



PRESIDENT: Lionel Green

VICE PRESIDENTS: Viscountess Hanworth, Eric Montague and William Rudd

BULLETIN NO. 164

CHAIR: Judith Goodman

DECEMBER 2007



PROGRAMME DECEMBER-MARCH



Saturday 8 December 2.30pm **St Mark's Church Centre**
'Remembering the Mizens'

A speaker from Groundwork Merton will give an illustrated talk on this important family of Mitcham market gardeners.

The Centre is in St Mark's Road, Mitcham, close to the town centre and bus routes.

Saturday 19 January 2.30pm **Mitcham Methodist Church Hall**
'The Life and Times of Henry Tate, Streatham's Sweet Benefactor'

Brian Bloice of the Streatham Society, who is always a welcome speaker, will be telling us about the wealthy sugar refiner and philanthropist who lived at Park Hill, Streatham, and whose name lives on in more than one institution.

The Methodist church is in Cricket Green, a short walk from bus routes and Tramlink.

Saturday 9 February 2.30pm **St James Church, Martin Way**
'Historical Pubs of Merton'

Clive Whichelow, who is one of our members, is the author of a well-researched and readable book about the pubs of the old parish of Merton, and he has also led a walk on the same subject for us in 2005. He has many interesting stories and illustrations to share with us about the past and present pubs of Merton.

St James church is on the 164 bus route, and about ten minutes walk from Morden town centre.

Saturday 23 February **Annual Lunch**
Booking form enclosed

Saturday 1 March 2.30pm **Raynes Park Library Hall**
'London's Markets, Market Halls and Exchanges'

Professor David Perrett will speak about a once highly important, and picturesque, aspect of London's commercial life that is fast declining.

Raynes Park Library hall is on or close to several bus routes and near the station.

Please enter the hall via the Aston Road entrance. Very limited parking.

The Society's events are open to the general public, but entry to lectures for non-members is £2 per head, towards our running costs.



‘FROM DOUBLEGATE TO SINGLEGATE’

The members and friends who braved the threatening weather on 19 August and met at South Wimbledon station were rewarded by a walk along High Street, Merton, made most enjoyable by the expert leadership of Cyril Maidment. He first explained the title of the walk. By the 19th century 20,000 miles of roads were administered by turnpike trusts, set up by Acts of Parliament to maintain and improve the highways, previously the responsibility of the parishes. Following an Act of 1755 the Doublegate and Singlegate were erected, enabling the trust to take tolls respectively at the junction of roads to and from Kingston, Epsom and Reigate at the western end of the High Street, and at Colliers Wood, on the high road to London. The trusts were wound up later in the 19th century and their responsibilities assumed by borough and county councils. The Doublegate tollhouse stood in the road where South Wimbledon station now is, and seems to have been a rather elegant octagon, in contrast to the humble weatherboard building at Singlegate, where Colliers Wood station now stands.



*‘Double Gates June 1870’
postcard postmarked 1911*

The High Street area has been the subject of recent articles and publications by the Society, and is associated with Merton priory, Sir Richard Hotham, Lord Nelson and William Morris. The street itself forms the boundary between Merton and Wimbledon. Starting at the western end we first considered Hotham, who by the 1760s had made a fortune in the hat trade and the East India Company, and bought Moat Farm, on the Merton side, which he improved and renamed Merton Place, and a lot of land on the Wimbledon side. However, in 1792, when developing Bognor, in Sussex, he sold everything here except one field. On this field, which lay between Kingston Road and Merton Road, at Doublegate, he built a fine house, Merton Grove. The site has been built over, but a Hassell watercolour shows a variety of Venetian and Strawberry Hill Gothic windows not unlike those of Gothic Lodge, Southside, Wimbledon.

The Wimbledon side of the High Street, apart from three houses built by James Perry in 1790, beyond the bus garage, was developed in the second half of the 19th century, and 90 percent of it has not been further developed. In Hamilton Road is Rose Cottage, dating from about 1810 and built on eight acres of the former Nelson estate by Hamnett Pinhey, a young London importer, who ten years later emigrated to Canada. Without its garden, and with unsympathetic replacement door and windows, the house is hardly recognisable as Georgian.

Nelson’s association with the area is well known but, as little now but the names of streets and pubs refer to it, it was agreeable to be led to a spot outside an electrical shop, opposite the Merton Place plaque in Doel Close. Looking south-east across the street, this was the viewpoint of the north and west sides of Merton Place, with the ‘Nile’ bridge to the left, familiar from an engraving after Locker of 1804. At the end of Haydons Road we were on the site of Thomas Bennett’s property, which included the stables leased by Nelson in 1801. Here we considered the possible survival of the tunnel beneath the road, connecting Merton Place with its land in Wimbledon parish, the earliest reference to which dates from 1790.

On the opposite side, perhaps the architectural highlight of the High Street is the *Nelson Arms*, with its attractive tile pictures of the hero and his ship *Victory*. Round the corner, at the junction of Abbey Road and Hillborough Close, we stood on or near the spot from which the other well-known, north-eastern, view of Merton Place, published by Warren in 1806, was taken.

Mill Road passes over the site of Abbey Gate House and its garden, once the home of Merton’s other admiral, Isaac Smith, who at the age of 16 was perhaps the first of Cook’s crew to set foot on Australia. He is buried in the churchyard of St Mary, Merton, and his hatchment, together with those of Sir William Hamilton and Lord Nelson, is in the church.



*Rose Cottage
photo Cyril Maidment 2006
watercolour c.1810*

From the southern end of Mill Road we reached the Wandle. Here, from a high bank, we looked down on miniature rapids and savoured an almost wild atmosphere. We heard of the millpond, once nearby, beyond which stood the Morris carpet and tapestry workshops. A Coade keystone, dated 1792, from a lost bridge here is in the Wimbledon Society museum.

From the gateway at Station Road and Merantun Way we looked south to the site of Abbey House. When it was demolished in 1914 the Norman arch was discovered that now stands outside St Mary, Merton. The 14th-century Gothic window, seen in an engraving of c.1800, came from a chapel nearby. The area is now covered by Merton Abbey Mills, preserved buildings formerly occupied by Liberty's textile-printing works. The site of the priory church lies north-east, mainly under Sainsbury's car-park and Merantun Way. Sculptured fragments from the priory can be seen at the Museum of London, and a delicately carved head with a jewelled fillet, once brightly coloured, was discovered in 1797 and given to the Society of Antiquaries by Sir William Hamilton. It is currently displayed in the Gallery of the Enlightenment at the British Museum.

On 16 June 1881 William Morris signed the lease of a seven-acre site at Merton Abbey, comprising land on both sides of the Wandle towards the north of what had been the priory precinct. It had been selected jointly by Morris and his friend, the decorative potter William De Morgan. The latter's lustreware works were in fact sited some 600 metres away, beyond the Singlegate in Colliers Wood, but his trademark remained 'Merton Abbey'. Among the 19 printed textile patterns William Morris registered during his time at Merton Abbey were those named after tributaries of the Thames, including 'Wandle'. The business continued after his death: examples of the stained glass are at St Mary, Merton, and some of the enormous tapestries can be seen in Lancing College chapel, Sussex. A block of flats occupies the sites of Morris's office and design room and the caretaker's and apprentices' accommodation.

Cyril now took us into the remains of the priory's chapter house and showed us his collection of old and new views and maps illustrating the relationship between former buildings and today's layout of roads.

Those who wished now walked on to Colliers Wood station, the site of the Singlegate, noting, on the north side, the King's Head, rebuilt in 1931, now converted to offices for the bus garage, the three houses from 1790, then Wandle Bank. Wandlebank House, which stood in Wandle Park, was the home of James Perry, editor of the *Morning Chronicle*. His memorial is in the vestibule of St Mary, Wimbledon.

Finally, to return to the subject of turnpike roads, a milestone inscribed 'Whitehall 8 miles/Cornhill 9 miles' is recorded as having been sited near the Royal Six Bells, in front of Wandle Park.

Ray Ninnis

GOODBYE TO LAMPERT'S

It was sad to learn in September that the nice people at Lampert's were hanging up their overalls and rolling down the shutters for the last time.

The 1862 Post Office Directory of Surrey seems to have been the first directory to list in its 'Commercial' section for Merton 'Lamport[sic] William Waller, blacksmith'. By 1870 the spelling was corrected and Mr Lampert described himself as 'whitesmith & bellhanger, High Street'. A whitesmith was someone who worked primarily with tin, and did other metal work that did not involve forging, and a bellhanger installed bells. Later he appeared as a 'gas, electrical and hot water fitter', but by early last century 'Lampert, William Waller' was listed simply as 'Ironmonger', and the address as 113 High Street. These premises, probably the business's original home, lay between Morden Road and Pincott Road, and survived until a whole stretch of the High Street was redeveloped for housing in the 1970s. When that happened Lampert's moved to a corner site in Pincott Road, and carried on.

The last proprietors, father and son Tony and Gary Stockham, believe the business to have been founded in 1854, though 1861 was the date on the fascia of the old shop. In either case it is likely to have been (excluding pubs), the oldest business in the old parish of Merton, when it closed. It was a traditional ironmonger's, with the counter just inside the door, and a cavernous interior which housed rack after rack crammed with tools, with cardboard boxes of nuts, bolts, screws and nails, with solder and lubricants, with machine parts, with fireguards and shovels – and hardly a blister-pack to be seen. Lampert's was as welcoming and helpful to the seeker after a single nut-and-bolt or zinc bucket as to the local works managers who used to keep them busy, when Merton was full of factories.



*Gary Stockham in the doorway of Lampert's
JG 2006*

Lampert's will be sadly missed.

JG

VISIT TO THE LONDON FIRE BRIGADE MUSEUM

On 20 September about 20 members were given a conducted tour of the Museum, in Southwark Bridge Road. The main part of the building dates from 1878, when it opened as headquarters for the London Fire brigade, although the oldest part dates from 1810 and had previous existences as a workhouse, hatmaker's and pleasure garden. The site was also (and still is) used for training new recruits. These at one time were solely ex-sailors, who were used to discipline and hard work, but nowadays come from many walks of life. There are now around 200 women out of the total of 6000. There is still one operational fire-engine in Southwark fire station next door, and this is one of the busiest in London. The headquarters moved to Lambeth in 1937, but will return to Southwark in 2008, albeit to another building a few yards away.

The tour began in the old engine hall, now an exhibition of historic engines. The oldest item is a manual engine, of a type patented in 1725 (although this one is more recent), which was man-hauled to the fire and had two men on each side to pump. From c. 1800 horse-drawn engines were introduced, and this permitted larger pumps with up to 20 men pumping. Steam fire-engines were introduced in the 1860s, constructed mainly by Merryweather and by Shand Mason. The boiler was kept warm all the time, and full steam could be raised in 6-7 minutes. The steam pressure allowed much stronger water jets to be used, which could reach the highest buildings. However, these engines were still horse-drawn. A separate wheeled escape ladder would also attend the fire.



From the early 1900s petrol-engine vehicles became available, and the last horse-drawn engines were retired in 1921. The new engines incorporated bells, longer ladders, hoses and a large water tank. Fire bells on engines were only introduced around this time, as previously the crew used a special 'shout', and this term has persisted in fire brigade jargon for any emergency call-out. The latest engine on display is a 1971 Dennis incorporating a wheeled escape, two stages of hose (small rubber hose on a reel for initial use and for smaller fires, and canvas hose for drawing water from hydrants and for larger fires). Breathing apparatus was also carried as standard. Canvas hose is no longer used because it has to be dried thoroughly each time.

Also on display was a trailer pump from the 1940s which could be pulled by any vehicle (commonly a taxi) or could be manhandled if necessary through streets full of Blitz debris which would otherwise be impassable. There was also a fire alarm call post, worked by telegraph, which was used to call out the fire brigade before telephones were common. The last one of these was removed as recently as 1958.

In the main museum building we were given a chronological survey of the LFB from the Parish Pump Act c. 1650 through fire insurance companies (1682) with their competing fire brigades, the London Fire Engine Establishment (1833) formed from the ten biggest insurance companies, the Metropolitan Fire Brigade (1866) when fire fighting became a local government responsibility, the Auxiliary Fire Service (1938) and the National Fire Brigade Service (1941) formed to tackle the Blitz, the London Fire and Civil Defence Authority (1970) with a wider remit to include fire prevention and other emergencies, to the present London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority, still commonly referred to as the London Fire Brigade.

Each stage was well illustrated with contemporary items including fire marks, uniforms and helmets, breathing apparatus, models, pictures and photographs of the major fires in London that have been used to improve the equipment and safety of the fireman. The tour concluded with a look at fire prevention and investigation, including the use of dogs to detect accelerants, e.g. petrol, used to start a fire.

Desmond Bazley

Madder at Mitcham

From R Chenciner *Madder Red: a history of luxury and trade* Curzon Press, Richmond, Surrey (2000) p.126

“...[A]n observant French traveller to London in 1773 ... professionally remarked on the madder ovens he saw at Mitcham in Surrey and Stratford in East London.”

Could the Mitcham ovens have been those of John Arbuthnot of the Ravensbury textile printing works? Arbuthnot's enterprise is discussed in Eric Montague's *Textile Bleaching and Printing in Mitcham and Merton 1590-1879* MHS (1992) and in articles by Eric, John Pile and Judith Goodman in *Bulletins* 141 and 142.

The sources which Chenciner gives are J Thirsk *Alternative Agriculture: A History from the Black Death to the Present Day*, Oxford 1997 p.116 and S Chassagne *Oberkampf: un Entrepreneur capitaliste au Siècle des Lumières* Paris 1980 pp.119-120

JG

A SECOND VISIT TO CRICKET GREEN, MITCHAM

Tony Scott met a small, but appreciative, group of members on Saturday 29 September, on a more pleasant afternoon than the morning had augured, to look at the stretch of Cricket Green there had been no time to discuss on his June walk. He began with the **milestone** in London Road. It reads 'Whitehall 8½ Miles' and 'Royal Exchange 9 Miles' and dates from 1745 when the turnpike trust that maintained the road until about 1870 was set up.

Elm Lodge, the pretty stuccoed villa on the corner with London Road, was built by Edward Tanner Worsfold, a maltster, at the beginning of the 19th century, and soon afterwards occupied by John Parrott, a local doctor with a prosperous practice. In fact for most of its life Elm Lodge has housed doctors. Its few non-medical residents include the artist (Sir) William Nicholson, who, with his wife Mabel and his infant son Ben, lived there for a few months late in the 19th century.

Next door is **Mitcham Court**. A yellow brick house with an Ionic porch, this was originally called Elm Court. The centre three bays were built by John Parrott around 1824, and it was a later owner, sugar broker Caesar Czarnikow, who extended it with wings at each side and renamed it, more grandly. This house might have become Mitcham Borough's town hall, for it was sold on generous terms, with its land, to the Borough in 1936 by its last private owner (Sir) Harry Mallaby-Deeley MP. But war intervened, and in the event it was council departments that occupied the building until, after the creation of the Borough of Merton in 1965, it was sold.

Cold Blows, the narrow passageway through to Commonsides East, takes its name from fields that were once nearby and is part of a mile-long ancient right of way connecting the parish church with the East Field.

Sir Isaac Wilson (1862-1944) was, like Czarnikow and Mallaby-Deeley, active and generous in the life of Mitcham. He was born near Carlisle, became a draper in Durham, and then moved south to join his brother as a builder. He was responsible for many Mitcham houses, including **Brampton** and possibly **Avoca**, and he and his wife lived at several addresses before, in the late 1920s, he built **The Birches**, a 'Queen Anne' house set well back from the road. Wilson funded the building of the Wilson Hospital and of Mitcham Garden Village. The Cumberland Hospital (named after Wilson's birth county) was later built in the grounds of The Birches.

The White House, three storeys high and three bays wide, probably dates from the 1790s, though its Doric porch is a Regency embellishment. It was home from about 1820 to another local medical man, Dr A C Bartley, and later to his daughter Emma Jane who published some of her recollections of Mitcham.

Next door is **Chestnut Cottage**, another Georgian house, whose front and back sections are separately roofed and have been separately occupied at times. The front is thought to be the older. The façade is pebbledashed, and the Ionic porch is a later addition.

After a pair of cottages, **Nos 11 and 13**, dating from perhaps the 1830s, with matching pretty porches, is the recent small development called **Chart Close**, after the family who, as builders, surveyors and local officers, served Mitcham for many years.

Then comes the **Methodist church** of 1958. Tony explained the complicated story of Methodism in Mitcham – the breakaways and comings together of different groups – and pointed out, across the Green, **No.46**, now a dwelling, but built in 1789 as a Wesleyan meeting-house.

The **police station** dates from 1965 and replaces the previous one built in 1877, though 1841 was the date of the first police station in Mitcham.

We then looked at **the obelisk** erected in 1822 by the vicar to commemorate the sudden appearance of a spring at the end of three consecutive summers of drought. Four biblical texts are inscribed on it.



No. 46 Cricket Green : JG 2007

The **Catholic church of SS Peter and Paul** dates from 1889. The land was given by the Simpson family who had established a Mass centre more than 30 years earlier and continued to be great benefactors to the Catholics of Mitcham. F A Walters, who had just designed the Sacred Heart church in Wimbledon, was the architect. To round off our Cricket Green tour we were able to enjoy a walk round the church.

Many thanks to Tony for an enjoyable and interesting afternoon.

Judith Goodman

‘LITERARY MERTON AND MORDEN’

This year’s Evelyn Jowett Memorial Lecture was given to a good-sized audience at the Raynes Park Library Hall on 13 October by Judith Goodman, chair of this Society, and a local historian of Merton.

She began by explaining that the writers she was going to talk about were a mixed collection – some important, some good, some endearingly bad, but all of interest. All lived, or went to school, or worked in Merton or Morden, or spent a significant time visiting the area. They were dealt with in chronological order – only a selection is mentioned here.

James Lackington (1746-1815) was the renowned owner of a bargain bookshop that he established in Finsbury Square, called the Temple of the Muses – one of the sights of London, stocked with 30,000 books. He lived at Spring House in the Kingston Road, and here he wrote his memoirs, running to several editions. In the churchyard of St Mary’s, Merton Park, is the tombstone of his second wife, Dorcas, which carries an epitaph written by her husband. It begins:

Ladies who chance to frisk this way,
With honest hearts and Spirits gay,
A serious moment give to one,
Who sleeps beneath this Earth & stone.

Richard Brinsley Sheridan (1751-1816) was a playwright (*The Rivals*, *The School for Scandal* etc), theatre manager and politician. He almost certainly spent the first part of his (first) honeymoon at Morden Park. Although he visited Merton, and Morden, on other occasions, there is no evidence that he ever lived in Merton, though, when John Innes started developing Merton Park, he was thought to have done so, and one of the new roads was called Sheridan Road.

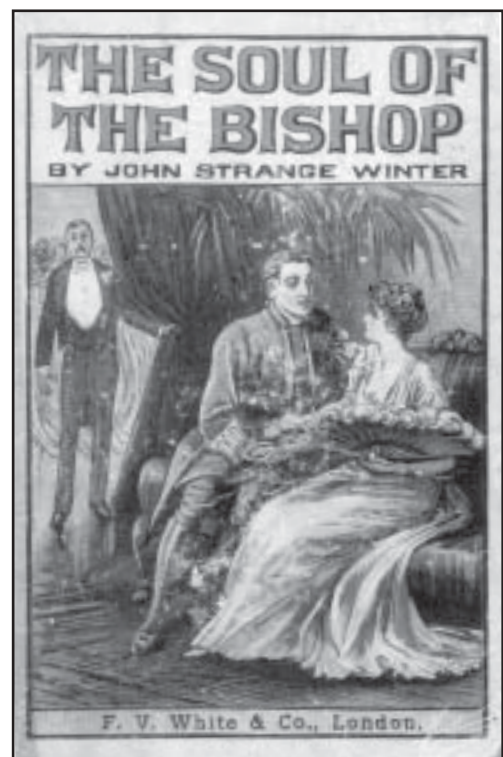
Leigh Hunt (1784-1859) was an essayist, editor and poet. In his autobiography he describes the time he spent when a child visiting his rich aunt at Spring House, Merton, as ‘three of the happiest weeks’ of his life. Compared with the austere life at Christ’s Hospital School he relished the plentiful food and freedom. He had fond memories of a beautiful young maiden he saw washing linen in the Wandle. Perhaps that was the inspiration for one of his better-known poems:

Say that health and wealth have missed me,
Say I’m growing old, but add –
Jenny kissed me.

William Morris (1834-1896) had his workshops at Merton Abbey, by the Wandle, and often stayed overnight at the office of Morris & Co in the High Street. In his lifetime he was more famous as a prolific writer than as a designer/craftsman. Much of his writing was undertaken when he was running the business in Merton, and he once said, “If a chap can’t compose an epic poem while he’s weaving a tapestry he had better shut up”.

Henrietta Stannard (1856-1911) was an editor and writer, publishing well over 100 popular novels and many short stories, mainly under the male *nom de plume* John Strange Winter. Her husband gave up his job to be her manager; they had four children. Judith Goodman’s admiration for such independent-minded capable women was evident in her presentation. Henrietta’s most successful novel was *Bootles’ Baby*, about a young army officer, nicknamed ‘Bootles’, who adopts a baby left in his barracks, and later falls in love with a young woman who turns out to be the child’s mother. The Stannards moved to Merton in 1892 – to Spring House (was there something about the place that attracted writers?) – where Henrietta wrote further novels, including *The Soul of the Bishop*, another romantic tale, this time about a handsome young bishop and a beautiful young woman, whose love comes to grief over the 39 Articles (doctrinal statements to which the clergy must give assent). The Stannards later moved to France, where they befriended the disgraced Oscar Wilde. He once said of John Strange Winter, “A charming lady, he is a charming lady; but I would rather talk to her than read his books”.

Havelock Ellis (1859-1939) qualified as a doctor, and is best known for his studies in sexuality. But he was also an important literary figure – he was the first editor since Shakespeare’s day to



publish unexpurgated texts of Shakespeare's plays; the Mermaid edition of play texts, which he founded, still exists. As a boy he lived in Hartfield Road, Wimbledon, and attended St Mary's, Merton, and the school at the old Church House, opposite.

Sidney Champion (1891-1978) was self-educated, a journalist by profession, but also a qualified teacher and lawyer. For over 40 years he lived, with his wife, in Erridge Road, Merton Park. He is still remembered by some residents, as an oddity. He was an obsessive man, somewhat oblivious to the sensitivities of others. His five volumes of autobiography are full of repetition and his delusions of grandeur, as revealed by the titles, such as *Reaching High Heaven* and *Only The Stars Remain*. He wrote that he had many of the qualities, which he listed, to become Prime Minister, but in real life he got no nearer than reporting on proceedings in Parliament for a trade union.

Raynes Park County School for Boys. The first headmaster of the school (now the mixed Raynes Park High School) was the extraordinary John Garrett, who knew W H Auden at Oxford, and got him to write the school song. Garrett and Auden co-edited a successful poetry collection called *The Poet's Tongue*, for use in schools. Garrett persuaded other major literary figures of the day to get involved with the school – C Day Lewis, Stephen Spender, L A G Strong, T S Eliot and Robert Graves. The school has produced several writers, including broadcasters Paul Vaughan and Robert Robinson, who wrote about their schooldays in their autobiographies.

Edna O'Brien (1932-) wrote her first three novels – the *Country Girl* trilogy – while living in Cannon Hill Lane, Merton. Her husband Ernest Gébler was also an author. Ms O'Brien had confirmed to Judith Goodman that a scene early in the novel *Girls in their Married Bliss* was suggested by the appearance of Cannon Hill Common in the bitter winter of 1962-3. The wife in the novel is standing by the lake with her young son reading the names of the fish – 'carp, bleak, bream' – that 'proliferated in that unlikely half-acre of miserable stagnant water'. The names sounded like '... a litany of moods that any woman might feel any Monday morning after she'd hung out her washing and caught a glimpse of a ravishing man going somewhere alone in a motor-car'.

The lecture was most entertaining and full of interest, and left many in the audience keen to read (or, in some cases, to avoid reading!) the writings of those that Judith Goodman talked about. It was well illustrated with slides of the literary figures and of local buildings associated with them.

David Roe

Surfing the Net for Merton Abbey Station

Bulletin readers may recall my article in the March 2005 issue where I described the delights of train-spotting from the office window of Young & Company (Westminster) Ltd's works in High Path in the 1950s. Browsing on the Internet recently, I came across Peter Wright's excellent web pages, full of historic and nostalgic photographs of Merton Abbey Station and the single-track goods line I had known so well. Visit www.overground.doeth.net to bring back your memories of the station and the line now buried deep below Merantun Way. There are fourteen views of the station and the line taken in August 1970 and ten supplementary photographs and maps, some taken before and some taken after this date, including a view of Merton Abbey Board Mills with its three tall chimneys. Like all good websites, this one has links that branch out in surprising directions, mostly concerned with public transport routes in the south London area that are now no more than memories. Time slipped away as I explored them: a 1968 view, to take just one example, from Merton Abbey Station towards Christchurch Road bridge with the bulk of the Eyre Smelting Works and Fry's Die-casting Works looming above it. Another link, Before Tramlink, took me on a visual journey on the Wimbledon to West Croydon line, looking at early photographs of the stations en route. A view of the Beddington Lane level-crossing with the crossing-keeper 'exchanging tokens' with the train driver brought back the memory of waiting at this crossing with my bicycle and witnessing this very necessary act in which batons were exchanged as a safety measure on this single-track section of the line. Another link, David Bradley Online, took me back to journeys made half a century ago on the 654 trolleybus from Sutton Green to Crystal Palace. I could go on about my personal voyages of discovery among these reminders of days gone by, but why don't you enjoy your own trip down Memory Line?



*Merton Abbey Station, looking east to Christchurch Road
copy print from Lens of Sutton*

John Pile

LOCAL HISTORY WORKSHOP

Friday 31 August - 5 present - Judith Goodman in the chair

◆ We were pleased to welcome **David Haunton**, who has recently joined the Society. An interest in family history revealed that some relatives had been bombed out of their Merton Park homes during World War II. Discovering that little was recorded on bombings in the area, David enquired at the National Archives, and found several maps and lists relating to bomb damage in Merton and Morden from 1940 onwards. He brought along copies of some of these, showing sites of public shelters and ARP Wardens' posts, as well as bombsites. A detailed plan of Lines Bros (see p13) shows the wartime production sites mentioned in his article in our last *Bulletin*, as well as shelters and bomb damage suffered in February 1944. We look forward to more articles from David.

◆ The recent flooding in our area inspired **Cyril Maidment** to look at maps and photographs of the severe flooding that took place in June 1903. Areas bordering the Wandle and Beverley Brook were not the only places affected. Stretches along the route of the present Bushey Road in the vicinity of the Apostles roads were flooded in 1903 and 2007. See article on pp10-11.

Cyril has been digitising some quarterplate glass negatives, including a good view of the Toll House at the Merton Doublegates (South Wimbledon), demolished in 1872.

If you missed the walk Cyril led for the Society around Colliers Wood, you might like to try a 'virtual walk' in a computer BLOG on the 'Faded London' site, which Cyril's son discovered recently.

◆ **Bill Rudd** brought along an album of photographs that he took of the St Helier estate in the 1970s, before the so-called 'improvements' that have now ruined its appearance. The photographs show the great variety of brickwork and finishing touches that gave charm to the original estate.

◆ **Peter Hopkins** has obtained digital photographs of several 15th- to 17th-century documents in Surrey History Centre relating to Morden, so that he can translate those that are in Latin and transcribe those that are in Tudor English. He brought along copies of an inventory of Morden's Tudor manor house, Growtes, when it was sold to Richard Garth in 1553/4. It lists all the rooms, and details individual items of furniture and other household equipment. Although written in English, much is difficult to decipher. Peter asked for, and received, help in identifying many unknown items. But some mysteries remain – for example, a 'brusshing table', 'a honket bill', and '2 olde flocklockes'. Suggestions welcomed!

◆ While researching the Leach and Bennett family, **Judith Goodman** came across references to James Lee of Merton Abbey who in 1815 applied for a patent for machines for the preparation of hemp. She has obtained copies of four patents granted to him between 1808 and 1819, together with plans of the equipment. These will be the subject of a future *Bulletin* article. Lee was not at Merton for long, as in 1808 he was at Old Ford in Middlesex and by 1819 he was at Hatton Garden.

Judy has been given a number of photographs, including this one dating from the late 19th century. She was told it was of the Liberty waterwheel, but it is far too narrow. Can anyone identify it?

Peter Hopkins

[The report on the Workshop held on 19 October will appear in the next Bulletin.]



The next workshops will be at Wandle Industrial Museum on Fridays 11 January at 7.30 and 14 March at 2.30

**PETER HOPKINS outlines the origins of
ST MARTIN'S CHURCH, LOWER MORDEN**

St Martin's is in Camborne Road, Morden, so it was decided to name the church after the patron saint of Camborne in Cornwall. It began life as the youngest of the three daughter churches of St Lawrence, the parish church of Morden. Dedicated on 12 March 1957, it has been celebrating its 50th birthday this year. But its conception was much earlier. The *Morden Parish Magazine* of November 1954 tells us:-

The search for a church building site in this area was begun by the then Rector, the Reverend A.J. Culwick, following the opening of St. George's Church Hall in 1932. In 1937 his successor, the Reverend J.A.G. Ainley, sought the assistance of builders and others in his efforts to secure a site in the Hillcross area of the Parish. Correspondence, interviews and the rest were all in vain, and the project was dropped at the outbreak of war. However, Mr. Ainley had been able to buy a parcel of land in Tudor Drive to build a church for the Lower Morden/North Cheam part of the Parish.

In December 1950 Emmanuel Church Hall was opened on Stonecot Hill, and the following year the search was renewed for a Church site on the Hillcross side of the 'Beverley' corner. The choice was ultimately narrowed down to a plot in Camborne Road, which had been reserved in earlier days for a Welfare Clinic, and was being re-purchased from the Surrey County Council by the Urban District Council, for housing. The Rector offered to exchange the plot in Tudor Drive (near Epsom Road) for an equivalent site in Camborne Road, details being arranged so that the housing needs of the area should not suffer. This appears to be the last available site in the area, and the alternative use is for Council houses which can very well be placed in equal numbers on the Tudor Drive site which is offered in exchange.

The *Parish Magazine* also reported on the turf-cutting ceremony on Saturday, 14 January 1956:-

Guided by the architect Mr. F. Sutton-Smith of Wallington the churchwardens of Morden, Messrs. H. M. Collins and J. H. Curnow removed the first spadeful of earth from the building site. The new building is to serve as church hall as well as church and will comprise a large chancel, two halls and several classrooms, together with two flats, one for the curate and the other for church staff. The work is being done by Messrs. Anglo Scottish Construction Company of Wimbledon and it is expected that the church will be ready for use by the end of September.

At the Stone-laying Ceremony on Saturday 19 May, the *Parish Magazine* informs us:-

The foundation-stone was laid by the Churchwardens of Morden, Messrs. H. M. Collins and J. H. Curnow, and the Architect set a copper tube containing copies of the plans, of the day's programme and other items likely to be of interest when the building is dismantled (in the distant future, as we hope).

The chancel will seat nearly 40 in the choir, and will leave room for a wide carpet between the choir stalls on special occasions. The folding doors which separate upper and lower halls and the gallery from the main building can be opened so that some 500 people can be accommodated at once in the whole building. There are three main exits, and since the structure is brick and concrete, with only wood in the floor, the doors and cupboards, and in some of the roof structure, the danger from fire is very small indeed.

The Minutes of the Building Committee tell of difficult decisions, such as:-

Should a 4 foot wall be built between the Chancel and the main building, to hide choir members' feet (particularly desirable if boys were to form part of the choir) or would it separate the Chancel from the Church too much? [Fortunately no wall was built!]

Various changes have taken place over the last 50 years. In 1968, a nearby house in Camborne Road was bought as a Curate's House, and 20 years later, when the parish became a Team Ministry, with Team Vicars responsible for the former daughter churches, the present Vicarage, further along Camborne Road, was bought. The downstairs Church flat, formerly occupied by the Curate, was converted into a bedsit, and the end bedroom was converted into a church room with entry from the Lobby. Then, in 1981, the upper flat was converted into a bedsit and a classroom.



Using money raised during the 50th-anniversary year, new soundproofing has recently been installed between the church and the side hall, and replacement windows are to be fitted at the 'west' end shortly.

St Martin's may not be beautiful architecture, but its congregation still seeks to serve the purpose for which it was built – as summarised in its current Mission Strategy:-

to be a family of people committed to Christ and to each other ... and to be of service in the community.

FLOODING IN 1903

The Surveyor, Mr Cooper, of the Wimbledon Urban District Council prepared a detailed map and took photographs of flooding in Wimbledon and adjoining districts in June 1903.

The Pyl Brook and the River Wandle were centres of flooding, but there were other concentrations, a lot of Worple Road, and also where the Skew Arch at Raynes Park and the Cattle Arch at Lower Downs Road breach the high railway embankment of the main line. The Wandle flooded the area encompassed by Trinity Road, Queens Road, Haydons Road and Florence Road. This may explain the high front door steps given to houses in this locality. The southern end of the newly built houses in the 'Apostles' area, was badly flooded.

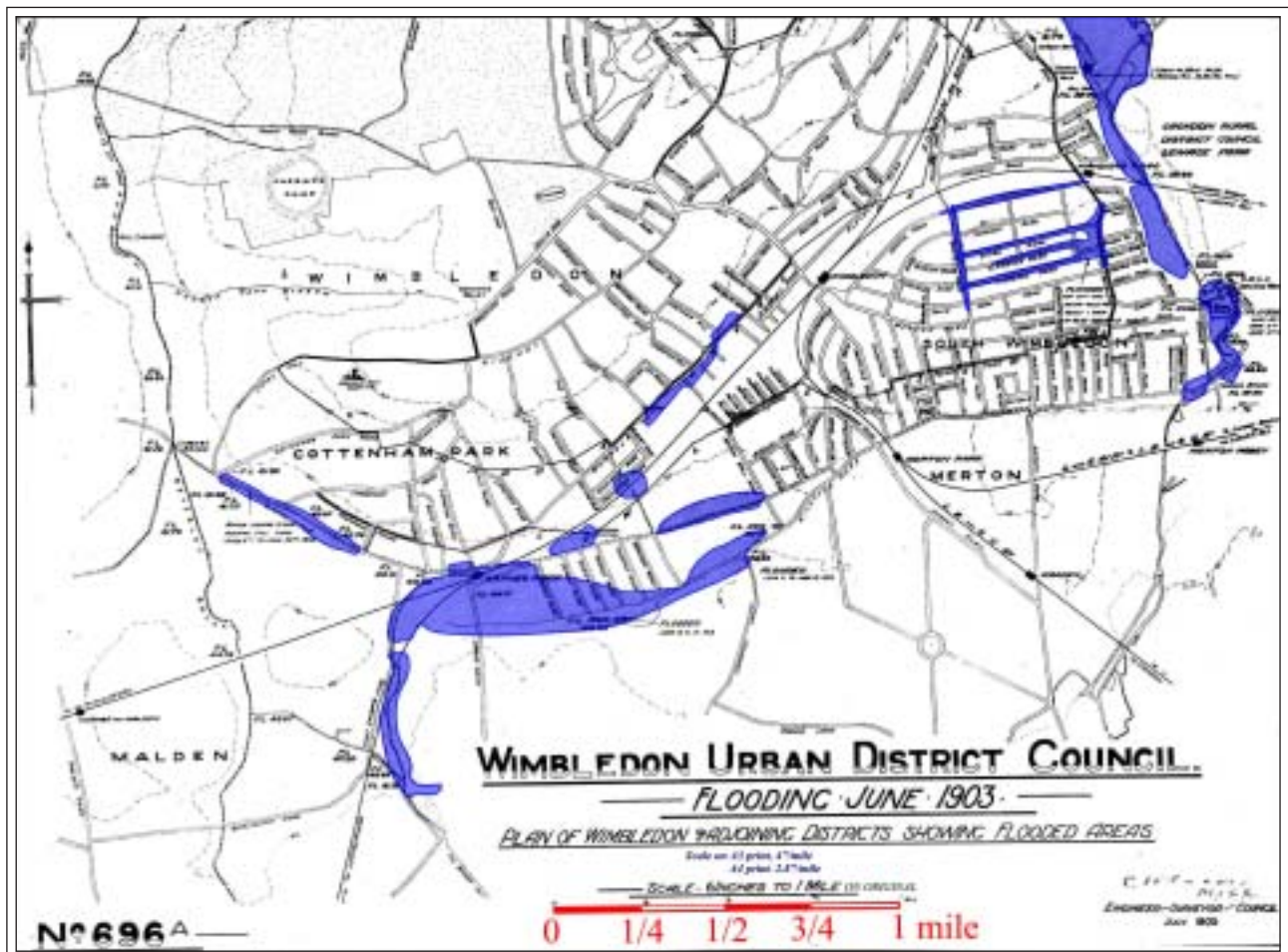
The photographs have not survived very well but they capture serious flooding in Kingston Road, Coombe Lane, Grand Drive, the 'Apostles' and Wyke Road near Raynes Park Station, which I saw badly flooded again in 2007.

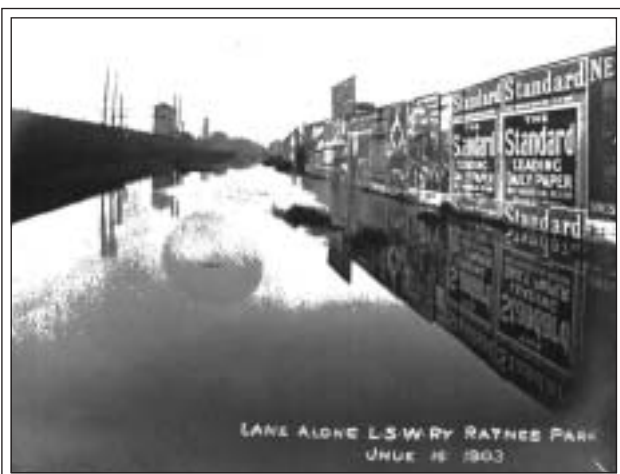
The current Flood Risk Area, dated April 2007, can be seen on Page 7 of the London Borough of Merton Local Development Framework 'Proposals Map'. Very roughly the 'Risk Area' is a series of hundred metre strips, following the Wandle, Beverley Brook, Pyl Brook and the Graveney. Also Coombe Lane and the southern end of the 'Apostles' are not spared, nor is the Lynmouth Avenue area, which was badly affected in the sixties.

In July this year we suffered serious flooding on Sunday 15th and Friday 20th. As we all know, thousands of small former catchment areas have been paved or concreted mainly for car parking. This increases the flood risk. Wimbledon Hill itself has a dramatic effect. In particular, a vast quantity of water continues rapidly to leave the Ridgway area and turns the mile and a half of Worple Road into a river. Also the centre of Wimbledon including the supermarkets becomes flooded. The Skew Arch at Raynes Park is now only a cycle track, but its road replacement is lower and more vulnerable to flooding.

Global warming may be affecting not only the rainfall but also the quantity that falls in a given time, defeating the available drainage systems more quickly.

Cyril Maidment





DAVID HAUNTON asks:

WHAT DID TRI-ANG DO IN THE WAR, MUMMY ?

Lines Bros' Products in World War 2

Introduction

This note on the wartime activities of Lines Bros Tri-ang Works in Morden Road, Merton, complements my previous article in Bulletin No.163, about Lines' pilotless aircraft. It is composed from scattered sources, and can only give a flavour rather than a coherent history. We are again heavily reliant on Walter Lines' history of the company,¹ while references to 'February 1944' are to a bomb damage report, which comments all too briefly on several aspects of the factory at that date.² The word 'probably' should probably appear more often.

The main pre-war products were prams, tricycles and pedal cars, 'Minic' model cars and 'Pedigree' dolls and soft toys. The many different materials used included wood, fabric, plastics, leather, elastic, rubber compounds, and metals (in the forms of sheet, tube, wire and castings). As almost every component was made 'in-house', a wide variety of skills was practised in the main factory, while people at the International Model Aircraft (IMA) subsidiary added their own skills in moulding plastic and compressed paper. Not least of the talents available were those of the production engineers, among whom Walter Lines was prominent. (Such engineers check designs for ease of manufacture and simplify the manufacturing process where possible.) This wide expertise used equally wide ranges of processes, such as curing, electro-plating and heat treating, and of machine tools - drills, presses, lathes, etc. The latter were available in large numbers: in February 1944 the Sawmill alone housed 68. Thus when war came, Lines Bros were well-equipped to manufacture a large variety of small, complex items.

During 1939-1940, almost all production of pre-war lines ceased, to be replaced by war work, until by 9 June 1941 the Lines Bros factory could be cited as "a very good example of 'switched' production" which had "undergone a tremendous changeover".³ The only links with the past were the Utility prams, which continued in production throughout the war. "[Only] just capable of fulfilling their function" was the sad comment of Walter Lines, a committed 'high-quality' man. They were fit enough for purpose, however, and a good example of the work of the production engineers, who pared their pre-war designs to the bone to produce an item of an acceptable standard, though made with minimum cost and effort.

Aircraft Models

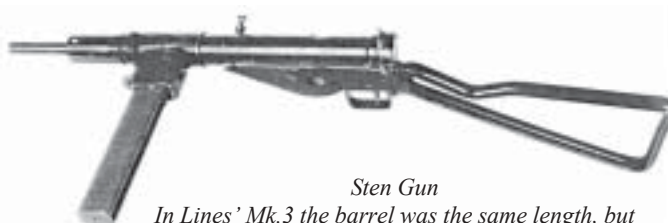
Before the war, the IMA subsidiary made model aeroplanes, both flying ('Frog') and static ('Penguin'). This activity carried on during 1940, presumably because the raw materials were not strategically important; the firm issued a quite extensive catalogue of models in January 1941.⁴ Indeed, in late 1940, young Hubert Bradbury accompanied a school-friend to IMA to buy a replacement model aircraft propellor: he seems to have been more impressed by the line of fresh bomb craters stitched along the length of the sports field than by IMA Stores being open for (toy) business as usual.⁵ However, things had already changed. IMA's great contribution to the war effort was to produce models of German and Allied aircraft at 1/72nd scale for aircraft recognition purposes. The initial ranges were made of Bakelite plastic, coloured black (since aircraft flying at a distance appear to be black). Later ranges were made of less-expensive sized and pressed paper, and most were painted in camouflage colours. The firm supplied literally millions of these models throughout the war; they went to every squadron of the Royal Air Force and Fleet Air Arm, to every ship of the Navy, to every Anti-Aircraft (AA) battery, to every Observer Corps unit, and to the Home Guard.

One of the very few dates we have is given by General Pile, Commander-in-Chief, AA Command, Home Defence. On 14 August 1940 he was conducting HM King George VI on an inspection of a gun battery, when "the king took a great fancy to the Bakelite models of enemy bombers, *which were then a novelty*" [my emphasis].⁶ Presumably this means that issue of aircraft recognition models to the AA troops had begun in June or July, and full-scale manufacture in April or May 1940. The anecdote continues with the king (evidently a most polite monarch) asking if he could have some of the models, saying "Even if I don't play with them, the children will".

The Sten Gun

Officially the '9mm. STEN Machine Carbine', this was perhaps Lines Bros' most memorable wartime product. It was a simple sub-machine gun, hand held, designed by Major (later Colonel)⁷ R V Shepherd and Mr H J Turpin at the Enfield factory of BSA⁸ in late 1940. It was intended to be manufactured quickly and cheaply, from a small number of simple components, with a good machined finish only on those surfaces where it was absolutely necessary.

Lines Bros made components for both the Mark 1 and the Mark 2 in 1941. During that year Walter Lines designed a simplified method of manufacture for the complete gun, resulting in the Mark 3. The prototype was made in the Merton Toolroom and demonstrated to Major Shepherd at Enfield on Saturday 3 January 1942;



Sten Gun
In Lines' Mk.3 the barrel was the same length, but its jacket was longer, so less of the barrel protruded.

*Lines Brothers Tri-Ang Factory in February 1944
Based on a plan in The National Archives, Ref. HO192/1524
Arrows show flow of materials from Press Shop and Saw Mill*

the upshot was “an immediate order for half-a-million guns” (and it was immediate: the official Instruction to Proceed was signed on 7 January). A subsequent contract on 31 October 1942 raised the total order to 1,150,000, of which 876,886 had been delivered⁹ before war contracts were terminated in 1945. Lines achieved a peak production rate of between three and four thousand guns per day. Even under that sort of pressure, and with compulsory overtime, the Baker sisters remembered the good atmosphere in the factory and having “enormous fun” while welding Sten guns.¹⁰ A proof firing range was built on the factory sports field and many guns were tested on the premises, so “the sounds of machine gun fire could often be heard in South Wimbledon”.¹¹ The cost of a single Mark 3, the cheapest Sten, was about £3. By comparison, the average worker was then paid £3-£4 per week, while a house cost about £500-£800, and a Spitfire about £8,000. The sinews of war are expensive.

As well as their widespread use by the British Army (including the Home Guard), many thousands of Sten Mark 3s were air-dropped to the Maquis, and the French, Norwegian and Polish Resistance movements (remarkably, the Polish Underground built over 2,000 Stens in small workshops). There has been much postwar denigration of the Sten, “mostly by those with no experience of actually using the weapon”.¹² Designed for a service life measured in months, its reputation for ‘falling to pieces’ is explicable in terms of wartime-standard welds cracking, due to age and hard knocks, a dozen or more years after manufacture.¹³ Maintenance could be neglected and the gun would still work, whether in the heat and damp of Malaya (1948-1960) or the snows and ice of Korea (1950-1953). The Sten was finally phased out of British Army use in the 1960s. Perhaps the best comment on the quality of the Mark 3 Sten is that in 1945 the Germans made some 10,000 examples of an almost exact copy (the Mauser MP 3008) for use by their own Home Guard, the Volkssturm.

Magazines and Ammunition

Less glamorous than a gun, but a necessary adjunct, a magazine is a container for bullets or shells, essentially a metal box of precise shape with internal guides. Those for smaller projectiles usually contain a spring to push the bullets towards the gun, while for larger calibres, the actual process of firing the gun pulls the next round of linked ammunition out of the magazine.

Lines Bros made 14 million magazines for Sten guns, of thin steel sheet. (Note that 27 other suppliers had only made 30 million between them by the end of 1944.) The number implies a manufacturing rate of 7,500 a day, every day, for five years, with a much higher rate at times. Almost all of these will have been the standard 32-round model, with comparatively few of the 50-round version. The company also made about half a million Sten magazine fillers (devices to load bullets into the box, against the pressure of the spring).

In addition, Lines Bros made thousands of duralumin magazines for Hurricane and Spitfire aircraft, of 16 differing types to fit different wing shapes. Some are likely to have been among the earliest of Lines’ war production items, as Walter Lines proudly claimed they were used in the Battle of Britain (mid-1940). The firm assembled 100-round magazines for Army Bren guns, while a department of 90 people (60 of them women) made magazines for Hispano cannon, used for AA and in aircraft. Another department, of 200 people (150 of them women), made magazines for Oerlikon AA guns for the Admiralty. Beginning in March 1943, this department produced 25,009 in the next ten months, with a further 3440 in January 1944. Walter Lines also noted the manufacture of millions of 20-mm shell cases and over eleven million land mine cases.

IMA were making detonator caps in 1944, when “an older employee” was sacked for over-claiming the number produced, in his accounts. “Paper products were ammunition, and large quantities were made.”¹⁴ I presume this ammunition was in the form of shaped cardboard containers for cordite, etc.

Night Vision

Following up Walter Lines’ mention of “special optical apparatus to enable troops to see in the dark”, I found that the only British night vision device used by the Army was the ‘Tabby’, developed during 1942-1943. It came in two forms: Type K, a monocular telescope for spying out the land, and Type E, a special pair of headlamps, plus binoculars for the driver, which enabled soldiers to drive vehicles (including tanks) in convoy at night without using any visible lights.¹⁵ Presumably Lines made components for the main ‘Tabby’ contractors, CAV, EMI and The Gramophone Company, from 1944 onward. Since the firm had little optical or electrical experience, I suspect their contribution was the kit of parts (metal strips, posts, locking nuts and webbing) with which the driver’s binoculars were clamped to dashboard or cab roof and adjusted to a convenient position to suit each driver.¹⁶

Other Products

The February 1944 bomb damage plan shows one area of the factory, accurately but inadequately, as being for “small metal contracts”, while, in a summary list, other contracts are lumped together, even less adequately, as merely for “other metal”.

We can fill in a few bits of “small metal”: in mid-1941 it included anti-tank mine covers, mine contacts, tails for bombs, and fuses.¹⁷ Contributions to the small-arms industry include making backsights for the Hotchkiss light machine gun (reconditioned First World War weapons, issued 1940-1941, mainly to the Home Guard), trigger guards for the Lee Enfield No.4 Rifle (1940-1943), over 100,000 filling and winding holders for Bren guns (1941-1942), magazines and

heat-treated sears for the Lanchester machine carbine (a sub-machine gun) (1941-1943), components for rifle grenade projectors (1943), 17,500 bayonets for the Sten Mark 2 (1943), and spare casing bands and grips for Lewis light machine guns, as well as repairing 4500 examples of the Lewis (1940-1941).¹⁸

“Other metal” would include a two-wheel carrier cart for wireless, for use by the Army on bush tracks. Designed at Merton, thousands were made for the invasion of France, presumably during 1943-1944. There was also a single-wheel trench-mortar barrow, rather like a skeletal wheel-barrow. The Army still depended on mules for transport in South-East Asia; Lines redesigned the pack saddles to carry disassembled Mountain Battery guns (Kipling’s “screw-guns”), saving 50% of the original weight (those production engineers again), and presumably made a sizeable number.

Wood was used in many products – the Sawmill employed 240 people (50 of them women) in February 1944. Lines were making ammunition crates in 1941 (Doris Goss recalled this as her first job at the factory)¹⁹ and mine crates in 1944, which were at that date constructed in a separate building, flanked by a large storage yard for “case wood” and an even larger one for “crate wood”. Presumably the “Hispano webbing handles” damaged in February 1944 were handles for crates. I imagine the “passive reflectors” being made with some wooden parts in February 1944 reflected visible light, and thus were road signs, red rear reflectors for vehicles, and so forth, but they might have been designed to reflect sound or radio energy. We do not know. One oddity was the supply of 250 wooden butts for imported Smith & Wesson machine carbines, at 17/6d each (about £34 each today) .

And finally, the Experimental Department made scale models of the Normandy Landing beaches in secret, at the Admiralty, presumably in January-May 1944.

Mummy ?

I have gained the impression that during the war rather more than half of the workers at Lines Bros were female. This comes from brief notes on some of the work-force in the bomb damage report, and a few photographs, while memories from the ladies mentioned above imply that some workshops or shifts were almost entirely female-staffed. Against this idea is the February 1944 plan, on which there are only as many ladies’ loos as gent’s. 1940s discrimination ? Or is the plan out of date ?

Walter Lines referred to thousands of products, of which we have discovered only a few. Recalling the millions of items produced for those products we do know about, we may join HRH Marina, Duchess of Kent, in her comment after a visit in May 1943 that “the astonishing output of your factory is something of which you may indeed be proud”.²⁰

Now: Over to You

In February 1944, IMA were making mysterious items referred to as “T’k prototypes for training”. What on earth were they ?

Did you, or someone you know, work at Lines during the war ?

Can you confirm or contradict my guess about the number of female workers ?

- 1 Lines, Walter *Lines Brothers: Looking Backwards, Looking Forwards* (1958) Private publication [Copies in Merton Local Studies Centre]
- 2 The National Archives HO 192/1524 *Lines Bros Bomb Damage Report* (March 1944)
- 3 The Royal Archives ref. RA PS / GVI / PS 04239 / 12 / 1 Letter from W B Brown, Shell Mex House, to Rt Hon Sir Alexander Hardinge, Buckingham Palace, 9 June 1941
- 4 Lines, Richard and Leif Hellström *FROG model aircraft 1932-1976* (1989) New Cavendish Books, p55
- 5 Mr Hubert Bradbury, *pers.comm.* April 2007
- 6 Pile, General Sir Frederick *Ack-Ack 1939-1945* (1949) George Harrap, London, p139
- 7 He was promoted to Lt-Col (and Temporary Colonel) on 1 August 1943 *Army List* (Jan 1946) HMSO
- 8 The name is usually said to be derived from the initials of Shepherd, Turpin and ENfield, though post-War, Col Shepherd maintained EN stood for ENgland. (Wartime Inventors’ Awards Ceremony, June 1949)
- 9 Skennerton, Ian *British Small Arms of World War 2: Complete Reference Guide to Weapons, Codes and Contracts 1936-1946* (1988) Greenhill Books, London pp32-39
- 10 Bruley, Sue and Nick Edwards *Factory Life and Labour in Merton and Beddington 1920-1960* (1997) London Borough of Merton, joint publishers, p5
- 11 Plastow, Norman *Safe as Houses: Wimbledon at War 1939-1945* (1972) The Wimbledon Society, p69
- 12 Wikipedia article “*Sten*”, from which much of this paragraph has been taken. [A stable web-page, with many points individually verifiable elsewhere: reliable in author’s opinion.]
- 13 My surmise following two conversations over a Wimbledon Library photo-copier with gentlemen who had post-war experience of the Sten.
- 14 Lines and Hellström, *op.cit.*
- 15 The National Archives WO 33/1812 *Tabby Equipment*, and AVIA 22/2420 *Tabby production difficulties* March 1943 – March 1944
- 16 Imperial War Museum Accession no. 78/2189 *Instructions for installing equipment ‘Tabby’ type E Mk II and III (SECRET)* (n.d. Dateable to 1944 by its mentioning Sherman Mk.V and Churchill Mk.VI tanks, but not later Marks) [8 other vehicle types are listed, but mechanics are permitted to fit Tabby equipment to other types “taking the nearest of these examples as a guide”.]
- 17 The Royal Archives ref. RA PS / GVI / PS 04239 / 12 / 1 *op.cit.*
- 18 Skennerton, *passim*
- 19 Bruley and Edwards *op.cit.*
- 20 The Royal Archives ref. RA MDKH / MAIN / FACTORY Letter from (unnamed) Comptroller and Private Secretary to HRH The Duchess of Kent, to Mr Lines, 29 May 1943

The minutes of the AGM are enclosed with this Bulletin.

SUBSCRIPTION REMINDER

Subscriptions for 2007-08 are now overdue. Please note that this will be the last *Bulletin* to reach you if we have not received your payment by the time of the next issue.

A membership form was enclosed in the September *Bulletin*. Current rates are:

Individual member	£10
Additional member in same household	£3
Student member	£1

Cheques are payable to Merton Historical Society and should be sent with completed forms to the Membership Secretary.

The current exhibition at Merton Heritage Centre is
Life Through a Lens: Tom Francis's Mitcham
and looks at life in Mitcham from 1870 to the 1920s
tel: 020 8640 9387

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