



PRESIDENT:

VICE PRESIDENTS: Viscountess Hanworth, Eric Montague and William Rudd

CHAIR: David Haunton

BULLETIN NO. 180

DECEMBER 2011

BILL RUDD'S MORDEN



'North's Cottages' 23-37 Crown Lane, Morden, photographed by Bill Rudd in 1981. Thomas North, who built them, lived at North Lodge, London Road. The cottages still stand, but all have now been stripped of their corrugated iron roofs and cladding. See page 2.

CONTENTS

Programme: December – March	2
Bill Rudd's Morden	1, 2
Reports:	
Wandsworth Museum	3
West Norwood Cemetery	3
New Wimbledon Theatre	5
Local History Workshops:	
5 August: post office memories; Stane Street; Wandle bitter; Ravensbury trail; archaeology in Sutton; a lost archaeology opportunity?; a surveyor's report from 1897	6
30 September: Nelson; a local novelist; Merton priory wall; a huge collection of photographs; WW2 memories; Motspur Park; Queen Eleanor's coronation; LAARC tours	7
Making a Meal of a Really Quite Simple Question (1943) – David Haunton	8
Transports of Delight – Geoffrey Wilson	10
Merton High Street and Nelson's Merton Place – Cyril Maidment	10
The Domesday Settlement in Morden – Peter Hopkins	12
Merton and Morden in 1951 – the year of the Festival of Britain – David Roe	14

PROGRAMME DECEMBER – MARCH

Saturday 10 December 2.30pm

Raynes Park Library Hall

‘Violette Szabo’

Daphne and Richard Marchant will present an illustrated talk about the World War II heroine and her local connections.

Saturday 21 January 2.30pm

Christ Church Hall, Colliers Wood

‘Merton’s Railways’

An illustrated talk by our member David Luff

Saturday 18 February 2.30pm

Christ Church Hall, Colliers Wood

‘The Crown Jewels’

An illustrated talk by Garry Wykes

Tuesday 21 February at 12.30 for 1pm

The Restaurant in the Park

ANNUAL LUNCH (booking form enclosed)

Saturday 17 March 2.30pm

Christ Church Hall, Colliers Wood

‘The National Archives’

An illustrated talk by Melinda Haunton.

Raynes Park Library Hall is in Aston Road, off Approach Road, on or close to several bus routes, including the 152, and near to Raynes Park station. Some parking possible in side streets.

Please use the hall entrance in Aston Road, not the library entrance.

Christ Church Hall is next to the church, in Christchurch Road, 250m from Colliers Wood Underground station. Limited parking at the hall, but plenty in nearby streets or at the Tandem Centre, 200m south. Buses 152, 200 and 470 pass the door.

Visitors are welcome to attend our talks. Entry £2.

THOMAS NORTH OF MORDEN (see picture on page 1)

NORTH & SON, iron church & house builders & roofing merchants, to Fisheries, Health, Inventions, Indian, Colonial, Irish, Italian, Paris, Military & Naval Exhibitions. Many thousand feet supplied also to Her Majesty's Government & to railways, hospitals &c. Special low quotations, some secondhand. Chief offices, 121 & 122 London road, Southwark s E; additional works & stores, Morden, Surrey. Telegraphic address, "Northwards, London"



Mr North's entry in the commercial section of the 1892 directory reads:

NORTH & SON, iron church & house builders & roofing merchants, to Fisheries, Indian, Colonial, Irish, Italian, Paris, Military & Naval Exhibitions. Many thousand feet supplied also to Her Majesty's Government & to railways, hospitals &c. Special low quotations, some secondhand. Chief offices, 121 & 122 London road, Southwark SE; additional works & stores, Morden, Surrey. Telegraphic address, "Northwards, London"

THE CHAPTER HOUSE, MERTON PRIORY

Congratulations to Merton Council and Merton Priory Trust in finally arranging the transfer of the Chapter House site and adjoining land into public ownership. The transfer was promised many years ago under a Section 106 agreement with the developers, together with a payment of some £400,000. This money is earmarked to finance the appropriate display of the site, which will be leased by the Council to the Trust.

Merton Priory Trust have been taking care of the site since 2003, and in recent months have been clearing away the low-grade sand that was installed to protect the remains but has instead been gradually destroying it. If you haven't visited lately, you will be amazed at the improvements that have already been achieved. The new funding will enable much more to be done to open up this historic space to the community and to the wider world. Keep up to date by visiting www.mertonpriory.org

Peter Hopkins

VISIT TO WANDSWORTH MUSEUM

Thanks to an enthusiastic and hard-working team, mostly volunteers, and generous start-up funding from a family trust, Wandsworth's new museum is now up and running in an attractive building that was previously a library. On 16 August a group of our members was given a guided tour by the director Neil Couzens, who, despite having only just taken up the post, was impressively up to speed with his brief.

There are two main exhibition areas. The permanent display uses three time-lines to explore different aspects of (what is now the Borough of) Wandsworth's history. They are labelled 'The Natural Landscape'; 'The Cultural Landscape', which tells how local people have modified, and re-modified, the landscape; and 'The Human Story', which highlights historic events, local and national, that have made an impact on life in Wandsworth. On display here is a fine replica of the famous Bronze Age 'Battersea shield'. Neil dreams of being able one day to borrow and display the real shield, which belongs to the British Museum. Meanwhile he and his team receive a great deal of support from the Museum of London in the way of advice and loans of exhibits. Display stands in this area contain artefacts relating to aspects of everyday life in Wandsworth. And local industries too are not overlooked: Morgan Crucible, Young's Ram Brewery and Price's Candles and others are represented.

The temporary exhibition space at the time of our visit was given over to *The History of Wandsworth in 100 Objects*. Most of the 'objects' were in fact drawings, watercolours and prints selected from what is a large and rather fine collection. Many were topographical, and included views of the Wandle and a drawing of the town hall when just built. I was charmed by a painting from 1923 of the thronged junction of Northcote Road and Battersea Rise by Leonora K Green RA. Among other subjects were a dramatic engraving of John Burns, the first working-class member of the cabinet, and a portrait of another local man, William Brodrick, the King's Embroiderer under James I, whose descendants have been lords of the manor until the present day. More solid 'objects' included a Wandgas cooker, a baker's handcart and two handsome banners once carried in procession.

We were then taken to the lower level of the building and introduced to Niamh Keating, the Education Officer, in her fascinating workspace. All kinds of props for many different periods are stored here, so that groups can dress up to learn about and recreate life in the past. We particularly enjoyed the large strip maps of south-west London at different periods, which could be unrolled and walked about on and explored.

Our thanks to Neil and Niamh, and also to Sheila Harris for arranging an interesting visit.

The museum is at 38 West Hill SW18 1RZ, and is open every day except Monday, from 10am to 5pm. Buses 37, 170 and 337 pass the door. It is a 15-minute walk from East Putney station or Wandsworth town centre. A single admission costs £4 / £3 concession, but annual membership of the Friends of Wandsworth Museum, with free admission, a newsletter, and discount in the very good café and the shop, costs £10. The current temporary exhibition is called *Separation and Silence: Wandsworth Prison* and is on until 31 December.

In the same building the De Morgan Centre, which is the home of the largest collection of ceramics by William De Morgan (Merton connections) and paintings by his wife Evelyn, has now reopened. Its hours from Tuesday to Friday are 1pm to 5pm and on Saturday 10am to 5pm. Ordinary adult admission (children are free) is £4, but it is only £3 for Friends of Wandsworth Museum, and is free for Art Fund members.

Judith Goodman

VISIT TO WEST NORWOOD CEMETERY

Ten members were given a guided tour by Jill Dudman, one of the Friends of West Norwood Cemetery, on 8 September. The cemetery was opened in 1837 by the South Metropolitan Cemetery Company and is one of the 'magnificent seven' cemeteries opened in the then outskirts of London in the 1830s and 1840s, to compensate for the filling up of graveyards in inner London. The total area is 40 acres, and this was divided into four-fifths Church of England and one-fifth Dissenters (Methodists, Baptists etc). Each part had a separate chapel built in the gothic style by the architect Sir William Tite, the larger (Anglican) one being a reduced version of King's College chapel in Cambridge.

The cemetery has 65 Grade II or II* listed monuments, commemorating many notable or rich people from the 19th and early 20th centuries. It was full by the middle of the 20th century and, following the bankruptcy of the cemetery company, it was bought in 1965 by Lambeth Council, who then undertook a process of clearing parts of the cemetery of gravestones, and reselling some graves with spare space for new burials, despite this being illegal. The management was then changed, and, thanks to help from English Heritage and the Friends of West Norwood Cemetery, much has been done to improve the state of the cemetery and monuments, including a new memorial garden.

The tour visited the graves and mausoleums of more than 30 individuals, of whom only a selection can be listed here. The largest mausoleum is that of Dr Edmund Distin Maddick (1857-1939) who was a surgeon with Italian royal connections. He built London's Scala Theatre and was later involved in films. Nearby is the grave of Sir Hiram Maxim (1840-1916) of machine-gun fame, who was also involved in early flying experiments, succeeding in getting his steam-powered octagonal-winged aeroplane off the ground briefly in 1894.

Another large mausoleum is that of J W Gilbert (1794-1863) who was general manager of the London & Westminster Bank (forerunner of NatWest). His tall Gothic monument (possibly by Tite) has a small carving of a squirrel gathering nuts, in reference to his profession. In contrast, John Britton (1771-1857), an antiquarian, has an unusual rough-hewn monument of millstone grit, which is listed Grade II*. Dr Gideon Mantell (1790-1852) was an early palaeontologist, who found the first iguanodon fossils in Sussex. His original grave site included a swamp cypress tree, which by 1987 had grown to an enormous girth and fell in the hurricane of that year. The grave was then reconstructed, with help from the Geologists' Association, and has been replanted, this time with a ginkgo, another 'fossil' tree.

We saw the graves of Sir Henry Bessemer (1813-98), inventor of the Bessemer converter for making steel; Sir Horace Jones (1819-87), architect to the Corporation of London and responsible for Leadenhall, Smithfield and Billingsgate Markets, the Guildhall School of Music and Tower Bridge; and Alexander Muirhead (1848-1920), an electrical engineer involved in early wireless telegraphy.

One of the most interesting tombs, and another one to be listed Grade II* is that of sea captain John Wimble (c.1797-1851). It has large panels depicting sailing ships, on one side in full sail on a calm sea, on another under shortened sail on a storm-tossed ocean. The top of the tomb also has a ship resting on it, although it has now lost its masts. The 'star' tomb of the cemetery is probably the Grade II* mausoleum of Otto Alexander Berens (c.1797-1860), originally a linen-drafter, but later dealing in imported fancy goods. This has an enormous granite plinth with marble columns, statues and decorated capitals, and was designed by E M Barry, son and successor to Sir Charles Barry.

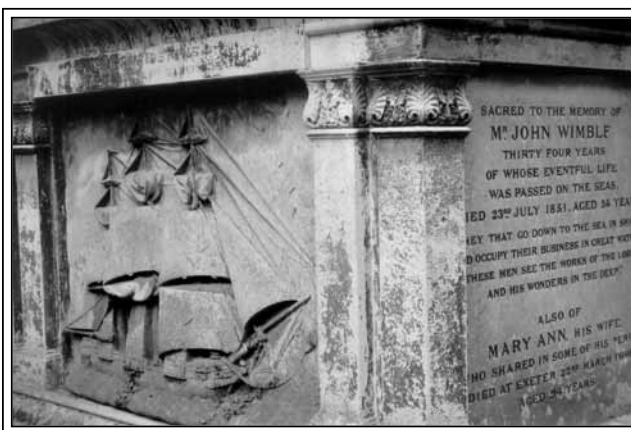


photo: D Bazley



photo: R Ninnis

Near the present crematorium chapel, which in 1957 replaced the Dissenters' chapel, is the tomb of Sir Henry Doulton (1820-97), who made his fortune by providing the pipes for London's new sewers designed by Sir Joseph Bazalgette, and later produced decorative pottery now known as Royal Doulton. His mausoleum is naturally of terracotta and it is inscribed 'He discovereth the deep things dug of darkness'. Another, similar, terracotta mausoleum is dedicated to Sir Henry Tate (1819-99), whose business later became Tate & Lyle. He invented sugar cubes and went on to donate his art collection to the nation. Next to the chapel is the classical portico which is all that remains of the war-damaged mausoleum of John Lawson Johnston (1839-1900) who made his fortune supplying the Army with 'Johnston's Fluid Beef', subsequently made famous as Bovril.

One of the most remarkable parts of the cemetery is that area dedicated to expatriate Greeks, whose 'cemetery within a cemetery' alone contains 18 Grade II listed items, including a large Doric chapel, a mausoleum for the Ralli family by G E Street, a striking female figure under a baldacchino, a mosaic icon, and many other elaborate memorials.

Other notable figures buried at West Norwood include Mrs Beeton, Baron Reuter of Reuter's News Agency, Thomas Cubitt the building contractor, William Wyon, engraver and medallist at the Royal Mint, Charles Spurgeon the preacher, Thomas Letts the stationer and Dr William Marsden, founder of the Royal Free and Royal Marsden Hospitals.

Our thanks are due to Jill Dudman for an excellent tour displaying a wide knowledge of the backgrounds of the many people buried at West Norwood.

Desmond Bazley

VISIT TO NEW WIMBLEDON THEATRE

The guide for our visit on 23 September was Sam Bain, now General Manager of the theatre, who had talked to us about its history in February (see June *Bulletin*). She reminded us that the theatre had opened on 26 December 1910 and is therefore now 100 years old. It was built by J B Mulholland, a travelling actor turned theatre proprietor (Wimbledon was his third – after Nottingham and Camberwell). In the 1960s it was bought by the local council and it remains council property. However since 2004 it has been run by the Ambassador Theatre Group. To mark this change, and the improvements they made to the building, they renamed it the New Wimbledon Theatre.

The New Wimbledon Theatre is a 'receiving house'. It does not mount its own productions but hosts touring companies and one-off shows. Sometimes the turn-around requires everyone to work all night, packing and unpacking.

In the auditorium Sam told us that though once it could hold nearly 3000 people, today the limit is 1600. The front three rows in the stalls can be lowered to accommodate a small orchestra, but when the Glyndebourne Touring Company come, with a full-size orchestra, three more rows have to go. From the stage we could see at the back of the stalls the control box and the sound desk, and right at the top of the gallery were the 'follow spots' – the lighting that follows performers around the stage.

Above us where we stood was the heavy safety curtain – required by law to take no more than 26 seconds to be completely lowered. Just off stage on the left (auditorium right) is the prompt desk, occupied during a performance by the deputy stage manager, who not only has the script in front of him/her but also the complete technical directions for the show. At either side of the stage, out of sight of the audience, hang the vertical ropes which, with the aid of counterweights, are used to raise and lower scenery.

Much of the backstage area has been rebuilt in the 1990s and more recently, in functional but not glamorous breezeblock. Dressing-rooms are arranged on three floors – stars at ground level, minor roles above, and the chorus up another flight of steps. We were shown a star's room, with its illuminated mirrors, spacious shower-room, and all-important fridge. High up in the building is the newish green room, a very pleasant, sunny, relaxing space with hot and cold drinks machines. No chance of your missing your entrance though, with a public address system throughout the backstage area. In part of the roof space here is a new storage area, especially for the Glyndebourne company, so they can mount two productions during their visits.

Finally we were taken, as the very first visitors, to the new Education and Archive Room. Here, overlooked by a portrait of Mulholland, are filing cabinets stocked with programmes, cuttings, photographs etc (though not many posters, because of their size). Sam demonstrated how to enter, for instance, a star's name (she chose Marlene Dietrich) on the computer and come up with a location in the files. A most useful facility for theatrical research, school projects and so on. Our thanks to Sam Bain and her colleague Keith Munro (the Building Services Manager) for an enjoyable tour, and to Audrey King for arranging it.

Judith Goodman

“CINDERELLA”

Characters in the order of their appearance :

Dandini	JOYCE BLAIR
Baron Bankrupt	ROY JEFFERIES
Cinderella	HERMENE FRENCH
The Ugly Sisters	TERRY & DORIC KENDALL
Buttons	RICHARD MURDOCH
The Brokers' Men }	BILLY NELSON
Prince Charming	CHUCK O'NEIL
Fairy Godmother	BILLY MORRIS
	PEGGY THOMPSON
	MARIA SANINA

Specialities by—
Miss MALTA'S DOG REVUE
The London Quartette
The Graham Nelson Children and full Corps de Ballet
Principal Dancer : Maria Sanina
Royal Cream Ponies supplied by Sir Garrard Tyrwhitt-Drake, D.L., J.P

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

Scene 1	The Village of Hard-up-on-the-Hill
Scene 2	Outside Bankrupt Hall
Scene 3	The Forest
Scene 4	The Baron's Library
Scene 5	The Sisters' Boudoir
Scene 6	A Corridor in Bankrupt Hall
Scene 7	Cinderella's Kitchen
Scene 8	Transformation Scenes and Ballet

(a) The Pixies' Garden
(b) The Gossamer Web
(c) The Rainbow
(d) The Realm of Ice and Snow
(e) The Land of Make-Believe

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From a 1952 programme (JG). The production of Cinderella came from the London Palladium.

LOCAL HISTORY WORKSHOPS

Friday 5 August 2011 – 4 present. Peter Hopkins in the chair

- ◆ **Bill Rudd** has had no further communication from the lady who asked him about possible contents for a Time Capsule to be buried on the Willows School site.

He recalled that, when he left the Army and applied to join the Sutton Post Office, he had to supply no fewer than four references (from the Army, his school, and two neighbours ‘who knew him well’) as this was for a Civil Service post. He was of course taken on, and shortly afterwards moved to the Morden office in Central Road (which had opened in 1934). This office received its mail from Mitcham Sorting Office, until the Morden South Sorting Office opened.

- ◆ **David Haunton** read part of a letter from Ken Gibbons, retailing his experiences while making the film *The Battle of Britain*, after which he joined Morden Post Office and met Bill, who ‘put him onto’ MHS. He then returned to working on Wimbledon Common, where his first job was ‘up a ladder, painting the outside of the windmill’.

David had read of three 12th-century towns – Dunstable, Baldock and Royston – planted at Roman crossroads on otherwise open land, confirming the view that the Roman roads were still in active use at that date, and wondered if Stane Street was similarly in use. Peter’s view was that the course of the road was well preserved from Colliers Wood into London in the modern A24. However, Stane Street in Surrey had been subject to many local diversions, such as are known or suspected at Merton Priory, Morden, and Ewell, and thus the direct course of the road was no longer clearly evident.

We noted a report in *The Times* about Sambrook’s, a micro-brewery in Battersea, who now brew a Wandle bitter, named for the ‘romantically meandering Wandle’. Does this count as literature?



It had been David’s turn to look critically at the recently-published *Town Trails* booklet, in which he got lost trying to follow Trail 7 ‘Ravensbury’ on the map. After walking the ground, he proposed a revised route for the Trail, which he discussed with the meeting.

- ◆ **Rosemary Turner** has been doing some archaeology. She attended the Sutton ‘Time Cheam’ study days, sorting medieval pottery from the Whitehall dig – was the pottery made on site or was it the work of the Cheam potters? She then joined the dig run by Carshalton Archaeological Society and the Friends of Honeywood at The Oaks, looking for a cockpit rumoured to have been in the dining room. A number of clues were found, but no definite indication of the cockpit. However, Rosemary had the satisfaction of finding the earliest dateable item – part of a clay pipe of 1730.



- ◆ **Peter Hopkins** has been dismayed by the planning inspector’s failure to impose any effective archaeological conditions on the developer’s proposal to extend the so-called ‘Manor House’ care home between the *George* inn and St Lawrence’s church. This lies in one of the key areas in Morden, the likely site of the main Domesday settlement (see page 12). Peter has contacted English Heritage and will raise his concerns with the Committee to see if we can find ways to avoid such situations arising in future.

On a more congenial topic, in Surrey History Centre Peter has found a surveyor’s report of 1897 on Lower Morden Farm and Hobald’s Farm, advising on their re-letting after the termination of a lease. After commenting favourably on transport links, it noted the soil is ‘somewhat difficult of cultivation’, with some of the land in a ‘rather foul state from weeds: docks especially ... and couch grass’, and that most of the farm buildings are ‘very old ... [and] will require constant reparation’. The report recommended that the land be used for building purposes. Peter comments that had the owner, Gilliat Hatfield senior, acted on these recommendations, much of Lower Morden would have been developed 40 years earlier than it was, and in a style very different from the 1930s housing.

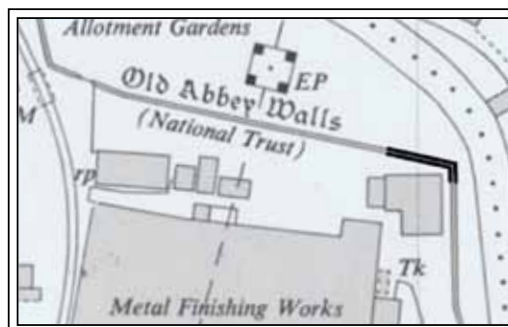
David Haunton

Friday 30 September – six present. David Haunton in the chair

- ◆ **Judith Goodman** had been reading a Nelson biography, which is generally accepted as the lowest in esteem. The author was James Harrison, a ‘hack’, but as it appeared (in two volumes) within a year of Nelson’s death, and includes material supplied by Emma Hamilton, it has value, and is the source of many quoted anecdotes.

Judith also brought along modern reprints of two novels by (Alice) Coralie Glyn, who lived at Merton Cottage in the 1890s, entitled *A Drama in Dregs: a life study* and *The Idyll of the Star Flower: an allegory of life*. They were available through the ‘print on demand’ system – the former from www.kessinger.net and the latter from the British Library at www.bl.uk. Clive Whichelow was thanked for tracking them down.

- ◆ **Cyril Maidment** showed a photograph of a section of Merton priory wall, together with a marked-up section of the 1950 OS map. A large part of the wall still extends from the junction of the Wandle and Pickle, near the Wandle bridge in Merton High Street, to the point where the Pickle goes under Merantun Way. Part of it was examined on pp14-5 in *Bulletin* 172 (September 2009) with the aid of photographs taken by Evelyn Jowett in 1973. Most of the wall is hidden, and it is protected on National Trust land on the west bank of the Pickle. The wall roughly follows the course of the meandering Pickle. Indeed, 1000 years ago, the main course of the Wandle was on the east side of the priory. Part of the last 50 metres at the southern end of the wall, including a right-angle bend, can be seen from the footpath beside PC World (as shown). Sadly, a two-metre break is also visible. This is not shown on the OS maps from the 1950s, and must have happened since.



- ◆ **Peter Hopkins** had been corresponding with Jeremy Harte, curator of Bourne Hall Museum, about Motspur Park, where four parishes and three hundreds meet at a group of square fields. He had wondered whether the name could derive from a form of the word ‘moot’, or meeting-place, but Mr Harte suggested inter-commoning as a more likely origin of the land layout.

Peter was pleased to have found an official document that confirms the date of the Westminster coronation of Henry III’s wife Eleanor of Provence in 1236. Contemporary sources have variant dates, but this document shows that it took place the Saturday before the Council meeting at Merton which approved the so-called Statute of Merton. Peter has promised future *Bulletin* articles on both these topics.

- ◆ **David Haunton** had had further dialogue about wartime days with Ken Gibbons and with Sheila Gallagher, whose recollections tie in with some of Ken’s. A future *Bulletin* article ...
- ◆ Rosemary Turner reported that LAARC (London Archaeological Archive and Research Centre), at Sir Mortimer Wheeler House, Eagle Wharf Road N1 is offering tours every Friday and the first and third Saturdays, 11.00 to 12.30 and 2.00 to 3.30. Book in advance: £5. www.museumoflondon.org.uk/archaeologyevents 020 7001 9844

Cyril Maidment

Dates of next Workshops: Fridays 9 December, 27 January and 16 March at 2.30pm

At Wandle Industrial Museum. All are welcome.

DAVID HAUNTON on

MAKING A MEAL OF A REALLY QUITE SIMPLE QUESTION (1943)

In the spring of 1943, after recently renewed German bombing raids, the District Engineer of Merton and Morden¹ raised a very sensible question in one of his areas of responsibility. Some subsequent official correspondence is preserved in file HO 207/760 at The National Archives, a little of which is presented in this note.

16 March 1943: The Clerk of the Council (and Air Raid Precautions Controller) wrote to the Chief Administration Officer, London Civil Defence (CD) Region, Regional HQ, Exhibition Road SW7: 'Our Borough Engineer notes that during enemy air attacks in 1940 and 1941 large numbers of people – at times as many as 1600 – took shelter at South Wimbledon station. During the latest raids about 200 persons gathered at the top of the escalators. Concerned [about what might happen] if those 200 people made a dash for the escalators and stairs, I have asked for police assistance at such times.

The depth of the Tube railway at South Wimbledon is 27 feet from ground level to the top of the tunnel. The accompanying drawing shows four 30-inch water-mains in Merton High Street / Kingston Road, close to the entrance. About 180 yards to the south of the station entrance at the junction of Morden Road and High Path there are two others of 42 and 48 inches. It is a cause for concern that these are nearby, just under the road surface and the station is liable to flooding if these are broken. It is somewhat exceptional for so many large pumping mains to be so close to an underground shelter. Should [South Wimbledon station] continue as an air raid shelter for large numbers of people?'

The accompanying map shows the four 30-inch mains pipes down Kingston Road - Merton High Street, plus a surface water sewer. Another, larger, sewer pipe runs down Merton Road – Morden Road.

There is a forwarding note in ink on the Clerk's letter: 'Mr Medhurst, From the plan the Council's fears seem well-founded – the 30-inch mains being only three feet below the surface of the road. It is presumed we will obtain LPTB (London Passenger Transport Board) observations in the first place...'

Letters go back and forth between J P Thomas, LPTB, 55 Broadway, Westminster SW1 and L W Medhurst, Secretary, New Tube Shelter Committee, HQ, London CD Region, the important one on 2 April containing 'This question is considered by the [LPTB] Engineer-in-Chief V A M Robertson to be a matter of general principle as there are other stations in the same category. Mr Robertson has already mentioned it to Sir Alexander Rouse,² and further meetings will be called by the Engineers....'

On 7 May, Thomas writes 'The LPTB Engineer-in-Chief has drawn the attention of the Chief Engineer to the Ministry of Home Security and the Chief Inspecting Officer of the Ministry of War Transport to the matter... [LPTB] has nothing further to say...'

On 8 July, nine weeks later, Medhurst of CD writes to the Clerk of Merton Council '...advise you that in stations fitted with floodgates, people are allowed to shelter in non-traffic hours. The following stations are available at all times for shelter purposes, but the Local Authority may limit the hours during which the public may be admitted ..' The list includes South Wimbledon, while the letter tells our Clerk something he knew already.

The Whitehall process grinds on, so on 23 July we have Home Security to CD: '... Similar questions are raised in regards to other Tube stations. The cases can only be dealt with as a whole, and Professor Webster³ is now working on the subject generally. The delay is due to the necessity of having drawings made by LPTB ... a slow business these days..'

Overall, the file crawls a total of 22 times from desk to desk, but eventually the following missive is sent, some six and a half months after the original enquiry (for the best effect this should be read aloud in a Sir Humphrey voice):

6 October 1943: T Woodisse, London CD Region, to Clerk of Merton & Morden Council '... Your question was considered most carefully by the Regional Commissioners and the Minister of Home Security ... While the Minister does not claim that Tube stations ... confer absolute protection, he does not consider that the continued use of South Wimbledon station exposes shelterers to undue risk such as would justify its closure for shelter purposes. At the same time, the measures necessary to remove the possibility of flooding would involve a greater expenditure of resources than would be consistent with a due regard for more important aspects of the war effort. I am Sir, Your obedient servant ...'

So having cogitated for half a year, the bureaucratic mountain has laboured and brought forth a mouse.

1 Ronald W North, MIMCE, who worked from the council offices in Kingston Road

2 Chief Engineer, Air Raid Precautions, Home Office

3 Of Imperial College, London University

ARCHAEOLOGY NEWS

The *London Archaeologist* in its fieldwork roundup for 2010 lists several Merton sites, including the former Alliance sports ground at Fairway, Raynes Park, where Bronze Age ditches and artefacts were found, and a site in Somerset Road, Wimbledon, where a large amount of 1st- and 2nd-century building material suggests a substantial Roman-period structure.

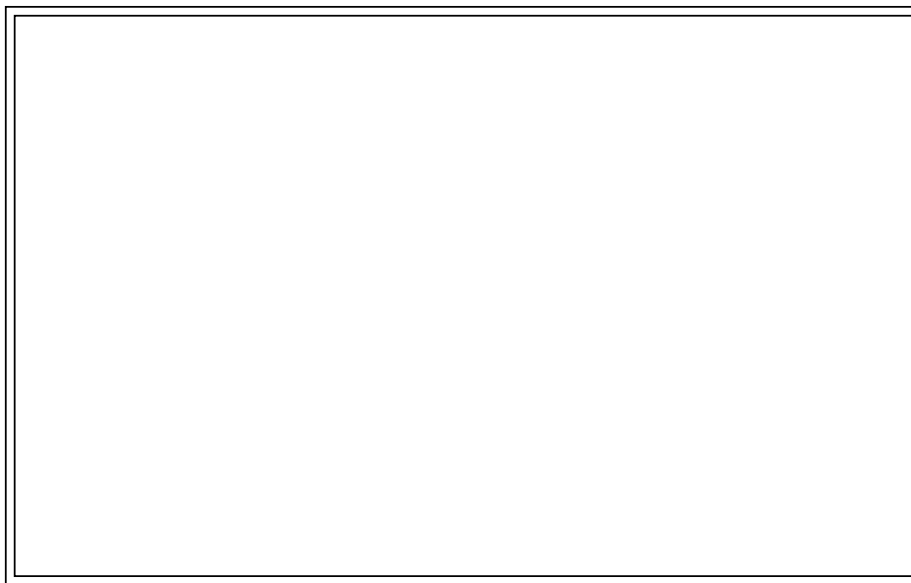
TRANSPORTS OF DELIGHT

I can just remember when the London General buses passing my birthplace and early home in Kingston Road began to shed their solid tyres for pneumatic, and gain a roof to the upper deck. The year, if memory serves, was 1925.

Riding on the open upper deck of a bus could be pleasant enough in fine weather (the experience may still be enjoyed in some seaside towns and major tourist destinations). Not so in bad weather. Not that there was any option if you were a smoker, and most men then smoked a pipe or a cigarette. A working man's income might just run to a packet of 'shag', which gave off a none too agreeable reek! Your only protection on the upper deck if the heavens opened was a mackintosh sheet fixed to the back of the forward seat, which at least covered one's lower regions.

The buses served routes 32 from Acton Green, and 77 from King's Cross, both terminating at the *Junction Tavern*, Raynes Park.

The London United trams on the Wimbledon-Hampton Court route at that time still included some cars with open tops, while others had carried rather inelegant covered upper decks since 1912. The London County Council trams (Embankment-Wimbledon via Clapham and Merton) were, to my young mind something superior, having been built from the outset with all enclosed upper decks and stairs, and well meriting their nickname of 'Pullman'.



A Hampton Court tram in West Barnes Lane, Merton. Postcard: JG.

The added attraction of the LCC trams for me was the shilling ticket which allowed you to ride them all day, and on holidays I did just that, venturing to such far-flung places as Abbey Wood, Barking and Ponders End.

Geoffrey Wilson

CYRIL MAIDMENT has been exploring

MERTON HIGH STREET AND NELSON'S MERTON PLACE

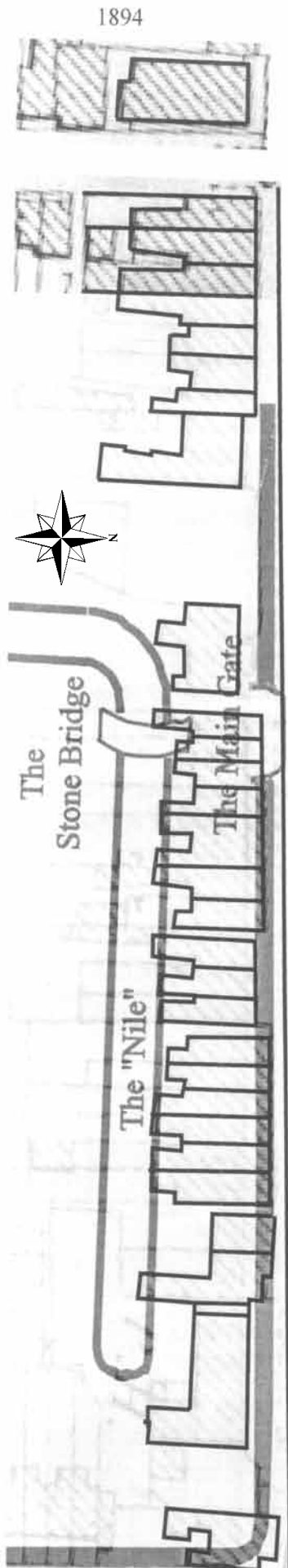
The illustration opposite shows a section of Merton High Street between Abbey Road and Pincott Road from the 1894 Ordnance Survey. The properties, all shops, are numbered and the shop keepers are listed for 1892 and 1905. In many cases there was no change of shop keeper in these thirteen years.

Superimposed is Nelson's "Nile", and the "stone bridge" as shown in the 1823 plan, as is Main Gate that is indicated in the 1806 indenture, Nelson's will. Since this drawing shows Merton Place much smaller than it was in 1806, it is probable that it is the one used for the 1801 sale of Merton Place.

Merton High Street was a turnpike for more than a hundred years. Half of the estate was on the Wimbledon side of the turnpike. Access was by means of a tunnel, which in 1805 had become an improved "spacious brick tunnel". It is not known if the improved tunnel was in the same location as the former one.

There are two recorded accounts of the location of this tunnel, marked as "???" on the drawing. On page 27 of *Reminiscences of Old Merton* by W H Chamberlain, 1925, it states "Near Mr Lee's drapery stores a tunnel ran under the road---". This is at number 39 Merton High Street, some distance from the stone bridge. The reliability of some of these reminiscences may be questioned. For example on page 26 the stone bridge is thought to be an "iron" bridge. Also the entrance to the carriage drive is said to be on the corner of Abbey Road. Were this the case, because the "Nile" does not extend this far, there would be no need for a bridge.

The other reported tunnel was in a *Supplement to Merton Church Monthly* in May 1889, where it was said to be between numbers 49 and 61, that is, close to the main entrance. Elsewhere, Mr Corke at number 61 is said to have often been through it. It is thought this location is more likely.



- | 1894 | 1892 | 1905 |
|--------------|---|---|
| | 87 W.H.Chamberlain, oil man | Henry Walter (1905) |
| | Hope Mission Room | |
| Pincott Road | | |
| | 83 Walter Clemo, tailor | (1905 John Warren, coffee rooms) |
| | 81 Porter Headley, grocer | (and 1905) |
| | 79 H.T.Squire, corn dealer | (and 1905) |
| | 77 Edwin Dive, wine merchant | William Birchall (1905) |
| | 75 Mrs R. Little, confectioner | (1905 Mrs Clara Jones, general shop) |
| | 73 William Bridger, greengrocer | (1905 Henry Herbert Birt, fishmonger) |
| | 71 Thomas Hillier, fishmonger | (1905 Herbert Walter Reeves, hair dresser) |
| | 69 Charles E. Birch, baker | Robert Cant (1905) |
| | 69A William Thompson, boot maker | (1905) |
| | 61 Joseph Corke, butcher | (and 1905) **** |
| | 59 Robert Alan, china dealer | (and 1905) |
| | 'Merton Church Monthly' Tunnel ← → ??? | |
| | 57 Charles Callen, tea dealer | (1905 Mrs Boxall, general shop) ??? |
| | 55 Thomas Hillier, fishmonger | (1905 Ernest Adams, hairdresser) |
| | 53 Henry Gardner, boot maker | (and 1905) |
| | 51 | ----- |
| | 49 Henry Philip Smith, oilman and ironmonger | (and 1905) **** |
| | 47 | ----- |
| | 45 Richard Garley, grocer | (and 1905) |
| | 43 William Willis, plumber | (and 1905) |
| | 41 William George Thirkettle, grocer | (1905 John Crowdy, beer retailer) |
| | 39 Thomas Winter Lee, draper | (and 1905) |
| | 'Chamberlain' Tunnel ← → ??? | |
| | 37 William Isaac Juster, undertaker | (and 1905) |
| | 35 | ----- (1905 Thomas H Thridgould, saddler) |
| | 33 Charles Whisker, saddler | (and 1905) |
| | 31 James Dann, boot maker | (1905 W H Arthur Edgelow, physician, surgeon) |
| | 29 Quaintance Bros, dairymen | (1905 Walter Herbert Lewis, wardrobe dlr) |
| | 27 William James Curtis, butcher | (1905 Edwin Good, also butcher) |
| | 25 Fredrick Hollands, boot maker | (and 1905) |
| | 23 William Torrington, baker | (and 1905) |
| | 21 | The Nelson Arms, Public House |
| | | Alfred Fulman (1905 Walter J Dobbs) |
| | 17 | |
| | 19 | W E Gower, wardrobe stores (1905 William Warren, fruiterer) |

PETER HOPKINS is trying to identify

THE DOMESDAY SETTLEMENT IN MORDEN

In 1312 an ‘extent’ or valuation of Westminster Abbey’s estate in Morden was undertaken, which is now in Cambridge University Library.¹ As well as detailing the demesne land – the land worked directly on behalf of the Abbey – it also lists the names of the tenants who owed rents and services for individual holdings of land in the manor. Later records, especially the manorial court rolls, enable us to trace these tenant holdings across the centuries.² Seventeen tenants listed in 1312 each held more than 10 acres, of whom all but two had farmsteads in Lower Morden, grouped around Morden Green. The other two were in the road now known as Central Road.

Most of the Lower Morden tenants held a ‘virgate’, which in Morden was a holding of 20 acres [8 hectares] of arable land, though three had ½-virgates, and a couple had larger holdings. It is clear from later records that these holdings consisted of 1-acre and ½-acre strips scattered throughout the open arable fields in the Lower Morden area. These tenant holdings also included allotments of meadow. But, surprisingly, several of them also included a croft of one or two acres along the present Epsom Road, between the East Pyl Brook and the parish church.

One of these 10-acre holdings based in Lower Morden acquired the name Bexwells from a mid-15th-century tenant. In 1312 the tenant had been Thomas ate Cherche. John Bexwell and his wife Agnes passed ‘Chyrcher’s cottage, curtilage and 10 acres’ to their daughter Johanne and her husband Robert Hardyng in September 1466, by the usual method of surrendering it at the manorial court.³ In 1488 the Hardyngs surrendered the property to John and Margerie Williams, but it was now only nine acres.⁴ However, in April 1466 Margaret Drayton had been admitted to a 1-acre holding which she passed to her daughter in 1486, when it was described as ‘one acre of land lying on the west of the church of Morden next to land of John Spyke on the east’.⁵ Later records name this 1-acre croft as Bexwells.⁶ It seems likely that Margaret Drayton had obtained this croft from John Bexwell in 1466, but the record has not survived. The croft eventually passed to John Smith, who surrendered it and some other properties in 1587 to Richard Garth, who had purchased the manor in 1554.⁷ It disappears from the record until 1745, when ‘a half acre in a certain close called *Boxwells*, contiguous with the churchyard in Morden’ is listed among the lord of the manor’s properties.⁸ No doubt the rest of the former croft had been swallowed up by its neighbours, a process continued in 1782, when a later Richard Garth exchanged this remnant for another ½-acre plot adjoining.⁹ By this date Bexwells ½-acre had been built upon, being described as ‘all that messuage or tenement with buildings, garden or orchard containing in whole half an acre formerly part of *Boxwells* contiguous with the Churchyard’. That 18th-century house now forms part of a care home next door to the church, which is for some unknown reason called Manor House (*right*).



Adjoining the care home is the *George* inn (*left*). The oldest part of the building, fronting the road, was built on a strip of land enclosed from roadside waste in the 1290s,¹⁰ and a building here was occupied as an alehouse in the 1460s if not earlier.¹¹ The land behind this roadside strip, now occupied by extensions to the inn, the Travelodge and the car park, was the land mentioned in 1469 as being owned by John Spyke. Spyke had bought this 2-acre croft of freehold land some time before 1400,¹² and the evidence suggests that it had formerly been part of one of the 20-acre holdings in Central Road, which was broken up in

the 1380s.¹³ In 1522 it was described as ‘one croft containing 2 acres, upon which was lately built one barn’,¹⁴ and by 1621 it was occupied by the tenant of the adjoining inn.¹⁵

Next to the *George* was an 8-acre croft, known as Gyrmans by 1536, when John Holt surrendered to Thomas Toller four tenements in Lower Morden – Rydons half-virgate, and Adams, Cokeseys and Swans virgates.¹⁶ Holt retained for himself ‘one close containing by estimation 8 acres of land called Gyrmans and another close called Netherlotkyns containing 2 acres by estimation’. The whereabouts of Netherlotkyns is not known, though it had once belonged to a tenement in Lower Morden known as Lotkyns. In 1570 Gyrmans was described as a ‘tenement commonly called Girmans containing 8 acres land lying between the queen’s highway on the south and demesne land on the north’,¹⁷ and in 1579 and 1624 was said to have adjoined Stonebridge Close, named from

the adjoining bridge that carried the Epsom road over the East Pyl Brook.¹⁸ In 1587 Gyrmans was said to be of only 7 acres, and similarly in a 1594 lease.¹⁹ The 1536 acreage was ‘by estimation’ and had perhaps since been measured more accurately. By 1745 ‘Garmans’ had been extended to 8½ acres by exchanges made in the 17th century, probably at the same time that Bexwells was reduced by half an acre.²⁰ It is now part of the golf course within Morden Park, but its former boundary hedge is probably represented by the row of trees shown on this extract from the 1865 Ordnance Survey map.

It seems clear that these 7 or 8 acres had been amalgamated from the 2-acre crofts belonging to the three virgate tenements and the 1-acre croft of the ½-virgate tenement based in Lower Morden. Netherlotkyns similarly represented a croft belonging to a virgate tenement in Lower Morden, and Bexwells had belonged to a ½-virgate there. In addition to these six tenements in Lower Morden, one of the Central Road tenements also had a croft, later annexed to the *George*.



Why did so many of these tenements have detached crofts in this area along the Epsom road? Perhaps a clue is in the 1312 valuation, where four of the Lower Morden tenants had the surname ate Cherche and another ate Rythe. It seems likely that their ancestors had once lived on these crofts between the church and the brook or rythe.

It is not known when the Lower Morden settlement was established, but a ‘custumal’, or list of tenants showing the rents and services they owed, dating from around 1225, names 17 tenants of ½-virgate, virgate and 1½ -virgate holdings, which would appear to match the situation in 1312. However, Domesday Book lists a mere eight villein tenants, plus five cottars and one slave on the Abbey’s estate at Morden in 1086. It is tempting to imagine the eight villein households occupying tofts and crofts fronting the Epsom road, or perhaps fronting the old Roman road we know as Stane Street, which ran across the present park, roughly parallel to the tree-line suggested above as the boundary hedge of Gyrmans. (No church is mentioned in Domesday Book, though that is not proof that no church existed here, as known pre-Conquest churches are often omitted.)

Probably the only way to test this theory is by excavation. Surrey Archaeological Society is planning a programme of test-pitting across the historic county, and Morden has been suggested as a possible location. The plan is to obtain permission from landowners to dig a number of small test-pits, a metre square and a metre deep, in private gardens, and to record any pottery or other finds which would give an indication of the periods that these sites were occupied. For Morden we would like to have a number of sites in the three known areas of medieval settlement – the Lower Morden area around the former green in Lower Morden Lane, Cardinal Avenue and Cranmer Close; in Central Road between Abbotsbury, Blanchland and Hazelwood Roads; and if possible in the area along Epsom Road described above, though it is unlikely that we would be allowed to dig up the golf course! During building work on the care home site in 1991 a single sherd of South Hertfordshire-type flint-tempered greyware, which has a date range of 1170–1350, was recovered from the fill of a shallow-cut feature.²¹ Further extensions to the building are planned, but the planning inspector failed to impose the usual archaeological conditions for a site within an Archaeological Priority Zone!

If any readers would like to get involved in this test-pitting project, please let me know. My contact details are shown on the list of Committee members on the back page of this *Bulletin*.

BL = British Library Add Rolls; CUL = Cambridge University Library; GLHER = Greater London Historic Environment Record;
LAARC = London Archaeological Archive & Research Centre; SHC = Surrey History Centre; WAM = Westminster Abbey Muniments

- | | | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1 CUL Kk 5.29 39v-43v | 6 BL 56045 2r, 4r, 56046 3r; | 11 BL 6043 21r, 20r; 19r, 16r | 17 SHC K85/2/17 |
| 2 WAM 27384-90; | SHC K85/2/17 | 12 BL 56040 1v | 18 SHC 2575 box 2 bundles H & C |
| BL 56038-46, 19407 | 7 SHC K85/4/69 | 13 BL 56038 14r | 19 SHC K85/4/69; 2575 box 2 bundle H |
| 3 BL 56043 17r | 8 SHC K85/2/51-52 | 14 BL 56046 3v | 20 SHC K85/2/51-52 |
| 4 BL 19407 15r | 9 SHC K85/2/170 | 15 SHC K85/1/1 6r | 21 GLHER SMR 021396/00/00; LAARC |
| 5 BL 19407 18r | 10 WAM 27387, 27389, | 16 BL 56046 1v | Sitecode MNH91 and email 20.9.2011 |
| | CUL Kk5.29 43r | | |

DAVID ROE celebrates

MERTON AND MORDEN IN 1951 – THE YEAR OF THE FESTIVAL OF BRITAIN

Local Life

Local life 60 years ago was covered in the *Merton & Morden News*, and also in the *Wimbledon News*. The first edition of the year reported that nearly 700 children had attended a party at Lines Brothers Tri-Ang works, consuming 150 loaves cut into sandwiches, 1800 cakes, and 100 gallons of lemon squash. This was said to be the largest children's party anywhere held in a works canteen. Over Christmas there had been many dances, and shows, and a page of each newspaper issue was taken up with adverts for films showing in the then many cinemas, such as the Morden and Shannon Corner Odeons. Emphasis was often on romance and drama, such as in *My Kind of Woman*, with Robert Mitchum and Jane Russell. In June a crowd of 25000 came to a 'Film Garden Party' in Morden Hall Park, promoted by the *Sunday Pictorial*, which was attended by 120 film stars. The local press published reports on fairs, celebrations, meetings, concerts and so on; numerous accounts of weddings, with pictures of the happy couples; detailed reports of sporting fixtures; and news of local courts cases and road accidents. Reports of the most petty crimes and commonplace marital breakdowns were often spread over three columns, despite continuing paper shortage. Here are some examples of headlines from lengthy items: 'Difficulties When Wives Have To Share Same Cooker'; 'Kept Watch She Found On Pavement'; 'Must Pay For Dustbin – Corporation Had Provided It'; 'Fined For Using Noisy Instrument' (a hand-bell for a horse and cart); 'Husband Twice Divorced – Wife Names The Same Woman'; 'Intended Paying For Newspaper Later On – Morden Man's Plea Succeeds In Self-Service Stall Case'; 'Colonel In Skirts – Won't Lose His Army Pension'; 'Judge And Gin-Drinking Wife: Took Half-Pint Straight Down'; 'Stray Dog Arrested'; 'Mrs. Hare Won The Mothers' Race'.

Community Buildings

Merton and Morden's schools came under Surrey, and in May the North-East Surrey Division Executive of Surrey Education Committee moved into Merton Cottage in Church Path, Merton Park (*below*). It later became the libraries headquarters, and today it is much changed, and privately owned.



Rutlish School was to be moved from its site at Kingston Road/Rutlish Road to land off Mostyn Road vacated by the John Innes Horticultural Institution. This came to fruition, but other plans did not, such as schemes for a Civic Centre in one of Morden's parks and for public halls, a swimming pool and a car-park on the Crown Road site in Morden.

Local Hardships

Early in the year there was a flu epidemic; heavy rain turned football matches into mud-baths; there was concern about fuel prices; and the *Merton & Morden News* had a Government notice in every issue saying 'Please Be Extra Careful With Coal, Electricity And Gas'. Meat was still heavily rationed, and housewives complained about the high prices of fish and rabbit (not rationed). The owner of the Ideal Café in Merton High Street was taken to court for providing eggs with breakfasts without the necessary permit.

Another concern was the high price of tobacco, and the Council's Parks Department decided to grow tobacco plants to pass to pensioners who wished to grow their own. In June 20 pensioners came to a meeting to be issued with their plants and with typed 'hints' on curing the leaves.

There were complaints in the local press about overcrowding and long queues at the bus station at Morden Underground. A nine-year-old girl in a bus queue was killed when a bus mounted the pavement trying to manoeuvre round other buses.

The Political Situation

After six years of a Labour government the General Election in October 1951 returned a Conservative government, under Winston Churchill, with a narrow majority over the Labour Party, under Clement Attlee. In the build-up to the election an editorial in the *Wimbledon News* called for the same spirit that had helped win the Battle of Britain, and suggested that local people were fed up with scarcities and rationing six years after the war, with ever-increasing taxation. Only ten weeks after the election a reform of the National Health Service was announced, and the editorial writer was criticising the Government for adding further austerity measures. The Conservatives said that they had inherited a grave financial situation from the previous Government; the country was living on credit, because imports exceeded exports ... Sounds familiar?

Another similarity with today was that the country in 1951 faced a threat to its security – not from terrorism, but from Communism and the Soviet Empire. The Korean war continued, and editorials and correspondence in the local press indicate how seriously the Communist threat was perceived, with some talk of a World War III, and recruiting notices for Civil Defence volunteers.

The Festival of Britain

To many Londoners over 65 the Festival of Britain is best remembered for the South Bank exhibition in the summer of 1951, and for the Festival fairground in Battersea Park. However, to quote from the official brochure, 'The Festival is nation-wide. All through the summer, and all through the land, its spirit will be finding expression ...'.

So how did Merton and Morden contribute? The first local event took place in March at Morden County Primary School, when Councillor F Grunine (chairman of the school governors) planted a red chestnut tree in the playground. Is it still there? It was reported in May that master craftsmen at the works of Rayner, Davies & Co Ltd, glass merchants at 91 Kingston Road (just over the parish boundary in Wimbledon), had designed and made a stained glass window for the Guildhall at Windsor to commemorate the Festival. It was unveiled by Princess Elizabeth. (Does any member know if the window is still there?)

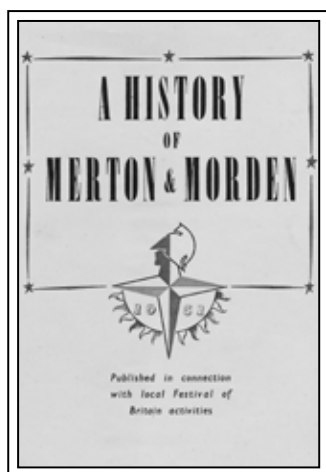
There was a civic service at the Sacred Heart, Edge Hill, Wimbledon, to mark the start of the Festival, but after that it was the youth of the area who played the leading role. At Morden Park there was a service and a procession, with displays and handicraft exhibitions. There were school open days, and displays of all kinds by youth groups, and youth concerts at the Morden Odeon.

The local press carried an editorial full of grand words: '...[T]he call of the Festival of Britain ... should be one of joyous endeavour, fired with ... resolute determination ... and summoning to our aid those Powers of Light against which the forces of evil cannot prevail'. I doubt whether the youngsters of Merton and Morden saw their innocent activities in the same way.

A key time for local history

In April 1951 the press reported that as part of Festival activities a historical society had been formed, to foster an interest in the history of the locality. Miss Evelyn M Jowett, Librarian of Merton and Morden (*right*), would be Secretary, and Councillor V Talbot Chairman. The first meeting was on 28 February.

On 20 July there appeared a review of *A History of Merton and Morden*, edited by Evelyn Jowett and published by the Festival of Britain Local Committee. In the preface Miss Jowett noted that no previous history of the district had been published, and that the book had had to be completed within three months – a major achievement. She acknowledged the help of her collaborators, including the late Lionel Green, our last president, then a very young man. The book is one of only a few products of Merton and Morden's involvement in the Festival of Britain that will last.



COMMITTEE MEMBERS 2011-2012

The minutes of the AGM are enclosed with this *Bulletin*.

SUBSCRIPTION REMINDER

Subscriptions for 2011-12 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 our Membership Secretary.

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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