



PRESIDENT: Lionel Green

VICE PRESIDENTS: Viscountess Hanworth, Eric Montague and William Rudd

BULLETIN NO. 170

CHAIR: Dr Tony Scott

JUNE 2009



*Merton Park footbridge at Corfe Castle, Dorset
photo: Richard Goodman Feb 2009 (see p.6)*

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PROGRAMME JUNE–SEPTEMBER

Tuesday 16 June 11.30am

The Musical Museum, Brentford

We have booked a guided tour, which will cost £6.50 per person.

For details and to book a place ring 020 8540 6656.

Saturday 4 July

Coach trip to Sheffield Park Gardens and Batemans arranged by Pat and Ray Kilsby.

Information and booking details were in the *March Bulletin*.

Ring 020 8405 0909 to check availability of places.

Thursday 6 August 2.00pm

Visit to Benjamin Franklin House, 36 Craven Street WC2, near Charing Cross station.

£7 (£5 concessions). *Ring 020 8540 6656 for details and booking.*

Thursday 10 September 2.00pm

Merton Park walk, led by Clive Whichelow

This event will be part of Merton's Festival for the Over Fifties. Booking details later.



MITCHAM COMMON EXHIBITION

Janet Morris, of the Friends of Mitcham Common, has produced a set of posters about the Common, which will be on display at the Mitcham Carnival on 13 June, in the Conservators' tent.

WANDLE INDUSTRIAL MUSEUM

Wandle Industrial Museum are launching their new exhibition, **Lost Mills of the Wandle**, on 13 June at The Vestry Hall Annexe, London Road, Mitcham, Surrey CR4 3UD. Tel: 020 8648 0127. More details on their website www.wandle.org

MERTON HERITAGE CENTRE HAS MOVED

The Heritage Centre has moved from The Canons to the second floor of Morden Library, where the Local Studies collection is housed. The new address is:

Merton Heritage & Local Studies Centre

2nd floor, Morden Library, Merton Civic Centre, London Road, Morden SM4 5DX

tel: 020 8545 3239

email: heritage.centre@merton.gov.uk local.studies@merton.gov.uk

The advantages of the move include better access from other parts of the Borough; longer opening hours; and the convenience of having materials at one site. A range of displays, events and activities is planned. The new centre has opened with a reprise of their popular exhibition **Through the Eyes of Child**, which will continue until 18 July.

Sarah Gould and her team are good friends to this Society, and we wish them well in their new home.

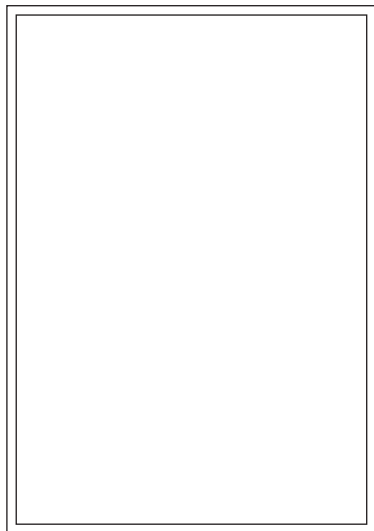
VINCENT LINES

This year is the centenary of the birth of artist Vincent Lines, who drew so many interesting local scenes in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Readers will remember articles about him and his work in the *Bulletins* of last September and December, written by Katharina and David Haunton.

The Wimbledon Society Museum, at 22 Ridgway, has a number of his original drawings and is putting on an exhibition of them which will run from 20 June to 28 February. Free admission. Saturdays/Sundays 2.30 to 5pm. An accompanying booklet, with all 52 of the Society's drawings, plus the original newspaper articles, will cost £9.99. www.wimbledonmuseum.org.uk

‘RECENT EXCAVATIONS AT BERMONDSEY ABBEY’

At our meeting at the Snuffmill Centre on 28 February Alistair Douglas, Senior Archaeologist of Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd, outlined the difficulties of excavating underground whilst countless building piles were being driven in close by.

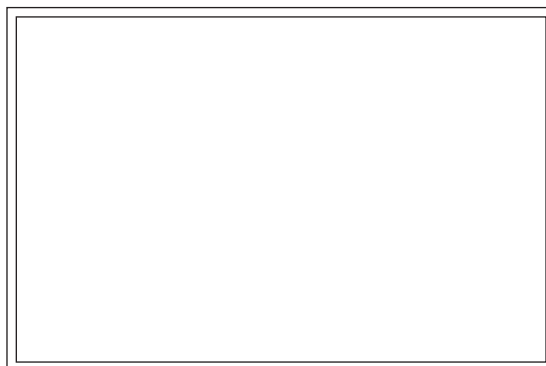


This was the scene portrayed when a huge complex was being built at Bermondsey Square, in southeast London, on the site of the abbey. The precinct has been declared a Scheduled Ancient Monument, and strict conditions had to be met by the developer for siting the piles, to avoid any archaeological evidence. Work continued from 1998 to 2007, and a total of 160 trenches were opened. Alistair had brought many excellent slides of the excavations, which clearly showed the difficulties under which the diggers worked.

St Saviour’s abbey was first founded in 1082 by Alwin Child, a citizen of London, but the monks did not arrive until 1089, when William Rufus gave the manor of Bermondsey to the brethren, who were followers of the Cluniac order. The chosen site was opposite the White Tower recently built on the north side of the river. The monastic church when built would have been a significant feature for boats approaching London from the Thames estuary. A suitable dock constructed on the south bank enabled stone and other materials to be delivered to the abbey site.

Material from every period was found, and the earliest stonework was below the Norman walls of the church, and may have been part of a Saxon minster. A large part of the south wall of the nave was revealed, with the base of a southwest tower at the west end of the church. A part of the south transept and the northeastern corner of the cloister could also be identified.

The finds were varied and interesting, and one long piece of Caen stone may have been a corbel with the features of a man on the end. Other stones bore defaced features of men, and graffiti.



Subsequent to the Reformation the site came into the possession of Sir Thomas Pope, who founded Trinity College, Oxford, in 1555. He built a mansion called Bermondsey House, and used the south wall of the church as the north wall of his house. Thus the nave interior was destroyed, and removed to form the front garden. Immediately south of the wall there was an entrance corridor east-west, with rooms off. Below, within the mansion, were cellars, and at the east was a post-monastic well.

Graves of monks were found further east, and the spinal remains of some revealed extra bone tissue resulting in a deformity known as DISH (disseminated idiopathic skeletal hyperostosis). DISH was first identified from canons buried at Merton priory.

Later graves uncovered were probably those of dissenters, buried away from the parish church.

Our speaker then answered many questions from the audience, always fully, and received justifiable applause.

Lionel Green

Photographs by Strephon Duckering of Pre-Construct Archaeology

MORE ON MERTON PRIORY

This letter appeared in the January 2009 edition of *Current Archaeology*, in response to the article on Merton Priory in the previous edition, reported in our last *Bulletin*:-

“I wonder why the article about Merton Priory (CA 225) should assume that the ring engraved with the motto ‘I want to love none but you’ must have belonged to ‘a lay visitor’. Religious sisters commonly receive a ring on the occasion of their profession of lifelong vows, and while this is not, now, so common among male religious communities, it would have been more so in the past.

“The Dominican Congregation of Sisters, to which I belong, customarily have a motto of their own choice engraved inside their profession ring; the Foundress of this particular Congregation, Margaret Mary Hallahan 1802-1868, chose for her motto ‘God Alone’ – remarkably close to the one engraved on the Merton Abbey ring.”

Sr. M Cecily Boulding, OP Stone, Staffordshire

‘LONDON ARCHAEOLOGY OVER THE CENTURIES’

Nathalie Cohen gave her talk at Raynes Park Library hall on 28 March the subtitle ‘Digging London’s Past: a History of Discovery’, and her subject was both the development of archaeology into a rigorous discipline and the story of discoveries illuminating London’s history.

She started with John Stow and his *A Survey[sic] of London*. The first edition, published in 1598, described the city in great detail, but the second, in 1603, added ‘divers rare notes of Antiquity’. Stow sought out and recorded stories and legends relating to the streets and buildings.

In 1665 Samuel Pepys recorded in his diary that on a visit to a dock at Blackwall he was interested to see a long-buried plantation of nut-trees revealed beneath the mud.

In those days, as now, destruction and rebuilding often uncovered older features. A number of Wren’s churches sit on top of very early foundations, and Wren himself recorded many ancient fragments, including Roman fabric beneath St Paul’s.

The 18th century saw the rise of the gentleman antiquary – classically educated, with time and money to spare, and great enthusiasm for recording and theorising about ancient relics. The Society of Antiquaries was founded in 1707, and its members were active all over the country. London was not spared. William Stukeley, perhaps the best known of them all, investigated a tumulus at Kenwood and a detached belfry at Westminster Abbey.

The massive increase in construction in the 19th century brought a boom in archaeology, for instance, the discovery of a medieval undercroft during the demolition of old London Bridge. Collecting and recording were very informal processes, by later standards, with antiquaries buying, or rejecting, items from the workmen on the sites. Many objects also were found in or by the Thames, such as the Battersea shield (in the British Museum), but provenance was often a problem with these. One collector in Brentford was known to pay well, so Brentford became recorded as a hot spot for finds.

The London and Middlesex Archaeological Society (LAMAS) was founded in 1855, and the Guildhall Museum opened in 1867 as part of the Guildhall Library. Public interest in archaeology was growing, and when the Bucklersbury mosaic was discovered and displayed in 1869 there were 30,000 visitors.

Nathalie commented that on the whole the archaeology of the City churches has been under-researched. However LAMAS did a study, with good drawings and photographs, of the remains of St Michael Bassishaw after it was demolished in 1899. Shockingly, to 21st-century ideas, from 1700 to 1939 there was a planned programme of demolition of ‘superfluous’ City churches. The last to be lost in this way was All Hallows Gracechurch in Lombard Street. Shortly afterwards, of course, enemy action would reveal much more of the archaeology of London, though little could be done to investigate it at the time.

Meanwhile the London Museum had been established at Kensington Palace in 1912, with the brief of illustrating the social history of London, except the City, from the earliest times. Distinguished archaeologists connected with it included Sir Mortimer Wheeler and Professor William F Grimes. The latter, with his wife Audrey Williams, visited and supervised more than 70 sites during his time there. Academics did not themselves go in for digging at the time. That was still done by the labourers, and as a result many of them became very knowledgeable indeed.

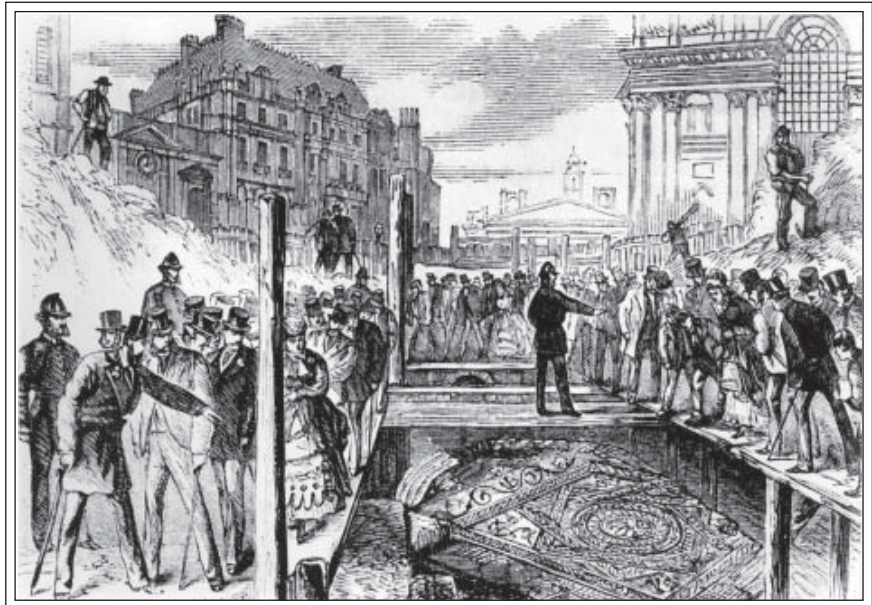
At the Guildhall Museum the director Quinton Waddington did not see it as part of his brief to visit sites at all.

Nathalie commented that a lack of proper funding was, and still is, a perennial problem for London archaeology. This fact, together with the different philosophies of the two principal museums, meant that many opportunities were lost. Not until 1975 did what seems like common sense prevail, and the London and Guildhall Museums amalgamate as the Museum of London, in purpose-built premises in the Barbican development, which opened to the public in the following year. The Museum of London Archaeological Service (MoLAS) was set up later as part of the Museum’s brief.

Most archaeology in London now is ‘rescue’ archaeology. When a site is to be redeveloped an agreement is reached (usually hard fought) with the developer for excavations to be carried out for a limited period. Since 1990, when *Planning Policy Guidance 16: Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16) came into force, the emphasis is on the preservation *in situ* of important remains. Today MoLAS no longer has the monopoly of London sites, as all investigations have to go out to tender.

Nathalie amused her audience by pointing out how unpractically archaeologists dressed until quite recently. While top hats, dress coats and a cane, for pointing(!), were standard 19th-century garb, it was surprising to be reminded that hard hats are a very recent feature at digs.

She ended her talk with a selection of highlights in London archaeological discovery. They included a Neolithic axe at the Olympic site; a woman's skeleton in a high status coffin at Spitalfields; the Roman amphitheatre at the Guildhall; a Roman ship at County Hall; a leather 'bikini' brief from a well in Queen Street; Saxon graves at St Martin-in-the-Fields; the discovery of *Lundenwic* in the Strand/Aldwych area (Aldwych = 'old *wic*'); the temple of Mithras in Queen Victoria Street (already moved once, and soon perhaps to be moved again); and medieval skates made of bones, which were strapped onto the wearer's shoes.



Nathalie is team leader for the Thames Discovery Programme and knows her London and its archaeology well. We were fortunate to have her expert appraisal of the subject, and everyone enjoyed her interesting, and often amusing, talk.

Judith Goodman

‘MERTON PARK 100 YEARS AGO’

For his very large audience at Merton Park Primary School David Roe began his talk on 25 April by defining Merton Park. The Conservation Area and broader Area of Benefit extend from Kingston Road, south to Crown Lane and London Road, not forgetting the Wilton Crescent Conservation Area, across the parish boundary in Wimbledon, but equally once part of John Innes's development area. And, though by 1909 Innes had been dead for five years, his influence lived on. He had come to Merton in the late 1860s, with money in his pocket from property development in the City, and had bought up several hundred acres of land, with a view to establishing an architecturally attractive suburb, with a mixture of dwellings in a leafy setting.

David proceeded to take us on an illustrated tour of Edwardian Merton Park, beginning, to the east of the tramlines, with the **Manor Club**, a working-men's club founded by Innes, and the **Masonic Hall**, now Merton Public Hall, another Innes initiative. A **weatherboard cottage** laundry and the **old Rutlish School** buildings have vanished, as has the long **footbridge** which crossed both lines out of Merton Park, though part of that has been re-erected for a preserved railway at Corfe Castle, Dorset. The original tall **signal box** for the old railway line has gone (as has its successor). Adjacent to it, the old **White Hart** looked rather more attractive than today's drab post-war re-build. We were shown a couple of the very large **elm trees** that once stood in Kingston Road, as well as the **plane trees** of Dorset Road, which, even 100 years ago, were already a fine sight. The cattle of Innes's **Morden Hall Farm** grazed in the fields towards Morden, and milk was delivered to each house from a **dairy hand-cart**.

We glimpsed **Poplar Road**, when it was indeed lined with poplars, before David took us back to Kingston Road, and the handsome 18th-century **Spring House**, which was lost in the 1930s. Further west, and the 1898 rebuild of the **Leather Bottle** faces the 1907 Merton Park Parade of shops. A hundred years ago **the Rush** was a picturesque community of cottages and tiny businesses, all to be swept away, most of them by the Nelson Hospital, and the final few, on the 'island', by sanitary regulations.



Further west were, and are, the ‘**Polytechnic Estate**’ shops of 1903-4, between Merton Hall Road and Quintin Avenue. On the south side of Kingston Road stood a large family house, **Blakesley**, whose site is now the hospital car-park. Another large house, that of **Broadwater or Baker’s End Farm**, stood where the Co-op is now.

Cannon Hill Lane, except for the very northern end, was still rural then. Just off it is John Innes’s **Manor House**, converted for him from a farmhouse to a gentleman’s residence, and now forming part of Rutlish School. In Church Path 100 years ago stood the picturesque old thatched **Sutton’s Cottages**, demolished in the 1950s. They were on the site of today’s parish office. Old **Church House**, opposite St Mary’s church, was still standing, but empty and looking rather sad. Newly installed in the church were four two-light **windows commemorating John Innes**. They had been made at the Morris works at Merton Abbey to designs by Burne-Jones and (John) Henry Dearle.

Innes’s tomb in the churchyard had been designed by (John) **Sydney Brocklesby**, a young local architect. David showed slides of a number of Brocklesby’s houses, including charming **Youell Cottage** in Watery Lane, imposing **Mostyn Lodge** at 17 Mostyn Road and the north-facing **terrace of cottages** in the Church Lane cul-de-sac.

Exactly 100 years ago **John Innes Park** was formally opened. It had been Innes’s private grounds, and its layout was adapted by Brocklesby, who added the charming little **bandstand** and picturesque **public conveniences**. There was a **pond**, a **fernery**, grass **tennis courts**, a **bowling green** and an ‘**adults’ enclosure**’.

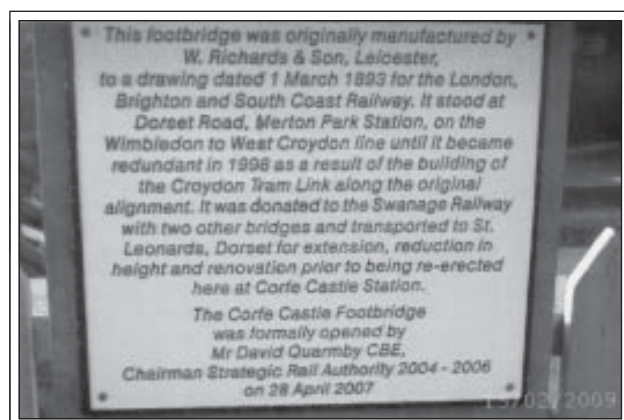


David mentioned some of the prominent residents of the time: the vicar **Canon Jagger**; **Edward Pillinger**, long-serving headmaster and organist; the painter **Frederic Shields** at Long Lodge; and the Suffragette **Rose Lamartine Yates** of Dorset Hall, who spent a month in prison for ‘obstructing’ the police as part of a women’s deputation to Westminster. Her son **Paul** was only eight months old at the time.

John Innes’s will had been a surprise to everyone, but, despite some controversy, by 1909 all was set for the opening of a **Horticultural Institution** named after him, to occupy his Manor House and adjoining fields. The first director was to be **Dr William Bateson**, a pioneer in genetics, and indeed the coiner of that term. The Institution soon gained a world-wide reputation, which it still maintains in its modern guise as the John Innes Centre at Norwich. Ironically, however, to most people the name John Innes means only a range of loam-based **composts**. The Institution devised the formulae for these while still at Merton Park, and, to help amateur gardeners in particular, made them freely available to all.

David’s dry sense of humour meant that his audience was amused as well as instructed, and this was a most absorbing afternoon.

Judith Goodman



Merton Park footbridge. Photo: Richard Goodman Feb 2009

MERTON PARK 100 YEARS AGO

The John Innes Society has arranged that David Roe will repeat his talk on Merton Park 100 years ago on Wednesday 1 July at 8pm, at Merton Park Primary School (entrance from Erridge Road). It is hoped that those people who had to be turned away on 25 April will be able to attend, as well as others who were not able to be present.

LOCAL HISTORY WORKSHOP

Friday 13 March 2009. 6 present – Peter Hopkins in the chair

◆ **Bill Rudd** has been quizzed by a geography student about changes to Morden shopping centre. He recalled that this began with Morden Station. A parade of shops was first built on either side of the station (still railway property) and only some years later did the LCC build shops on the opposite side of London Road. Morden was a flourishing centre until the mid-1960s, when shops started to close down. Bill suspects that this was when the initial long leases fell in and were not renewed.

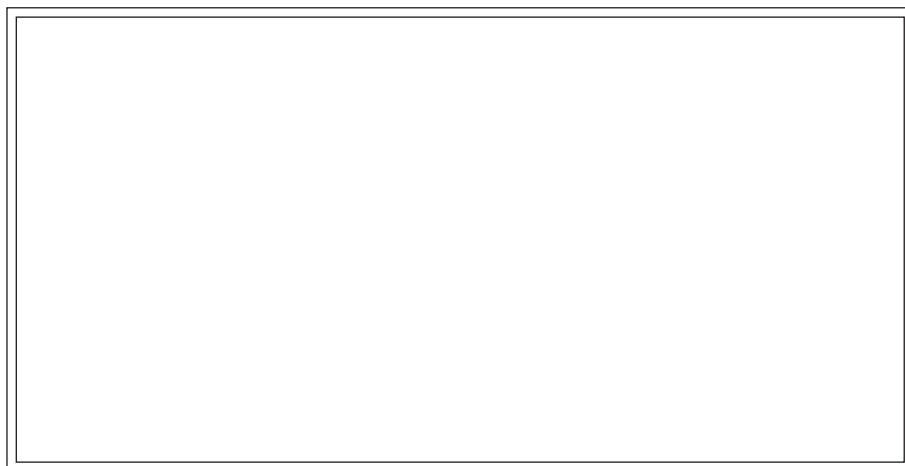
◆ **David Haunton** visited the Art Workers Guild, Queen Square, Bloomsbury, where he was delighted to locate Vincent Lines's name carved on the frieze of members' names, flanked by Osbert Lancaster and David Low, two other men admitted in 1951.

David has also discovered more about the Palmer and Reville racing car families, revealing several errors in Part 1 of his article. See Part 2 on page 10.

In a museum in Frankfurt, David's wife **Katharina** had spotted a painting by George Augustus Wallis, born in 'Merton bei London 1770'. This artist spent much of his time in Italy, Germany and Spain during the Napoleonic War period. An article should be forthcoming.

◆ **Lionel Green** has been invited to the book launch of *Tudor Rose* by Sue Allan, a novel about Rose Hickman (the daughter of William Locke), because he answered so many of the author's questions. Sue Allan has also written *Lady Rose Hickman: her life and family*, which is a more factual biography.

At the previous Workshop Judy had asked if anyone could identify the location of this photograph of an Epsom Racecourse bus parked near Morden Station. Lionel tentatively identified the street where the bus is parked as Mossville Gardens [Judy has since checked, and it is not Mossville Gardens]: can anyone make a better suggestion?



◆ **Cyril Maidment** showed some historic photos of All Saints church in Wimbledon (dwarfed by its vicarage) and the Mission Hall in Rodney Place. He has found photos taken by Evelyn Jowett in 1973, showing a long stretch of Merton Priory precinct wall within the Board Mills factory. Well hidden by undergrowth, this still survives on National Trust land. [These will be reproduced in the next *Bulletin*.]

◆ **Peter Hopkins's** project on Medieval Morden proceeds apace: with 14000 entries on the spreadsheet, he has almost finished coding every reference to property transfers, so he can follow through each property's history. Gaps in the records mean some links are missing, and inconsistencies in naming of properties and previous holders complicate the next task, which is to rationalise the list of separate properties (150 at present, but this is too many...).

Peter wrote to Marvin Colker, the editor of the Latin texts on the foundation of Merton Priory that we propose to translate, who replied assuring us that he knows of no English translation, and to go ahead.

◆ **Website** Peter reported several emails, particularly noting those from Romy Conroy, who sent photos of her great grandfather's shop, the café next to the Parish Hall in Central Road, Morden, from Jane Bond, who sent photos of Mitcham buildings [see page 8], and from Rosemary Jewers whose family once owned Brinton Hall in Norfolk, which it appears contains the staircase from Nelson's home at Merton Place – Brinton Hall was being remodelled in 1823, when Merton Place was demolished, and she has tracked down an advert from *The Times* for the sale of the staircase, paving slabs, etc. [see page 14].

David Haunton

Next Workshops: Friday 3 July and Friday 14 August 2009, both at 2:30 at the Wandle Industrial Museum. All are welcome.

WHAT'S THE CONNECTION?

We recently received these copies of Mitcham photographs from Mrs Jane Bond who lives in Bodmin, Cornwall.

The photograph on the right shows 475 London Road, Mitcham – one of the cottages adjoining the Grove Mill above Mitcham Bridge – around 1916. The link between the photographs is the two men on the riverbank. The man on the left, in the long coat and carrying a walking stick, is Peter Dale (1844-1923), who ran the *Fountain* beerhouse in Merton Lane (now Western Road), Mitcham, from around 1867 to at least 1891. The photograph below left shows the *Fountain* in the 1880s.



Later he transferred to *The Gardeners' Arms*, London Road, Mitcham, shown right in the 1920s/1930s.

His brother, James, was the miller at Grove Mill for most of the second part of the 19th century, and lived in one of the cottages, 475, 477 or 479.



Mrs Bond also sent this detail from the *Fountain*, which shows its name more clearly.

The final photograph shows the *Swan Inn*, London Road, Mitcham, in the 1930s, when it was being run by one of Peter Dale's sons.



We are grateful to Mrs Bond for giving us these photographs, copied from her own originals. She has also donated copies to Merton Local Studies Centre.

Peter Hopkins

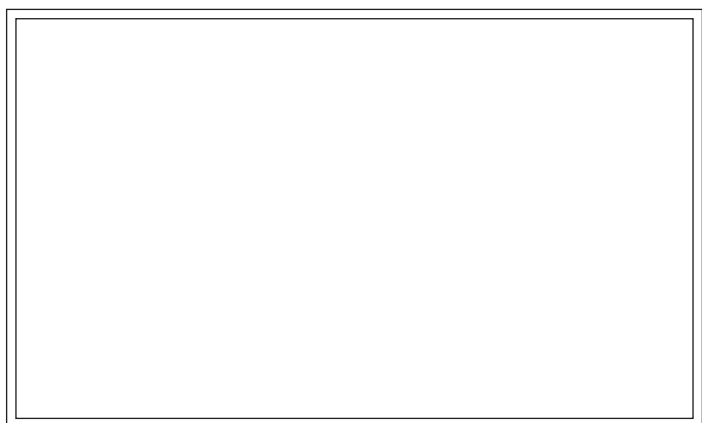
MORDEN PARK ESTATE IN 1873

CHARLES TOASE has turned up this interesting advertisement from page 15 of *The Times* for 5 April 1873:

The Morden-park Estate, Surrey.— A Highly important and valuable Freehold Estate, situate in the parishes of Morden, Merton, Malden, and Sutton, about half a mile from the Morden Station¹ on the Croydon and Wimbledon Railway, two miles from the Wimbledon Station on the South-Western Railway, with the unusual advantage of close proximity to the stations at Raynes-park, Worcester-park, Sutton, Carshalton, and Mitcham (the farthest being only three miles distant), and 10 miles by road from either Whitehall or Cornhill. It comprises a capital family mansion,² with stabling and offices, beautifully placed on high ground, commanding very extensive and diversified views, and surrounded by an undulating park and pleasure grounds, adorned with fine forest and other timber and extensive shrubbery walks, with an ornamental entrance-lodge and carriage approach from the high road from London to Epsom. A superior residence distinguished as Morden-house,³ with gardens, pleasure grounds, and land. A residence, pleasure grounds, offices, and land, called Hill-house,⁴ several ornamental villa residences, some let, and others fit for immediate occupation, the compact farms known as Morden-park,⁵ Peacock,⁶ and Hobalds,⁷ with first-rate homesteads, numerous small occupations, and accommodation lands, an attractive building estate called Raynes-park, with its adjacent beautifully timbered land, through the centre of which a new 40-foot road⁸ has recently been made at great cost, completely opening up the Morden-park Estate, and leading direct from Lower Morden to the railway station, whereby important and extensive building frontages have been secured, and several other eligible sites commanding fine views developed for the erection of residences; a valuable brickyard, now in full work, with every modern appliance, and an almost unlimited supply of brick earth of a superior quality;⁹ the Crown Inn and premises, now doing a capital trade; newly erected shops and dwelling-houses, plots of building land, and about 60 cottages, some of an ornamental character, together forming nearly the entire village of Lower Morden, the whole estate extending over about 1,250 acres, almost in a ring fence. The mansion, park &c. (about 28 acres), are at present in occupation of General Sir Wm. Baker,¹⁰ and the remainder, with the exception of about 80 acres of land, several villa residences, and the brickyard, are let to highly respectable tenants, the whole producing and of the value of nearly £6,000 per annum. This important property is bounded and intersected by excellent roads, with frontages of several miles in extent, a large portion of which is immediately available for building purposes. The land is nearly all pipe-drained; ornamental belts of plantations, reaching upwards of two miles, have been judiciously planted, and other great improvements made within the last few years regardless of cost; and the estate altogether, whether as a residential domain in its entirety, or for subdivision for profitable speculation, presents features of attraction and interest rarely to be met with within so short a distance from the metropolis.

MESSRS. NORTON, TRIST, WATNEY, and Co. are instructed by the OWNER to offer the above PROPERTY for SALE, at the Mart, early in June next, unless an acceptable offer should previously be made for the whole...

1. Now the Morden Road Tramlink stop, which is in fact, of course, in Merton.
2. Morden Park house, built in 1770 by John Ewart, merchant and distiller of Thames Street, London. The estate at that date consisted of 156 acres (63ha), and Ewart had it on a 99-year lease, from Michaelmas 1768, from Richard Garth, the lord of the manor. The estate was greatly added to over the years.
3. Morden House was in London Road close to where Morden South station now stands.
4. The site of Hill House is now occupied by the Haig Homes, in Epsom Road.
5. Morden Park Farm house stood near the 'mansion' house.
6. Peacock Farm was in Lower Morden Lane. One of its buildings survives, in the garden centre.
7. Hobalds Farm was in Lower Morden. Morden Cemetery and the North East Surrey Crematorium occupy the site.
8. Grand Drive
9. The brickworks occupied 24 acres (10ha) just to the west of today's Garth Road, on Morden Common, which lay between the track known as Green Lane (not the road of the same name) and Stonecot Hill.
10. Major-General Sir William Erskine Baker KCB. Served with the Royal (Bengal) Engineers and as Military Secretary at the India Office. Member of the Council of India.



Morden Park in 1873, East View, from the prints accompanying the sales particulars. Copyright of Surrey History Service

Sources and further reading:

Peter Hopkins *Discovering the Past: Lower Morden & Morden Park* (1999 revised 2000) St Martin's Church, Morden
Peter Hopkins and William Rudd *Morden Park* (2002) Merton Library Service
Evelyn Jowett *Lost Common Lands 1 – Morden Common* (1974) reprinted 1991 by Merton Historical Society as Local History Note 4
Surrey History Centre, Woking, has a copy of the sales brochure, acquisition number: SHC K/85/379-380

**DAVID HAUNTON (much assisted by John Williams in Brisbane) continues
JEAN REVILLE: MERTON'S RACING MOTORIST: PART 2**

Revised Relations

Part 1 began by saying that 'this is a work in progress'. Progress has been made, so there are some changes. We now know that Jean Reville was born Eric John Revell on 24 October 1899 in Puckeridge, a small village in Hertfordshire. He was the son of James Joslen [*sic*] Revell, a carman (driver of a horse and cart), and Emma Cecilia, née Barker, and had left Puckeridge by 1922, presumably for London.

Brother Dennis was not younger, but five years older than Jean. A draper's assistant in 1911, after a spell in the wartime Army (Bedfordshire Regiment), he married Grace Johnson in 1920, and they ran a stationer's shop in High Street, Puckeridge 1922-1933. Then they joined Jean and Daisy in Merton Park Parade, and changed the spelling of their name to Reville. Dennis became part of the Palmer-Reville operation; he acted as a 'Steward appointed for the Meeting' for the Easter 1934 meeting at Crystal Palace (Jean was 'Track Manager'), and continued the Merton Park garage operation for two or three years after Jean left England.

Arthur Thomas Palmer was rather older than I thought. He was born in 1876 in Rotherhithe, and so was 34 when he moved into a confectionery shop at 82 Kingston Road, Merton, in 1910. Four years later he moved again, to 3 Merton Park Parade. He and his wife Elizabeth Jane seem to have had no children, but Daisy Florence Epsom, their niece, was already living with them in 1911, aged 12 (which explains the 'Epsom otherwise Palmer' on her marriage lines). There is no trace of her parents Annie and Arthur (milk carrier of Lewisham in 1901), nor her older twin siblings, also Arthur and Annie, in those parts of the 1911 Census available to date.

Jean Reville and Daisy had two children, Arthur Eric (June 1930) and Margaret Ann (August 1932),¹ so Daisy would have had good reason not to accompany Jean to Australia. There would thus have been eight rather than six Palmers and Revilles who moved into the double shop premises in Ewell in 1935, with Arthur Palmer now 58. When he retired, it was Daisy who continued the Ewell business, 'trading as A T Palmer'. Dennis and Grace Reville stayed with her until they died, in 1952 and 1958 respectively. Jean's daughter Margaret Reville left in 1954. Jean's son Arthur Reville had married another Margaret in 1952, and the couple remained with Daisy until she retired, aged 60, in 1959. The business was then continued by a Mr and Mrs Derry, still trading under the 'A T Palmer' name.



Jean Reville (Wimbledon Boro' News 4 May 1934)

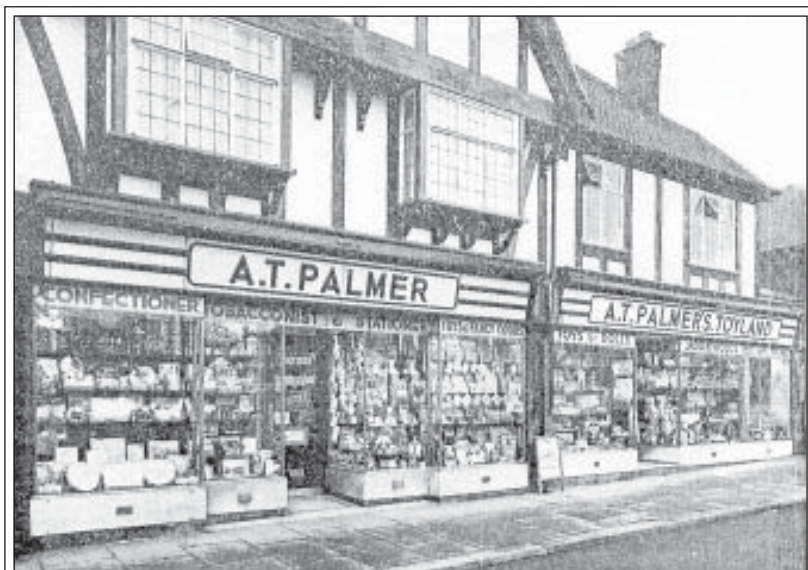
A. T. PALMER
 Prop.: D. F. REVILLE
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above: D(aisy) F(lorenc) Reville trading in Ewell.

The Courtier, newsletter of the Ewell Court Ward Resident's Association, No.76
July-Aug 1958

left: Shop-front, from
The Courtier No.85 Jan-Feb 1960

*Both courtesy of
Surrey Libraries*

England Snippets

Jean Reville never described himself as a mechanic – my mistake in Part 1 – but as a confectioner for both his weddings, in 1928 and 1929, as a garage proprietor in 1932, and eventually as a racing motorist in 1935.

On 12 May 1934 Jean Reville was one of the attractions at the first midget car race meeting at Belle Vue Stadium in Manchester. This was not too successful, as ‘the track was too narrow for three cars abreast’.² Intriguingly, pre-event publicity³ included a photo of another car racing past Jean’s, which is lying on its side, with Jean standing beside it; evidently a previous occasion.

6 April 1935: the programme for the Easter Monday meeting at Crystal Palace shows that at least six Palmer Specials had been built and survived to race that day. The publicity machine is evident – there is a Special Challenge Match Race between Jean Reville in the Gnat, ‘First appearance on any Speedway’, and Jimmy Hanley ‘the famous Gaumont British film artist of *Little Friend*’ (a recently-released film). Hanley was a child star, only 16 at the time. He had presumably met Reville while working at Merton Park Film Studios, just across the road from the Merton Park Parade premises. What 16-year-old boy could resist?

One possible explanation of Jean Reville’s failure to return to England after the Australian trip has now been rebutted: a search of the bankruptcy petitions to Kingston County Court for 1934-1936 found no reference to him.⁴ So we have to ponder further.

AMERICAN MIDGET CAR SPEEDWAY RACING			
PAVILION 1 II (plus tax 4d)		STAND SEATS 6d. (plus tax 1d.)	
at 2.30 p.m.			
Event 1.—Introducing THE "GNAT"—THE WORLD'S SMALLEST RACING CAR (First Appearance on any English Speedway)			
Driver	Make of Car	Car Number	
JEAN REVILLE	500 cc. "PALMER" SPECIAL	1	
Event 2.—INTERNATIONAL SCRATCH RACE, 4 Laps, Rolling Start. Heat 1.			
Driver	Nationality	Make of Car	Car Number
JEAN REVILLE	FRANCE	500 cc. "PALMER" SPECIAL	1
"GINGER" MORTON	ENGLAND	500 cc. "PALMER" SPECIAL	2
LES WHITE	ENGLAND	1000 cc. "PALMER" SPECIAL	3
"BUD" STANLEY	ENGLAND	500 cc. "PALMER" SPECIAL	4
Result: 1st	2nd	3rd	
Time: _____ Speed: _____ (Example: 1st and 2nd in Final: 1st and 4th in Consolation Race.)			
Event 3.—INTERNATIONAL SCRATCH RACE, 4 Laps, Rolling Start. Heat 2.			
Driver	Nationality	Make of Car	Car Number
RALPH SECRETAN	ENGLAND	500 cc. "PALMER" SPECIAL	5
ALFRED PABST	GERMANY	500 cc. "PALMER" SPECIAL	6
IAN DAVIES	SCOTLAND	500 cc. "PALMER" SPECIAL	4
F. M. WILLS	ENGLAND	1100 cc. "WILLS" SPECIAL	9
Result: 1st	2nd	3rd	
Time: _____ Speed: _____ (Example: 1st and 2nd in Final: 1st and 4th in Consolation Race.)			
Event 4.—INTERNATIONAL SCRATCH RACE, 4 Laps, Rolling Start. Heat 3.			
Driver	Nationality	Make of Car	Car Number
S. MURPHY	FRANCE	1100 "MURPHY" SPECIAL	12
TOMMY SULLMAN	AUSTRALIA	1100 "SULLMAN" SPECIAL	10
F. G. HARGREAVE	ENGLAND	1100 "HARGREAVE" SPECIAL	11
BILLY MURDEN	ENGLAND	500 "MURDEN" SPECIAL	7
Result: 1st	2nd	3rd	
Time: _____ Speed: _____ (Example: 1st and 2nd in Final: 1st and 4th in Consolation Race.)			
Event 5.—SPECIAL CHALLENGE MATCH RACE, 4 Laps, Rolling Start. JIMMY HANLEY (The Famous Gaumont British Film Artist of "Little Friend") JEAN REVILLE (The "GNAT")			
Result: 1st	2nd	3rd	
Event 6.—CHALLENGE MATCH RACE, 2 Laps, Flying Start. "GINGER" MORTON (Car No. 2) v. IAN DAVIES (Car No. 4)			
Result: 1st	2nd	3rd	
Event 7.—CHALLENGE MATCH RACE, 2 Laps, Flying Start. TOMMY SULLMAN (Car No. 10) v. BILLY MURDEN (Car No. 7)			
Result: 1st	2nd	3rd	
Event 8.—INTERNATIONAL SCRATCH RACE (FINAL), 4 Laps, Rolling Start.			
Driver	Nationality	Car Number	
WINNER OF EVENT 2			
WINNER OF EVENT 3			
WINNER OF EVENT 4			
Result: 1st	2nd	3rd	

Part of the programme at Crystal Palace, Easter Monday 1935

‘Bud Stanley’, the third of the British drivers who raced in Australia,⁵ has now been unmasked by inspection of the passenger list of the *SS Orsova*. This was the pseudonym of Stanley Edgar Budd (ho ho), born in Wimbledon in 1910 to George Budd, jobbing gardener, and his wife Harriet. The family were living at 60 Haydon’s Road in 1911, less than a mile from Merton Park Parade, and moved to Oatlands Road, Burgh Heath, some time before 1934. Between 1897 and 1900 they were in Ware, Hertfordshire, a town only seven miles from Puckeridge. Did the Budds know the Revells back then?

Australia⁶

1936: Contrary to my statement in Part 1, Jean Reville seems not to have raced in Australia after the somewhat intermittent season for which he was engaged, and in which he enjoyed only patchy success. At the end of the season, he landed in hospital with an injured hand and arm, perhaps exacerbating the injury received at Crystal Palace in 1934 (see below). All three Gnats that he had taken with him to Australia were sold in March 1936.⁷

An Australian neighbour of the elderly Jean Reville recalled that he was an entertaining and persuasive talker, who could sell you anything. However, a junior-school friend of his Australian son Bruce recalled Jean as full of talk about his great past, but commented ‘no-one believed him’. Some of his claims will be examined in Part 3. His persuasive abilities were tested in another field, when he stood (but was not elected) as a Group B candidate for Queensland in the Australian Federal elections in November 1958, and again in 1972.

A Race Meeting

Let us remember Jean Reville in his brief prime, as an excellent and competitive dare-devil of a racing driver. Here reproduced in its entirety is a rather breathless account from the *Wimbledon Boro' News* of 1 June 1934, which gives the flavour of a typical midget car race meeting, and of the incidents and accidents which might befall a 'racing motorist'. (The dirt-track at Crystal Palace was built within the Corinthians' football stadium in 1927, and used for motorcycle events from 1928. The track circuit would measure only some 350 yards.) Note that in this article 'Marett' may be a mistake for 'Marriot'.



*Wimbledon Stadium, shortly after opening
(Wimbledon Boro' News 9 March 1934)*

Midget Cars in Collision

Wimbledon Drivers' Thrilling Race

A large crowd at Crystal Palace Speedway on Saturday saw Victor Gillow beat Jean Reville, the Wimbledon racing motorist, in the first heats of the British Individual Midget Car Dirt Track Championship, organised by the Speedway Racing Drivers Club, Merton Park Parade, Wimbledon. There were, as usual, thrills and spills in every race, although all the drivers concerned luckily escaped unhurt. The standard of racing was particularly good with fast times and close finishes being the order of the evening. The main attraction was the first heats of the British Individual Championships, in which the first two contenders were Victor Gillow and Jean Reville. These two drivers met each other in three 4-lap races, each run off from a rolling start. They proved the two fastest drivers throughout the meeting.

In Heat 1 Reville and Gillow entered the first bend side by side at over 45 mph and for a lap they were practically locked together until Reville gained a slight lead coming out of the Paddock bend, and held it to the finish, winning by ten yards in the excellent time of 95 seconds. Before the commencement of Heat 2 Gillow took the precaution of changing over to rough-tread tyres, owing to the treacherous nature of the track. From the inside position and with slightly better acceleration off the mark, Gillow was into the first bend some distance ahead of Reville, who nothing daunted kept his foot down for the remainder of the race. In spite of the fact that he twice over-slid and hit the fence, Reville succeeded in slightly reducing Gillow's lead. However, the latter eventually won by 12 yards in 94.4 seconds.

Spoiled by Mishap

In Heat 3 both cars were smartly off the mark and into the first bend together. What promised to be the most exciting of the heats was spoilt through Reville getting an eyeful of cinders while crossing behind Gillow to the inside position. With a clear track, Gillow then proceeded to give what was probably his finest display of spectacular driving on the Crystal Palace track, winning by about 15 yards in the record time of 94.2 seconds.

In the second semi-final of the Crystal Palace scratch race, Jean Reville (Palmer Special) emerged from a tremendous cloud of dust with Leon Marett (Palmer Special) also of Wimbledon, hot on his heels, while Hagborg and Pat Regan were fighting a separate battle for third place some considerable distance in the rear. For three whole laps Reville and Marett thundered round with only inches separating their cars, until Reville struck a bump on entering the Paddock bend, which caused his car to leap quite two feet in the air, colliding with Marett's car as it came to earth again. With a terrific wrench on the steering wheel Reville coolly averted what might have been a nasty accident by broad-siding his car completely off the track. He was, however, travelling at such a speed that that it took the whole length of the football pitch to bring the car to a standstill. It was then found that the steering of Reville's car was ... badly damaged, and in addition, a badly sprained wrist would not permit him to compete again in the meeting. The race was finally won by Marett, with Pat Regan second, in 99 seconds.

Gillow again scored in the final with Hagborg second, Pat Regan third and Marett last. The absence of Reville robbed the race of much of its interest, as the spectators were eagerly anticipating another Reville-Gillow duel. Gillow won by 40 yards in 96 seconds. This Saturday there will be record attempts and match races.

1 And, by report, another boy, though I have not found him.

2 Brief report in *Manchester Guardian* 14 May 1934.

3 Published in *News Chronicle*, Northern edition, 10 or 11 May 1934.

4 Letter from Surrey History Centre to author, 1 May 2009

5 He is mentioned as '[one] of our best-known exponents' in *Wimbledon Boro' News* 6 September 1935, but apparently never raced again after the Australian trip.

6 Most of this section is due to John Williams of Brisbane, in talks and e-mails January to April 2009.

7 John Williams supplies the definitions of midget car racing in Australia, where the sport continued strongly. 'Early midgets' raced between 1914 and 1918/19. In the 1930s, the English press referred to all small racing cars as midgets, but aficionados distinguish between converted road cars (light cars or cycle-cars, 'not real midgets') and 'modern midgets', which are purpose-built and conform to a set of size and engine capacity regulations which sound very similar to those Jean Reville claimed to have established with his Speedway Racing Drivers Club. Also, some early 1930s races in England were run clockwise – for purists true midgets have always raced counter-clockwise.

THE WANDLE TROUT SPOTTED

Sixteen years ago – it was in the *Bulletin* for March 1993 – a reference by Eric Montague to Izaak Walton’s description of the Wandle trout as ‘having spots like tortoises’ reminded me that, though I had seen it quoted before I had never located this picturesque expression in *The Compleat Angler*. To make sure, I read it again. And there were definitely no tortoise-spotted trout. No Wandle even.

In two short pieces in *Bulletins* 106 and 109 I related my discovery that Edward Walford in his *Greater London* (1883-4) refers to this description of the trout, and places it in a note to Walton’s text. But in which edition? Walford did not say. *The Compleat Angler* has never been out of print, and has gone into, almost, countless editions. In the British Library I checked the notes in those of 1653, 1815, 1823, 1836 and 1902 (my own copy is from 1935). No tortoise spots. However I did discover that the 1815 edition, with notes by Sir John Hawkins, has a note to Chapter XVII that reads: ‘That which Walton calls the straw-worm or ruff-coat ... is the most common of any, and is found in ... the Wandle, which runs through Carshalton in Surrey. In 1759 I took one of the insects ... which had been found in the River Wandle ...’ So Hawkins knew the Wandle. That was something – but not enough.

However, **Charles Toase** noticed my reference to this puzzle in the workshop report in the last *Bulletin*, and brought the power of the internet to bear on the problem. He writes:

‘Some editions of *The Compleat Angler* have been digitised and put, in full, online. The principal service that has done this is Eighteenth Century Collections Online, which has eight editions. The advantage of this service, apart from being able to read rare books at home, is that they can be searched, thus providing a wonderful source for rare quotations.

‘However when I looked for Wandle trout it wasn’t there in any of the editions.

‘There was, though, an earlier source called the Gutenberg Project. This relies on volunteers keyboarding the texts of books, and doesn’t reproduce the actual pages; it also looks rather a mess, but it so happens that it chose a different edition of Walton, and it was the one we have been seeking, with notes by Sir John Hawkins.

‘Hawkins[’s notes were used] for several editions; our trout does not appear in all of them – only in those edited by James Rennie.

‘The one I have seen at the British Library, dated 1833, pressmark 7907.b.23, has on page 90 [third paragraph of Chapter V]:

“*Piscator*. Nay, Brother, you shall not stay so long; for, look you, here’s a Trout* will fill six reasonable bellies.”

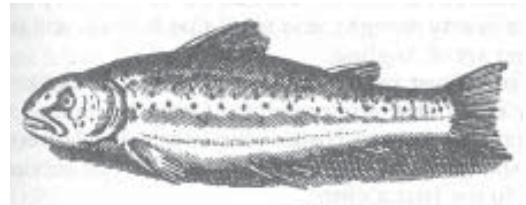
‘[footnote] ***This is the Wandle variety of trout with marked spots like a tortoise.**”

(The same note appears in the edition of 1835.)

So the words are definitely not those of Walton, but were written by Sir John Hawkins (1719-1789), and selected, long after the latter’s death, by James Rennie, a Scots-born naturalist, one of whose interests was angling. Hawkins was a lawyer and magistrate, devoted to music and literature, a friend, editor, and executor of Dr Johnson, and it appears that he knew the Wandle, even if it was only at the Carshalton end.

All enthusiasts of the Wandle should be grateful to Charles Toase for hunting down this elusive quotation.

Judith Goodman



A WALK AROUND MERTON RUSH

Our 28th Local History Note is *A Walk around Merton Rush in the early 20th century*, conducted by Cyril Maidment and Peter Hopkins. Cyril has collected photographs and views of all the old buildings that stood on the site of the Nelson Hospital and nearby, identifying the viewpoint of each one. Peter has gone through the manorial court rolls to trace the history of each holding from the late 15th century to the 19th. Also included are a Vincent Lines article from a 1929 edition of *Wimbledon Boro’ News*, information from the 1891 and 1901 Censuses and local directories, as well as several maps.

The book is of 36 A4 pages, and costs £2.50 (£2 to members), plus 80p postage & packing. It is available from our Publications Secretary, Peter Hopkins, 57 Templecombe Way, Morden, Surrey SM4 4JF, or phone Peter on 020 8543 8471 to arrange collection.



‘Old Cottages, Merton Rush’

Watercolour by Madeline Graham Barker 1929, reproduced by courtesy of Wimbledon Society Museum of Local History

**ROSEMARY JEWERS has been engaged in
THE SEARCH FOR NELSON'S STAIRCASE**

Nelson descended the grand staircase of Merton Place for the last time on 13 September 1805, when he departed for the battle of Trafalgar. Within 16 years the house had been completely demolished. How many of the contents survive?

My story begins almost six decades ago, when I was a child. My father John Brereton, a farmer living at Little Massingham, Norfolk, mentioned to me several times that he had been told a Nelson staircase had been installed in a former family house – Brinton Hall, Norfolk. I absorbed the information, but at that age did not appreciate the significance.

Many years later I heard that Brinton Hall was to be open to the public for one day. So, on 16 April 2008, my cousin Michael Sandford and I drove to Norfolk. The present owners of the Hall, Jeremy and Esmé Bagnall-Oakeley, greeted us and immediately noticed my interest in their staircase. When I related my father's story they looked surprised and said that Jeremy's mother had heard this same story from her parents, when the Breretons had sold Brinton Hall to them in 1922-3.

Because of its close proximity to Brinton I first thought the Nelson staircase had originated from Nelson's childhood home, the now demolished rectory at Burnham Thorps. It soon appeared that this was unlikely, as Merton Place was a much stronger contender.

Over the years Merton Place had been improved and extended by Sir Richard Hotham and possibly later by Charles Greaves. Nelson bought it following the death of Greaves, and engravings of Merton at that time show that the height of the original building was three storeys. The additional buildings attached to it had only two, but the overall height was almost the same. The grand staircase was in the original building, and therefore would give access to three floors.

We felt it necessary to photograph every joint, cut, wedge, tread, riser, and landing at Brinton. This was a great help, because when we obtained a copy of the ground floor plan of Merton Place, drawn by architect Thomas Chawner in 1805 it showed the stairs to the first floor were in three sections, separated by large landings.

When Brinton Hall was remodelled in 1822 the staircase had also been joined together in three places to make the first long flight. Also at Brinton there are further cuts, joins and modifications to make it all fit. Floor panels on the half landing then connected the first and second flights. We thought it quite likely that the smaller second flight and more floor panels seen at Brinton could have come from the remaining flights of the Merton staircase, as could any treads and risers that might have been damaged when the staircase was dismantled.

Having studied the staircase measurements carefully, my husband Tony, using a computer, redrew part of Chawner's plan to scale. He then superimposed a highlighted rectangle exactly to the proportions of a Brinton 1.395m x 312mm stair tread onto a stair drawn on the plan. This was a very good match. He then conducted an interesting experiment. He knew, from the 1815 sale details, that Merton Place's 'withdrawing room' measured 23ft x 24ft. He copied this rectangle five times, making 6.98m, which is just under 23ft. By adding another 30mm to the rectangles it takes it to just under 24ft. When superimposing these joined rectangles onto the plan the results are extremely close to the known sizes of the Merton withdrawing room (see Fig.2). Tony decided to redraw Chawner's plan because our copy showed the texture of the plan's paper. Redrawing produced a sharper and cleaner image.

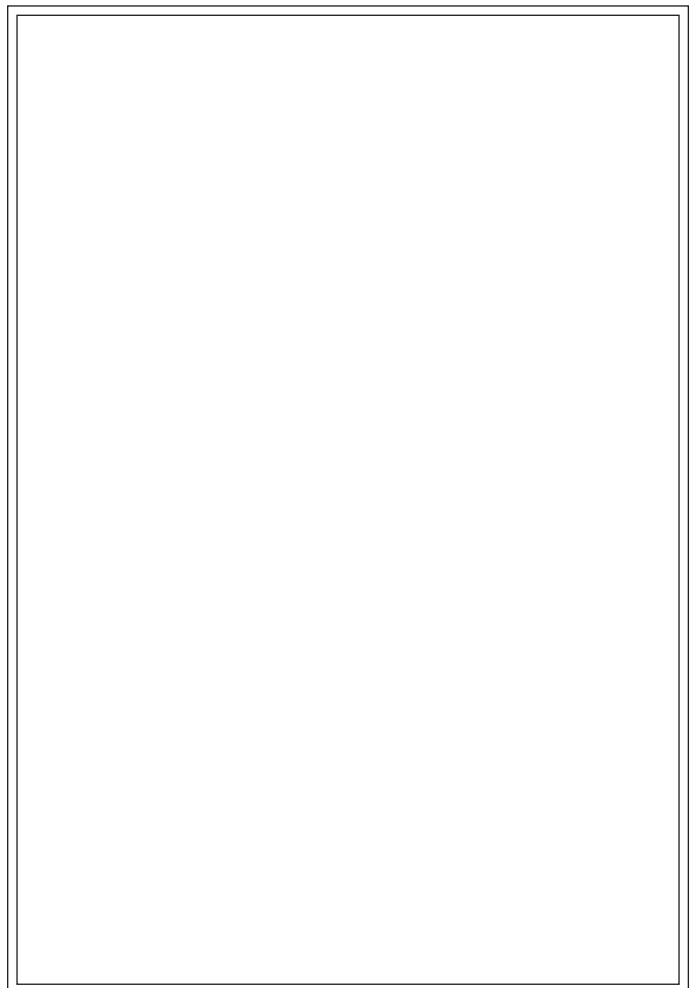


Fig.1 The first flight of the staircase at Brinton Hall

Excellent Materials and Fixtures of a spacious modern Mansion, Merton, formerly the Residence of the late Lord Nelson.—By Mr. GRIMAULT, on the Premises, at Merton, Surrey, on Wednesday, Sept. 19, and the following day, at 12.

THE excellent Building Materials and Fixtures, comprising about 85 feet square of capital wainscot, clean batten and other flooring boards, 70 feet 2-inch 6-panel and other doors, several pair of folding ditto, suitable for large drawing rooms, a great number of sash frames and sashes complete, Venetian and French ditto, statuary, Sienna and neat modern veined marble chimney-pieces, a real wainscot staircase complete, dado and wainscoting, 2,500 feet of stone paving, 300 feet of ditto, with black dots to the hall, 120 feet of painted veranda, 30 square of slating, a great quantity of lead, iron railing, fencing, &c.; a capital force and other pumps, lead cisterns, coppern, ranges, register and other stoves, capital iron door to strong closet, 2 waterclosets, a copper bath, a great number of bookcases, presses, and other effects. May be viewed two days previous, and the mornings of sale; catalogues to be had at the inns in the adjacent towns; at the Old Bell, Holborn, London; and of the auctioneer, Brentford-end.

Second Sale of the Building Materials of a very large Mansion, Merton, formerly the residence of the late Lord Nelson.—By Mr. GRIMAULT, on the Premises, at Merton, Surrey, on Thursday, Nov. 15, and following day, at 12.

ABOUT 250,000 very good sound Bricks, cleaned and stacked, a very large quantity of excellent fir timber, in girders, joists, plates, rafters, and quartering, 30 square of slating boards, 13,000 plain tiles, 400 feet stone coping, a large quantity of firewood, &c.; also the brickwork and timbers of the kitchen, laundry, gardener's room, icehouse, &c., now standing, and numerous other effects. May be viewed, and catalogues had at the Inns in the adjacent towns; at the Old Bell, Holborn, London; and of the auctioneer, Brentford-end.

Advertisements from The Times 10 September 1821 (left)
and 9 November 1821 (above)

In December 2008 Michael Sandford discovered two very important advertisements in 1821 editions of *The Times*. The first publicised the sale at Merton Place, on ‘Wednesday, Sept. 19, and the following day, at 12’. It detailed building materials and fixtures, including ‘a real wainscot staircase complete, dado and wainscoting’.

In November Mr Grimault, the same auctioneer, advertised another sale at Merton Place, offering ‘About 250,000 very good sound Bricks, cleaned and stacked’. This confirmed that Merton Place was demolished in 1821, and probably was not standing when the first sale took place, because of the mammoth task of removing, cleaning and stacking the huge number of bricks.

So, if Brinton has the Merton staircase (and any other items bought at the sale) how could it have been transported to Norfolk in 1821?

Road conditions were poor at that time, so they would almost certainly have used the nearby Surrey Iron Railway, the first public railway for the transportation of goods. Horses pulled the wagons along the track, which led from Croydon to Wandsworth, where the Thames flowed.

At the same time two Brereton cousins, Robert and Randle, were shipowners, moving goods between London and Blakeney. They could easily have transported the staircase by sea to Blakeney, and then on to Brinton by road, six miles away.

Having measured the Brinton staircase carefully in January we faced the task of analysing and calculating to see if it could have originated from Nelson’s home at Merton Place.

I then went back to my notes, and realised just how many coincidental factors there were, relating to Merton Place and Brinton Hall:

1. The Nelson staircase story has been passed down through five generations of Breretons.
2. The same story has been passed down through three generations to the present owners of Brinton Hall.
3. Through marriage, the Brereton family connection with Merton Place went back to Charles Greaves, who owned Merton Place until his death, when it was sold to Nelson. The network of wealthy relatives, some holding high office in London, would have known about the demolition of Merton Place, and the 1821 sale. They would have passed on the information to the Breretons at Brinton, because they would have known about the rebuilding there. Of course the Breretons could have also read the *Times* advertisement.
4. The Merton staircase was sold in 1821 – Brinton Hall was remodelled in 1822.
5. In the opinion of an expert, Brinton’s staircase could date between 1760 and 1770. These dates coincide with improvements made by the earlier owner of Merton, Sir Richard Hotham, before it was sold to Charles Greaves.
6. The size of the treads on the Brinton staircase match Merton’s, and are to the proportions shown on Chawner’s plan of 1805.
7. The floor panels shown on the landings of Chawner’s plan match the size of those set into the half-landing of the Brinton staircase.
8. The total number of joins, and the number of treads, banisters and panelling of the first flight of the Brinton staircase match the Merton ground floor staircase plan.
9. The Brinton staircase is made of oak. When an attempt was made to sell Merton Place in 1815 the sale particulars referred to the staircase being of oak.
10. The staircases at Merton and Brinton are both described as ‘wainscot’.
11. The size of the treads on the Merton plan and the Brinton staircase match. Using the size of the tread as a known factor we have confirmed the size of some of Merton’s rooms as stated in the 1815 sale particulars, and the result is surprisingly close to those dimensions.

The owners of Brinton Hall think there could be more fixtures from Merton Place in the house – glass doors, windows, and the large number of Portland stone slabs in the hall floor.

With so many matching factors we feel that it is highly probable that the staircase from Merton Place is now in Brinton Hall. However, this is an ongoing investigation and we are still seeking proof positive for a bill of lading, bill of sale or any other indisputable evidence that will propel this research forward. We hope that someone may have knowledge or information that could contribute to the data gathered so far.

Notes.

My great-great-grandfather Charles Brereton was born at Brinton Hall and married Frances Wilson. His father and brother were living at Brinton Hall when it was being remodelled in 1822. Frances Wilson's father Joseph was a wealthy London silk merchant, as was a cousin Samuel Wilson, who was also an alderman, then sheriff, which led to his becoming Lord Mayor of London in 1838.

Joseph Wilson had another cousin, William Wilson, who was also a silk merchant. William's daughter Sophia married the Revd Richard Greaves, who was the son of Charles Greaves, who owned Merton Place before Nelson bought it.*

Michael Sandford and Tony Jewers have collaborated with me on the staircase project. Their co-operation and help have been invaluable.

My thanks to Mr and Mrs Bagnall-Oakeley, owners of Brinton Hall.

Brinton Hall open days:
www.invitationtoview.co.uk

Staircase information and updates:
brereton.org.uk/brinton/nelson-stair-case.htm

Direct email: rosemaryandtony@gmail.com
email: nelsonstaircase@brereton.org.uk

Sources:

Thomas Chawner's 1805 floor plan, at Merton Local Studies Centre, redrawn with permission.

Photograph and drawing copyright Tony Jewers

1815 sale particulars at Surrey History Centre

Peter Hopkins *A History of Lord Nelson's Merton Place* (1998) Merton Historical Society

Malcolm Harrison *Unravelling the Threads: a Guide to the Wilsons of Stenson ...*

The Times 10 September 1821, 9 November 1821

* Editor's note: there is more about the Wilson and Greaves families in J E M Latham *Search for a New Eden* (1999) Associated University Presses.

[This article also appears, with five illustrations in colour and a black-and-white photo of Brinton Hall, in the current edition of *The Nelson Dispatch*, Volume 10 part 2 April 2009.]

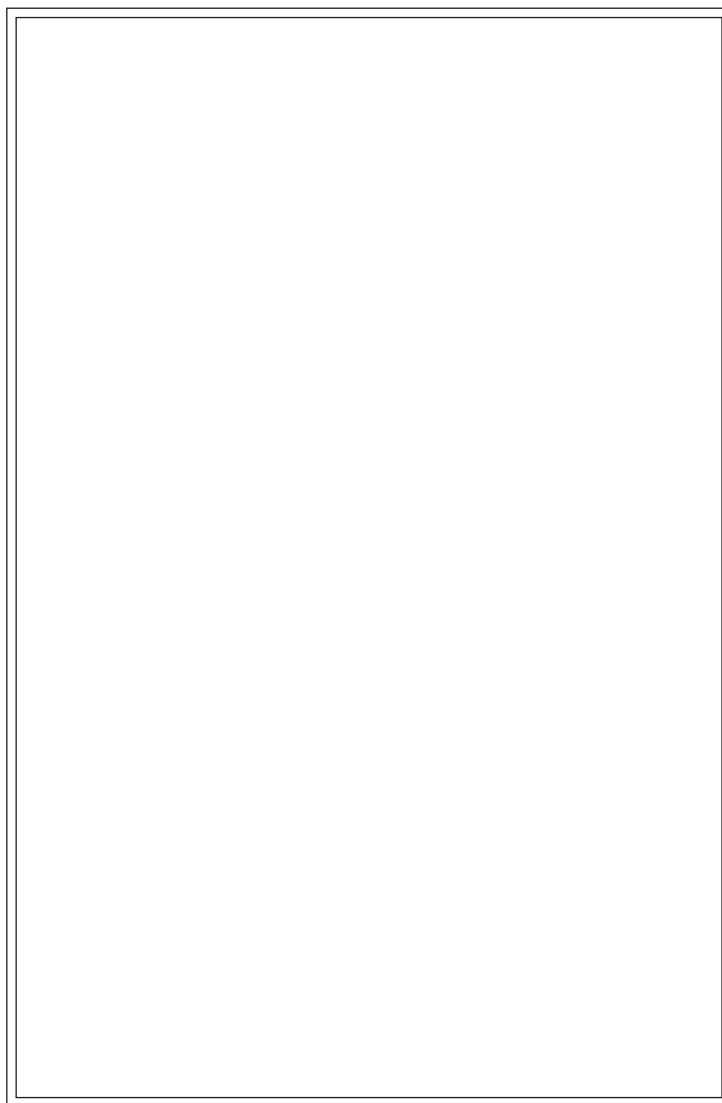


Fig.2 Re-drawn to scale from Chawner's plan. Brinton's stair tread size confirms the known measurements of the 'withdrawing room'.

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.

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