgotten. It is likely that the house was never occupied again, and it was pulled down probably in the 1890s.



Early postcard of Cannon Hill ‘Park’ – no postmark

In 1925 George Blay, a property developer, bought the estate, which then included much of Raynes Park that was still undeveloped. Using the post-war government subsidy scheme he went on to build hundreds of houses there, at the same time offering to sell to the Council the piece of land we now know as Cannon Hill Common. Dog walkers, nature lovers, picnickers and anglers have cause to be grateful to him and to the Friends. Carolyn illustrated her enjoyable talk with an interesting selection of slides.

Judith Goodman

MERTON HERITAGE CENTRE

There is still time to see The Merton Heritage Alphabet, which is on till 28 March. Tel: 8640 9387

THE LOVEKYN CHAPEL

This year Kingston’s Lovekyn Chapel (see page 6) is 700 years old. Information about celebratory events all year can be found at <http://www.kingston-grammar.surrey.sch.uk/events/lovekyn700.html>

HONEYWOOD MUSEUM, CARSHALTON

The museum currently has two exhibitions: one about Henry VIII and Nicholas Carew, and, by way of contrast, one about Sutton’s Route 654 trolleybus, which ran from 1935 to 1959. For details tel: 020 8770 4297

‘THE HISTORY OF SCOTLAND YARD’

At Raynes Park Library Hall, on 6 December 2008, Maggie Bird, Head of the Historical Section, Metropolitan Police, delivered a lively and splendidly illustrated ‘swift dash’ through centuries of London police history.

Policing in London by a formal organisation began in 1663 with a force of night-watchmen, charged with raising the alarm when wrongdoing was discovered, but with little actual authority. Mostly recruited from ex-soldiers, they were raised soon after the Restoration of Charles II; hence their nickname of ‘Charleys’. Never very effective, over the next 150 years they were the butt of many jokes and caricatures, and not infrequently subjected to indignities by young men-about-town.

Around 1750, Henry Fielding JP organised a mobile group of ‘thief-takers’ working from his magistrates office and court in Bow Street – the originals of the ‘Bow Street Runners’. They wore plain clothes, not a uniform, and essentially formed a detective organisation rather than a police force. Some years later, Bow Street began the Horse Patrol on all heaths and commons within 20 miles of Charing Cross, keeping an eye on such well-known haunts of footpads and highwaymen as the little hamlet of Heath Row in Middlesex. (This is still effectively the Metropolitan Police District.) These chaps did wear the famous scarlet waistcoat which gave rise to their nickname (supposedly a reference to the scarlet flowers of the runner bean). They were also known as ‘Robin Redbreasts’. The Bow Street organisation continued until 1840, when the Metropolitan Police assumed its responsibilities.

Then in 1798, Pat Colquhoun, a police magistrate, instituted the Thames River Police force, to counter piracy on the river. This was not quite the first police force in London, since a basic City police force, much restricted as to authority and boundaries, had recently evolved from the old watch system.

In the early 1800s London was a fairly lawless place, with many ‘rookeries’ where desperately poor people lived in overcrowded and insanitary conditions. Social deprivation was widespread, and cheap gin the main relaxation, apart from public hangings. Drunkenness was a perennial problem, as it was much safer to drink beer than the available water. Criminality was rife; a common form of assault was the use of a wire, to effect strangulation or garrotting. Against this background, Sir Robert Peel introduced a Metropolitan Police Bill in 1822, which failed. He tried again in 1828 and succeeded. The Metropolitan Police was established in 1829, with its HQ in Whitehall Place and its first police station at the rear of the building, approached by way of Scotland Yard (so named as the area behind the early London lodging suite of the kings of Scotland within Whitehall Palace). Police stations were marked with the nowadays traditional blue lamps – all except Bow Street, which had white ones until recently (apparently Queen Victoria often visited a house in the street, and objected to the blue colour).

Under the first pair of Commissioners, Dick Mayne (a lawyer and manager) and Sir Charles Rowan (a soldier), conditions of service were onerous and strictly regulated. Each constable was expected to patrol 20 miles a day, on foot; the uniform was to be worn at all times (if a man was on duty he wore an armband to signify this), comprising a blue tail coat, reinforced top hat (in which ‘refreshments may be carried’), an anti-garrotte collar and a leather stock; he was to carry a rattle (not a whistle) and a truncheon. Helmets and tunics were introduced in 1864. Originally there was no pension, but there was the prospect of a gratuity after 20 years service. The first establishment was for about 3500 men, who were mainly recruited from labourers, clerks and ex-soldiers. Initially there was a high drop-out rate, mainly from drunkenness (the first two recruits, warrant numbers 1 and 2, lasted all of four hours in service).



‘The Real Blue Collarier in London’. Hostility to the new police is compared in this 1832 caricature to the dread of cholera.

Despite riots against the police, assaults on individual officers, and public meetings to abolish them, they persevered. To combat riots in the 1860s they had cutlass training (the last time the Army assisted the Metropolitan Police). Their responsibilities expanded so that they became the emergency service – there were no ambulance or public fire brigades, so equipment began to include stretchers, braziers and fire buckets, and handcarts fitted as ambulances with leather hoods and solid wheels. When eventually fire stations arrived, they were often built next door to an old police station (the police kept the ladders...). Not only did a constable have to know the law, and how to control traffic, using a semaphore system, he needed knowledge of other specialities like cattle driving and animal diseases – there were many slaughterhouses, tanneries, soap and glue factories – not to mention public health and the necessity of keeping the streets clean. At least during the cholera epidemics it was emphatically laid down that a constable was not to distribute medicine.

By the 1890s poor living conditions still prevailed – social problems led to horrible crimes such as those of Jack the Ripper – but the Met Police persevered and innovated. Conditions of service improved; many police stations were built 1890-1908 with an inspector living on the premises and a section house providing single accommodation for constables. Old age pensions were instituted in 1890. Headquarters itself moved to New Scotland Yard on the Victoria Embankment in 1890, and then in 1967 to its present location at the new New Scotland Yard, on Victoria Street in St James's. Cycle patrols were introduced; the first radio car (actually a lorry) was used at the Epsom Derby in 1915; women police constables were accepted in 1919 – wartime service as WPCs was strictly speaking not as constables, but as their assistants – leading to the first WPC section at Scotland Yard in 1922, though the WPC was only paid 9/10ths of her male colleague's wage. After the First World War, the entry requirements were relaxed a little – minimum height for men was now 5' 9" rather than 5' 11" – and service conditions again improved, as the pension was now granted after 30 years service. In 1937 the first two police dogs were taken on strength, but only lasted 18 months. However, the experiment was adjudged a success, and in 1947 the first Dog School was opened at Kenton.

'Policewomen are regarded as specialists in all matters relating to the Children and Young Persons Act' from the Evening News London Year Book 1953

Although berated as 'working class traitors', the Metropolitan Police provided substantial assistance to the government during the 1926 General Strike. For the Second World War, the police were equipped with steel helmets, and acquitted themselves well during the chaos of the Blitz of 1940-1941. WPCs were prominent in the evacuation of children from the capital in 1939. Postwar, WPCs proved themselves in other ways, as when WPC Margaret Cleland was decorated with the George Medal for talking calmly to a deranged father clutching his baby and threatening to jump off a precarious roof, until she managed to grab the baby to safety and 'fortunately chummy did not fall off'.

Scotland Yard's famous Crime ('Black') Museum is alas not open to the public, though Maggie Bird recommends a very good one in Manchester. However, the River Police Museum in Wapping is open to the public, being maintained by the Metropolitan Police Association, not the Police Authority. And the National Archives at Kew hold about nine miles (!) of London police files in class MEPO.

David Haunton

[See *Coal and Calico* p.158 for a good example of Bow Street detective work. The 'Mounted Horse Patrol' [*sic*] was operated from Bow Street.]

WHO REMEMBERS THE ASTON BANJO CLUB?

A recent enquiry from Debbie Foster, an ex-Merton Park resident who now lives in Devon, related to an organisation called the Aston Banjo Club. There were blank faces all round until I consulted Sarah Gould, Merton Heritage Officer. The name struck a chord (sorry) with her, and in no time she located a little booklet from 1981 called *The Aston Banjo Club: A Short History*.

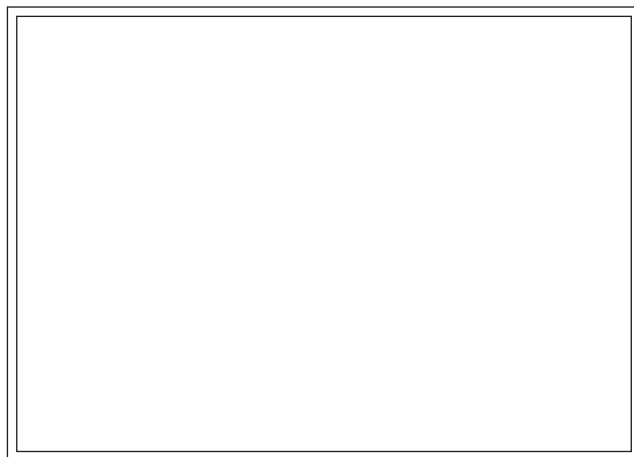
The Club was not named (as I first wondered) after Aston Road, Raynes Park, but Aston Street, Stepney, which was where Harry Marsh, who founded the Club in 1896, had his home. Later he married, and in 1909 moved to Boscombe Road, Merton Park, and the Club's headquarters became the parish room of Holy Trinity, Wimbledon. Their instruments were quite varied, including banjeaurines, banjolos and piccolo banjos, mandolins, and of course a piano. Over time they moved towards a greater number of plectra- rather than finger-played instruments. There were dinner dances and outings, as well as competitions with other clubs and orchestras. A highlight was their big annual concert, held mostly at various halls in Wimbledon and Merton Park, though Kensington town hall was the venue for a few years. By the date of the booklet they had filled Wimbledon's Civic Hall several years running. The Club achieved its centenary in 1996, but sadly disbanded shortly afterwards. Debbie Foster writes that she would love to find out more, particularly in connection with her grandfather William Thomas Long and his father William James Long, who both had a long association with the club. William Thomas apparently met his future wife, Elsie Foxcroft, at the Club, where she was the pianist. This was during the 1920s. Debbie would appreciate hearing from any readers with memories of the Aston Banjo Club. If you have any information please also share it with *Bulletin* readers.

JG

'KINGSTON UPON THAMES – 800 YEARS AS A ROYAL BOROUGH'

The Snuff Mill Centre was full to overflowing for this talk on 31 January, given by Jill Lamb, Kingston's Archivist and Local Studies Manager. Last year was the 800th anniversary of the granting of a charter by King John in 1208 that gave Kingston the right to raise its own taxes, and saw the birth of an independent community. The charter document survives as the oldest of 32 in the archives.

Jill Lamb explained that by the year 1200 Kingston was one of the richest places in Surrey. The church of All Saints had been built about 1130, and the original wooden Kingston bridge (just north of the present one) some 50 years later. A market existed on the present site; there were taverns and wine shops, and a Guild merchant to regulate trade, which included whiteware pottery manufacture. By 1300 Kingston held its own courts and had an annual eight-day fair, but the town was still very small and the main part round the Market Place was effectively an island surrounded by marshes. The Lovekyn chapel was built in 1309; it can still be seen today in the grounds of Kingston Grammar School, and is used for civil weddings and other events. In the 14th century the town experienced high taxes, political unrest, and the plague. The building of Hampton Court in the 1520s was of great importance to Kingston. Many local craftsmen were employed, and material and supplies came through the town. The number of court visitors encouraged the growth of inns and taverns. Kingston Bridge was still the first bridge upstream from London Bridge and therefore a vital strategic link.



*The Lovekyn Chapel in 1886, after restoration.
Photo courtesy of Kingston Grammar School.*

A charter of 1628 gave Kingston the right to be the only market within a radius of seven miles, a right tested in court as late as the 1970s, when Brentford tried to establish a market. Brewing had become an important industry and the name of the wealthy Tiffin brewing family survives in schools that they helped to found. During the turbulent period surrounding the Civil War, Kingston suffered from the quartering of troops in the town and political interference, and did not regain all its ancient rights until a Charter of 1688. In the more settled 18th century the population continued to grow steadily (1200 in the year 1600, 2700 in 1700 and 4500 in 1800), and Kingston had several coaching inns, as it was the hub of four turnpike roads. However, it was still a small town surrounded by agricultural land. The medieval bridge was replaced by a stone bridge in 1828. In the early 19th century Kingston Corporation was under-resourced and unable to deal with the new demands of a growing population following the coming of the railways. The Municipal Corporations Act of 1835 swept the old order away and replaced it with a new administration. In despair at Kingston's efforts to provide facilities Surbiton and New Malden took over their own governance. They were generally regarded as more upmarket than Kingston, which was very much a working class town.

Many new facilities and public buildings were established around the end of the 19th century, when the population had reached 34,500. The economy was becoming more varied as the importance of the market declined. Some 1000 Kingston men lost their lives in the first World War, when the East Surrey Regiment was based in the town and the Sopwith aircraft factory was established, later to become Hawkers. Light industry increased in the 20s and 30s and Kingston grew in importance as a shopping centre. Bentalls, who started in 1867, rebuilt the store in 1935 to a magnificent design by Aston Webb inspired by Hampton Court Palace.

After the second World War, for the first time Kingston seriously addressed the need for more council housing, and there were several large housing developments. Kingston's population had remained static since the 1920s, but Surbiton, Tolworth and New Malden had grown enormously since the building of the by-pass in 1927. Local government reorganization brought about the amalgamation of the boroughs into the new London (and Royal) Borough of Kingston upon Thames in 1965. In the last 40 years many industries have gone, but Kingston remains a major shopping centre and a significant number of people are employed by Kingston Council, Surrey County Council and Kingston University – all situated in the town. Jill Lamb ended on an optimistic note : it is hoped to develop Kingston as a cultural centre with the Market Place at the heart of the Cultural Quarter – a far cry from the market trading of the 13th century.

This was a well-illustrated talk packed full with facts, in which Jill Lamb displayed a comprehensive knowledge of the subject : it was a commendable attempt to pack 800 years of Kingston history into a talk of just an hour.

David Roe

A CRICKET SOUVENIR

The Mitcham Cricket Club Year Book for 1946 includes the names of Colonel Bidder, 'Burn' Bullock, Andy Sandham, Hubert Strudwick and Tom Francis as Vice Presidents.

On 22 May that year a benefit match was arranged versus the Surrey 1st Eleven for Alf Gover and Tom Barling, and there were also special activities to support the Surrey County Cricket Club Centenary (1845-1945) Appeal, to make the Kennington Oval one of the finest grounds in England. Proceeds from a match on the Green against a Surrey 2nd Eleven on 19 June would go to the appeal. However, there is no mention, probably because details were not available in time, of an even greater fund-raising match. On Thursday 23 May Surrey v 'Old England' was to be played at the Oval. This turned out to be a truly remarkable event, attended by 15,000 spectators, including King George VI.

Surrey faced a side comprising ten Old England players and Brooks, former Surrey wicket-keeper, the one member of the eleven without the honour of Test Match experience. Altogether the caps gained by the ten players and the umpires Hobbs and Strudwick numbered 370. On one of the finest days of the season the cricket proved full of interest. Runs always came fast, and there were three stands of over 100. Gregory and Squires put up 111 for Surrey; Woolley and Hendren hit up 102, and Hendren and Jardine 108 for Old England in a splendid effort to hit off the runs after Bennett, the new Surrey captain, declared. Fender was prominent in the field, making a neat catch and taking two wickets with successive balls. The most exhilarating cricket came after the fall of Sandham and Sutcliffe for two runs. Woolley, at the age of 59, drove with the same ease that delighted the crowds before and after the 1914-18 war. Hendren showed all his cheery forcing play until, just before time, he lifted a catch off Surrey's most famous recruit, A V Bedser, already marked for England honours. To stay two and three-quarter hours and hit eight fours at the age of 57 was a great feat by Hendren. D R Jardine, wearing his Oxford Harlequin cap, was as polished as ever in academic skill. The match was drawn. Surrey declared at 248 for 6. Old England reached 232 for 5 before time ran out.

After the match my uncle succeeded in buying an auctioned copy of the Mitcham Cricket Club Year Book autographed by all those great players. And he gave it to me.

Cyril Maidment



LOCAL HISTORY WORKSHOPS

Friday 21 November 2008 at Wandle Industrial Museum. Evening meeting. Five present.

Cyril Maidment in the chair.

- ◆ **David Haunton**, who subscribes to *Current Archaeology*, had brought along the December issue, which had a ten-page article on Merton priory by David Saxby and two colleagues. Excavations on the site of this medieval powerhouse, as they called it, had yielded painted plaster, stained glass and a (rather unmonastic) gold ring.

*A gold finger-ring
recovered from a
demolition deposit in the
former infirmary hall,
inscribed [Je] ne weil
aymer autre que vous
(‘I am not seeking to
love anyone but you’).
Presumably it belonged
to a high-ranking lay
visitor.*

David had been learning more about Eric Jean Reville, who, with a confectioner called Palmer, created at Merton Rush the Palmer-Reville miniature racing car. Reville had a fascinating, if irregular, private life, which David was untangling, and the little racing cars had quite a celebrated, if brief, career. See pages 10-14.

- ◆ We were then treated to a selection of **Bill Rudd**'s fine black-and-white photographs of Morden street scenes and buildings. These had been taken mainly in the 1960s and included long-gone Cinema Parade in Aberconway Road, and Morden Park Cottages in London Road, and also Morden Park baths when brand new, and the site of Merton College.
- ◆ **Judith Goodman** had been in electronic correspondence with someone in Carshalton who is interested in the Wandle, and in fly-fishing. Like her, he has been unable to find the often-cited ‘Wandle trout spotted like tortoises’ in Izaak Walton’s *Compleat Angler*. Indeed the Wandle is not mentioned at all in that book, and there is no reason to think Walton even knew of the river. His London river was the Lea.
- ◆ **Cyril Maidment** is interested in the garden gate at Abbey Gate House, a drawing of which appears in W H Chamberlain’s *Reminiscences of Old Merton* (1925). His thoughts about its significance appear on page 14.

He had also brought along copies of some Vincent Lines drawings of Morden, which were admired.

Judith Goodman

*B615 Wimbledon – West Croydon March 1929
photo: H G Casserley (see report on facing page)*

Friday 9 January, afternoon meeting. Six present. Judy Goodman in the chair.

- ◆ **Cyril Maidment** referred back to the Vincent H Lines drawings of Morden from the Wimbledon Society Museum. Now 80 years old, they gave some details of local history not found anywhere else. Charles Toase had now kindly provided the important accompanying text, but this does not reproduce well, nor can the poor 1920s/1930s newsprint be digitised by the OCR process. Sixty half-page articles need to be put on disk by a copy typist in preparation for the Lines centenary. Could any Society member volunteer?

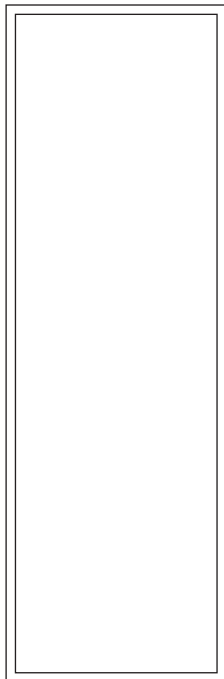
In the *Bulletin* for September 2005 there were three items relating to cricket in Mitcham. One was about a copy of Mitcham Cricket Club's 1946 Year Book, the cover of which had been autographed by some very famous players on the occasion of Old England playing Surrey at the Oval on 23 May 1946. Cyril had unearthed some more facts about this event and about the Year Book. See page 7 of this *Bulletin*.

- ◆ **Peter Hopkins** had been even more industrious than usual. With the medieval court rolls of Morden he had prepared a spreadsheet with 10600 entries, enabling all manner of studies to be undertaken. Copies of documents had been received from the National Archives, including a grant of 1362 by William de Mareys to the perpetual vicars of Mitcham, and Westmorden. Also he had received a 16th-century document relating to Sparrowfield Common. After much seeking he had found a good researcher to deal with certain documents of Morden church and vicarage. He had also obtained a quotation for translating the 14th-century copy of the Merton priory foundation narrative in the College of Arms. This would probably cost about £1000. Workshop considered this would be an excellent use for part of the Maud Gummow bequest.

Surrey History Centre has recently purchased an album of photographs of the plant and operations at Renshaw's marzipan factory in Mitcham.

Sarah Gould had passed to Peter a typescript *Memoirs of a Morden Lad*, who had lived in Central Road from 1932 to 1957. It would be considered for publication, as would the 19th-century poem *Ravensbury*, copies of which had been given to members at the previous workshop.

- ◆ **Lionel Green** had obtained copies of seven interesting railway photos relating to Mitcham (see the example at the foot of facing page).



Zechariah

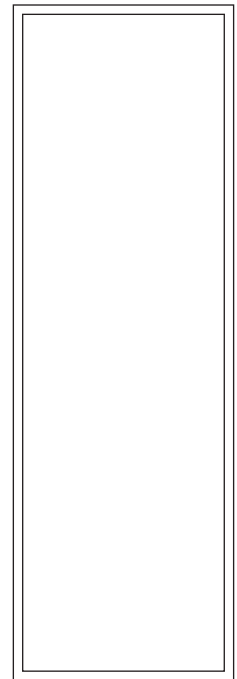
He had also brought with him a little book by Rose E Selfe called *The Work of the Prophets* (1906), which has local interest as four of the eight illustrations are photographs of paintings by Frederic Shields, who lived at Long Lodge, Merton Park. He painted them for the Ascension Chapel in Bayswater, which was unfortunately destroyed in the last war, and all its decoration lost.

Lionel reported that the latest newsletter of Leatherhead and District Local History Society had a note about *Coal and Calico*. Calico printer John Leach had retired to Bookham.

- ◆ **David Haunton** believed he had deciphered the 'illegible' word reproduced on page 158 of *Coal and Calico*. He suggested that it was the Scottish word 'throch', and that the housemaid was in fact armed with a chamber pot! See page 15.

- ◆ **Judy Goodman** mentioned the 19th-century boys' school in old Church House, Merton Park. Charles Toase had sent her a copy of an 1893 advertisement from *The Times* placed by the school's proprietor. The school will be the subject of a future *Bulletin* article.

She had also, thanks to Sarah Gould, been able to answer an enquiry about the Aston Banjo Band. See page 5.



Isaiah

She had had an enquiry from a regular correspondent who had sent a photo (undated) of part of Young's Accumulator establishment on the Kingston Bypass, asking her to identify a cupola at one side of the view. The workshop felt it was most probably a feature of the 'works' building, which was alongside the 'office' building shown in the photo. It did not seem likely to have been on the Shannon Corner Odeon nearby, which was apparently (we have no pictures of it locally) a white-tiled art deco building, unlikely to sport a cupola. Can anyone remember?

Cyril Maidment

Dates of next Workshops: Fridays 13 March and 15 May at 2.30pm at Wandle Industrial Museum. All are welcome. Note that workshops will be afternoon events from now on.

DAVID HAUNTON is intrigued by

JEAN REVILLE: MERTON'S RACING MOTORIST – PART 1

This article is a tentative statement of work in progress. There are so many loose ends that an alternative title might well be 'Jean Reville: International Man of Mystery'.

Our hero was a racing driver and racing car maker, based in Merton Park. He was briefly famous during 1934 and 1935 in the brand new sport of midget car racing. This enjoyed a short-lived vogue in Britain before the War, employing tiny purpose-built cars which hurtled round three or four laps of a small oval dirt-track course.

Early Days

'Jean' Reville was his preferred publicity name. His given names, as reported in Merton and Morden Voters Lists, were Eric Jene (consistently so spelt). Here I shall refer to him as Jean. We do not know where he was born, but from his 1928 marriage certificate we learn that his father, James Jocelyn Reville, was a flour miller and manager, and that Jean was then 28 years old, so born c. 1900. However, the family do not appear to be in the 1901 census or those parts of the 1911 census available at present. (Is immigration more probable than name change?)

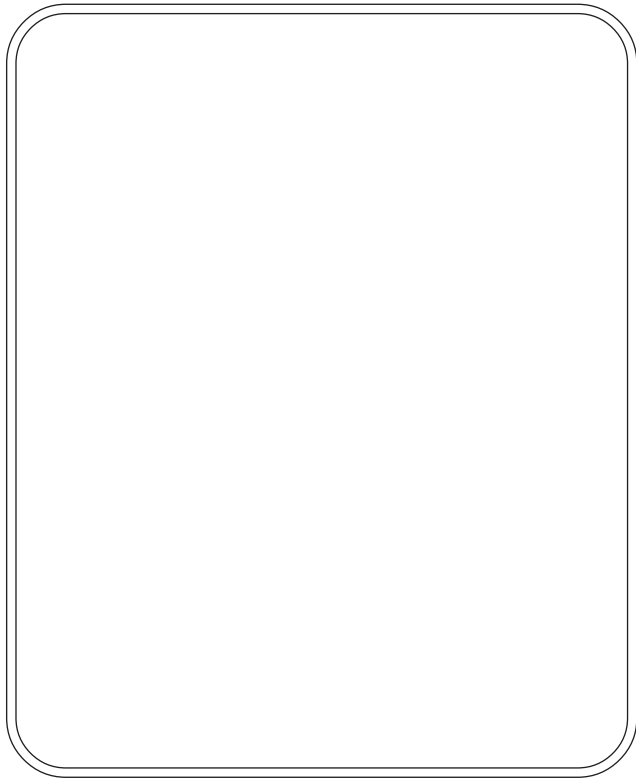
Jean married Daisy Florence Epsom 'otherwise Palmer' of Croydon, at Hammersmith Register Office in 1928, describing himself as a confectionery salesman. By May 1929, the couple had moved into 3 Merton Park Parade, a confectionery shop. There they joined Arthur Thomas Palmer and his wife Elizabeth Jane, who had been in residence and keeping the shop since 1914. (I believe that, to hold a lease or own a freehold, Arthur must have been over 20 years old in 1914, so he would be at least 35 in 1929.) Intriguingly, in 1929 Jean and Daisy married again, this time in St Mary's Church in Merton Park, with Jean now a 'motor engineer'. (What was the impediment to the first wedding?) I presume that Daisy was a relation of the Palmers. It is curious that she is entered in the Voters List for October 1929 under her maiden name of Epsom, with her qualification being that of the wife of a resident. In the 1930 Voters List, Daisy is safely 'Reville' and remains so while in Merton.

At this point we should note that the Merton Park Parade of shops, with flats above, curves round from Kingston Road into Watery Lane. Nos. 1–12 form a continuous terrace and were built in 1907. Then there is an open plot (thus avoiding any need for a no. 13), and then a detached showroom, no. 14, which was added in 1930 with an unusual triangular groundplan. The open plot and no. 14 have always been occupied together, by motor engineers and/or traders.

In 1930, Arthur and Jean started a new venture called Palmer Reville & Co. This offered 'motor hire services' based on 3 Merton Park Parade. The following year they raised sufficient capital (from whom?) to move this business to no. 14, while Arthur retained and continued the confectionery shop at no. 3. In 1931 they were joined by Dennis James Reville and his wife Grace Gladys, who occupied 14A Merton Park Parade, the flat above the showroom. I believe that Dennis was a younger (?) brother of Jean, who assisted at Palmer Reville & Co. I presume they erected some sort of temporary workshop and garage on the open plot, where they began to modify BSA front wheel drive sports cars, which they offered for sale under the tag of 'Palmer Specials'. They were sufficiently successful in this that by the end of 1933 they could offer three different

versions – the 'Ulster' 2-seater and 'Le Mans' 4-seater for touring, and the 'Brooklands' 2-seater for more dedicated sportsmen.

Recent photo of a 1933 Palmer Reville Ulster model (website bsafwdc.co.uk, courtesy Merton Library and Heritage Service)



*Advertisement showing Brooklands model
(The Autocar 13 October 1933)*

The Sport

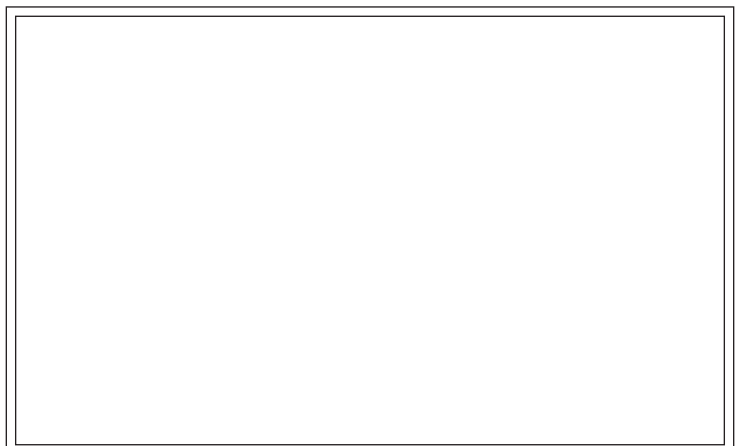
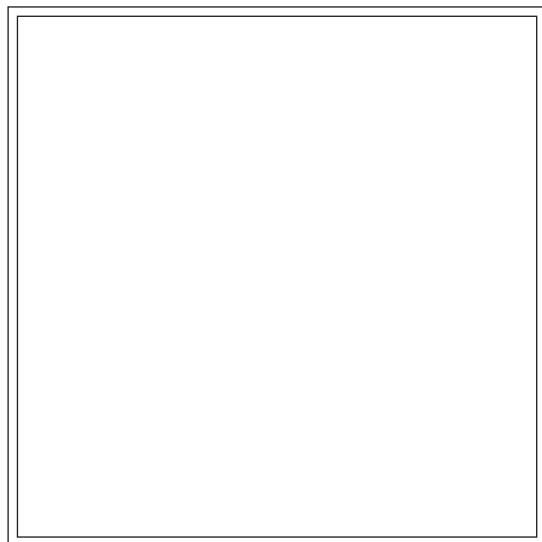
There were many car-based competitions in the 1920s and 1930s – time trials, rallies, hill climbs, economy runs, even a few road races on private land. All over the country young men with spanners modified and tuned some of the immense variety of small cars available. Motorcycle racing on dirt-tracks began in the mid-1920s; car races with standard roadsters on the same tracks were occasional events that became more frequent during the early 1930s.

The first dirt-track meeting for midget cars featuring specially-designed vehicles was held in June 1933 in Sacramento, California. This exciting new sport rapidly became widely popular across the USA and then crossed to Britain in 1934. Chiefly performed at greyhound racing and motorcycle speedway stadiums, the sport was calculated to attract a more numerous, working-class, paying audience than traditional motor racing, where fans tended to be more upper-class. Normally a programme contained a dozen or more races.

First Racing Car

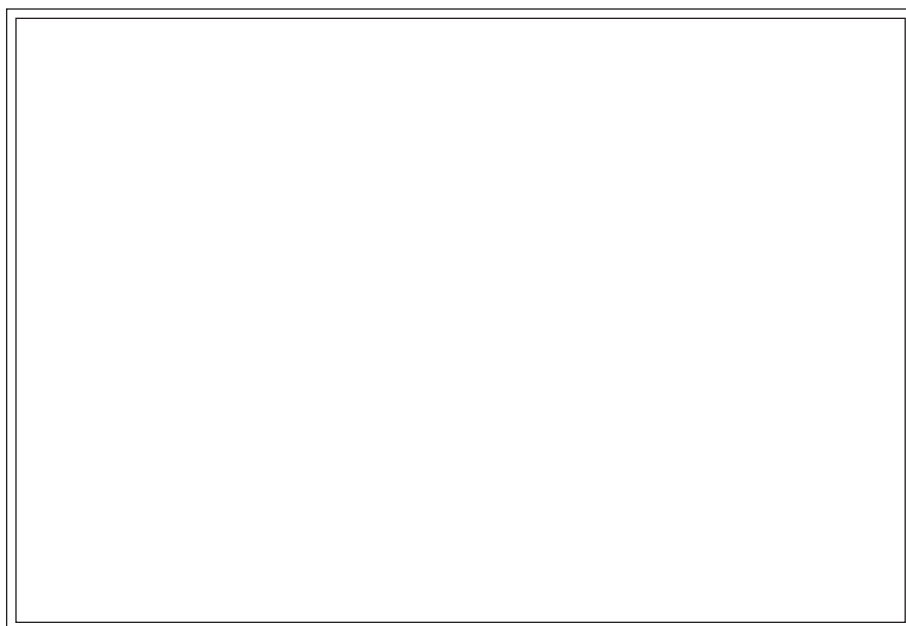
I suspect that Jean acquired his racing experience in amateur sports over the period 1929-1933. He certainly drove in dirt-track races during 1933 (eg. at Wembley Stadium in early August), using a BSA sports car ‘of somewhat special attributes’. Since the firm’s later cars were known as Palmer Specials rather than Palmer Revilles, I speculate that at the same time Arthur was developing expertise in car modification.

Arthur Palmer and Jean Reville decided that they could exploit the new midget racer arena, and so created a single-seat midget Palmer Special towards the end of 1933. This was a variant of their existing designs, with small wheels and a low, narrow and rather crude body, in which the cylinder heads of the ‘Vee’ engine protruded through the bonnet. The driver’s seat was moved to the centre-line, but the steering wheel remained in its original position, so that the steering column pointed at the driver’s right shoulder. Versions were offered for sale for £180 ‘including engine mods’. This was raced during the 1934 season, and was evidently improved and ‘cleaned up’ as time went on. A few (two or three?) further examples were produced.



*left: Early Palmer Special, Reville in car, Palmer (?) standing.
above: Early Palmer Special. Boy is holding a normal size BSA wheel.
(both from Bridgett, Midget Car Speedway p.20)*

Jean Reville threw his energies into promotion and publicity. He set up a Speedway Racing Drivers Club, based at 14 Merton Park Parade, which organised the first British race meetings for midget cars, at Crystal Palace, and drew up rules for size and engine capacity of the cars. The first meeting was on 31 March 1934 (Easter weekend), and Reville interested Paramount Films sufficiently for them to send a film crew. Both the first and the second (14 April) meetings were advertised in the *Times*, as was another on 26 May. All these were on Saturdays. Also in

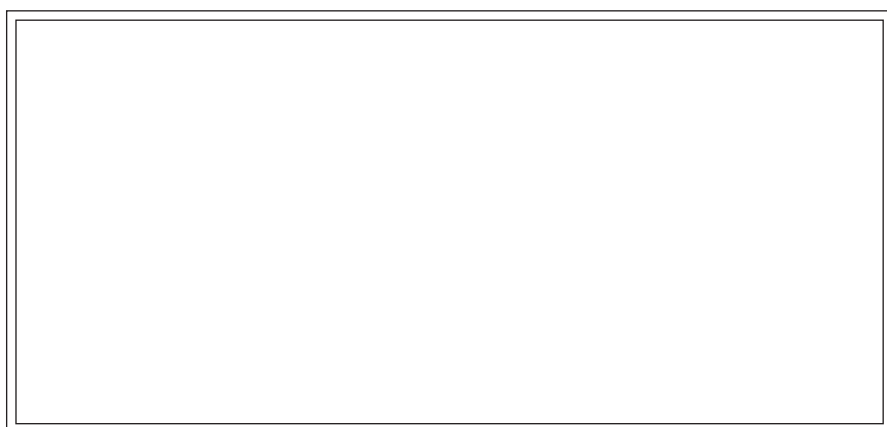


Late-model Palmer Special (The Light Car 30 November 1934)

May, he posed for a publicity picture with the Hon. Victoria Worsley, a socialite and racing driver, before her attempt at a lap record at Crystal Palace on Whit Monday (the *Wimbledon Boro' News* calling him 'the well-known local racing motorist'). As well as this activity, Jean was racing at least once a week throughout a season lasting until September; at Crystal Palace this was often as the captain of the local team of three drivers. By 23 November 1934 *The Autocar* could describe him as 'the originator of miniature-car dirt-track racing in this country'.

The Gnat

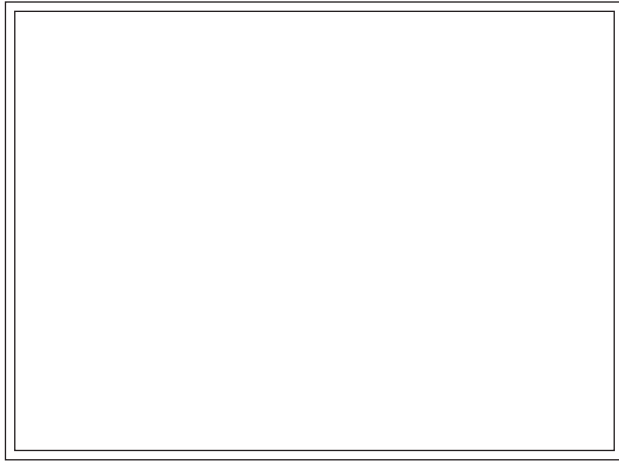
In November 1934, Reville's publicity machine announced a new car in the motoring press, while the *Wimbledon Boro' News* had an early picture of Reville himself in 'his latest baby car' on 7 December. This was the Gnat, a specially designed midget racer with a 992cc JAP motorcycle engine, one gear and one small brake. Initially the exhaust pipe ran between the driver's knees, which 'must have added to the excitement'. Only six feet long, the Gnat was billed as the 'World's Smallest Racing Car', with 'Jean Reville' prominent in its paintwork, and 'Palmer Special' rather more quietly across the radiator. In January, *The Light Car* had portrait photos of the machine itself, and commented approvingly that the 'Palmer-Reville duo had done a great deal of serious thinking on the subject of the right kind of dirt-track car'. This was followed on 1 February by news of design changes as a result of testing. (But where were the test runs held?) Later opinion was not so flattering; 'unbelievably crude' was one Australian comment delivered decades later with 100% hindsight – but what else could be expected of two pioneering young men with spanners?



*Side view of the Gnat
(The Light Car 11 January 1935)*

During February 1935 a certain unreality creeps into the publicity – there are reports that Jean Reville has plans to produce 50 machines 'by Easter', backed by a company with 'unlimited capital', and that he intends to take a team of six English drivers to California to compete against

'the Americans'. Such euphoric talk may have been stimulated by meeting Joel 'Joe' W Thorne, the playboy American heir to two millionaires, pilot, and driver of fast cars, boats and motorcycles. The two men were pictured in the local press in February, Thorne having just competed in the Monte Carlo Rally, and genially agreeing he would raise a team of midget racers (in the USA) and return in the summer. (On 21 February he sailed for New York from Southampton aboard the luxurious *Ile de France*, and apparently did not return to Britain before the Second World War: at least, he did not again leave Britain by ship in that period.) Of course, all Jean Reville's talk may have been 'shooting a line' with his tongue firmly in his cheek. He must have known that producing 50 Gnats in eight or nine weeks was quite impossible on the Merton Park premises – in the event it seems only five or six machines were made over the next few months.

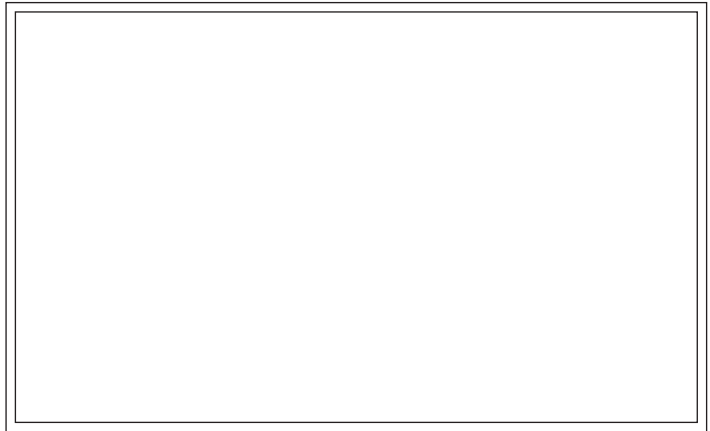


*above: Driver's view of the Gnat
(The Light Car 11 January 1935)*

This was a two-car match arranged by the stadium management to test the interest of the local greyhound racing (known locally as 'gracing') and motorcycle speedway fans. In the event, his opponent's car 'refused to function' and Jean was reduced to driving a solo demonstration run, which was adjudged 'insufficiently interesting'. This seems to have been the only occasion on which midget racing cars were shown at Wimbledon.

Jean had a very busy and successful 1935 racing season, with much publicity. For example, he won three races at Crystal Palace on Easter Monday, raced at the Silver Jubilee meeting at White City in May, and the second Lea Bridge meeting on the Saturday before Whitsun, and competed in three meetings over Whitsun – on the Saturday at the opening meeting of the Perry Hill Stadium in Catford, on Whit Monday at Crystal Palace in the afternoon, and at Lea Bridge Stadium in the evening. Probably his last appearance on a British track was at the recently opened Wimbledon Stadium on 1 September.

below: Joe Thorne standing by his Monte Carlo car, Jean Reville in Gnat (Wimbledon Boro' News 15 February 1935)



*Gnat after modifications
(South London Press 24
April 1935)*

And Away ...

At some point in 1935, Arthur Palmer had relinquished the sweetshop at 3 Merton Park Parade and taken a newly-built double-fronted shop at 215/217 Kingston Road, Ewell, where he sold toys and prams as well as confectionery. All six Palmers and Revilles moved into the new accommodation. Dennis continued the motor hire service until 1937, when 14 Merton Park Parade passed to Mr A G Spencer, motor engineer. With the end of the 1935 British season, Jean Reville accepted a contract to race for a season in Australia, along with two other drivers. They were to tour as an

'England' team using three Gnats and competing against local drivers and machines. Reville was billed as the 'British Champion'; the other two were 'Bud' Stanley (allegedly of Wimbledon, but whose given name no-one seems to know) and Ralph E P Secretan. On 13 September 1935, Jean Reville 'racing motorist' sailed from London for Sydney aboard the SS *Orsova*, together with Ralph Secretan and his wife, but without his own wife Daisy. And he never came back.

The team had a good Australian season, starting at the newly-opened Sydney Showground on 2 November, and later going on to race at Melbourne and Brisbane. Stanley and Secretan returned to England in early 1936, but Reville stayed on in Brisbane. (Why?)

According to my Brisbane correspondent John Williams, Reville subsequently had a successful racing career in Australia, supplemented by a motor-import business and various half-hearted engineering enterprises. In 1945 he married the daughter of William Jolley, the mayor of Brisbane, and they later had a son. (What had happened

to Daisy? She had not sailed for Australia by 1948.) Jean Reville remained in Brisbane until he died in the early 1980s. Sadly, in later life he made many claims about his involvement with English midget car racing, but most if not all are exaggerated or false. (See Part 2.)

Arthur Palmer occupied his new shop with its prams and toys until at least 1960, when he presumably retired. The shop, with its window display of a working electric train set, is still fondly remembered in Ewell. I must also admit to a soft spot for Arthur Thomas Palmer, confectioner and racing car designer (part-time).

Acknowledgements

Derek Bridgett, author of *Midget Car Speedway* (2006), Tempus Publishing Ltd, for much help, for copies of many cuttings he culled from *The Light Car and Cyclecar* magazine (usually referred to as *The Light Car*), *The Autocar* magazine, and other press notices, and for starting this whole enquiry by his letter to the *Wimbledon Guardian*.

John Williams of Brisbane for encouragement, information and long phone calls from Australia. (John is a Welshman whose parents met in Wimbledon, so he is one of us, and therefore a Good Chap.)

Merton Local Studies Centre for local newspapers, directories, Voters Lists, and finding our first illustration.

Volunteers at Epsom and Ewell Local Heritage Centre for memories.

THE 'HIGHGATE' OF MERTON PRIORY

Some years ago I studied the matter of access to Merton priory, and in particular the functions of two gates in Station Road, opposite each other, and separated by the width of the road, say 20 metres. Was there a reason for them to be exactly facing each other? The much-loved southern gate, with a round arch, survived until the 1980s, but the northern gate, with a pointed arch, must have disappeared soon after our drawing was made in 1925. The elaborate small towers on either side of the gate suggested that this was no more than a 'folly' built to please an owner of Merton Abbey Gatehouse. In the photograph, taken from inside the wall, one can see the railings at one end of the long thin ornamental lake, most of which was exactly replaced by the line of Mill Road. Imagine my delight to find on page 122 of the MoLAS book on Merton priory that the gate was ancient and was known as the 'Highgate'. The photograph shows clearly much flint still apparent in the wall, indicating that it was part of the priory. Indeed the wall surrounded the grounds of the gatehouse and also covered the length of Abbey Road. In the late 17th century John Aubrey noted the existence of the Highgate in his *Natural History and Antiquities of Surrey* (pub. 1718-1719).

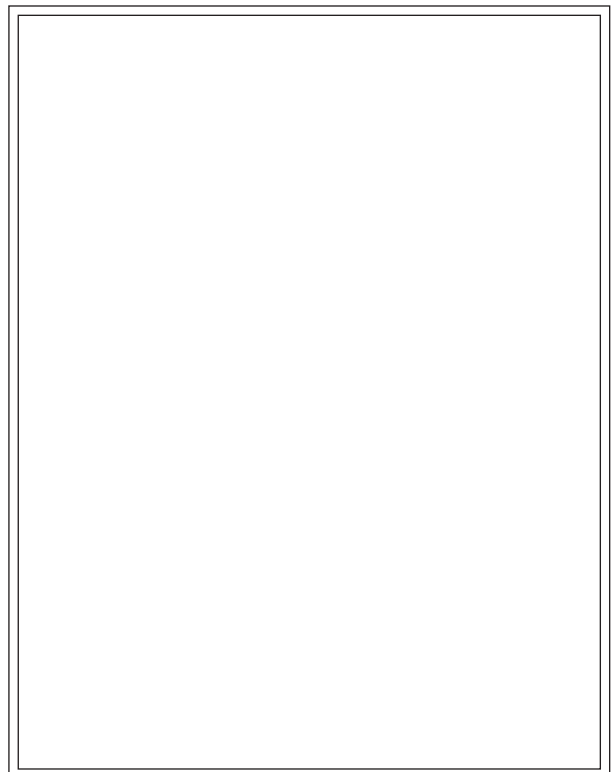
One wonders why walls existed on both sides of this lane (Station Road). Two possibilities exist. The lane was open to public access, with a further gate at the present river crossing, or thereabouts – the main course of the river Wandle being east of the priory during the life of the priory. The other possibility is a grand entrance gate at the junction of Station Road, High Path and Abbey Road. Dave Saxby, who has spent many years excavating the priory and its surroundings, considers that this is not unlikely.

Cyril Maidment

Right: The 'Highgate' from Station Road, signed 'L.B.T. 1925'



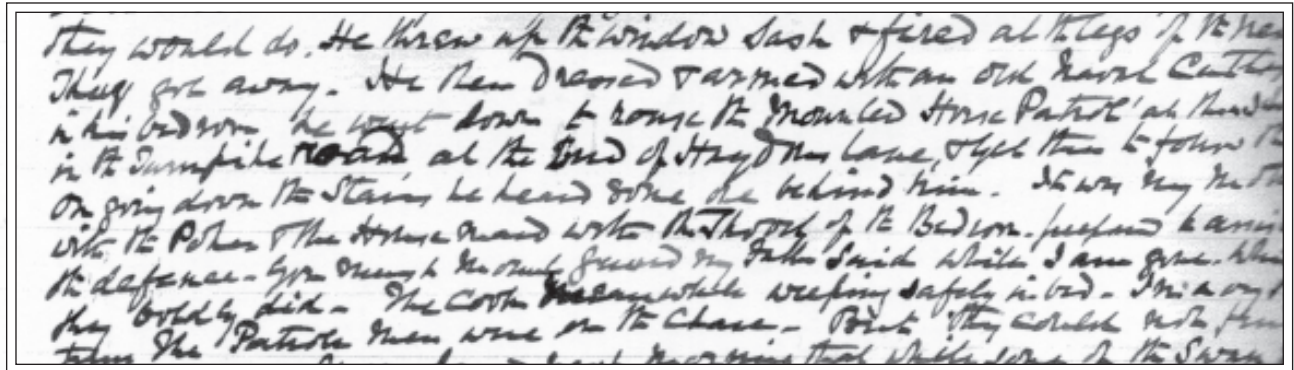
Above: The 'Highgate' from the garden side, photographed before 1915 (Wimbledon Society Museum)



**DAVID HAUNTON does not wish to be taken too seriously as he discusses
IDEAS ON [illegible]**

On p.158 of *Coal and Calico* (transcribed from the notes hand-written by the aged Canon Frederick Bennett in 1896) the account of the 1826 burglary contains the following:

‘... he heard some one behind him. It was my Mother with the Poker & the Housemaid with the [illegible] of the Bedroom, prepared to assist in the defence’.



What, wonders Judith Goodman in a picture caption, is [illegible]? Keen to assist, I recruited my daughter, who is currently attending a paleography course, and after some time and argument we agreed that [illegible] reads something like **Throch**, with plausible alternatives **Throck**, **Thooch** or **Throoh**.

And so off to Wimbledon Library, there to consult the full *Oxford English Dictionary*. It contained not a single entry for any of our three plausibilities.

Happily, however, **Throch** (or **Throckt**) though obsolete, Scottish and undefined, did give us cross-references to **Through**, **Through** and **Trough**.

Through (or **Through**) is a sheet of paper. An unlikely weapon.

Through (or **Thorough**) yields several possibilities:

- (1) a trough, pipe or channel for water. But only in Old English (ie. Anglo-Saxon).
- (2) a hollow receptacle for a dead body
- (3) a large slab of stone laid upon a tomb.

Neither of these is likely to appear in a bedroom, and either of them is a bit heavy for a housemaid.

- (4) various ladder-rungs and express messengers, which eliminate themselves from further consideration.

Trough offers an encouraging range of possibilities (nearly two columns of the *OED*):

- (1) a narrow open box-like vessel ... to contain liquid; also a tank or vat for washing, brewing, tanning, fulling, and ‘various other purposes’.

Variants on this are a small vessel used in chemistry or photography; a toper (a mere container for liquids); or a dining table or a meal. These we can dismiss.

- (2) other boxes with special uses involving grindstones, voltaic batteries, or washing ore in a mine (though you may call that one a buddle, of course)
- (3) a small primitive boat, a dug-out or **Trow** (though there is no unanimity on this: in different parts of Britain it is a large flat-bottomed sailing barge, a double canoe for spearing salmon by torchlight or a small flat-bottomed herring-fishing boat)
- (4) a stone tomb or coffin (see above)
- (5) a conduit or gutter for conveying water
- (6) a hollow or valley in sea or land.

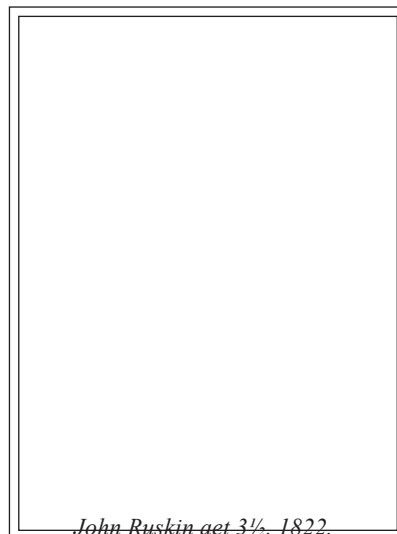
Coming up for air, and after mature consideration, we are left with some sort of container for liquids, to be found in an early 19th-century bedroom. It must be portable, but reasonably hefty, to be thought of as a weapon. One obvious possibility is the jug or ewer from a jug-and-basin washing set, but in that case why would the good Canon not just call it a jug? To employ an unusual word seems to imply some delicacy on his part; which leads me to suggest he intended either the slop-pail from a putative jug-and-basin set, or the conversationally-dreaded chamber pot. Given the choice of wielding the former, with its uncertainly swinging handle, or the latter, with its reassuringly firmly fixed handle, I would opt for the chamber pot.

I rest my case.

THE WANDLE IN LITERATURE – an occasional series

6. John Ruskin

John Ruskin (1819-1900), artist, critic, polymath and social reformer, published his autobiography in parts between 1885 and 1889. He called it *Praeterita* – ‘Things Gone By’. By this period of his life he was suffering severe bouts of insanity, and the book was never completed. But the first few chapters had been written much earlier; they were based on some of his writings in *Fors Clavigera* (Ruskin never went in for straightforward titles. This one, he said, meant Chance, or Fortune, with the nail). *Fors* was his series of letters ‘to the Workmen and Labourers of Great Britain’, which he began in 1871. His description of his life as a small boy is fresh, vivid and touching. He was the only child of parents who combined strictness with indulgence in his upbringing. His Calvinist mother made him read the Bible aloud every morning; he was whipped frequently; he was allowed no toys except a box of bricks; he was never permitted a dessert. But his time was his own from noon each day till supper and he early began his meticulous observation and depiction of every detail of his surroundings. Moreover, every year there was a long tour with his parents, in this country or on the Continent, for his father was a prosperous wine merchant. These early experiences sowed the seeds of the intense appreciation of nature, architecture and art that so influenced his future career.



*John Ruskin aet 3½, 1822,
by James Northcote*

An attractive aspect of Ruskin’s character is that he was no snob. He dearly loved, and loved to be with, the humble maternal relatives who lived over their baker’s shop in Croydon’s medieval Market Street. And when he stayed with them he had the chance, he wrote, to ‘walk on Duppas Hill and on the heather of Addington’. Was it on these visits that he got to know the Wandle? Perhaps. At the end of *Praeterita*’s first chapter is this passage: ‘... [W]hile I never to this day pass a lattice-windowed cottage without wishing to be its cottager, I never yet saw the castle which I envied to its lord; and although in the course of ... many worshipful pilgrimages I gathered curiously extensive knowledge, both of art and natural scenery, ... it is evident to me in retrospect that ... the personal feeling and native instinct of me had been fastened, irrevocably, long before, to things modest, humble, and pure in peace, under the low red roofs of Croydon, and by the cress-set rivulets in which the sand danced and minnows darted above the Springs of **Wandel**.’ (Ruskin chose to use this spelling.) The chapter is called ‘The Springs of Wandel’.

In 1866 Ruskin published three polemical lectures, ‘Work’, ‘Traffic’ and ‘War’, in a volume which he called *The Crown of Wild Olive*. His introduction begins with another famous reference to the Wandle:

‘Twenty years ago there was no lovelier piece of lowland scenery in southern England ... than that immediately bordering on the sources of the **Wandel** ... with all their pools and streams. ... The place remains ... nearly unchanged in its larger features; but ... I have never seen anything so ghastly ... as the slow stealing of aspects of reckless, indolent, animal neglect, over the delicate sweetness of that English scene ... Just where the welling of stainless water ... enters the pool of Carshalton ... the human wretches of the place cast their street and house foulness. ... Half-a dozen men, with one day’s work, could cleanse those pools, and trim the flowers about their banks. ... But that day’s work is never given, nor, I suppose will be.’

Ruskin’s mother, Margaret, died in 1871, and in her memory he paid for one of the Carshalton pools to be tidied, and its spring cleaned out. A plaque was installed, which read:

‘In obedience to the Giver of Life, of the brooks and fruits that feed it, of the peace that ends it, may this Well be kept sacred for the services of men, flocks and flowers, and be by kindness called MARGARET’S WELL. This pool was beautified and endowed by John Ruskin, Esq., M.A. LL.D.’

The pool, in the angle between West Street and Pound Street, still survives, and even has water in it sometimes – after a wet winter. (A detailed account of the pool project is given by A E Jones in his *From Medieval Manor to London Suburb: An Obituary of Carshalton*.)

Judith Goodman

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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