

PRESIDENT: J Scott McCracken BA FSA MIFA

VICE PRESIDENTS: Viscountess Hanworth, Arthur Turner, Lionel Green and William Rudd

BULLETIN NO. 128

DECEMBER 1998



PROGRAMME DECEMBER-MARCH



Saturday 5 December 2.30 pm Snuff Mill Environmental Centre

'The Archaeological History of Carshalton House and Water Tower'

Andrew Skelton

Archaeology continues to shed light on the history of two of the most distinguished buildings in our near neighbourhood.

Saturday 23 January 2.30 pm Snuff Mill Environmental Centre

'Great Houses of Sutton' **John Phillips**

Mr Phillips is Heritage Officer of the London Borough of Sutton. His illustrated lecture promises to be an enlightening look at an unfamiliar aspect of Sutton's history.

(For the Snuff Mill Centre drivers should park in the Morden Hall Garden Centre car-park and take the path across the bridge, go through the gateway and turn right towards Morden Cottage. Buses 118, 154, 157, 164.)

Thursday 18 February 8pm Morden Hall Medical Centre, 256 Morden Road
SW19 (the old Morden Library premises)

'The Roman Soldier' **John Eagle**

The venue for this exciting hands-on event is appropriately close to Stane Street, probably a familiar route to many a Roman soldier.

(The medical centre is near Morden station and on or close to many bus routes.)

Saturday 13 March 2.30 pm The Canons House

'The Canons House and its Setting' **Eric Montague**

Our chairman needs no introduction as *the* historian of Mitcham, and his audience can expect an authoritative and absorbing account of the Canons story.

(The Canons is in Madeira Road, Mitcham, close to bus routes 118, 152, 200. There is a car-park.)



The Society's events are open to the general public, unless otherwise stated.



LOCAL HISTORY WORKSHOPS

FRIDAY 25 September 1998

Three members only were present.

- ◆ **Judy Goodman** had two short tales to tell. She had visited All Saints church, Tudeley, in Kent, famous for its superb set of modern glass by Marc Chagall. These windows were installed in memory of a young girl, Sarah Venetia d'Avigdor-Goldsmid, who was tragically drowned in a boating accident in 1963. And this is the local connection - because Sarah was a great-great-great-great-granddaughter of Abraham Goldsmid of Morden Lodge. Abraham's daughter Isabel married her cousin Isaac Lyon Goldsmid, who later became the first Jew to be made a baronet. Their daughter Rachel married Count Solomon Henry d'Avigdor, and a grandson of that marriage, Osmund, the first baronet d'Avigdor Goldsmid, was Sarah's grandfather. The Tudeley church, outside Tonbridge, is open every day from 9am to 6pm.
- ◆ Who would have thought there could be even a tenuous link between Merton's two most celebrated figures - Nelson and William Morris? Well there really is. A frequent visitor/resident at Nelson's Merton Place was his young niece Charlotte Nelson, who was otherwise at the well-known Whitelands boarding school for young ladies in Chelsea. Forty years later Whitelands was taken over by the National Society as a training college for schoolmistresses, and from the 1870s John Ruskin took a special interest in it. In particular he transformed the chapel, sending William Morris and Burne-Jones there in 1883 to plan new windows and decoration scheme. Though Whitelands moved to Putney in 1931, and is now part of the Roehampton Institute, the windows survive as one of the finest sets of late Burne-Jones windows anywhere. (The Chelsea site in Kings Road, next to the barracks, is occupied by Whitelands House, a handsome block of flats.)
- ◆ **Bill Rudd** was still on the trail of Rev John White, schoolmaster at Morden Hall in the 19th century, and his family. Mr White does not appear among the Alumni of Oxford or Cambridge and his personal details continue to elude Bill.
- ◆ Following up his recollections of Sir Alan Cobham's Great Air Display off Stonecot Hill in September 1934 (see Bulletin 123) Bill had written to Flight Magazine. Though they had not been able to provide more information they did have a photo of the 'Flying Flea', a well remembered feature of the Display. Bill is tempted to order a copy.
- ◆ The Kennels Farm, which once stood in Lower Morden Lane, had taken the interest of **Peter Hopkins**. Views of it in the Local Studies Centre show a weatherboarded building with a jettied upper storey and the appearance of possibly having been one limb of a larger structure. Peter's account will appear in the next Bulletin.

JG

For future workshop dates please telephone Sheila on 540 6656 or Judy on 543 8908

DAVID LUFF reports on **MERTON GREEN FAIR**

Our sales stall featured again on Sunday 13 September at the Green Fair at the London Road Playing Fields in Mitcham. The day was not too warm, but even with the remains of the American hurricane which had drifted over the pond blowing its hardest all day we were nicely sheltered, and wind was not the problem it had been in past years.

The Green Fair is for local societies and does not attract the large crowds it deserves, as there is always plenty to entertain one and all throughout the afternoon. In fact the birds of prey display, which we were told was not one of falconry, kept those watching spellbound. I would assume that the large vulture that landed on adults' and children's heads and ungloved hands had had the talons clipped. It even walked in and out of the spectators looking for any tasty titbits.

Unfortunately, due to the wind the sound from the area drifted everywhere, drowning out other attractions such as the Merton Concert Band. It is a pity the playing fields do not have a purpose-built bandstand like I remember from the 1950s. I can remember bands playing in some of them. All fell into disrepair and were pulled down - something they would not get away with today.

Our publications attracted a number of purchases and we also had a visit from our lady mayor. On the whole a successful day, and many many thanks to Margaret Carr and Eric Trim who took turns to staff the stand throughout the day.

IN BRIEF

- ◆ Work on **Tramlink** is progressing steadily. All the footbridges at the Merton end have now come down. At Kingston Road level crossing a length of new rails is in place, even while the big job of re-aligning the services at this point, especially the water mains, continues. The rolling-stock has now arrived in this country from Austria, having been landed, we are told, at Dartford.
- ◆ The 1998 Year Book of the **1805 Club** has an interesting article about Nelson's arms (in the heraldic sense!). The author, David White, has examined the records of the College of Arms. He quotes from an Officer of Arms who was horrified at Nelson's wish to incorporate the Spanish king's ensign in his arms - an intention described as "indelicate" from a gallant victor to "a subdued enemy which may ... become a friendly power". More happily, Nelson's use of an ordinary seaman as one 'supporter' in his arms (the other was a lion shredding the aforementioned Spanish flag) apparently set a new fashion among naval men. The arms can be studied on Nelson's hatchment in St Mary the Virgin, Merton Park.
- ◆ I visited **Crossness**, near Erith, during the Open House weekend in September. The very direct local connection is that all our waste water goes via the Southern Intercepting Sewer and the Southern Outfall to Crossness Pumping Station. The whole scheme was the work of Sir Joseph Bazalgette (a Morden resident for many years before moving to Wimbledon) and was opened in 1865. The four identical rotative beam engines (possibly the largest in the world) were last used in 1953 and are being restored by volunteers. Both they and the romanque engine house are spectacular monuments of the Victorian age. In contrast, but perhaps equally fine, is the brand-new gleaming incinerator building at the other end of the huge site. For information about open days telephone (Sun and Tues only) 0181 311 3711.
- ◆ Recorded in Surrey Archaeological Society Bulletin for September: **Minutes and Bulletins of this Society** from 1962-1996 are to be found at Surrey History Centre under Accession Number 4583. The Committee recently decided that this was the proper place to lodge our records.
- ◆ An article on **Mitcham Parish Church** in the latest edition of *Surrey History* (Vol.V No.4 @£2 to members of MHS - contact Peter Harris) is by MHS member, **Ray Ninnis**. The article is a study of the devastating criticism of the architecture of the "New Church at Mitcham, Surrey" published in *The Gentleman's Magazine* for July 1821, and includes some excellent new photographs of the church.
- ◆ **From New Troy to Londinium: The Rediscovery of Roman London** is the title of a LAMAS (London and Middlesex Archaeological Society) lecture by John Clark at the Museum of London on Thursday 14 January 1999 at 6.30pm.
- ◆ The illuminated **clock on the Prince of Wales** at the top of Hartfield Road in Wimbledon is 100 years old this year. It would be good if, to mark the occasion, the brewers would get it working again!
- ◆ On Monday 4 January at 8pm at Woodlawns, 16 Leigham Court Road SW16, **Brian Bloice** will be talking to the Streatham Society Local History Group on '**Researching Building History**'. Visitors welcome.
- ◆ I recently acquired at an antiques fair the photograph shown here. It seems to be a wartime shot of two **Merton and Morden auxiliary ambulances** and their crew outside a large corrugated iron building - possibly the depot? Can any reader locate the building, identify the vehicles (? American make) or provide any other information? (Please ring Judy Goodman)



Crossness Beam Engine House 1865



TONY SCOTT writes:

*I read with interest Eric Montague's account of **RICHARD SIMPSON, Vicar of Mitcham 1844-46**, in the last Bulletin (No 127), as I have made a particular study of the Simpsons in connection with their establishment and support of SS Peter & Paul Catholic Church in Mitcham.*

I can enlarge on some of the facts presented by Mr Montague and take him to task on some others.

Richard Simpson chaired the meeting of Mitcham parish vestry on Easter Tuesday, 14 April 1846, as vicar, but does not appear thereafter in the vestry minutes, even though the next meeting was only two days later¹. Throughout the spring and summer the meetings were chaired by James Bridger. On 22 October the minutes recorded that "Edwin Chart laid before the Vestry his appointment by Mr R Simpson to the office of Parish Clerk and Sexton, dated 2nd May last". Up to this time Richard Simpson had been given the title Rev'd whenever his name appeared in the minutes. The Easter Tuesday meeting re-appointed Rev John Hurnall as vicar's warden, and it seems likely that Richard Simpson subsequently retired from 'public' life, although his formal resignation from the living did not take place until 6 July 1846².

On 1 August of the same year Richard Simpson and his wife Elizabeth Mary were received into the Catholic Church by Father Brownbull SJ². He then travelled to the Continent, doing the 'Grand Tour' and acquiring a wide spread of languages³. In his periods of residence in England he worked as a translator and a tutor⁴. In 1850 he embarked upon a literary career with a series of articles in *The Rambler*, a journal founded two years earlier as an organ for lay converts to Catholicism. Some years later he became assistant editor, then editor, and finally part-owner of the journal with Lord Acton, before it ceased publication in 1862. By 1858 he was living at 1 Nelson Terrace, Clapham Common (now part of Clapham Common North Side)⁴, and I believe remained there for the rest of his life, apart from occasional visits abroad. He continued various publishing activities, with Lord Acton, for most of the rest of his life. He became a zealous Shakespearean scholar and also a prolific composer; but for some eccentricities of style he might have acquired fame as a musician³. In his final years Richard Simpson suffered from cancer, and he died on 5 April 1876 at the Villa Sciarra, residence of his friend the Count of Heritz, just outside Rome³.

William Simpson, the eldest of the three brothers, was educated at Cambridge and had been converted to Catholicism in 1843. Robert, the youngest, was, like Richard, educated at Merchant Taylors' School and Oxford, where at 17, in 1842, he entered St John's College. He, similarly, became influenced by the Oxford Movement and joined the Catholic Church in 1845, the same year as Newman's conversion. He left Oxford without obtaining a degree and decided to enter Oscott Seminary in Sutton Coldfield to commence studies for the priesthood. These were completed in Rome where he was ordained on 22 December 1849.

Initially he served missions in the Birmingham diocese, but in 1855 he was transferred to the Southwark diocese, and led the missions at Deal and Canterbury before becoming the first resident priest in the Mitcham mission (founded the previous year by his eldest brother William) in May 1862. On 8 November 1861 in a letter to the Catholic Bishop of Southwark, his address is given as 4 Victoria Road, Clapham Common⁵, but by 17 April 1862 his address is "Mitcham S" (probably S for Surrey)⁵. He left Mitcham in October 1863 to become the chaplain to the military prison at Southwark.

Although poor health followed Robert Simpson for most of his life², I have failed to find any evidence of mental derangement caused by the death of his mother at the age of 75 in 1858. There is in the diocesan archives a very clear and lucid letter from Robert Simpson, then living at Dartford, to Bishop James Danell of Southwark, dated 9 August 1879, in which he relates his recollections of being told as a boy about Mass being said in Mr Langdale's house in Mitcham. Robert died on 24 March 1887 aged 62², and I have also failed to find mention of him dying as a lunatic.

References:

1. Minutes of Mitcham vestry
2. McElrath, D *Richard Simpson 1820-1876*, Publications Universitaires de Louvain 1972
3. *Dictionary of National Biography* (Richard Simpson)
4. Altholtz, J L, McElrath, D, and Holland, J C (editors) *The Correspondence of Lord Acton and Richard Simpson* vol 1 Cambridge 1971
5. Two letters to Bishop Thomas Grant by Robert Simpson: in Roman Catholic Diocese of Southwark archives

TONY SCOTT represents this Society on the London Borough of Merton Conservation Areas Advisory Committee. Following a recent CAAC meeting he has produced this report for our members:

BUILDINGS AT RISK IN MERTON

Each year since 1991 English Heritage has produced, as part of a broader national survey, a Register of Buildings at Risk in Greater London. This register comprises a schedule of vacant or partially occupied listed buildings "at risk" from neglect and the ravages of time.

As well as giving the address and Grade of Listing of each building, the list also gives the degree of risk on a scale of A-F. There are currently 11 entries on the Register located within Merton. They are as follows:

Listing Grade		Degree of Risk
II	66 Church Road, Mitcham	A
II	Memorials in St Peter and St Paul's churchyard, Church Road, Mitcham	C
II	Cottenham House, Atkinson Morley's Hospital, 27 Copse Hill, SW20	C
II	Former stables, 27 Copse Hill, SW20	C
II	Wall and gateways to Sacred Heart Church, Edge Hill, SW20	C
II	475 London Road, Mitcham	C
II*	The Canons, Madeira Road, Mitcham	C
II	Section of Merton Priory wall, Station Road, SW19	C
II	Section of Merton Priory wall, rear of 27-33 Windsor Avenue, SW19	C
II*	Morden Park House, London Road, Morden	D
II	346/348 London Road, Mitcham	D

An explanation of the various degrees of risk is as follows:

- A Immediate risk of further rapid deterioration; no solution agreed
- B Immediate risk of further rapid deterioration; solution agreed but not yet implemented
- C Steady decay; no solution agreed
- D Steady decay; solution agreed but not yet implemented

There are two buildings on the Register which are owned by Merton Council. The Canons is included because of the serious fire there in 1996. However essential repairs have been carried out and the building is back in use. Morden Park House has been the subject of a successful application for Heritage Lottery Funding for renovation of the building to accommodate the Register Office. Tenders are being invited and work should commence in November 1998.

PUBLICATIONS

The Society has brought out several new publications recently. These are:

Title:	Author:	Full Price:	Members' Price:
The Railways of Merton	Lionel Green	£1.75	£1.40
A History of Lord Nelson's Merton Place	Peter Hopkins	£2.00	£1.60
The Patent Steam Washing Factory at Phipps Bridge	Eric Montague	50p	40p
The Parish of Merton in 1844 - The Tithe Apportionment Map	Peter Hopkins	75p	60p
Morden in 1838 - The Tithe Apportionment Map	Peter Hopkins	£1.00	80p
Life at The Cranmers, Mitcham, before the 1914-18 War	Ethel Smith	50p	40p

Available at meetings or order from Peter Harris.

See Publications List/ Order Form enclosed. Excellent stocking-fillers, or to keep for yourself!

Richard Milward, who is a member of this Society as well as, of course, the Wimbledon Society, has just brought out another new title. This is *Wimbledon Past*, a handsomely produced and lavishly illustrated chronological account of Wimbledon's history from the Bronze Age to the 1990s. Published by Historical Publications Ltd it costs £14.95 from bookshops and the Wimbledon Society Museum. It would make an excellent Christmas present.

The John Innes Society has brought out a new edition of *Merton Park, the Quiet Suburb 1904-1914*. First published in 1984 it has now been thoroughly revised, and provided with new illustrations, a better map, and an updated bibliography. It costs £2 from Merton Local Studies Centre, the Wimbledon Society Museum, or John Innes Society events. Or order from David Roe, 105 Poplar Road South, SW19 3JZ, with a stamped (19p) envelope (9"x6") and a cheque to the John Innes Society.

LIONEL GREEN tackles the question “What really is the difference between a priory and an abbey?”
ABBEYS AND/OR PRIORIES

When is a priory not an abbey? This depends on the superior, for an abbot governed an abbey but a prior governed a priory. The full answer is more involved because abbeys also had a prior.

Benedictine houses

Most pre-Conquest monasteries were important foundations whose superior was an abbot or abbess assisted by a prior or prioress. From AD 664 all religious followed the Rule of St Benedict, although following the Norse invasions which began after AD 787 regular monastic life ceased to exist in most parts until the tenth century.

Daughter houses of monasteries began as cells (with fewer than four religious), but many grew in importance to have a prior in charge (a priory), and a few secured independence. Most autonomous houses were abbeys, and all dependent monasteries were priories. There were few abbesses in post-Conquest nunneries.

All monastic cathedrals were priories, because the monastery was governed by the prior. The bishop was the titular abbot, but not necessarily a member of the community.

Many foundations (of all orders) were termed ‘alien priories’, because their mother house was elsewhere than in England. Most of these were only cells, and the monks were mainly Frenchmen. Boxgrove in Sussex was alien until it became denizen as a Benedictine priory in 1339.

Cluniac houses

All Cluniac houses were priories, because they were under the Abbot of Cluny. Daughter houses of Cluny and La Charité were alien priories, but only Bermondsey of the Cluniac houses achieved the status of an abbey, in 1399, having become denizen in 1381. Even the senior Cluniac monastery in England, Lewes (founded in 1077), remained a priory.

Cistercian houses

All Cistercian houses, regardless of size, were abbeys.

Carthusian monks

All Carthusian monasteries were priories.

Augustinian canons

Most Augustinian convents began as priories. Only about 18 (of over 200) achieved abbatial rank, and four of these were in royal patronage from their foundation.

Premonstratensian canons

Most establishments were abbeys, with a few cells and priories. The abbots were expressly forbidden to wear the mitre, ring and gloves properly pertaining to bishops¹. (See **Mitred abbeys** below)

Gilbertine canons

All Gilbertine canons lived in priories, but the superior was the Master.

Arrouaisian and Victorine canons

These 12th-century foundations of St Nicholas of Arrouaise and St Victor of Paris followed the regulations of Citeaux (Cistercian) and were thus abbeys. When the houses were subsumed and followed the Augustinian Rule, they retained their titles as abbeys.

Benedictine nuns

Amesbury was an abbey from 980 until 1177, when it was refounded as a priory, following the expelling of all the nuns. Farewell was reduced to a priory in the mid-13th century because of a lack of numbers.

Augustinian canonesses

Canonsleigh was a priory of canons until 1282 when it became an abbey of canonesses. Burnham and Lacock were the only other Augustinian abbeys for canonesses.

Mitred abbeys

Many important monasteries applied to the Pope for enhanced status, which when granted enabled the abbot and his successors to wear episcopal insignia. The procurement was costly and grounds for claiming this status would include the size of the community, historic importance, competence of the abbot or prior, adequacy of buildings, sufficiency of endowments for the future, and the backing of the Pope. The Pope would licence the prelate to wear some or all of the episcopal insignia, which consisted of sandals, tunic,

dalmatic, gloves, staff or crosier, ring and mitre. A mitred abbot was exempt from any episcopal visitation or control. The monastery henceforth was termed a 'mitred abbey'. The insignia were only worn within the monastery on special occasions and in state pageants and processions.

During the Great Schism (1378-1417) Boniface IX had financial problems and began selling papal privileges on a large scale. Many monasteries used the opportunity to raise their status.

The successful applicants within the Augustinian Order were Bridlington² (1409), Bristol (1398), Bruton (1511), Butley (1398), Cirencester (1416), Kenilworth (c.1410), London Aldgate (1452), Norton (1391), Oseney (1481), St Osyth (1397), Taunton (1499), Thornton (1518) and Waltham (1184). Although Bridlington, Butley and Norton were granted the status of mitred abbeys they chose to retain the title of 'Priories'. Bodmin was unsuccessful in 1206, when the Pope's legate's report was unfavourable, and Walsingham's application in 1384 was refused when the bishop accused the prior of dissipating revenues in trying to procure such a privilege. Prior Snoring was deposed in 1387. The foundation charter of Cartmel (1190) stipulated that "the priory shall never be made an abbey".

Mitred (Parliamentary) Abbeys

Certain prelates were summoned by the king to attend Parliament, and they held the rank of a baron in the Upper House. Numbers were increased as monasteries flourished, until in 1300 a total of 80 abbots and priors were summoned. In 1327 Edward III reduced the number to 25 abbots and 2 priors. From 1265 until 1327 the Prior of Merton attended Parliament as did the abbots of Chertsey and Waverley. The only Augustinian mitred abbot attending Parliament from 1327 represented Cirencester and Waltham.

Merton Priory or Merton Abbey?

A few priories were of such importance that it is difficult to understand why they remained such. Merton was never governed by an abbot, but there are odd references to Merton 'Abbey' from the 15th century (1409, 1410, 1497, 1521, 1525, 1535)⁴. In 1537 a book on surveying was published, and the title page states that it was "compiled by Sir Richard Benese Channon of Merton Abbey beside London". The building accounts of the proposed Nonsuch Palace at Cuddington refer to "uncovering the body of the church at Merton Abbey"⁵. The antiquary John Leland visited Kingston when compiling his *Itinerary* at the time of the Dissolution and makes reference to Merton Abbey⁶.

The early misuse of the name of Merton Abbey was probably due to ignorance of the term. Its use would then begin to be adopted as acceptable or even desirable. Canon Richard Benese thought so. There may also have been an element of local snobbery.

The ruins of many dissolved monasteries were used to construct, or adapted into, desirable residences. At Merton were two buildings adopting names like Abbey House. One may have been the former Guest House and the other the Gate House of the priory.

Other post-Dissolution "Abbeys"

There were similar occurrences at other priories. "Abbey Houses" were built at Barnwell, Buckenham, Calke, Calwich, Upholland, Walsingham (east range) and Wroxten. At Calwich the buildings were owned by Merton Priory in its last years (1537-38). The priory church was converted into a residence (see Bulletin No 126) and became Calwich Abbey. Similar conversions took place at Anglesey (chapter house and dormitory), Bolton (gate house), Ixworth (east range), Launde (south chapel), Llanthony (west range), Mottisfont (church and west cellarage), Much Wenlock⁷ (prior's lodgings) and Newstead (claustral complex). All these priories were promoted to "abbeys" where no abbot ever existed, and all, except Much Wenlock (Cluniac) and Upholland (Benedictine), were Augustinian foundations. But this is understandable because of the preponderance of Augustinian priories.

The "promotion" by the new house owners may have been influenced by the thought that there was little point in being a "priory" when it could be an "abbey". Strangely, the majority are now tourist attractions. Anglesey (NT), Bolton, Calke (NT), Hexham, Llanthony (EH), Mottisfont (NT), Much Wenlock (EH/NT), Newstead and Walsingham.

References:

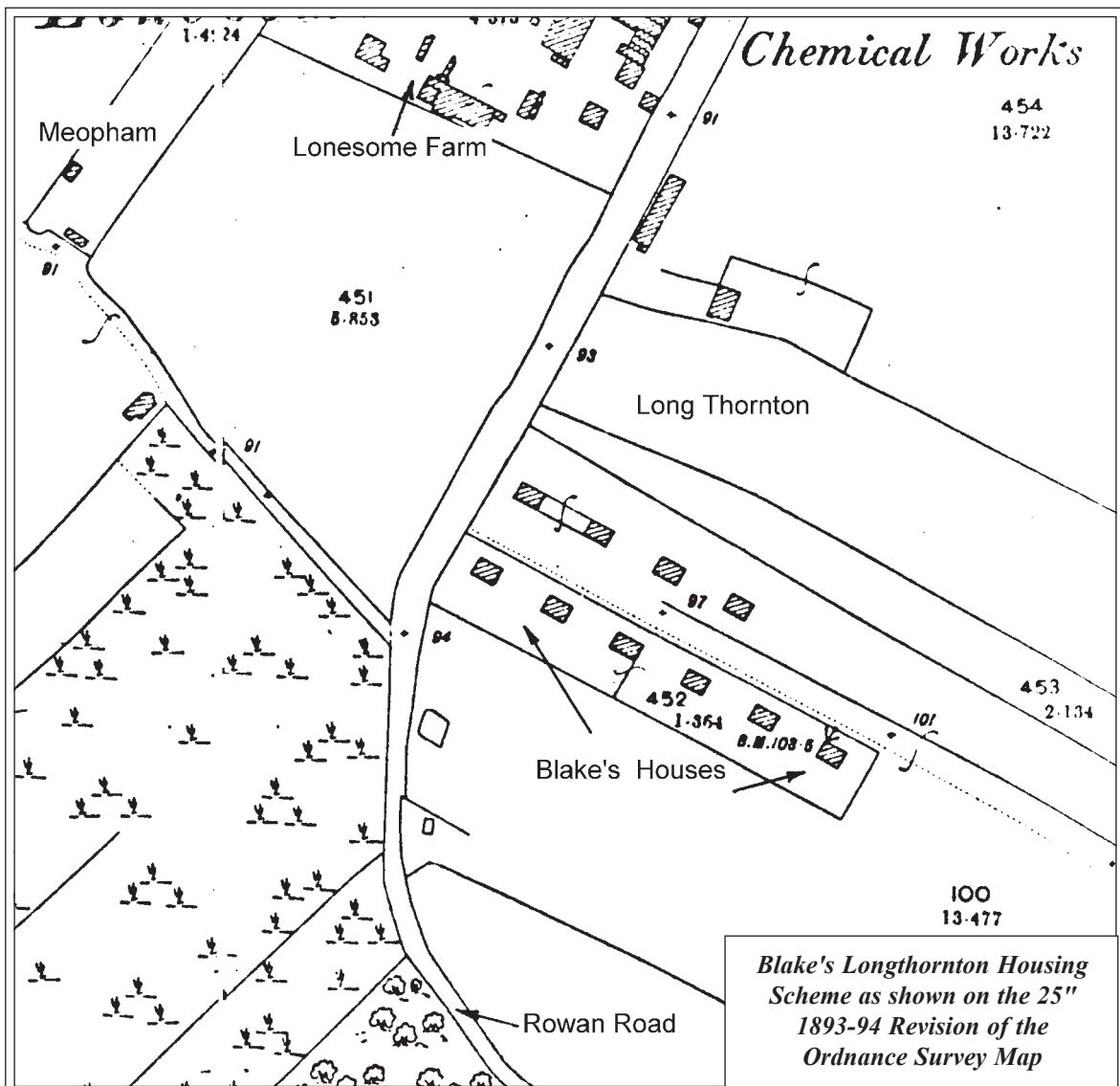
1. W H St John Hope in *Archaeologia Cantiana* XV 1883 (p59 for Premonstratensian Abbots)
2. Although granted the status of mitred abbeys, Bridlington, Butley and Norton all retained the title of Priory.
3. J C Dickinson, *The Land of Cartmel* 1980 p11
4. A Heales, *Records of Merton Priory* 1898
5. PRO E101/477/12 April 22 to May 20 1538
6. J Leland, *Itinerary* 1710 Pt viii fol.25
7. In 1522 the prior secured the personal right to use the mitre, but resigned in 1526, and the right lapsed.

ERIC MONTAGUE offers another tale from Mitcham. The following is an extract from the section on Long Thornton in his unpublished *magnum opus*. The text has been slightly shortened, with permission, for inclusion here.

‘BLAKE’S FOLLY’

Two parcels of land described as “in Long Thornton” and containing a little over 1.5 acres and 3 acres respectively are shown on the Mitcham tithe map of 1847 to the east of what we now know as Rowan Road. Long and narrow in plan, they might have originated in medieval strip holdings, and if so represent, with the whimsically named Meopham, some of the most northerly extensions of the common east fields of the parish. The tithe register of 1846 records parcel 749 (the northern and smaller of the two) to have been owned by Captain Charles Hallowell Carew of Beddington and occupied by James Moore, whilst 748 was both owned and occupied by Moore¹. The sub-soil would have been London Clay, overlain with loam, and both holdings were under grass.

James Moore, principal of the firm of Potter and Moore, famous growers of medicinal herbs, and distillers of essential oils, had a large estate in Mitcham, its constituent parts scattered throughout the parish. Moore died in 1851 and his estate was offered for sale by auction in August 1853. The Long Thornton holding (Lot 73 in the sale particulars) is shown on the plan prepared by the auctioneers, Crawters, as abutting on the north a parcel of land owned by “C H Carew Esq.”². The outcome of the sale is not known, but it would appear from its subsequent history that Lot 73 was soon to pass into the ownership of a man called Blake. Captain Charles Hallowell Carew had died in 1849, and was succeeded by his son, Charles Hallowell Hallowell Carew, a spendthrift and gambler against whom bankruptcy proceedings were instituted in 1857³. The family estate was in the course of being broken up and sold throughout the 1850s, and in all probability the Carew portion of Long Thornton came on the market at this time, to be acquired by Blake.



Blake, referred to derisively in the press some 50 years later as ‘Squire Blake’⁴, was not a Mitcham man. Although he has not been identified with certainty, there are good grounds for believing he was Charles Blake, a landowner and gentleman farmer in the West Barnes area of what is now Raynes Park. This Blake was resident at Blue House Farm from the early 1850s until about 1887 (the farm was managed by a bailiff), and also at Motspur Park. By profession a solicitor (possibly connected with the Croydon firm of that name), he was actively, but not always successfully, involved in railway promotion in association with his friend Richard Garth of Morden, and to a minor degree in land development in West Barnes in the 1860s. He must have been well aware of the prospect of a substantial increase in the value of the Long Thornton land, once the London, Brighton & South Coast Railway Company’s Greyhound Lane station was opened on their Balham to Croydon line, only half a mile away, in 1862⁵. Known as ‘Squire’ Blake in the Raynes Park area, Charles Blake was master of the local stag hounds, and very much the country gentleman. He seems to have died without issue, and the estate at Raynes Park was administered by trustees, of whom there is still mention only shortly before the 1914 War⁶.

Whether or not ‘Squire’ Blake at Lonesome and Charles Blake of West Barnes were the same person, the owner of Long Thornton was certainly dabbling in property speculation, as is demonstrated by the Ordnance Survey maps of 1865 and 1867, which show eight houses to have been erected there, either side of a newly constructed roadway of generous width, extending eastward from what is the modern Rowan Road to the present-day Northborough Road. The map of 1894 shows a further two houses built on the southern side of the road in the intervening years, making ten in all. Illustrations in *The Morning Leader* of 22 July 1901, and a roughly contemporary article in the *Daily Mirror* portray these houses as substantial, 2-storied 6-roomed detached villas, each with a columned entrance porch and a generous garden. The low pitched roofs were obviously of slate, the brickwork probably yellow stocks, and the window and door openings were framed with stucco architraves. The style is a familiar one in South London and datable to 1850-1870. The development would appear to have been conceived with middle-class residents in mind, and the venture was quite likely to have been encouraged by the new railway station. Situated in what was still open countryside, with tracts of sheltering woodland and distant views of the North Downs, the new houses should have found a ready market.

Remarkably, and for reasons which are by no means clear, though various theories can be advanced, the houses were never finished, work on them ceasing after completion of the main structure and roofing, but before the carpentry and joinery work had commenced. From the evidence of the maps there seem to have been at least two phases of building between 1860 and 1890. It is said that for a time the unfinished houses were kept in repair and the site fenced with iron railings to prevent trespass. But as the years passed the gardens were increasingly overgrown with weeds and brambles, whilst the tree-lined road eventually became completely grassed over. Across the parish border housing development was proceeding steadily. Greyhound Lane station was renamed Streatham Common station in 1875, and three years later Norbury station was opened⁵. The first, wooden, station was replaced by the present brick building in 1902, but in 1905, when building development could be seen proceeding apace on the slopes of Pollards Hill nearby, the freehold Long Thornton building estate was still empty and derelict, its houses beginning to collapse through decay and neglect. A noticeboard proclaimed that the land was offered on long building leases at easy terms, and directed enquirers to the estate office at 6 Cheshunt Road, West Norwood⁷. No-one was apparently interested enough to pursue matters to a satisfactory conclusion, and the area acquired a notoriety as a ‘ghost town’, from time to time attracting the curiosity and imagination of columnists in both the national and the local press⁸.

Two possible explanations for the failure of the enterprise occur to the writer. In 1853 it was reported to Mitcham vestry that a factory, which was to become Thomas Forster’s Lonesome Chemical Works, had been erected at Lonesome Farm⁹. This was on the opposite side of the road to Long Thornton, and only a little over 100 yards from where the nearest of the new villas were to be built. It was Blake’s misfortune to have only recently purchased his land with a housing estate in mind. A clash of interests was inevitable. The exact sequence of events is not known, but the Ordnance Survey map shows that by 1867 a small ‘gasometer’ had been erected at the works, on the roadside frontage opposite the entrance to the new estate road, and with it there must have been the coke ovens and other unsightly structures of what by this time amounted to an embryo gas works. The Lonesome Chemical Works prospered, and the premises had expanded considerably by the time the next edition of the 25"-Ordnance Survey map was published in the 1890s. Contemporary accounts refer to a smoking chimney; there was often nuisance from smells as well. The reaction to the presence of such works in those perhaps considering moving to the rural delights of Long Thornton is not hard to imagine.

The arrival of Forster's chemical works must thus have provided the first serious set-back to Blake's operations. It certainly could not have occurred at a worse time, for a period of financial difficulty was approaching for many who speculated in house property. From the late 1870s there was a decade of prolonged depression. Though profits from industry rose tremendously during these years, Blake's houses were probably too small, and certainly too close to the chemical factory, to interest prosperous manufacturers; and for those whose livelihood depended on retail trade or agriculture times were extremely hard.

Blake's stubborn refusal to reduce his terms to attract suitable leaseholders or tenants for his Long Thornton properties implies a dogged conviction that either circumstances must eventually change for the better, or that he might succeed in an action for damages. There could also have been an element of personal conflict, with Blake not only refusing to accept defeat as a consequence of Forster's enterprise, but holding on in defiance of what, in retrospect, should have been obvious - the chemical works were destined to blight permanently all prospects of developing Lonesome into a desirable residential area. According to one account in the local press the matter was finally resolved by an action in Chancery, but with what result we are not told¹⁰. Had it not been for the outbreak of war in 1914 the steady spread of middle-class suburban housing into South Streatham and Norbury might in the end have brought the long awaited change for the better at Lonesome. As it was, the development which finally swept away 'Blake's Folly' was quite different in character from that of the more affluent Edwardian estates across the parish borders.

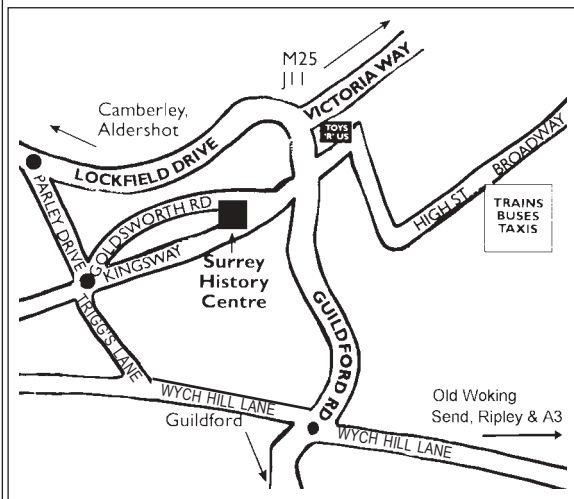
By the mid-1920s estates of new terrace houses to rent or buy were rapidly covering the remaining open land in South Streatham, and the isolation of Lonesome was coming to an end¹¹. In 1927 plans for an estate of small terrace houses in Long Thornton were submitted to Mitcham Urban District Council by Henry V Bannan, architect, and construction proceeded after clearance of what remained of Blake's attempt at estate development half a century before. The following year saw approval of an application by J G Robinson & Co, meter manufacturers of Liverpool, to erect factory buildings fronting Rowan Road at the junction with Longthornton Road, to be occupied by Smith Meters¹². These two applications thus perpetuated the pattern of mixed industrial and domestic development which had had its beginnings 60 years previously, and which characterises the area today. Now, when compared with other estate roads set out a little later by speculative builders in the boom years of the inter-war period, the unusual width of Longthornton Road still sets it apart. Few people however are now aware of the strange story behind the first attempt at its development for housing.

References:

1. Mitcham tithe register & maps - Merton Local Studies Centre
2. Moore estate sale map 1853 - Merton Local Studies Centre
3. Michell, R *The Carews of Beddington* 1981 p110
4. *Morning Leader* 22 July 1901
5. Information from J W Brown of the Streatham Society
6. Jowett, E M *Raynes Park* 1987 pp102, 132-4
7. 'A Visit to Lonesome', *Streatham News* 10 June 1905
8. For instance *Streatham News* 8 October 1904
9. Mitcham vestry minutes for October 1853 - Merton Local Studies Centre
10. 'Long Thornton and Lonesome', *Streatham News* 26 September 1939 p47
11. 'Not Lonesome Now!', *Streatham News* 15 January 1926
12. Information from LBM Planning Department

SURREY HISTORY CENTRE

Surrey Record Office, Surrey Local Studies Library and Guildford Muniment Room have all been combined in purpose-built premises in Woking:-



Surrey History Centre

130 Goldsworth Road
Woking
Surrey
GU21 1ND

Tel: 01483 594594

Fax: 01483 594595

e-mail: shs@surreycc.gov.uk

internet:

<http://shs.surreycc.gov.uk>

The Centre is 15 minutes walk from Woking's railway and bus stations.

Local bus services 24, 34, 38, 44 and 48 pass the door.

You can park at the History Centre (access from Kingsway) or buy parking vouchers from the Centre to park in local streets.

Opening hours:

Monday	Closed
Tuesday	9.30-5.00
Wednesday	9.30-5.00
Thursday	9.30-7.30
Friday	9.30-5.00
Saturday	9.30-4.00

The centre is closed on Sundays and on Bank Holiday weekends (including Saturdays).

There is no need to book, though it is wise to do so. You will need a Surrey County Libraries ticket or a CARN card to use the collections.

8th EVELYN JOWETT MEMORIAL LECTURE - 21st OCTOBER 1998 HISTORY OF ST MARY'S CHURCH MERTON by GRAHAM HAWKES

It was fitting that we returned to St Mary's Church Merton to honour our founding Secretary and best-known historian of Merton and Morden, the late Evelyn Jowett, as this was the church at which she worshipped for many years.

It was also fitting that we visited on 21st October, Trafalgar Day, as Nelson regularly attended this church during the short time he lived at Merton Place, and was a close friend of the parson at the time, Rev Thomas Lancaster, whose 14-year old son was a 1st class volunteer on the *Victory* at Trafalgar. The date is also special to the present vicar, Rev Tom Leary, who welcomed us to the church, it being the 6th anniversary of his induction to the parish.

We couldn't have asked for a better speaker on the subject, as Graham Hawkes has been a member of St Mary's for 55 years, having joined as a choirboy at Easter 1943, and also served for 25 years as captain of bell ringers, as well as many years as churchwarden.

However, Graham was the first to admit that there is much about the church that even he doesn't know, and that there are many legends relating to the church which cannot be authenticated.

As we visited at night we were not able to see the stained glass in the east window, the bottom section of which traces the history of the church from its earliest days to the 1950s, when it was installed following bomb damage in 1944. The left side of the window depicts the Saxon predecessor to the present building, mentioned in the Domesday Book, as a thatched wooden building. It was probably on the site of the present building, or adjoining it. The right hand side of the window depicts a 1950s modern city church, including the then churchwarden's car, complete with his actual registration number.

The centre panel recounts two stories from the 12th century, one of which relates to Merton Priory by the Wandle, rather than the parish church. The stories appear in a 14th-century copy of a foundation narrative of the priory, which now belongs to the College of Arms (Arundel MS 28). It begins with the building of the present church by Gilbert the Sheriff:-

Henry (I), king of the English, gave the Ville pertaining to the Crown, called Meriton, or Merton, to Gilbert the Knight, formerly Sheriff, to possess freely in hereditary right: in which ville the same Gilbert most liberally built a church at his own cost, and handsomely decorated it with paintings and other images, as was customary, and, magnificently, caused it to be dedicated to the honour of the Most Blessed Mother of God and Ever Virgin Mary; ... and he ordered the said place with tokens of religion and erected wooden buildings suitable to the requirements of Religion. He then went to the King and prayed his royal licence for the establishment of the Monastery, which the King granted as freely as it was asked.

The narrative then tells how Gilbert invited Robert, sub-prior at Huntingdon, to become the first prior of Merton. The next section is represented in the east window:-

Some persons testified that before the church was built in that place, in the evening hours after sunset, a light was frequently seen to vanish there, and to descend there from Heaven with a gentle motion. What this foretold may be easily conjectured.

However, Prior Robert persuaded Gilbert to rebuild the priory on a better site by the Wandle:-

Wherefore the Sheriff, freehandedly, built the said Church, with assistance of his household, and diligently engaged in the new building; at one moment, with the prior, perambulating the place, now tracing out the site of the church, now measuring the bounds for the cemetery, deciding how the water was to be drawn from the main body, and now to what point the mill should be removed... Thus, with the assistance of neighbours on all sides, the appearance of the place day by day became ameliorated, and a wooden chapel was there at the same time constructed.

The next section is also represented in the east window, though it actually refers to the new priory site:-

At the consecration of the cemetery William Giffard, the Bishop of Winchester, was led thither and received in the sheriff's house with great hospitality. On his arrival occurred an event which was a presage of the future; for while on his way there he met a certain boy, condemned, for theft, to be deprived of his eyesight; whereupon the Bishop, with the intervention of his pastoral staff, rescued him from the imminent peril; by which deed therefore he foreshadowed that in the place which he came to consecrate many should be rescued from the darkness of vice, and be brought by the power of discipline to the light of justice.

The Convent was now transferred to the new building in the year of the Incarnation of the Eternal-from-the-Beginning, 1117; and many hastened thither. This was two years and almost five months after the time when the Prior had entered the limits of the place, and on the fifth of the nones of May (May 3), being the day on which the Lord's Ascension was celebrated, the Brethren, who were now fifteen in number, entered the place of their new habitation, singing *Hail Festive Day*.¹

The church that Gilbert built here before starting on the Priory in 1114 still survives in the nave of the present church, though his apsidal chancel was replaced by the present one early in the 13th century. The south aisle was added in 1856, and the north aisle in 1866.

Although darkness prevented us from seeing the stained glass, it did enable Graham to use the lights to effect a mini *son et lumière* to focus on various parts of the building, most dramatically the nave roof of chestnut, dating from the 13th century, but covered with plaster until 1929. The church guide suggests that the great cross beams were a gift from Henry III in 1125, but this should, of course, be 1225. In July of that year:-

William de Coign'es was ordered to deliver to the Prior the gift of the King of six old oaks in the forest of Windsor, where they could be taken with least harm to the forest, for the works of their church.²

Whether this was the parish church or the priory church is not clear. Apparently the tower of Merton Priory had been blown down in a severe storm in December 1222, necessitating major rebuilding there.

The medieval church would have been cold and dark, with rushes on the floor, and no seating, except perhaps a few benches against the wall for the infirm - the origin of the phrase "The weak go to the wall".

The service, in Latin, would have been led by a chaplain from the Priory. The priest's door, which now leads into the vestry, is some 700 years old, and on the doorframe can still be seen some scratched symbols, identified as a bishop's cross incised many centuries ago.

More recent additions include an impressive, though modest for the period, monument to Sir Gregory Lovell, cofferer to Elizabeth I, who lived at the former priory site. Another monument is to the Smith family, later owners of Abbey Gate House. Rear Admiral Isaac Smith is reputed to have been the first Englishman to set foot on Australian soil, having accompanied Captain Cook on his voyages. The memorial was erected by Cook's widow, a cousin of Rear Admiral Smith.

One of the six hatchments hanging in the north aisle is Rear Admiral Smith's, the others being those of Nelson, Sir William Hamilton, Sir Robert and Lady Burnett, who lived at Morden Hall, and Elizabeth Simon, née Masterman, owner of Spring House, and responsible for the building of the almshouse that still stands in Kingston Road, on the corner of Mostyn Road. Judy Goodman has written a series of articles on the hatchments for the Parish Magazine. Perhaps they could be reprinted in future Bulletins?

A memorial in the south aisle is to Edward Rayne, who owned a farm in the east of West Barnes, and whose name is commemorated by Raynes Park. He was buried beneath the floor of the nave in 1847, and Graham told us that, when the nave was refloored recently, he was able to look at Edward Rayne's bones!

The furniture includes the bench from the box-pew used by Nelson, and a Victorian chair containing a medieval carved panel representing Cain slaying Abel.

The six bells include the oldest bell in regular use in Surrey, dating from c1450, while the newest was donated in 1971 by the first mayor of the London Borough of Merton, Alderman Cyril Marsh.

In the churchyard is the tomb of William Rutlish, court embroiderer to Charles II, who left £400 in trust from property in Merton for 'the putting out poor children born in this parish as apprentices' in 1687. In 1894 the charity paid for the establishing of the Rutlish Science School, now Rutlish School. Another benefactor was Richard Thornton, the millionaire owner of Cannon Hill Park, who left stocks in trust for the building of the school opposite. When the school closed, the trustees, including both Graham and the Vicar, took over Priory Middle School. A third benefactor, also buried in the churchyard, was John Innes, who created the present Merton Park estate.

Our Vice President, Lionel Green, himself a former member of St Mary's, thanked Graham on behalf of the Society, parishioners and visitors, some 80 all told. As he said, Graham exudes history! A most enjoyable and informative evening.

Peter Hopkins

¹ Alfred Heales - *The Records of Merton Priory* (1898) pp1-8; Marvin Colker - 'Latin Texts concerning Gilbert, Founder of Merton Priory' in *Studia Monastica* xii (1970) pp 241-271

² Alfred Heales - *The Records of Merton Priory* (1898) pp 85 & 86

48th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - SATURDAY 7 NOVEMBER

Chairman Eric Montague welcomed 35 members and 2 visitors.

1. Apologies for absence had been received from Viscountess Hanworth, Lionel Green and Mrs J Davis.
2. Minutes of the 47th AGM were distributed before the meeting, and were accepted.

Proposed David Mann, seconded Madeline Healey, accepted *nem con*

3. No matters arising, apart from:-

4. **Duration of Presidential Tenure of office:**

- a. That the term of office of the President should be three years, when he/she could stand for re-election
- b. That the maximum period of office should be three terms (nine consecutive years)

Proposed David Mann, seconded Doris Green, accepted *nem con*

5. **Chairman's Report:** (printed opposite)

6. **Membership Secretary's Report:** C E Sole reported that we had 120 members in 1997/98. Last year he thought that he would need to recommend a rise in subscriptions in the light of inflation, but he now thinks that this can be left for another year.

Proposed Tony Scott, seconded Eric Trim, accepted *nem con*

7. **Treasurer's Report:** David Luff reminded us that the Society is run on the subscriptions from members, and this year income exceeded expenditure by £115.75, in spite of the fact that the cost of publications, both our own and bought in from elsewhere, was more than the income from sales. Petty cash for stamps, envelopes, etc., is a major item. The hire of halls has been kept down, through the use of the Snuff Mill at very reasonable rates, and the use of library facilities free of charge. The cost of the Bulletin has risen slightly this year, but is still well below normal costs. He agreed that there is no need as yet to increase subscriptions. (The Statement of Account is printed on page 11).

No questions were forthcoming. Proposed David Mann, seconded Tony Scott, accepted *nem con*

8. **Appointment of President and a Vice-President. Election of Life Members.**

- a. The Chairman reminded us that the first President of our Society, Col. Bidder, excavated the Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Mitcham, as well as undertaking preliminary excavation at Merton Priory. His successor, Viscountess Rosamund Hanworth, another distinguished archaeologist, stood down in 1996. The Committee have given a great deal of consideration to the choice of a suitable successor, and unanimously recommend to the membership J Scott McCracken BA FSA MIFA to be our third President. Scott is another eminent archaeologist, who has also dug on the Merton Priory site. He is a well known tutor, and, after some recent work in Sweden, now lectures at Birkbeck and elsewhere.

Proposed Dennis Turner, seconded Lionel Green, accepted with acclamation

- b. The Committee recommended that Viscountess Hanworth be invited to serve as a Vice-President.

Proposed Scott McCracken, seconded David Mann, accepted *nem con*.

- c. Miss Winifred Mould and Mrs Jess Bailey were unanimously appointed life members.
9. Vice-President W J Rudd took the chair for the election of Officers for the coming year, and
 10. the election of a Committee for the coming year. (Details on back page).

In spite of an appeal from Tony Scott for additional members for the Committee, no one else offered to stand for election this year.

11. There were no other motions.

12. There being no other business, the meeting closed at 3.15pm.

After a break for tea, Pat Elliott gave a talk on **Christmas Customs**, tracing many of the activities that we now associate with Christmas back to pre-Christian pagan roots. By the 4th century the Christian church felt confident and strong enough to combat pagan influences, and Pope Gregory I set the official birthday of Christ as 25th December, a date celebrated in the pagan cultures of both southern and northern Europe. Over the centuries pagan symbolism was redefined, though by the 1600s the pagan roots were showing through, leading to the banning of Christmas by Oliver Cromwell. Reinstated in 1660, the decline in religious observance in the 18th century saw Christmas sink into oblivion, except in the Hanoverian court. The Victorian Age saw the revival of many old Christmas customs as well as the introduction of new ones.

Peter Hopkins

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Once again, I am able to look back on a year of steady, if not spectacular activity, during which the Society has followed a course based on a formula which seems to meet with the wishes of members. Total membership has remained steady, and we have been pleased to welcome a number of new members. As you will hear later from the Hon. Treasurer, our financial situation also continues in a satisfactory state. Your appreciation of the Committee's efforts to provide an interesting mix of talks and visits has been manifest by the attendances, and looking back over our programme for 1997/98 I think we managed to get the balance of subject matter about right. Work is far advanced on producing the programme for the next 12 months, much of it, as usual, with a local bias.

Here I must again express a special word of thanks on your behalf to our Hon. Secretary, Sheila Harris, on whose shoulders much of the work of making the necessary arrangements inevitably falls.

Reports of our meetings and visits have appeared in the quarterly Bulletin, so further comment from me is unnecessary. Whilst on the subject of the Bulletin, I am sure you would all support me in an expression of appreciation to Judith Goodman, our Editor. As you know, Judith has occupied the editorial chair since it was vacated by Margery Ledgerton, who is now living at Horsham. Always a "good read", the Bulletin has gone from strength to strength. Virtually complete sets have now been supplied to Surrey Record Office and English Heritage, and a gratifying indication of the standing the Bulletin has achieved is the number of requests received from organisations and libraries who wish to be included in the mailing list.

This brings me to your Committee, without which the Society could not function. We have met on eight occasions over the last 12 months, the venue being the Wandle Industrial Museum, to the funds of which it was felt appropriate to make a contribution in appreciation.

The Society's constitution makes provision for up to 10 elected members to the Committee in addition to the officers. Elected members may not serve for more than three consecutive years. This year most of the existing Committee members are eligible for re-election and willing to serve a third year. This means that if they are elected the Committee should remain quorate but, as in recent years, we will have vacancies. It is still not too late for any member or members who feel they would like to be a little more closely associated with the work of the Society to offer themselves for election at this meeting. You can be assured of a welcome.

Possibly one of the most notable activities of the Society over the last twelve months has been in the field of publishing. Here, thanks to our Vice-Chairman, Peter Hopkins, it has been possible to maintain the flow of booklets and leaflets on local subjects. The latest publications include *The Railways of Merton* by our Vice-President, Lionel Green, and *A History of Lord Nelson's Merton Place* by Peter Hopkins, building on the work of the late John Wallace. Copies of both are on sale today. As an experiment, Peter has also produced some large-print versions of three of our booklets, which may be appreciated by some of our readers. Drafts of several others are circulating amongst our "editorial sub-committee" and will be released soon.

Here I would like to make a special plea for someone to assist Peter Harris in the distribution and marketing of these publications. If anyone would like to know a little more of what is involved before committing themselves, please have a word with him.

Over the years we have collected a considerable "library" of local history publications, mainly journals and newsletters from other societies. This year Mrs. Bailey kindly presented the Society with her late husband Jack's collection dealing with the history of railways. Miss Gummow MBE, one of our founder members, has also most generously placed in our custody an extremely interesting collection of maps and other material of local interest. This potentially valuable archive is housed, with our collection of archaeological material and other historical items, in our store at Lower Morden Library. This should be made more available to members, and the committee will need to give some thought on how this might be achieved. Once again, a volunteer would be welcomed (preferably with some library experience), initially to catalogue what we hold.

Whilst founder members are in mind, I think I should mention that recently Mr and Mrs Arthur Turner moved from Churston Drive, Morden, to the Moreton Hill Care Centre, Stonehouse, Gloucestershire. We understand that Mr Turner, who is one of our vice-presidents, is keeping well, but that Mrs Turner is now rather frail. If any of you would like their full address, I have it with me.

You will have seen from the Bulletin that our local history workshops have continued to be held throughout the year at the Wandle Industrial Museum. Completely informal, these have proved stimulating and fascinating, and are open to anyone, whether they are following a particular line of research, or would merely like to come and listen.

In my report last year I dealt at some length with the contacts maintained with kindred organisations, with departments of Merton Council, and other official bodies. These have continued over the year. In particular I would mention our close collaboration with the London Ecology Unit in compiling the historical sections of their latest volume, *Nature Conservation in Merton*, which was launched in September.

As in previous years the Society has been happy to assist with projects initiated by Sarah Gould, the Borough's Heritage Officer, supplying items from our collections, and also assisting at the Heritage Open Day in September. The Heritage Forum, established by Merton Libraries and Heritage Service in 1996 as the Heritage Working Group, has now been reinvigorated with the appointment of new staff in the Department, and promises to become a valuable means of bringing together various bodies in the Borough sharing a common interest in local history. Merton Historical Society is, of course, represented on the Forum, and our co-operation has been promised with a new Oral History project initiated by the Heritage Department which, it is hoped, will be supported by a Millennium Grant.

Finally, I wish to express my personal thanks to the members of the Committee for their support over the last twelve months, and to your Vice-Chairman, Peter Hopkins, who has fulfilled his role so admirably, standing in on those occasions when I needed to be in two (or more) places at the same time.

Eric Montague

COMMITTEE MEMBERS 1998-1999

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.

Printed by Peter Hopkins