

PRESIDENT: The Viscountess Hanworth. F.S.A

VICE PRESIDENT: Mr. Arthur Turner

BULLETIN NO. 114

JUNE 1995



FORTHCOMING PROGRAMME 1995

Saturday 17th June 2.00 pm Guided Tour of Painshill Park

Details of transport arrangements will be sent to those who have booked

Saturday 15th July 2.00 pm Lumley Chapel & Whitehall, Cheam

Meet at Lumley Chapel by 1.45 pm. Closing Date: 31st May 1995

Saturday 12th August 2.00 pm

Visit to Richmond on Thames

Richmond Museum (free) followed by

Guided Tour of Town Centre (£2)

Meet at the Museum by 1.45 pm.

Closing Date: 15th July 1995

Refreshments available in the Riverside

Coffee Room on the Ground Floor



Friday 15th September 8.00 pm Snuff Mill Environmental Centre

100 Years of the National Trust - Gerald Smith

Evelyn Jowett Memorial Lecture

(Park in Garden Centre Car Park for Snuff Mill Environmental Centre, Morden Hall Park)



Streatham Society

Streatham Society Pumps 111 & 112 are now available from Tony Scott. Meetings are on Monday evenings at 8.00 in Small Hall, St. Leonards Church Hall:-

19th June	A Day in the Life of a Commons Man	Keith Hill MP
17th July	Twenty-One Today: The Streatham Society Comes of Age	Brenda Hargreaves
4th September	There's a Hole in the Ground & I'm Looking Into It	Bob Jenner

EDITORIAL



Winifred was born on 22nd June in the year 1905. She first attended a MHS lecture in early 1968 and spoke to Eric Montague after the lecture, about Ravensbury Mill and the Rutters, as she was doing a local research project in connection with a class she was attending. His help, and that of the local and other librarians meant that she learned more about Merton in three months than she had ever known about anywhere else in her life. Eric Montague tells me that his recent publication on The Ravensbury Mills owes a great deal to the information he received from Winifred.

Winifred has been a member of the Society ever since, and has enjoyed the lectures (when she could fit them in) and the outings (in the days when you had to be quick to book or else the coach was full!). She first acted as Auditor when Raymond Craske was Treasurer in the early 1980s, and continued in this role when Audrey Thomas and her successor were Treasurers.

In December 1987 the Society had difficulty in forming a Committee, and in March 1988 Winifred became the Hon. Treasurer, continuing in that post until 1991, though she carried on for another year in an acting capacity as no-one else was prepared to take on the job. Since then she has been of great help to her successor, and is at the moment acting as Auditor once again.

Once again, a very happy day to you Winifred, and congratulations on reaching this 90th milestone. May you continue to flourish!

For the **September Bulletin** I would really like to receive from members their recollections of the peace that came about in 1945 after the surrender of Japan and VJ Day.

The formal re-opening of the renovated **Wimbledon Library** was attended by Bill Sole and Eric Trim, representing the Society. Nigel Williams, local author of 'The Wimbledon Poisoner', officiated at the ceremony and the Mayor and other notable dignitaries were also present.

Wandle Heritage is establishing a permanent exhibition in the Merton Abbey Mills Wheelhouse. It will illustrate our area of London's historical past. Various displays and exhibits will show the activities in the buildings which were along the banks of the River Wandle in times past. The Wandle Conservation Centre will be based here and have plans for practical conservation and improvements. Volunteers will be welcome. The exhibition opens to the public for the first time on 27th May at 10.00 am.

As **Mitcham Carnival** came to a close, all the helpers felt that congratulations were in order. After a slow start the publications sold amounted to £76.80. The Treasure Hunt was disappointing, only £13 worth of tickets sold, but the square where the £10 is hidden is still undiscovered, so the hunt will be continued at the Green Fair. However, Eric Montague's gift copy of Mitcham, A Pictorial History, was won by Dorrie Warburton. Thank you to Madeleine Healey, Marjorie Ledgerton, Dorrie Warburton, Peter Hopkins, David Luff, Bill Sole and Eric Trim. Also to Judy Goodman and Eric Trim for the loan of their materials relating to the Morden Hall Farm 'dig' which interested a number of people, especially the children.

We shall be at **The Green Fair** at the London Playing Fields, Mitcham on Sunday 25th June from 1.00 to 5.00 pm. Volunteers are required. Please contact Eric Trim. The theme will be 'The Other Mitcham & William Slater'. If anyone can supply any herbs or herb cuttings please contact Madeleine Healey or Marjorie Ledgerton.

The Editor

THE AUSTRALIAN CONNECTION GROWS STRONGER

My trip to Australia proved to be the holiday of a lifetime. I think I saw more of this huge country in 5½ weeks than some of its inhabitants. Albany, in Western Australia, is indeed a lovely place (in a way similar to Torquay but larger). The whole of Western Australia is very British orientated and Albany has a Local History Society whose members man the local gaol (the original convicts built one in the 19th century) and also the Patrick Taylor Cottage (one of the early settlers). I shall be contacting them and also the Plantagenet Historical Society out at Mt. Barker, Western Australia. Whilst in Sydney I was taken to Captain Cook's landing place and saw replicas of the Endeavour and the Bounty, and I also visited Canberra on a day trip. When all my films are developed (12 rolls of 24 prints and 3 rolls of 24 slides), I hope to have enough material to give a slide lecture. There are sufficient, if slight, connections locally to give me a reason - an Admiral under Lord Nelson became Governor of Albany and established the first farm, "Strawberry Hill" (now National Trust) while the present gardener there used to live in Ewell, four doors from the Organ Inn! Also I am told by Eric Montague that the windows in the Anglican Church in Albany were made by William Morris. I'm sending away for their guide book, as none were available at the time of my visit. The Society's programme is booked to early 1996 so that will give me time to get some research in.

Marjorie Ledgerton

While on the subject of Australia, we have received a copy of the newsletter of the Nunawading Historical Society Inc., which is based in the other Mitcham, near Melbourne. A report on Eric Montague's discoveries while on a visit there was in a recent Bulletin, and we sent a copy to them. Their Assistant Secretary, Beryl Gray, wrote back in February.

"Thank you for your copy of the newsletter of Merton Society. I told the Society at our last meeting of Eric's talk on his visit to Mitcham.

(She then writes about Marjorie's proposed visit to Albany and Sydney, which unfortunately are both a long distance from Melbourne).

"I am very busy with the archives and in April we will be holding an 'Open Day' at Schwerkolt Cottage for Heritage Week.

"In April to August Australia will be holding various functions celebrating "Australia Remembers 1939-45". The Federal Government has allocated money to many Councils.

"I note by your newsletter that Eric will be speaking on the Mitcham Parish Church. Our Anglican Church in Mitcham is 107 years old."

The Newsletter will be available from Tony Scott from the September meeting.

The Nunawading Historical Society logo

A lot of time and effort has been put in by the reporters on the three meetings in February, March and April, and I feel compelled to include their full text. This means we have a bumper issue this quarter.

Hon. Editor

THE ENGLISH CIVIL WAR

On Saturday February 25th 1995, Gavin Barlow, David Diston and Declan Canning of the English Civil War Society, gave a lecture to 27 members and 22 visitors at the Merton Heritage Centre, The Canons, Mitcham. The Society comprises two sections, the King's Army and the Roundhead Association. They came together for administrative convenience when presenting events to the public. It was found that people still enthusiastically support the party which held sway in their region some 350 years ago. Now, as then, the North and West are predominantly Royalist supporting King Charles, and the South and East support Parliament. Yorkshire is split almost evenly, and London is a hotbed of opinions, politics and feuds.

We were told that the object of the Association is to promote greater understanding of the Civil War period. A secondary but very important aim is to raise charitable sums through the activities of members so that Oxfam and Cancer Research are supported, together with local charities through branches of Round Table or the Lions Clubs. Activities involving members dressed in period uniforms and carrying muskets, pikes, swords, etc., range from one-day appearances at fetes and carnivals to re-enactments of major battles.

The causes of the Civil War were many and complex. Surprisingly, most people had learned to read by the time of the Civil War. Their attendance at Church provided the opportunity to gossip, and printing had arrived at an advanced stage. Hence, the opportunity was taken by interested parties to utilise the written word for propaganda purposes. Stories were spread to the effect that Charles was being influenced by his Catholic wife, who, in turn, would be subject to the views of the Pope. For example, in one instance, Charles was blamed for 3,000 deaths in Ireland, although he was in no way involved. There were also stories that during a siege people had been eating babies. This story was based on an incident which occurred elsewhere.

Suffice it to say, the fighting commenced at Edgehill on October 23rd 1642, mostly involving only civilians, and the outcome was inconclusive. There were numerous battles and skirmishes but by June 14th 1645 at the Battle of Naseby, the Royalist army was crushed and this effectively ended the war, although further incidents did occur leading up to the execution of Charles I on January 30th 1649.

Our three lecturers were dressed in typical Civil War uniforms and they emphasised that the distinctive images of Roundheads and Cavaliers as depicted by Hollywood were very far from the truth. Clothes and uniforms worn during the Civil War were so similar that, during fighting, it was frequently found to be difficult to identify the enemy. Further, the terms "Roundheads" and "Cavaliers" are not favoured by the Association who prefer to use "Royalists" and "Parliamentarians". Examples of the uniforms of a Royalist (Sir Thos. Blackwell's Regiment of Foote) and a Parliamentarian (Sir John Fox's Regiment) were displayed and represented soldiers of this period. During the earlier years most uniforms and armour were black. It appears that much of the Royalist clothing was acquired at Oxford, where gowns, etc., were of this colour. Later, when a Parliamentary army was being kitted out, nearby warehouses contained sufficient red material for their purposes and, hence, this became the standard colour used by the army until the South African wars.

The fighting men were divided, on both sides, into four groups: viz. cavalry, pikemen, artillery and musketeers. Only the Royalty and richest people could afford horses and these men made up the cavalry. Next in descending order of wealth came landlords and business people, who formed the pikemen. The artillery acted virtually as sub-contractors and fought for whoever hired them. The remainder were musketeers.

Armour was worn by most troops but those with the most money had the best equipment and a complete suit of armour gave almost total protection against the weapons of the time. Since only the richest people could afford rust-free armour, black paint was used to protect standard armour from rusting. For those who could not afford armour, leather garments were used since they provided protection against glancing blows. The most recent fighting prior to the Civil War had been in Spain and hence there is a Spanish influence in the helmets and armour that was in use at this time.

When it became necessary to form an army, the gentry were given the title of Colonel regardless of their military knowledge, which was frequently nil. Such armies would not normally go beyond the boundaries of their county. It was only when the new model army was formed in 1645 that the Earl of Essex trained his men to fight anywhere. Regiments formed in this way took the name and colours of the men who raised them. If the Colonel was lost in battle, he was replaced and fresh colours introduced. This frequently led to two lots of colours and consequent confusion, particularly when several regiments were fighting as one army.

The pikes were of ash or elm and chiefly had metal spiked ends. They varied between 12 and 18 feet in length. A square was frequently formed, comprising lines of twenty by twenty and musketeers would often stand beside the pikemen to gain the protection of the pikes.

The muskets used fine and coarse gunpowder and lead balls which were often too big to fit into the musket barrel. To reduce them in size, they were sucked by the musketeers, who were thereby fatally poisoned. The loading of a musket comprised, when done correctly, some 48 movements. These included putting coarse gunpowder in the barrel and fine in a hollow on the outside of the musket, to which would be applied a glowing "match", a wick-type taper. A tube connects the two lots of gunpowder. The coarse gunpowder and the lead ball were rammed into the barrel by means of a rod. Pulling the trigger thrust the match into the fine gunpowder, which exploded. This, by way of the tube, caused the explosion of the coarse gunpowder inside the barrel. These arrangements were extremely hazardous and caused the musketeers many injuries, such as burned faces and lost fingers. Since pure water was not available, the troops' liquid intake comprised mainly beer, which no doubt led to more accidents when firing muskets. It is interesting to note that during the early days of the Civil War there were, on average, two pikemen to every musketeer, but these figures were reversed towards the end. Artillery men were seldom attacked. It was preferable to capture them and then apply pressure for them to change sides at an agreed price. However, those who manoeuvred the artillery were often put to the sword.

Another feature of fighting was the dipping of weapons in urine and cowpats, so that, when a superficial wound was caused to an opponent, the presence of infection would often later prove fatal.

In addition to the hazards of utilising muskets, their accuracy was poor and their effectiveness amounted to little more than 35 feet. A secondary use of the musket was as a club where the barrel was held and the butt applied to the opponent's head, most effectively.

On display were muskets, pikes, swords, living history equipment such as plates, cloths and personal effects, and a drum, etc.

A musket was discharged in the Heritage Centre grounds (compaction of the gunpowder being by paper rather than a lead ball). A display of pike drill was given, and the hazards of using the muskets, swords and pikes were fully explained. A number of questions were asked; in particular a lady enquired as to the status of women at this time. The reply was that husbands were lords and masters so that the status of women rested between the husband and the animals! This answer from our panel, and many others, illustrated their exceptional infectious enthusiasm for the English Civil War Society. Our thanks are due to David, Gavin and Declan for a most enjoyable, informative and amusing afternoon.

Ray Kilsby

MITCHAM PARISH CHURCH AND PEOPLE

On a fine evening on Thursday, 16th March, we had a well attended visit by over 40 members of the Society together with other visitors to the Parish Church of St Peter and St Paul. Our talk was given by Eric Montague, mainly dealing with the period 1750-1900.

He first gave us an historical introduction to the Mitcham area (his patch) when the parish was recognised around 1150 and a simple Church constructed of chalk and flint. A later medieval Church was built around 1250 on the site where the Parish Church now stands in Church Road. The first recorded Vicar of Mitcham was Hugo de Guldeford in 1291. At the dissolution of the monastic houses, 1536-39, the Vicarage of Mitcham fell into private hands. Robert Cranmer, a City Merchant, purchased the 'Lordship of the Manor of Mitcham'.

In 1637 the Church was struck by lightning and set on fire during the great storm - the heat melting four of its brass bells, the spire and the chancel roof were destroyed. The rebuilding was completed in 1640.

By the end of the 18th century the Church was deteriorating, part of the wall and roof collapsed, so an Act of Parliament was obtained in 1819 for the old church to be demolished. The estimated cost being £8000 and a new larger building was built in 1820 to the design of George Smith, FSA, FIBP. John Chart, a master builder, who worked as a Parish Clerk, undertook the building using mostly local labour. The new Church was completed and re-opened in April 1822.

After about 45 minutes or so we had a refreshment break with home-made cakes! and were given time to wander around the Church. My eye caught the brass plate on the wall which read "The interior was redecorated, the pews removed, and the nave floor levelled and carpeted in 57 hours as part of the BBC series of 'Challenge Anneka'".

Eric continued his talk on the present day Church and its features. The Church consists of a nave and two aisles, a chancel, north transept, Chapel and Tower, the whole being mainly of local brick, cemented outside with sham joints. The tower is in three stories with octagonal buttresses to form four turret corners. The east window of the chancel has beautiful stained glass windows, while most of the other windows are of plain glass.

The old 15th century font was replaced in 1877 as a gift of Sydney Gedge (1829-1923) of Mill House, Mitcham Common. The font is octagonal as in the Middle Ages. The Baptistry window was dedicated by Joseph and Blanche Watson also of Mill House. The pair of wrought iron gates 1934, opposite the Watson window, are in memory of Alfred and Emily Mizen, who were market gardeners in Eastfields.

The Early-English arches can be seen from the old structure from the 13th century, 22 feet high and made from flint and stone. In the tower room is a medieval stone basin and drain, also several holes can be seen where builders inserted the scaffold poles during the building.

In the 19th century gifts were made to the Church from the congregation. £400 from George Parker Bidder for the east window. Also gifts from William Simpson, Lord of the Manor of Mitcham, and William Harris of Gorringe Park and Lord of the Manor of Biggin and Tamworth. Other gifts were made by Isaac Rutter, owner of the tobacco and snuff mill at Ravensbury.

During the Second World War, Mitcham suffered damage in the 40s, but fortunately the Parish Church survived. However in 1943 the organ was destroyed and serious damage was done to the interior by fire, believed started by a boy! Repair work was carried out after the War and the Church redecorated in time for the Festival of Britain in 1951, the bells were re-cast and fitted by the famous Whitechapel Foundry. There are a number of plaques in memory of local people.

This Church is well worth a visit. More information can be found in the Guide to the Church by Eric Montague, who I would, on behalf of the Members and visitors, thank for a very informative evening and for all the research he has done to make this possible. Also to the Reverend John Shephard for making us welcome. Over £100 was raised for the Restoration Fund.

Eric Trim

THE STORY OF WEST NORWOOD CEMETERY

Although attendance was low, we had a fascinating slide lecture on 7th April from Jill Dudman, Secretary of the Friends of West Norwood Cemetery. The Cemetery was opened in 1837 by a private company, the South Metropolitan Co., to meet the desperate need for burial places in the London area in the wake of the population explosion of the Industrial Revolution.

The Company employed the architect, Sir William Tite, to create a country park setting for the cemetery, on 40 acres of the former Lord Chancellor's estate. It was focused on a central hill, on which were built an Episcopalian chapel and a Dissenters' chapel, neither of which is still standing. The gates and walls remain and are listed Grade II. Sir William chose to be interred in the catacombs beneath the chapels, and these too remain, complete with hydraulic lift.

Other burials include:-

- † Sir Henry Tate, sugar magnate and founder of the Tate Gallery
- † Sir Henry Doulton who made a fortune from sanitary pipes before moving on to Royal Doulton pottery
- † Mrs. Beeton and her publisher husband who literally made her a 'household name' - she died aged 29
- † Paul Julius Reuter, founder of Reuters News Agency
- † Dr. William Marsden, founder of the Royal Free Hospital and the Royal Marsden
- † Sir Hiram Maxim, American inventor of light bulbs, machine guns, flying machines and fairground rides
- † Sir Henry Bessemer, inventor of the Bessemer process for making steel
- † John Lawson Johnston, dietitian and millionaire inventor of Bovril
- † Arthur Anderson, founder of P&O Lines
- † Charles Spurgeon, the Baptist preacher
- † Dr. Gideon Mantell, the founder of the study of Palaeontology
- † Horace Jones, architect of Tower Bridge
- † Members of the Oakey family, famous for knife polish and black lead
- † Thomas Cubitt, builder
- † William Higgs, builder
- † Ben Coles, builder
- † Tom Spring, bare-knuckle fighter

A unique feature is the Greek enclosure within the cemetery, with its own Grade II* listed chapel in classical design, serving the Greek community in London. Monuments include a number of mausoleums, mosaics and statues.

By the end of the 1950s the cemetery was, in its turn, virtually full. The offices had been hit by a flying bomb. The two chapels had been demolished as there were insufficient funds for their upkeep. In the mid-1960s it was purchased by London Borough of Lambeth, and thousands of tombstones were cleared to allow for further burials and open spaces. In 1989/1990 the Friends of West Norwood Cemetery were set up, and together with other interested bodies, took Lambeth Council to a Consistory Court of the Diocese of Southwark to prevent further clearance. It was discovered that the appropriate permission to clear consecrated ground had not been obtained, and the Council were ordered to stop further clearance and to restore the damage.

Much restoration work is being carried out, and a total of 64 listed structures remain. The essence of the Victorian garden cemetery can still be appreciated, especially on one of the 2 hour guided tours organised by the Friends.

I know many were disappointed that the Huguenot lecture had to be cancelled. However, I am sure that no one was disappointed with Gill Dudman's lecture, and we do thank her for stepping into the breach.

Peter Hopkins

LOCAL HISTORY WORKSHOP

The Local History Workshop has met on two occasions since the last Bulletin and, as at the inaugural meeting, discussion ranged over a fascinating medley of subjects.

- ❖ The question of where the Abbot of Westminster's court at Morden actually was, and the course of the road diversion agreed in 1225 is an on-going theme, with translations of the original texts now awaited. (Lionel Green, Peter Hopkins and Tony Scott collaborating).
- ❖ The career of Lt. Col. Edward Kelly of the 1st Life Guards (son-in-law of James Moore) during the Napoleonic War has been studied (along with the strange family history of the Moore clan) by Jack Bailey who is now hoping to cast some light on another local notable, the 18th century industrialist, Sir Ambrose Crowley.
- ❖ Judith Goodman's further researches into the elaborate decor and entertainments at Abraham Goldsmid's Morden villa c.1806 proved equally enthralling, whilst her current involvement with an exhibition on the first George Parker Bidder has awoken interest in the whole Bidder story which could, we hope, result in a talk on our first President and his ancestors at a future Society meeting.
- ❖ Bill Sole is making New Wimbledon an area of study, prompted by a family history enquiry.
- ❖ Eric Trim's own family history researches have produced photographs of his father as a P.O.W. in Germany in World War I and a letter received from King George V.
- ❖ Bill Rudd's alertness led to the retrieval of medieval pottery from a newly exposed ditch in the vicinity of Morden parish church.
- ❖ The site of Asprey's of Bond Street's early beginnings at Phipps Bridge has been identified and is to be the venue of a group visit.
- ❖ Tony Scott's knowledge of hydrodynamics is, we hope, to be applied to a study of mill wheels in our stretch of the Wandle resulting, perhaps, in another Society talk.

The Workshop next meets at 7.30 pm on Friday 23rd June at the Wandle Industrial Museum, and anyone, either contributing or merely listening, is welcome.

Eric Montague

BOOK REVIEWS

Two more titles have been published in our popular Local History Notes series.

9 - Memories of Service with the LDV/Home Guard, Mitcham 1940-42

We have all laughed at 'Dad's Army', but behind the mishaps and jokes was a very serious purpose. These notes give a clear, factual account of the formation, arming and training of the Mitcham Home Guard, formed to protect Mitcham against the threatened German invasion or any other hazard. A timely reminder of desperate measures needed in desperate times.

Price 25p to members, and 30p to non-members. Postage 25p.

10 - The Story of the Long Thornton and District Improvement Society

This Association was formed in 1927 by people who were buying houses on a new privately-built estate with only temporary road surfaces which had to be repaired by the residents at week-ends, poor street lighting, no buses or schools and few shops. By electing a politically independent councillor and constantly pushing the authorities hard, they achieved the local facilities and amenities they needed.

This is a piece of social history and a very warming account of what ordinary people can achieve when banding together for a common good.

Price 80p to members, and £1 to non-members. Postage 40p.

Both publications are available by post from Peter Harris.

Margaret Carr

STANE STREET AND THE ROMAN INVASION

Some questions about Stane Street in southern and central Surrey have remained unanswered, but this article considers the mysteries of the stretch of Stane Street lying in historic Surrey between Ewell and Colliers Wood. Winbolt and Margary are agreed that the agger of Stane Street lies inside Nonsuch Park along its western boundary on the London Road, therefore the southernmost point (opposite Briarwood Road) can be pinpointed with the National Grid Reference TQ 22610/63670. But if the alignment from Newington Butts through Colliers Wood is produced to Nonsuch Park, it passes through N.G.R. TQ 22530/63620, that is 93 metres off line, therefore there must be at least one small deflection of line.

Published information concurs that there is a straight from Ewell Old Church to the summit of Stonecot Hill including the crossing of the Pyl Brook at Pylford. This seems to have been substantiated when the L.T.E. sports ground was being developed, and the milestone, with the legend XII miles to legend, was removed in September 1992 whilst a new boundary fence was being installed. Just to the southwest of the mile stone position could be seen a chalk layer apparently extending under the public pavement, at a depth of about one metre. This could not be natural because several metres of London clay overlies the chalk strata, and therefore, in all probability was Roman. Later road builders such as Telford and Macadam were not using this chalk technique.

In 1934 the Sutton Water Company were trenching by the west side of London Road past the Lord Nelson Inn towards Pylford Bridge, when they dug into hard metal in the dip by the brook. This was not laid in modern cement, said the foreman, but in lime mortar; this was Roman Stane Street. Few lengths of Roman Road are mortared, this was the bed of the ford. If the bed has a flat surface, four or five metres wide and maybe twenty metres along the stream, water will flow evenly with a depth of a few centimetres and be fordable in almost all seasons. Certainly this was the Roman crossing, but the centre line of the street cannot be pin-pointed with absolute accuracy. Stane Street has been revealed in Morden Park but not in the adjacent playing field near Morden South Station. After leaving the summit of Stonecot Hill, the A24 main road diverts four degrees east of the parish boundary, to the south of St. Lawrence Church, probably because of the Thames clay geology; again travellers seem to be adverse to passing north of a church in medieval days. There is a terrace of cottages from Camrose Close to Crown Road whose alignment is parallel to the alignment of Stane Street, probably London Road A24 west-side carriageway is coincident with Stane Street on this stretch.

About 150 yards north of the roundabout, there is a diagonal ridge in Morden Road A24 (photo/sketch overleaf) precisely on the line assumed by O.G.S. Crawford and printed on some Ordnance Survey maps. Even more remarkably, the fence of Morden Hall Park rises to this shoulder and then falls again. Behind the fence, in the park, there is a distinct hollow which indicates an extraction of material. Extraction of gravel in 1965 was reported, but there was no gravel terraces hereabouts; robbery of Stane Street material is strongly suspected. This area is now reserved as a Wandle flood plain. In 1942, traces of Stane Street were observed in a ditch cut obliquely across its line, near Morden Hall (Sheppard Frere, *Journal of Roman Studies*, Vol. XXXIII page 75, 1943). This is the last location of Stane Street while proceeding down this stretch until reaching Miller's Mead in Colliers Wood High Street.

There is not an impeccable alignment of Stane Street from North Cheam to Morden Hall Park, minor deviations are perceptible. Extrapolation of any known stretch takes a line into Morden Park, less than seventy yards north of the Crawford line where it crosses Morden Road, but one thousand two hundred yards south of the road junction at South Wimbledon.

Between the line from Ewell to Morden Hall Park and the line to Colliers Wood and Newington Butts, there is an anti-clockwise nett deflection of fifty minutes of arc, an understandable size of error.

Gravel or Stane Street material was apparently being removed by the cartload from near the L.B.& S.C. Railway in 1921 and 1922. Three hundred Roman coins of all periods were collected (T.R.S. 11, 1921 page 22 and Bidder Sy. A. C.. Collection XXXV, 1922, page 123).

Stane Street is the one and only long-distance Roman road in Britannia to be envisaged, devised and installed for military requirements exclusively.

That thesis is the major theme of this essay, but Belloc must be accredited with that nougat of insight and wisdom. Belloc adds that that fact made Stane Street appear to be an incredible enigma and is the source of its lasting fascination for so many people.

Roman roads were built in straights from one strategical or salient points to the next. Routes taken by an advancing Roman army can be deduced from the roads that they built to enable their rapid retreat or communications with base. Almost invariably they followed closely to old trackways. One typical example is their fundamental route from Richborough via Canterbury and Rochester to Hyde Park. Stane Street was not built behind an advancing army but was built from one established centre to another some twenty years after the primary invasion, to facilitate rapid deployment of troops in an emergency situation such as had happened previously (but never recurred). Another set of Roman roads were cross country, such as the Fosse Way, built to link up advanced positions like Cirencester and Leicester and thereby strengthen the then current boundary; Stane Street does not fit into that pattern either.

Belloc dwells on the difficulty of crossing the Wandle whose flat and marshy valley lies athwart the straight and he therefore postulates an "elbow" which gets round the marshes. This elbow strikes off to the north past Morden Station (L.B.S.C.R.), the Prince of Wales public-house, the Congregational Church and turns to the east at the corner of Grove House (i.e. South Wimbledon Underground Station). The 'alignment' is recovered after the crossing of the Wandle by the bridge. Merton High Street is certainly on a ridge about six feet above the level of the valley, but that is London Clay and anathema to early road builders; probably the track was used in Saxon and medieval times, but was in shocking condition until being turnpiked in mid-eighteenth century. In fact, during its meanderings over the millennia, the Wandle has deposited a fairly firm alluvium on the floor of the valley, offering little hindrance to any road builder; the watercourse must be crossed, either by bridge or ford, whichever route is chosen. No archaeological evidence supports the "elbow" route.

Crossing the Wandle is not so difficult as the lower crossing of the Arun, as Belloc himself had said, nor more difficult than a hundred river crossings up and down England which the Romans created to serve their military needs. Southwark tidal marshes had been dealt with already. Stane Street was a military road, again as Belloc himself had said. Military brass prefer straight roads and expense is no object. If the "elbow" route theory was tenable, it would throw doubts on Belloc's own military theory. His quite unwarranted "elbow" assumption caused confusion that has persisted for eighty years. His book was read but his sin was scarlet.

C E Sole (This article is reprinted from the KUTAS newsletter of May 1993, with permission.)

STANE STREET RIDGE

MORDEN HALL PARK FENCE

A24 MORDEN ROAD

STANE STREET
ALIGNMENT IN

MORDEN AND MERTON

71

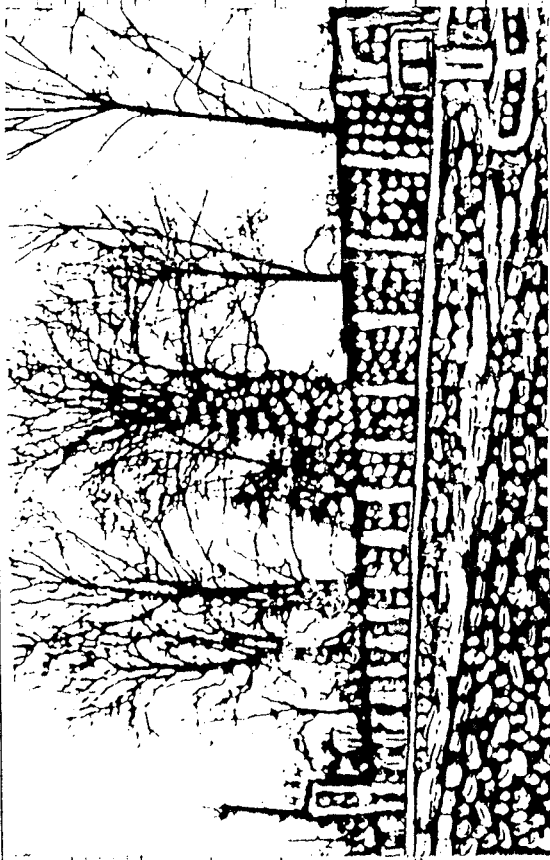
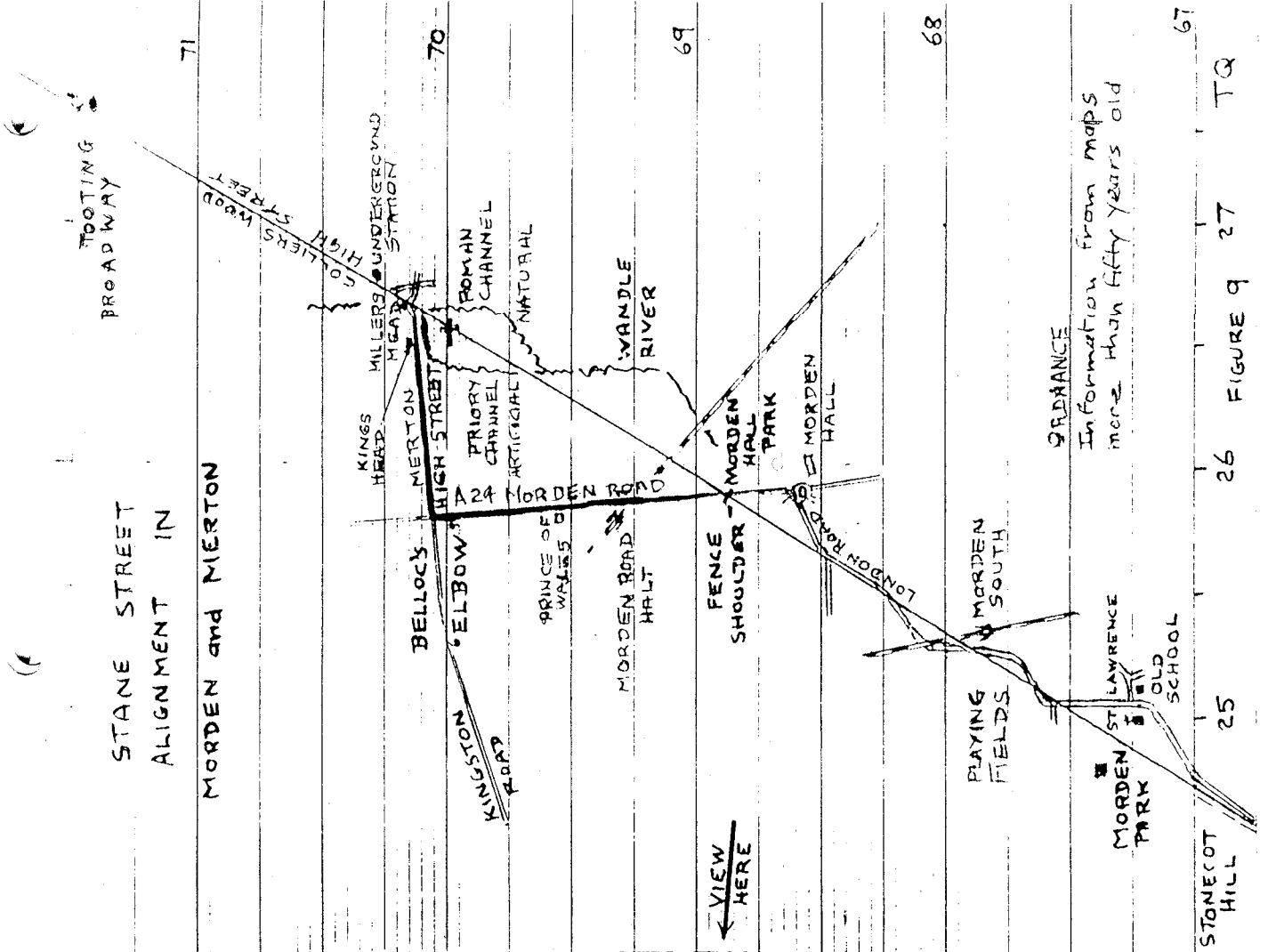


FIGURE 8

please view obliquely to paper
along line of weatherboard



MORE FROM OUR POSTBAG

We have been approached recently by a Mr Bob Lewis of Aultnager, Cammachmore, Stonehaven, AB3 2NR, seeking information about his grandfather who, he believes, was a member of the Mitcham Town Guard after his retirement from the Metropolitan Police in 1904.

Whilst in the police force grandfather Lewis was stationed at the Tooting Police Station, Amen Corner, which was also the headquarters of the Mitcham Town Guard. This auxiliary force became the Tooting Special Constabulary Division W, Section 3 in 1914. A photograph of Mr Lewis, in uniform and with a medal, has been supplied.

Mr Lewis was also a member of the Tooting, Balham, Merton and Mitcham Horticultural Society, and judging from another photograph which survives of him and his eldest son, he was a proficient grower of fine chrysanthemums. His daughter-in-law won several 'firsts' in a show in November 1915 after her husband joined up. That year Mr Lewis senior won a prize for leeks, which was very fitting, for the family originated in Welsh Wales!

Mr Lewis (the one from Scotland) also tells us that in reading *The Sporting Life* for the years either side of the Great (i.e. 1914/18) War he discovered that his father was active in the "cross country and middle distance world". Rugby was being played in Merton in 1911, and the Merton AA was running cross-country races from the Church Hall, Church Lane, with a course that took them over Merton Park Golf Links, Prince George's Playing Fields, Raynes Park Golf Club and Green Lane, Merton (*sic*). The father's club, Tooting Athletic Club, ran from the Leather Bottle, and in the club journals for 1908 and 1909 one reads of them enjoying "smokers" and concerts after their races.

As with many of the letters we receive, Bob Lewis's note gives some interesting little "tit-bits" of Merton history - not in themselves great event, but affording glimpses of the lives of people long since dead and, possibly, inspiring one of our readers to dig a little into local records and come up with something more. If anyone has any information they think would help Bob Lewis in his family researches, he would be delighted to hear from them.

Eric Montague

(And please let me know - it might interest other members! Editor)

We have also received a letter from Mrs Daphne Neech, who now lives in Peterborough.

"I have enjoyed receiving the bulletins very much. However, a friend has shown me some photographs of Mitcham today and it is SO different from the Mitcham of my girlhood (1928 to 1943). I am now housebound and apart from little sorties into East Anglia, I shall not be able to get "home" now. Still, I have very happy memories of growing up in what was a very pleasant district."

STOP PRESS

A special word of thanks to Bill Rudd and Eric Montague for their 'Conducted Tour' of the Society's Archives at Morden Park Library on 29th April. They even managed to find enough seats! Monty mentioned the possibility of recording more detail about each item in the collection, which could then be typed up. If anyone is interested in helping out in some little way with this project, please talk to Monty. The Society is very grateful for all the work that Monty, Bill and Bill Sole have done with the archives. Bill Rudd has put in many hours organising the storage. Bill would like some help himself. Some months ago he took to one of our meetings a large roll of paper on which he had recorded the family tree of the Rutter family of Ravensbury Mills. Someone asked to borrow it and has not yet returned it. Please do so soon, as it represents many years of research. Thank you!

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.