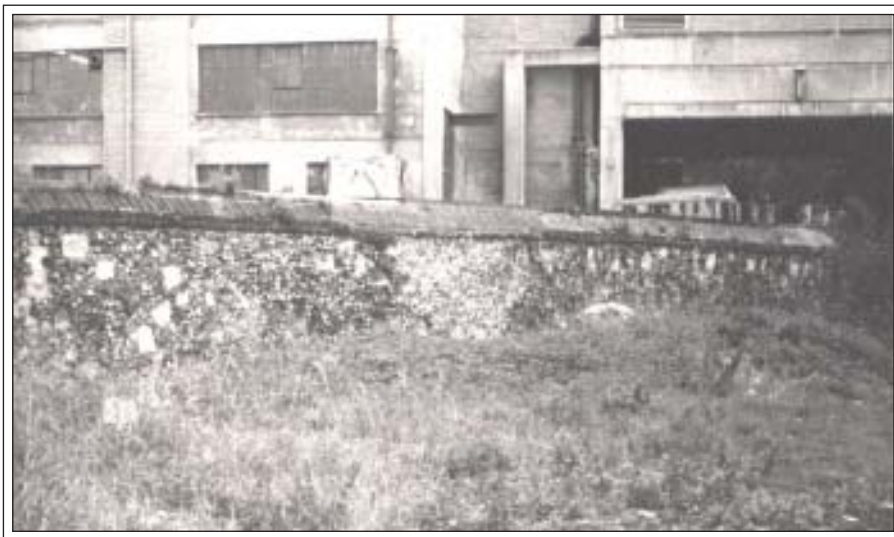


**CYRIL MAIDMENT has discovered more photographs of
THE WALL OF MERTON PRIORY**

Evelyn Jowett was very active in the Merton Historical Society and also the Museum and the Local History Group of the Wimbledon Society. She contributed 251 important photos to the Museum collection, forty of which are outside the Parish of Wimbledon and half of these are of the Merton Board Mills, prior to demolition in February 1984. Recently in the Museum we were thrilled to come across three photographs taken in 1973 of the wall of Merton Priory.

The map shows where she stood to take the photographs. Fortunately there is a good selection of photographs of the wall, and many can be seen in Lionel Green's book *A Priory Revealed* pp 62-63. Most of these sections no longer exist.

1.

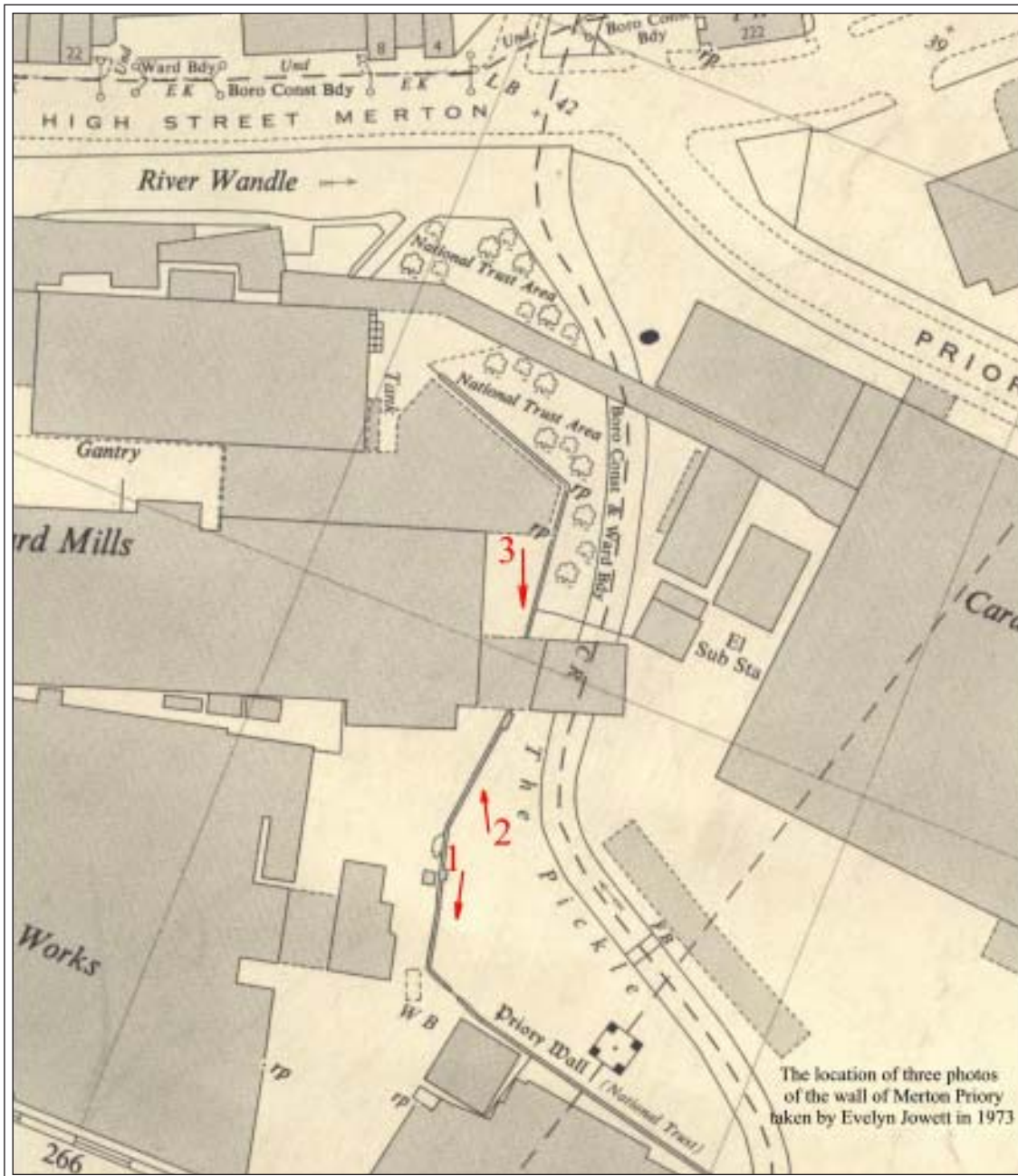


The two that are still with us are in Station Road, and on the west bank of the Pickle on National Trust land that can be viewed, in the shrubbery, from the Priory Retail Park (Currys and PC World). It is this section that Evelyn Jowett photographed, and a modern view, 2007, is included

2.

3.





Extract from the large-scale Ordnance Survey map of 1966



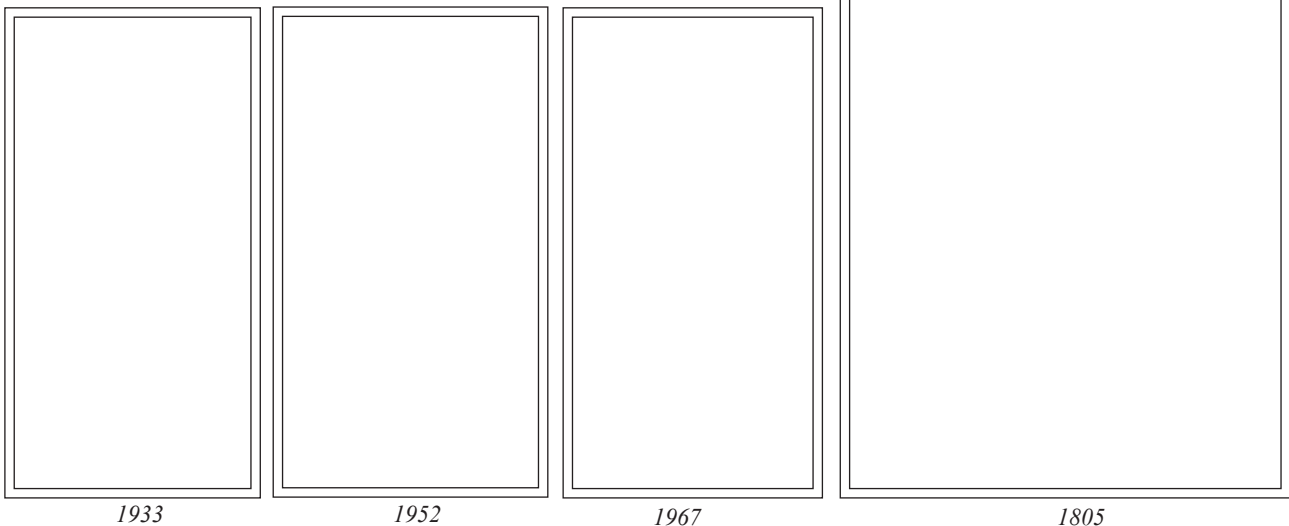
Photograph of the wall of Merton Priory taken in 2007, same section as 3 but from the other side

Friday 16 October 2009 – David Haunton in the chair

- ◆ **Peter Hopkins** had been tracking down photos in the Local Studies Centre to illustrate a forthcoming memoir by Ronald Read, who lived in Central Road from 1932 to 1957. In particular he had found photographs annotated with comments on lives saved in severe local bombings.

Peter had also found more documents at The National Archives concerning the on-going disputes over the rights of local people to use the 360 acres of Sparrowfield Common. The 16th-century ‘plots’ were still being used in the early 18th-century, though by that time the former landmarks were unrecognisable.

- ◆ **Cyril Maidment** showed two A3 maps he had prepared for the London Open House weekend at the (Merton priory) Chapter House under Meranton Way. One was this beautiful tracing of the 1805 map of the 65-acre ‘Merton Abbey’ estate held at Surrey History Centre. The other was a development of part of Dave Saxby’s map on page 5 of the MOLAS book *Merton Priory*, showing the location of contemporary buildings.



Cyril had also traced the life of a section of Priory wall, that had been progressively destroyed by the Liberty silk-printing works despite the fact that it was in the care of the National Trust. In 1805 the wall was linked to the north side of the High Path, Station Road, wall, which incorporated the High Gate, the location of which can be seen. In 1933 most of it was still there. In 1952 half of it had been removed, the remainder was National Trust. In 1967, only 20% remained, still National Trust. Today, 2009, there is nothing left.

- ◆ **Judith Goodman** had been sent a photocopied view of an elegant but functional (Charles Holden) bus shelter at Shannon Corner. She had been able to date the view to 1933/34, thanks to a film poster (for the Regal, Wimbledon) in the background, advertising *My Lips Betray*, starring Lilian Harvey and John Boles. [Later note: The Regal, in the Broadway, opened in November 1933, so the image probably dates from the following year. The film, made in 1933, was held back briefly by the studio in favour of another one with the same stars.]

Dave Saxby, who has been trawling a number of old newspapers, had passed the following news item to her, from the *General Advertiser* of Wednesday 29 November 1749:

Saturday last being the birthday of John Cecil, Esq; of Martin Abbey in the county of Surry, the same was observed with great splendour, a great many cannon were fired, and the evening concluded with bonfires and a great number of very fine fireworks and other demonstrations of joy.

John Cecil was a calico printer at Merton Abbey, and probably lived at Abbey House.

- ◆ **Rosemary Turner** was gathering information on the area where she grew up, south of the western end of Central Road, Morden, with a view to producing a *Local History Note* or something similar on a mansion, a pond, Lodge Farm and Farm Lane (later Road). She had obtained an interesting series of maps.
- ◆ **David Haunton** remarked on the end of SCOLA, the Standing Conference on London Archaeology. Following an enquiry from a previous resident (now living in Chester), David had found reports in local papers of the explosion in March 1933 at the factory of W J Bush & Co, perfume distillers. There is a good photograph on page 117 of Eric Montague’s *Phipp’s Bridge* book.

Cyril Maidment

Next workshops: Fridays 15 January and 5 March at 2.30pm at Wandle Industrial Museum

DAVID LUFF examines

THE PRIORY WALL

On page 7 of the December *Bulletin* reference was made to a section of wall that once ran down the eastern boundary of the old Liberty works, and it was described as having been part of the priory's precinct wall. However, from the photographs you can see that it did not at all resemble any of the three surviving sections. These can be found, one alongside the Pickle in the grounds of Sainsbury's supermarket, one in Station Road, and one behind the maisonettes in Windsor Avenue.

The only section to have been restored is the one in Station Road, and that is because it is on a public road, and was almost collapsing. The section in Windsor Avenue is in very poor condition, and that by the Pickle has been left for nature to destroy, partly covered by ivy and hemmed in by shrubs and trees.

The former wall in the Liberty works site may be marked on maps as part of the priory wall, but was not regarded as such when I worked there. Could there once have been two walls here – one a part of the precinct wall and one just a boundary wall? The former could have been demolished and the name transferred to the latter.



The priory wall in Station Road, after repair. Photo: D Luff



*The wall at Liberty's Printing Works, demolished 1989
Photo: D Luff*

Reference was also made to Liberty's having destroyed the section of wall on their land. This is correct for a large part of the wall, demolished in the last war, but not for the remaining section shown on the 1967 map. This was still standing after the print works closed in 1982. Its demolition took place in 1988/9, when the site was converted into Merton Abbey Mills.

During the redevelopment in the late 1980s I cannot recall the retention of this wall being considered, though it fell within the environs of two listed buildings and could have been protected. The only people who may now be able to explain why the wall was demolished would be the Museum of London, who are the experts on the priory site, and who acted as advisers to Sainsbury's, the London Borough of Merton, the developers and other interested parties.

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.

website: www.mertonhistoricalsociety.org.uk email: mhs@mertonhistoricalsociety.org.uk

Printed by Peter Hopkins