



PRESIDENT: The Viscountess Hanworth. F.S.A

VICE PRESIDENTS: Arthur Turner and Lionel Green

BULLETIN NO. 118

JUNE 1996



### FORTHCOMING PROGRAMME 1996



**Saturday 8th June** - Visit and Guided Tour of **Nonsuch Mansion House**, Nonsuch Park, including Kitchen & Garden, led by Gerald Smith - **£1.00** payable on arrival. meet outside Nonsuch Mansion House at **1.45p.m.** On 293 bus route from Morden.

#### ADDITIONAL VISIT, PLEASE NOTE:

**Saturday 22nd June** - Merton's **Twin Towers** - **2.00p.m.** meet at **Civic Centre, Morden**, to visit **Mayor's Parlour** and the **Roof**, then at **3.30p.m.** meet at the **Lyon Tower SW19** to visit the **Roof** there. Ideal opportunity for photographs and videos. Refreshments available at Savacentre after the visits.

**Saturday 20th July** - Walk round **Wimbledon Village** plus visit to Wimbledon Society's **Museum**, led by Norman Plastow. Meet outside Museum at **1.45** for 2.00p.m.



**Saturday 17th August** - Guided walk in **Carshalton**, led by Doug Cluett. Meet outside Heritage Centre at **1.45** for 2.00p.m. start.

**Saturday 21st September** - Historic Pub Walk in **Mitcham**, led by Tony Scott. Meet outside **Three Kings** at **1.45** for 2.00p.m. start. Finish at **Burn Bullock**.

**Friday 11th October** - Evelyn Jowett Memorial Lecture on **William Morris in Merton** by Judith Goodman - **8.00p.m.** at the Snuff Mill Environmental Centre, Morden Hall Park.

**Saturday 9th December** - **AGM** - **2.30p.m.** at the Snuff Mill Environmental Centre, Morden Hall Park.

**Saturday 7th December** - **Surrey and the Picture Postcard** by John Gent - **2.30p.m.** at the Snuff Mill Environmental Centre, Morden Hall Park.



## AUSTRALIA: SOME MERTON CONNECTIONS

I must say thank you to a very attentive audience when I talked to members on my visit to Australia last year. The Merton connections were with Lord Nelson, whose friend, a semi-retired Vice Admiral, had gone to Albany in Western Australia as the third Governor and had established a farm and house at Strawberry Hill - one of the very first sites to establish a market garden. Today it is owned by the National Trust. It contains a letter from Nelson to his friend as well as a sampler of a parrot and girl said to have been stitched by Lady Hamilton! More interesting was the fact that Horatia, Nelson's daughter, who had married a clergyman, had a son who married the sister of the last resident of Strawberry Hill (who had lived there for over 60 years), and that explained why there were photos of portraits there of Horatia.

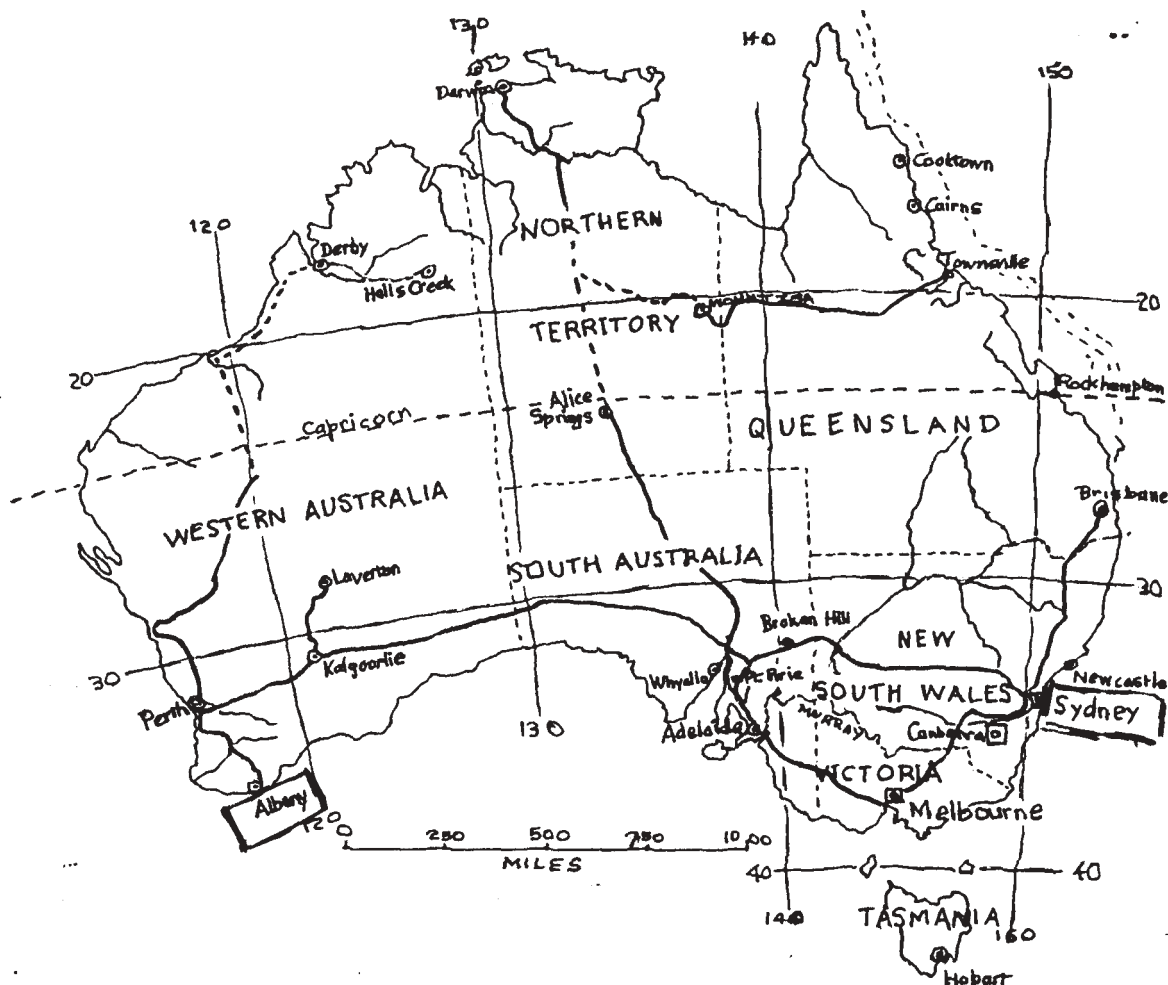
The Hamiltons and Nelson worshipped at Merton Parish Church, as did the widow of Captain James Cook, who, after Cook's murder, lived at Merton Abbey with her nephew, Rear Admiral Isaac Smith, until she died at 93 years of age. Isaac Smith had been with Captain Cook when the *Endeavour* arrived in Australia. I understand the *Endeavour* is visiting this country soon, and may be in the Pool of London. A guide to the church gives details of the families' monuments.

I could not track down the stained glass window from the Morris Works, said by Miss Jowett to have been exported to Albany. Eric Montague, who followed with a talk on Mitcham, a suburb of Adelaide (see next article), did track one down there.

There was also a very remote connection with Rear Admiral William Bligh, (of Mutiny of the *Bounty* fame or infamy). I saw a replica of the *Bounty* in Sydney Harbour, as he went out as the fifth Governor of New South Wales. He had served with Nelson at the Battle of Copenhagen and was with Cook on his last fateful voyage.

Thank you to Bill Sole who sent this map of Australia to emphasise the remoteness of the country.

Marjorie Ledgerton



## MITCHAM, SOUTH AUSTRALIA

The City of Mitcham, a suburb of Adelaide, is delightfully situated a short distance from the coast, much of it in the thickly wooded foothills of the Mount Lofty Range to the south-east of the capital. The district was sparsely settled until the early 1830s, but by 1838 had been surveyed and divided into plots by the South Australia Company, ready for sale to immigrants from Britain. In 1839 the Company decided the land round the Brownhill creek should become the nucleus of a village, an area of open land either side of the river being reserved as a village green or common.

The name Mitcham was adopted for the new village by William Giles, a native of Mitcham in Surrey, who became the Company's manager in 1841. Sales at first were slow, only 22 of the available 103 plots being purchased by 1841, but by the mid 1840s Mitcham had grown sufficiently to need both church and school. The pace quickened, and in 1853 there were 12 public houses, five houses large enough to be classified as "mansions" and 457 houses with 2 to 12 rooms.

The fascinating story of Mitcham's growth is the subject of Anneley Aeukens' excellent *More About Mitcham*, published by the City of Mitcham in 1989. For the purposes of this brief note, it can best be summarised by quoting from one of two village walk leaflets, written by Pam Oborn, and also produced by the City Corporation:

"Around it" (the village green) "developed a thriving commercial district with many shops, public houses, coaching stables, churches and schools. Labourers who worked in the quarries lived in simple 2 or 3-roomed bluestone cottages; most shopkeepers had dwellings attached to their premises; and the gentry built gracious villas on the slopes around St. Michael's Anglican Church.

"The horse trams complemented an era of suburban expansion in the early 1880s, but Mitcham retained its compact village identity into the 1920s. The population explosion and resulting building boom after World War I saw the surrounding wheat fields and cow paddocks subdivided and the Village gradually absorbed into the greater Adelaide suburban sprawl.

"Until the advent of large regional shopping centres in the 1950s, the Village remained the main commercial area for the district. Today most of the shops have been restyled as private houses. Even in the midst of suburbia Mitcham village still retains its identity. The nucleus of the Village remains almost intact: its value as a microcosm of simple colonial architecture has been acknowledged by the National Trust of S.A., the Mitcham Council and the State Heritage Centre. The area has also been listed as an historic precinct in the Register of the National Estate of Australia."

Reading this account one gains the impression that in their development over the last 150 years the two Mitchams have followed parallel lines. In a sense this is true, for both were country villages in the mid 19th century, were engulfed by urban expansion during the 20th, and became part of the suburban sprawl around a major city. Mitcham S.A. has, however, retained its municipal identity, and today enjoys a physical environment far more attractive than its namesake in Surrey.

In an attempt to identify the boyhood home of William Giles I have recently looked quickly through the available records at Mitcham Library, but with no success. There seem to be no Giles listed in the 1841 census returns, and the family would not appear to have been important enough socially or commercially to have been noted in the contemporary directories. Similarly, the name Giles does not appear under the "occupiers" column of the tithe register of 1846. There were two Giles in Mitcham in 1851, both men in their 40s, one a teacher of French at the Eagle House Academy and the other a painter living as a lodger in Everetts Place, Phipps Bridge Road. Whether either were related to the manager of the South Australia Company it seems impossible to say. The parish of Merton appears to offer more possibilities, for there were two separate Giles households living in Merton parish in 1851. It is possible that William's relatives had moved over the parish borders from Mitcham sometime prior to the 1840s, and that a search in Merton might be more productive. The parish registers of births, marriages and burials are, of course, another potential source of information. Is anyone interested in taking up the quest?

E.N.Montague

## MEANWHILE, IN NEW ZEALAND...

In the last Bulletin mention was made of a scrapbook of early MHS events being presented to the Society by Mrs Nethersole of Reading in Berkshire. Her sister, Jeanie White, who made up the scrap book, is now living in New Zealand, where she is continuing her interest in local history. Mrs Nethersole sent a copy of the following article from *The Nelson Mail*:

# Inside South St's cottages

Jeanie White's latest book, *Windows on the Past*, has turned out to be a South Street production.

Jeanie, a resident of South St, wrote it as an extension of her earlier book, *Town Acre 456*, Nelson, NZ.

Both are about the street's history but Jeanie wanted *Windows* to be less formal and more personal, focusing on the people who lived in the cottages, where they came from and what happened to them. She includes current residents.

The artist who provided the pencil drawings which illustrate the book is Phillip Edwards, who also lives in South St. Another street resident, Jeanette Hancock, was responsible for funding the book and approached the Trustbank Canterbury Community Trust and the NZ Lottery Grants Board.

One of the reasons Jeanie considered writing a second book about South St. was a mark of respect for John Wheeler MBE, who was well known in Nelson as a broadcaster and chairman of the Arts Council. He and his wife Pat owned a cottage in the street and she still lives there. Another reason was that many people, descended from original residents, offered her additional photographs and information after reading *Town Acre 456*. She found the stories of the people too interesting to hide away in her files.

Jeanie spent four months researching, writing and haunting the Court House and the Land Registry office for information from wills and deeds. She says that the people at the Provincial Museum and at the St. Mary's Catholic Church archives gave her valuable help.



*Jeanie White and Phillip Edwards in South St with their book, Windows on the Past.*

Characters whom she found fascinating included a Marist priest, William Mahoney, who lived in Nelson from 1875 and owned No.11 (his name was found on several property deeds in Nelson as the church permitted priests to own property as a means to generate money for projects), and William Haddow, who arrived in 1863 and formed the company of Neale and Haddow (he had a soap manufacturing business in Waimea Rd.)

Part of Nile St. West is also included as that area was originally in Acre 456. The history of South St Gallery is mentioned as well as the area of Wholesale Cars which was owned by a gentleman called George Batchelor who had a liking for Harleys Beer and who used to poach eels and oysters out of season.

One of the families mentioned in her book were the Haydens and as a result of her interest Jeanie has been invited to speak at a family reunion in the North Island at Easter.

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### GREATER LONDON RECORD OFFICE: CHANGE OF HOURS

The GLRO, at 40, Northampton Road, London, EC1R 0HB, is now open at the following times:

Monday, Wednesday and Friday 9.30 - 4.45

Tuesday and Thursday 9.30 - 7.30

The Office will be closed for stocktaking from 4th to 15th November 1996.

## LOCAL HISTORY WORKSHOP

The main item under discussion at the March Workshop was the possibility of local history records for the Borough of Merton (at present distributed amongst the former central reference libraries at Wimbledon, Morden and Mitcham) being brought together in one "Heritage Library". Susan Andrew, Information Team Librarian, set out the advantages and disadvantages of various locations, and there was a free-ranging discussion. We hope that Susan found our comments of value, and we will certainly have a better appreciation of the problems involved when a decision is reached.

Sheila Harris showed an interesting example of petit point work by Miss Rose Ward, recently donated to the Wandle Industrial Museum by Mr. Victor Haynes of Merton Road whose father had worked for William Morris. The piece will be framed and displayed at the Ravensbury Mill.

Eric Montague mentioned features on Mitcham Common, recorded in early 19th century plans but now destroyed, which included a large banked and ditched enclosure and a possible Bronze Age burial mound off Beddington Lane. He has recently completed an archaeological assessment for the Common Conservators. Lionel Green was able to clarify a point concerning the occasional use of Merton Abbey Station by special trains long after its closure to normal traffic in 1929.

Margaret Groves, wishing to establish the history of land in Garth Road, Morden, before its development for houses, etc., was offered advice and assistance by Bill Rudd.

Lionel Green produced some interesting photographs of medieval people (actually MHS members in costume) attending the Coronation Pageant in 1953. These will be deposited with the Society's records. (One of Lionel, as a Canon of Merton Priory, is on the following page of this Bulletin).

Ray Innes gave details of a fascinating reference he had found in a catalogue of western manuscripts in Trinity College Library Cambridge, to John Norton, vicar of Mitcham from 1446 to his death in 1459, who recorded an eclipse of the sun and also seems to have been interested in alchemy!

Judith Goodman reported briefly on continuing research into the Merton Charter, and cast doubt on the accuracy of the translation which describes Merton as being "a much-frequented place" in AD 967. She also produced a photograph of a Polytechnic Estate 'Bus in Quinton Avenue in 1904. It was on a 16 h.p. Napier chassis, and was one of two converted former motor cars.

Bill Sole, pursuing his New (i.e. South) Wimbledon studies, mentioned the single line sections of tramway in Merton Road, photographs of which were passed round the table.

The meeting concluded with Peter Harris displaying a series of boards on the work of William Morris at Merton, which he had produced for exhibition.

The next two meetings of the Local History Workshop will be at the Wandle Industrial Museum on Friday 24th May and Friday 5th July, commencing at 7.30 p.m.

Eric Montague

### **R.B.SHERIDAN - a correction**

The gremlins seem to have got into the reference in the last Bulletin to dramatist/politician Richard (not James) Brinsley Sheridan (1751-1816). It was Morden where he had friends - the Ewarts of Morden Park - and it seems to have been at their house that he and his first wife, Elizabeth Linley of Bath, spent the early days of their honeymoon in 1773. Though a Bath newspaper mentioned Mitcham as the location, this was probably because Mitcham was a great deal better known to its readers than Morden. I believe there to be no other reference to Mitcham in any account of Sheridan. However in 1806 he did attend a reception for the Prince of Wales at Morden Lodge, the country villa of financier Abraham Goldsmid. Apart from one letter datemarked Merton, which was written during an overnight stop en route to Lymington in 1804, there is nothing known to connect Sheridan with Merton. His bed for the night on that occasion may have been at the *King's Head* or the *Six Bells* (neither actually in Merton, though often spoken of as such), or he could have been offered a bed at Wandlebank House (just over the border in Wimbledon), home of his friend James Perry of the *Morning Chronicle*. No evidence has been found to support the belief, current by 1870, that Sheridan lived for a time at old Church House, Merton.

Judy Goodman



Among the photographs in Jeanie White's scrapbook was this view of the Merton and Morden Historical Society's float in the 1953 Coronation Carnival. According to the report in the local paper: "It depicted the Coronation of King Henry the Third and Queen Eleanor, which took place some 700 years ago, actually within the borders of Merton and Morden.

"The Historical Society made quite a pageant of it. There were black-robed monks, bishops, men-at-arms, and the King and Queen on the Throne, all correct costumes of the early Plantagenet period."

Lionel Green, our Vice President, who was one of the "black-robed monks" or Canons of Merton Priory, has also given us some more photographs of the event, including the one below. Lionel is the Canon circled at the back left of the photograph. King Henry III was Norman Black, who is still a member of the Society, though he now lives in Sussex.



## THE CORONATION OF QUEEN ELEANOR

The suggestion that the coronation of Eleanor of Provence, Queen to Henry III, took place at Merton seems to have originated from a misinterpretation of a comment in Alfred Heales' book, *The Records of Merton Priory*, published in 1898. On page 98, Heales' entry for January 20th 1236 reads "King Henry III was married to Eleanor, daughter of Raymund, Count of Provence. When the nuptial ceremonies and festivities were concluded, the King went to Merton."

His next entry, for January 23rd 1236, reads "In these days, King Henry III, for the salvation of his own soul and that of the Queen, and that God might crown a happy beginning by a fortunate end, by giving him a fruitful offspring, at a Council held at Merton, granted and established some good new laws, and ordered them to be forever inviolably observed throughout his kingdom.... The Parliament referred to was held at Merton on Wednesday the morrow after the feast of St. Vincent, in the twentieth year of his reign, at which there were present William, Archbishop of Canterbury, and other his Bishops and Suffragans, and the greater part of the Earls and Barons of England, being there assembled for the Coronation of the King and his Queen Eleanor."

Heales quotes Matthew Paris as one of his sources. When one looks at Matthew Paris's *Chronicles* one realises that, although the Parliament that passed the so called Statute of Merton was held at Merton after the Coronation, the Coronation itself was held at Westminster, not at Merton.

Matthew Paris, a monk of St. Albans from 1217 to 1259, writes at length about the events surrounding the marriage. The following extracts are from *Chronicles of the Age of Chivalry* edited by Elizabeth Hallam (1987).

"On arriving at the borders of France, Eleanor of Provence and her escort ... embarked at the port of Wisant, and had an unexpectedly quick crossing under full sail to the port of Dover. The landing went well, and they hastened to Canterbury, where the king rushed out to embrace the envoys on their arrival.

"Having seen Eleanor and welcomed her, he married her there in Canterbury. On 14th January (1236) Edmund, archbishop of Canterbury, together with the bishops who had accompanied Eleanor of Provence, and other lords, nobles and prelates, performed the marriage ceremony.

"On 19th January, King Henry III came to Westminster, and on the following day, a Sunday, at a ceremony of unparalleled splendour at which the king wore his crown, Eleanor of Provence was crowned queen.

"Such a throng of noble lords and ladies, so many religious, such a multitude of the common people and such a motley swarm of strolling players gathered by invitation at the wedding feast that the city of London could scarcely contain them. The whole place was decked with silks and banners, crowns and draperies, lights and torches, and with some amazing devices and contrivances.

"On that day too the citizens set out from the city of Westminster to discharge the service that belonged to them by ancient right - that of butler to the king at his coronation...

"The royal trumpeters led the way, sounding their trumpets - an amazing sight, rousing wonder and admiration in the beholders.

"The archbishop of Canterbury, by his special right, solemnly performed the coronation rite, assisted by the bishop of London as deacon, with the other bishops placed according to their rank, as were all the abbots.

"Magnates performed the coronation services which were theirs by ancient custom and right. The lord marshal of England, Richard of Clare, earl of Pembroke, carried a rod before the king, clearing the way in the church and the hall, and organizing the royal banquet and guests."

Matthew Paris is not the only source. *The Red Book of the Exchequer* (pp.755-60) also includes a full account of "the coronation of Eleanor, daughter of the Count of Provence, at Westminster."

There seems no doubt that the coronation did not, alas, take place at Merton.

Peter Hopkins

## THE TREASURE ACT 1996

A private member's bill, brought forward by Sir Anthony Grant, is to reach the Committee Stage in the House of Commons this month (April). The bill is the outcome of ten years' campaigning by the Surrey Archaeological Society and latterly also by the British Museum, for reform of the ancient law of Treasure Trove (whose origins date back to Saxon times).

One of the objectives of that law, in the Middle Ages, was to ensure that people did not avoid paying their taxes by burying their spare cash underground. Anything of gold and silver found to have been buried intentionally could be seized by the crown if the owner had obviously meant to dig his treasure up again when the crisis had passed. If, on the other hand, he had lost it by mistake, it could not be seized as Treasure Trove.

The way of finding out what an owner's intention had been was to summon a coroner's inquest to make inquiries. This still holds good; but as time has rolled on it has become stupefyingly obvious that a jury at an inquest is not in a position to determine what an owner, who may have died hundreds or even thousands of years ago, had intended to do with his treasure.

That was only one stumbling block in administering the law of Treasure Trove. Another was the fact that only gold and silver were included. If a hoard containing precious metals and also jewels were to be found, perhaps contained in a rare pottery vessel or a wooden box, such associated articles were separated away from the 'treasure'. Likewise rare copper objects or base metal ones could not qualify. The result has been that the social and historical significance of such hoards could not be properly assessed once they had been broken up in this way.

Another problem which has grown up is this; if a find is declared Treasure Trove and if, in a few cases only, there are items in it which are of great importance, the crown may buy them on our behalf from the finder for their full market value, provided there is a museum who is prepared to pay for them. At present the purchase money, which is seen as an *ex gratia reward*, goes to the finder, rather than to the owner of the land in which the treasure lay.

The thinking behind this paradox has been that if a finder were not to be rewarded, he would be unlikely to declare his find and go through the process of a coroner's inquest. In that case items of very great value, both historically and also in terms of money, would vanish from the scene, unrecorded, probably to be sold to the highest bidder, often going overseas. What should be our national heritage could be lost. In practice nowadays, under Treasure Trove law as it stands, the very great majority of finds whether valuable or commonplace are retained by finders because they are not deemed to be Treasure Trove.

Landowners have often suffered from unfairness over this practice. Trespassers might come onto their land without permission, dig up the booty and carry it off, leaving damage behind and then get rewarded for doing so. It is often mistakenly thought that all objects declared to be Treasure Trove are bought up by museums. This is very far from being the case; for one thing they only want to acquire outstanding exhibits; for another, their collecting policies are controlled by what they can afford.

As the number of metal finds has dramatically increased in the last decade, so have people come to realise how vitally important it is for them to be recorded, since they form part of our social heritage. This is and will remain a central function of the coroner's inquest.

The new bill is a small and simple step towards preserving the raw material from which history can be written. Its provisions are not drastic and they have been drawn up after consultation with as many interested bodies as possible. Notably both the Country Landowners Association and the National Farmers Union give it their backing. So does the Government, and also the other political parties in parliament.



The bill gives a new definition to the meaning of treasure, to its precious metal content, and to the inclusion of other objects found with the gold or silver ones. It vests treasure in the crown (the crown means us) subject to prior rights and interests, without the need to guess about loss or concealment. It is important to note that the crown may then disclaim some treasure if the Secretary of State so directs, as he would do in the frequent cases where it is of no great importance. In which case a lawful finder will be able to keep it, as hitherto. The bill retains the coroner's jurisdiction but imposes a duty upon him to notify 'interested parties' so that they can attend. It will be a duty of a finder to report Treasure within fourteen days. Failure to do so without good excuse would be an offence. Needless to say, there are plenty of facilities for a finder to check any probability of his finds containing precious metal. Lastly, the Secretary of State will determine to whom a 'reward' should be paid, or split between more than one person; so that wrongdoers will not be at an advantage over others.

A code of practice will be drawn up. Once it has been agreed by Parliament it will be published, so everyone can know where they stand. Only after that will the bill become law.

Rosamond Hanworth

### **COPPER MILLING IN MITCHAM: AN EARLY 18TH CENTURY INDUSTRY**

In 1696 Thomas Cietscher, a Swedish traveller, noted a mill at Mitcham engaged in the casting and rolling of copper rods from which blanks for farthings and halfpennies were produced. The operation was licensed by the Crown, and the blanks were taken to the Royal Mint, where the actual transformation into coins took place. This must have been the establishment described in a survey of the manor of Reigate in 1700 as comprising "one Messuage or Tenement with a Water Mill now used for the working of copper and a parcel of Marsh Ground thereunto belonging situate and being in Mitcham containing 30 acres" and held of the manor by "Smith of Mitcham, Widow" at a quit rent of 20s. The name of her lessee, the actual mill operator, is not recorded, but it is clear from other references to the mill, both in earlier and later records, that this was the predecessor of the Crown Mill.

A monopoly in copper manufacture which had existed in this country collapsed during the Civil War, and after the formation of the English Copper Company in 1691 the industry expanded. A number of battery and rolling mills, for which water power was the only practicable source of energy, are said to have been established in England in the late 17th century to exploit what hitherto had been a Dutch trade secret for the manufacture of copper sheeting. A change in use of one of the Mitcham mills from corn milling to another aspect of copper working could well be ascribed to the same period. Copper mills began to proliferate along the Wandle Valley at this time, and a Charles Perry (or Parry) of the "Tower Mills" at Mitcham applied for, and obtained, a licence to manufacture copper coins in 1712. Roque's map of the environs of London, dated 1741-5, shows "Perry's Mill" close by Mitcham Bridge, and the first of a series of deeds confirms that copper milling was carried on here until the middle of the century. These give the impression that Perry died or had gone away by 1764, a notion supported by Roque's map of 1762, which shows "Mitcham Mill" in place of "Perry's Mill". What had happened to the Tower Mills is a matter for speculation, but it, or its successor, seems from later references to have reverted to corn milling, and eventually became known as the Crown Mill.

Extract from a book by Eric Montague on Mitcham Bridge, the Watermeads and the Wandle Mills, awaiting publication.

I have been told by a number of people of the excellence of Eric Montague's talk on Mitcham with the Tom Francis slides. Congratulations, Eric.

The Editor

## VISIT TO SOUTHERN GREECE

It is surprising how many visits to scenes from Greek history can be squeezed into a one week tour of Athens and the Peloponnese. We started in Athens and saw, inter alia, the Parthenon (5th century BC) on the Acropolis (upper city). This structure was designed avoiding straight lines, which was highlighted by scaffolding along one side emphasising the curve in the columns. This is truly one of the world's greatest buildings.

An interesting feature of life in Athens was the absence of mugging and respect given to older people when the young allow them to the front of queues etc. Indeed, unaccompanied young ladies were seen to sit beside the drivers of cabs in complete safety. One serious feature requiring immediate attention, however, was continuous smog.

From Athens we took a trip to Cape Sounion to view the remains of the Temple of Poseidon (444 BC) where Lord Byron scratched his initials (hooligan!). It stands on a headland in splendid isolation. We returned to Athens to see the Panathenic Stadium, built 1896 for the revival of the Olympic Games on the site where games had been held since the 4th century BC. It held 60,000 spectators and is now used for jogging only.

Next day we crossed the bridge straddling the Corinth Canal, construction of which caused the Peloponnese, originally the southernmost section of mainland Greece, to become an island. Emperor Nero first proposed a canal to avoid the long journey round the Peloponnese. He had 6,000 Jewish prisoners working on it but, though they never finished it, work from 1881 to 1893 completed the 6.5km long, 27m wide canal, having a drop of 90m. To-day only passenger ships and local vessels use it but it is said that the original design was largely adopted for the final version.

Our next call was at Mycenae, where Agamemnon lived, and we recalled the exhibits from this site seen earlier in the Archaeological Museum in Athens. We passed through the famous Lion Gate (1250 BC) and the royal cemetery beyond. The day was concluded by a visit to the 14,000 seat arena built on the mountainside at Epidauros. It is renowned for its acoustics: from the back of the 55 rows of seats it is said a pin dropped on the stage can be heard. Maria Callas, etc., had sung here.

The following day we drove through old Sparta, little of which remains. It stood on a fertile plain but when the population realised that a Turkish army was about to overwhelm them, they moved to a high mountain town, Mistras, where some 45,000 people lived in a walled city. It seems impossible that so many lived in such a small area.

On a bright sunny morning we "raced" to Olympia and walked down the contestants' entrance to the original Olympic stadium and on to the running track. The start/finish lines are still to be seen, the seat of the only lady authorised to have been present - a priestess, and the winners' podium. Women caught watching the naked male runners were sentenced to be thrown down a cliff onto rocks!! Here, about 1000 BC, games were held and continued at approximately four-yearly intervals until 393 AD. From resumption in 1896, a bearer has set off every four years (war times excepted) to carry the sacred flame to the next Games site. The remains of the Temple of Zeus (472 BC) stand adjacent.

On our penultimate day we visited the Cathedral of St. Andrew in Patras to see the remains of his crucifixion cross and the tomb of Jesus. A ferry conveyed us to the mainland and we next visited Delphi to see the Navel of the Earth and the most famous oracle of them all, the Rock of Sibyl. To the ancient Greeks, Delphi was said to be the centre of the World.

It is regretted no place having the name Merton was found by us but hopefully this article will be acceptable in this Olympic Year.

Ray Kilsby

## **MERTON HOCKEY CLUB**

Men's hockey has never been as popular as football as a winter game but has had a relatively long history within the Borough. In the spring of 1894 seven clubs, among them Mitcham, met at Anderton's Hotel, Fleet Street and agreed to form the Surrey County Hockey Association.

Mitcham were a famous club in those days and played on the Cricket Green, but unfortunately I cannot ascertain when they were founded [can anyone help?]. However, at the end of the 1894 playing season, Mitcham were given notice to leave the Cricket Green as they were damaging the playing surface and thus the Mitcham Club (who played in blue and white) ceased to exist. Many of their players were members of Merton Gentlemen's Cricket Club and were able to transfer their hockey interests to the Merton Gent's CC ground on the Morden Road which was then part of the John Innes estate and is now occupied by the World of Leather showroom.

The colours selected were cerise and black diamonds (Cheltenham School colours). Although the players were initially enthusiastic, the playing field was not really large enough for the pitch to miss the cricket square and so, at the end of 1898, the club ceased activity and remained dormant until 1910.

In that year the John Innes Trustees announced that they were selling the cricket ground and offered in substitution "Cow Meadow" in Cannon Hill Lane. There was a restriction, in that it could only be used by Mertonians, defined as those born or residing in Merton and Morden, engaging in team games. The restriction also applied to the bowls and tennis facilities and even to entry to the John Innes Park. The Cricket Club accepted, and it being a larger ground, proposals came to revive the Hockey Club and to start a Football Club. The club colours of chocolate, mauve and gold are supposed to have been chosen by Dr W G Grace at the request of a Merton cricketer.

The John Innes Trustees' ruling that only Mertonians could belong to any of the three clubs was later relaxed slightly so that a maximum of four outsiders could belong to each club. The names of all members and their addresses had to be supplied to the Trustees annually (this certainly applied up until 1949 at least) and a liaison officer was appointed annually to act between each club and the Trustees.

All activity ceased at the declaration of war in 1914 and during the autumn of 1919 the hockey club was re-started, enrolling many ex-service men who had learned Hockey during their War Service. Initially two teams were fielded, with a 3rd XI being formed in 1931 and a 4th XI in 1934.

Again activity within the clubs ceased at the declaration of war in 1939 and although a few friendly matches were played during the following winter, equipment was stored away at the end of the season, not to be used again until the Autumn of 1945. Merton Hockey Club was then re-started and is still providing competitive hockey today.

Most of the contents of this article were obtained from a speech written by C Bowyer (Club Secretary 1929-49) on the occasion of the Merton Hockey Club's 75th Anniversary Dinner at The Crown, Morden on 12th March 1970.

Tony Scott

## **LISTED BUILDINGS**

It has been reported that Merton has appointed Keith Knight to a new post (in a partnership deal with English Heritage) as a Conservation Officer. One of his first tasks will be to use his skills to help restore buildings and enhance the environment in Mitcham Cricket Green Conservation Area.

## NEW PUBLICATIONS

Number 11 in our Local History Notes series has just been published:- Memories of Lower Morden, by Lilian Grumbridge. Lilian was born in one of the 'New Cottages' in Lower Morden Lane in 1915, and lived there until her marriage, when she moved to her present home in nearby Hillcross Avenue. Her memories of life in this tiny rural area, with its three farms, contrasts with life in the area today. Photographs and postcards are also reproduced, together with an extract from the 1933 25" Ordnance Survey map with annotations by Bill Rudd. It costs 60p to members. It is also available by post from Peter Harris plus 30p for postage, etc.

To celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Beddington, Carshalton & Wallington Archaeological Society, a 40 page book has been produced titled "Celebrating our Past". It is edited by Clive Orton and is a study in local history and archaeology in their area. There is an appreciation of Muriel Hayman, who has been President for 2 years, having been Vice President since 1993. Doug Cluett, A.L.A., well known to many of us, is also included as he will shortly be retiring, and we all wish him well. A number of short histories of properties in the area are included and it is a good buy at £3 (add 70p if ordering by post from Peter Harris).

## FROM THE EDITOR

The Membership for the current year is now 106. It usually averages 100 to 120 these days. The Committee are somewhat concerned at the low attendance at some meetings, even though about 40% of the membership live some distance out of the area. It is realised that the Snuff Mill is not the most ideal place to have meetings but Morden is the central spot for the membership and no other alternative has been found. A poll was taken over the last 5 months to see what was the preferred time - and mixed times and Saturday afternoons only voting was very similar, so it was agreed to continue as at present. It was noted that the two meetings at the Heritage Centre and the one at Mitcham Parish Church drew the most members as well as visitors. It is proposed to have two meetings at Canons in the future, and possibly another venue too.

In 1997 there will be a talk by Bill Rudd on Lower Morden, at St. Martin's Church, Lower Morden in March, as part of the Church's 40th anniversary celebrations. Mary Saaler, Vice Chairman of the Bourne Society has recently had published a book about Anne of Cleves, and she is being approached for a future lecture. An offer has been received from Mrs Pat Nicolayson to lead a walk and/or give a lecture on West Barnes based on the late John Wallace's notes. Maybe the subjects chosen for talks are not of interest to people. How about some ideas from the Membership? This has been requested before but no replies were received. The Hon. Secretary has made enquiries of Epsom Coaches about their Heritage Day Tours (e.g. Blenheim, Oxford, etc.). Party bookings are accepted and pick-ups are in Morden and (according to the destination) Mitcham and North Cheam. A group of ten (minimum) could be arranged and seated together. Is anyone interested?

I feel the time has come for me to step down as Editor. There are two reasons. I have produced the Bulletin since 1989 and been on the Committee continuously since 1987, so feel I have earned a sabbatical. Secondly, I may be moving out of the area and so it will not be practical to continue. However, I shall continue to be a member of the Society. I have enjoyed the time spent and hope you like the changes during that time. Now, how about one of you out there taking over? You do not need to type!! Peter Hopkins as printer is very supportive. I shall be responsible for the September issue and would help in the change-over period after that. Please contact me or any Committee member to find out more.

Marjorie Ledgerton

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.