



PRESIDENT: The Viscountess Hanworth. F.S.A

VICE PRESIDENTS: Arthur Turner and Lionel Green

BULLETIN NO. 116

DECEMBER 1995



FORTHCOMING PROGRAMME 1996



Saturday 13th January 2.30 p.m. Snuff Mill Environmental Centre
Fulham Palace. An illustrated lecture by Mrs Miranda Poliakoff, Curator of the Museum of Fulham Palace.

Saturday 17th February 2.30 p.m. Merton Heritage Centre, The Canons
The Huguenots of Wandsworth. An illustrated talk by Anthony Shaw, Local History Librarian, Wandsworth.

Friday 15th March 8.00 p.m. Snuff Mill Environmental Centre
Australia and Some Merton Connections. A talk by Marjorie Ledgerton.

Friday 12th April 8.00 p.m. Snuff Mill Environmental Centre
The Crystal Palace. A slide talk by Ian Bevan of Crystal Palace Foundation.



(Park in Morden Hall National Trust Garden Centre Car Park and follow the path across the bridge and through the gateway)



MERTON & MORDEN - A Pictorial History by Judith Goodman

Starting with a brief description of the area in earliest times the book has sections covering every aspect of life in Merton and in Morden - the old villages, the growth of the suburbs, churches, transport, work, leisure, etc.

Each of the 183 illustrations has an informative caption in which the author's enthusiasm for her subject comes through in the small additional details which bring the past alive.

The book jacket has pictures of the Wheelhouse at Merton Abbey Mills, and Morden Cottage - truly a pictorial delight from cover to cover.

The book is for sale at meetings for £12.95, or can be mailed at an extra cost of £1.20 from the Publications Officer, Peter Harris.

Margaret Carr

REPORT ON ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 1995

The AGM, held this year on 4th November, was rather poorly attended, with only 20 members present. The usual formal business was transacted with the previous year's minutes being approved and the Chairman's report (which is printed below) being delivered and accepted.

The Treasurer's report (on page 3) was presented by David Luff who explained that a slight increase in membership coupled with a tighter control over expenditure had turned a deficit of £74.54 last year into a surplus of £301.43. Put simply, we have been selling publications this year which we paid to print last year. Clearly, re-printing will soon be needed and this, coupled with the increasing trend for lecturers to require a fee, justifies this year's increase in the Society's annual subscriptions. After discussion the Treasurer's report was accepted.

A list of those elected to the Committee is printed on the back page of this Bulletin.

Members also accepted with acclamation the Committee's proposal that Lionel Green become a Vice President of the Society.

At the end of the meeting the Chairman reminded members that he is conducting a survey to find out whether Friday evenings or Saturday afternoons are preferred as times of meetings. If you have strong views, please say so at the next meeting or contact the Chairman by letter or telephone.

After the AGM was concluded members formed into small teams to take part in a historical quiz which was enjoyed by all present.

Tony Scott

The Chairman's Report for 1994-1995

It is good to take this opportunity to look back on the past year and to remember some of its highlights. Can we ever forget the visit of the English Civil War Society to the Canons in February, or tuning in to one of Peter Brunning's Vintage Wireless Collection? Our visit to Painshill Park was as fascinating as Maina Teltscher had told us it would be, in spite of pouring rain. Monty has continued to feed our curiosity for local knowledge, with his talk in Mitcham Parish Church, and the walk through the Watermeads. We had a slide tour of West Norwood Cemetery, and of the Surrey Record Office, and the faithful few enjoyed our fifth Evelyn Jowett lecture, by Gerald Smith, on 100 Years of the National Trust. (These last two lectures are reported elsewhere in this bulletin.) We also visited Lumley Chapel and Whitehall in Cheam, Richmond Museum and town centre, and the Society's store at Lower Morden Library.

The indexing of back numbers of the Bulletin, begun by Audrey Thomas, has been completed by Eric Trim (Many thanks, Eric). We are still hoping for volunteers to help with cataloguing the artifacts in the Store. Please see Marjorie Ledgerton if you can help.

A new venture this year has been the Local History Workshops, held every six weeks or so at the Wandle Industrial Museum, where members are able to share and discuss their current researches. More information later in this bulletin. Thanks to Monty for suggesting the idea. The timing has been ideal, as it should provide an excellent forum for members to share in the Millennium Project being organised by Surrey Archaeological Society in the near future. I certainly hope that many members will be willing to become involved in this Project, which is aiming to build up a series of maps and indexes to the history of our ancient villages. More details as soon as they become available.

The Society has continued to be represented on a number of local organisations, and took part in both Mitcham Carnival and the Green Fair, the Treasure Hunt and book sales covering our costs. Marjorie Ledgerton organised a display of herbs for the Green Fair, and Judy Goodman and Eric Trim provided a display of some of the artifacts rescued from the dig at the Morden Hall Farm Dairy which she and Stephen Day told us about at last year's AGM. Marjorie and Judy also displayed some of our publications at the Local History Book Fair at Vauxhall.

The publishing event of the year was Judy's *Merton & Morden: A Pictorial History*, published by Phillimore. But the Society has been busy also, publishing two more titles in the Local History Notes series -

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

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

as well as Monty's booklet, *The Ravensbury Mills*. More publications are in preparation.

I would like to thank all the Committee members who, once again, have worked so hard this year, and for their longsuffering support during my Chairmanship. A special thanks to Sheila Harris, our Hon. Secretary, Marjorie Ledgerton, our Bulletin Editor and David Luff, our Treasurer.

Three very hardworking Committee members have completed their three years on the Committee - Eric Trim, who has already been mentioned above, Bill Sole, our Membership Secretary, and Madeline Healey, who opens up and prepares the Snuff Mill for our lectures each month. We all thank them for everything that they have done, and hopefully will continue to do, on our behalf. Many thanks also to Sheila and Peter Harris for their hospitality at the Wandle Industrial Museum, both for Workshops and Committee meetings.

Finally, may I thank every member of the Society for your support at meetings and other events throughout the year. I hope you will agree that it has again been a good year for the Society. Please let us know if you have any suggestions for improvements, or ideas for future speakers, topics or events.

Peter Hopkins

Membership Secretary's Report

Membership for 1994-95 totalled 108. To date membership totals 88. Payment can now be made by Standing Order. Membership fees are now overdue and renewal forms are enclosed for those who may have not yet rejoined.

C E Sole

Treasurer's Report

It was unfortunate that we had to put up our subscriptions this year by £1. This had come about due to increased costs. Hopefully the last for the foreseeable future.

Your Committee has been working hard over the past twelve months to reduce expenditure where possible. Our Bulletin is now printed privately, but we must keep in mind that at some time in the future we might have to return to a commercial printer. We cut back on the number of new publications and, as you can see from the balance sheet (printed overleaf), we have benefited from sales of our existing titles.

No sooner do we reduce expenditure in one place than it creeps in somewhere else. It seems to be becoming the norm for guest speakers at our meetings to require a donation, as well as expenses, usually around £15 to £20, and so long as this does not occur at every meeting it is well within our yearly budget.

On a lighter note, we drank less tea last year than the previous, and I'm not sure if this just reflects that we are seeing less of you at the monthly meetings or if there is something you want to say to our very hardworking tea ladies.

For the really observant, you will have noticed that I am now no longer the 'acting' Treasurer but the 'Hon' Treasurer. Our Chairman has allowed me to use the full title after serving a year's apprenticeship, but to give full credit where it is due, Miss Mould is still the Treasurer behind the Treasurer, always ready to help and advise. Long may she continue to do so. This does not mean that if there is someone out there just dying to become Treasurer that I would not step aside! Please send your CV to our Chairman.

Statement of Accounts for the year ending 30th September 1995

Income

Balance brought forward from 1-10-94		
Midland Bank	63.80	
Nationwide Anglia Building Society	1030.18	
Petty Cash	1.44	1095.42
Subscriptions	320.00	
Donations	22.56	
Teas at Meetings	28.40	
Bank and Building Society Interest	34.19	
Miscellaneous	220.50	725.65
Publications	395.74	395.74
		2216.81

Expenditure

Bulletin	133.45	
Affiliation fees	73.00	
Lecturers' Expenses	43.36	
Hire of Halls, etc.	68.00	
Painshill Park visit	73.80	
Painshill Park (refunds)	9.60	
Mitcham Carnival stall	15.00	
Green Fair stall	10.00	
Wandle Industrial		
Museum (books, etc.)	64.60	
Petty Cash	94.80	
	585.61	585.61
Publications	234.35	234.35
		819.96

We are affiliated to:-
 London & Middlesex Archaeological Society
 Surrey Local History Council
 Surrey Archaeological Society
 Town Trails
 SCOLA (Standing Council on London
 Archaeology)
 Merton Arts Council

Balance 30-9-95

Midland Bank	337.04	
Nationwide Anglia		
Building Society	1059.79	
Petty Cash	00.02	1396.85
		2216.81

David Luff

LOCAL ARCHAEOLOGY

It is well-known in archaeology that a long spell of hot dry weather often produces parch marks in the grass that might indicate buried foundations. Thus four members of the Society, having obtained permission of the resident of Morden Lodge, set out to find the possible site of Growtes, the Tudor manor house built in 1553. But this was not to be. Perhaps too much to expect some 200 years after its demolition and the site changed out of all recognition.

However, it was a useful exercise and a chance to examine the grounds not normally accessible. What was found was a well, a large ice house, and the remains of a greenhouse as well as an outbuilding. There was a slightly raised area which might justify a resistivity survey. Photographs were taken and a letter of thanks sent to the resident.

A week later a small team from the Oxford Archaeological Unit, at the behest of The National Trust and English Heritage, carried out a brief exploratory excavation in the grounds of Morden Hall, the site being proposed as a car parking area for the development of Morden Hall into a restaurant. Two trenches exposed the footings of a wall in alignment with the east elevation of Morden Hall. One comprised of red bricks, the other of chalk and greensand stone. There is no indication of a wall on any of the available maps. It is likely further examination will be made when development takes place.

W.J. Rudd

LOCAL HISTORY WORKSHOPS

The Workshops meetings have flourished. Reports for the past two sessions will be published in the March issue, together with the subjects discussed at the next meeting which will be on Friday 26th January. There will also be one on Friday 29th March from 7.30 to 9.30 pm at the Wandle Industrial Museum. All are welcome.

VISIT TO RICHMOND MUSEUM & GUIDED TOWN TOUR

On an extremely hot Saturday afternoon 8 members met for a Tour of Richmond Museum. We had an Introductory Talk by the Curator, Simon Lace, who told us the Museum was opened 7 years ago. It was an Independent Museum supported by Richmond Council. It is housed in the Old Town Hall complex which includes the Tourist Office and Riverside Tea Rooms. Simon Lace explained that the exhibits showed a chronological display of the history of Richmond, Kew, Petersham and Ham. He devoted a fair proportion of display space to changing exhibitions on local themes with a wide appeal i.e. local famous personalities who had lived in Richmond such as Virginia Woolf. The present temporary exhibition was about "A Century of Shopping" and concentrated on the life histories of various Richmond shops.

There were some excellent models of Richmond Palace 1501-1603 built by Henry VII and Shere Palace destroyed by fire in 1497.

After spending time in the Museum we met Norman Radley of the Richmond Voluntary Guides who took us on an hour's tour of Richmond.

After leaving the Museum and the Old Town Hall once the site of the Whittaker Hotel, we visited Heron Square which was re-designed in the original style and opened in 1988 by the Queen. The whole complex is owned by an American Company and is used as offices. Here there were Merton connections as Emma Hamilton lived in the original Heron House in 1806 while trying to get money from the Admiralty for her daughter Horatia after Nelson's death. Hotham House nearby is named after the former owner of Merton Place before Nelson and the Hamiltons lived there.

Leaving Heron Square we passed under Richmond Bridge and up to the site of Richmond Palace once the largest Palace in England before Hampton Court was built. It is now occupied by Trumpeter House.

Passing onto Richmond Green containing the homes of the rich and famous, we saw Maids of Honour Row built in 1724 for the Maids of Honour to the Prince of Wales before he became King George II.

Continuing across the Green past the Richmond Theatre we returned to the Station after a very pleasant and interesting afternoon.

THE WORK OF THE SURREY RECORD OFFICE

The Surrey Record Office is based at Kingston-upon-Thames and Guildford and has a department dealing with the preservation of maps, documents, etc. So said Julian Pooley, one of six archivists who are employed there, in his illustrated talk to the Society on 20th October last.

Plans are well ahead for a new Office to be opened in Woking so that all will be under one roof. This is not a dream but should be opening in 1997.

After discussing in general terms the activities of the Record Office, a number of slides were shown of varying materials, ending with Morden records including extracts from the Tithe Map, Church Wardens Account Books for 1771-1780, the Vestry Minutes book for 1805 and Piggott's Trade Directory.

There are two leaflets in our lending libraries giving details of facilities offered, one being "Notes for Family Historians".

There was the usual opportunity for questions at the end, and the Chairman thanked Julian for his interesting talk.

Similarly the Greater London Record Office had an Exhibition in the summer and issued a booklet on the plans for the evacuation of children during the Second World War. Brochures for this are available in the lending library collections.

THE FIFTH EVELYN JOWETT MEMORIAL LECTURE

On the 15th September a select handful of members heard the fifth Evelyn Jowett Memorial Lecture which was given by Mr. Gerald Smith, Chairman of the Epsom Centre of the National Trust. This was a well structured talk on the 100 year old history of the Trust but much was happening before it was founded. Robert Hunter was campaigning through the Commons Preservation Society to prevent unreasonable landowners from enclosing common land i.e. commons. Another founder, Octavia Hill was an astute business woman and fundraiser for good causes. Whilst the third founder, Canon H.D. Rawsley was rousing public opinion to prevent the building of a railway around Derwent Water in the Lake District. Together they agreed to set up a body of private citizens to act as trustees for the nation in the acquisition and ownership of places of historic interest or natural beauty. This was in 1895 and in 1907 Parliament conferred upon the Trust the unique power to declare its land inalienable so that it can never be sold or compulsorily purchased without special parliamentary procedure.

Following the First World War, in 1920, Scafell Pike was given to the Trust by the 3rd Lord Leconfield as a war memorial for the men of the Lake District. Membership of the Trust had dropped due to the war and a new problem arose in the countryside. The large houses of the landed gentry had a servant problem. Returning soldiers and munition workers no longer wished to work all hours with little recreation. Many large houses were being closed up and/or receiving little maintenance so the Country House Scheme began whereby the buildings were given to the Trust but the former owners allowed to stay rent free. The scheme required a change in the law. Later the National Gardens Scheme was started to take care of historic gardens and here this was supported by income from the National Memorial Fund. In 1965 Enterprise Neptune was launched to save the best of Britain's 3000 miles of coastline and the Trust now owns 550 miles. It now works hard supporting nature conservation. In some areas it is recreating mud flats and salt marshes by allowing high tides to flood reclaimed meadows. New challenges present themselves each year. At the moment the Trust is fighting government proposals to re-route the A35 near the Golden Cap estate in Dorset. For over 20 years the Trust has been securing land around the headland and having reached the culmination of its efforts is now faced with a scarring road across the valley.

Some of the work of the National Trust is accomplished by 29,000 volunteers and membership is now over two million.

Mr Smith has a pleasant voice and entertained the audience with brief breaks into recitation. As expected there were many excellent slides. He delivered his illustrated talk without referring to notes and this caused several lapses of accuracy in describing locations. Bill Sole pointed out that Orford Ness is not in Norfolk. The recently opened gardens at Biddulph Grange are not "near Birmingham" but in Staffordshire near the border with Cheshire, some 45 miles from Birmingham. Penrhyn Castle is not in Anglesey but on the mainland near Bangor. Barrington Court is not near Moreton in the Marsh, but over 100 miles and four counties away from the Cotswolds.

Lionel Green

SOUTH LONDON BOOK FAIR

Merton Historical Society, with its publications, was in attendance at the above held at the St. Peter's Heritage Centre, Vauxhall, and sales were good. A total amount of £24.95 from the sales was handed over to The Hon. Treasurer. The actual amount received was £26.95 but a donation of £2 was made to the Centre towards their costs. Also from this event a new member joined us. Welcome Mrs Gordon, who spent her childhood in Mitcham.

The Centre is well worth a visit - open daily - and the current display features the Vauxhall Gardens. Refreshments are available.

A “SISTER HOUSE” TO MERTON PRIORY

Merton Priory was one of the great religious houses of the Augustinian order in England and survived from its foundation in 1114 by Gilbert the Norman until its Dissolution on the orders of Henry VIII in 1538. At that time it was known as Merton Abbey not Priory. Soon after its foundation, a magnificent stone church, chapter house, cloisters and other domestic buildings were constructed but virtually nothing remains today above ground level. Much of the stone was taken soon after the Dissolution to construct Nonsuch Palace and the dispossessed Prior, John Ramsey, was given a pension of about £66 pa by Thomas Cromwell and the use of a house and garden in Trinity Lane, London, for life.

Merton was not the only great house of the Augustinian order in England and it is interesting to compare its fate with that of another similar establishment about which we in Merton hear little.

Oseney Abbey, located near the Thames just outside the city wall of Oxford, was founded for the Augustinians in 1129 by Robert d’Oilly, son of the first Norman Sheriff of Oxford. The abbey church was by far the largest in Oxford, having a nave 332 feet long (slightly longer than Merton’s nave of 307 feet) and a chapter house capable of accommodating the 200 canons who assembled there for the English Augustinian chapter in July 1443. The western campanile of the church contained a ring of eight bells which were claimed to be the finest in England.

In 1538 the Abbey was dissolved and the dispossessed abbot (prior?), Robert King, assisted Thomas Cromwell with the dissolution of the local religious houses and for this he was rewarded with a pension and the newly created bishopric of Oxford. The Abbey was used as the cathedral until 1546 when the see was removed from Oseney to the city church of St Frideswide beside which Cardinal’s College had been founded by Cardinal Wolsey in 1525. The college name was then thought to be singularly inappropriate and the whole became Christ Church College which it remains today.

Soon after 1546 the Abbey was substantially destroyed to provide stone for local construction and now nothing remains visible. The area is now called Osney (but still pronounced “Owesnee”) and part of the land is now covered by Oxford railway station and car park and part by late Victorian housing. Thus the two Augustinian houses, so similar in outward appearance, suffered a closely similar end.

The fate of Oseney Abbey’s beautiful bells is an interesting story. The largest, “Great Tom”, was given to Christ Church College where it remains today. It is one of the largest bells in England and weighs about 8 tons. It is now housed in Tom Tower, designed for it by Wren in 1682 when he designed buildings to complete the quadrangle of Christ Church College. Great Tom is still tolled 101 times each night at 9.05pm to indicate curfew time for the original 101 students at the college.

Henry VIII apparently ordered the other seven bells to be transported to London, possibly to replace those in Westminster Abbey. They were loaded on a barge and carefully towed down the Thames, through 20 or more “flash locks”, until they passed Windsor whereupon they mysteriously “disappeared”. It was claimed that the barge capsized and that they were thrown into the river. Was it an act of God or of man? It is quite unbelievable that not one of them could be located and raised since, even today, the Thames there is only 12 - 15 feet deep and would have been much shallower before the present locks were constructed. Underwater visibility is poor but a drag chain could have been used for such a valuable treasure. I think it more likely that the bells were spirited away so as not to arouse public hostility and sent to a foundry for casting into canons.

The loss of the bells is commemorated by the name of the riverside pub and steak-house, “The Bells of Ouzeley”, just up-river from Runnymede. This was rebuilt in the 1930s on the site of a much older establishment bearing the same name (including spelling!).

Tony Scott

COMMITTEE MEMBERS 1995-1996

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.

