MERTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

PRESIDENT:
VICE PRESIDENTS: Eric Montague and William Rudd
CHAIR: David Haunton

BULLETIN No. 189 **MARCH 2014**

Members of Merton & Morden Historical Society washing masonry from Merton Priory found in the River Wandle in 1956. Photo courtesy of Mike Nethersole (see page 10)

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PROGRAMME MARCH – JUNE

Saturday 15 March 2.30pm **Christ Church Hall, Colliers Wood**
'Worcester Park, Old Malden and North Cheam: History at our Feet'
Illustrated talk by archivist and local historian **David Rymill.**

Saturday 13 April 2.30pm **Christ Church Hall, Colliers Wood**
'Merton Priory: Celebrating 900 Years'
Richard Chellew will talk on **'The Merton Priory Manuscripts'**
and **Janette Henderson** on **'The Granges of Merton Priory'.**

Thursday 8 May 11.00am
Museum of the Knights of St John **St John's Gate, St John's Lane, Clerkenwell EC1M 4DA**
Guided tour; places limited; please book with David Haunton
Entry free, but donations welcome
Nearest station: Farringdon

Saturday 14 June 2.30pm **St Mary's Church, The Avenue, Worcester Park, KT4 7HL**
Walk round Worcester Park and St Mary's, Cuddington
Led by archivist and local historian **David Rymill**
Parking at the Church; 10 mins walk from Worcester Park Station

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.

AN APPEAL

Ninety-nine years ago Gilliat Edward Hatfeild offered Morden Hall to the War Office as a military convalescent hospital. To commemorate this chapter in its history the ATTIC Theatre Company, working with the National Trust, plans a presentation in September 2015 in the Stable Yard and Park. Meanwhile they are getting on with researching both the hospital and the farm.

ATTIC is appealing for any information, memories or photographs about Morden, Morden Hall Auxiliary Hospital, the nurses and soldiers, and Morden Hall Farm, in 1915-25. They will be re-creating life 100 years ago in five performances. If you can help, please contact Victoria on 020 8640 6800 or email on info@attictheatrecompany.com. ATTIC is at Mitcham Library, 157 London Road, Mitcham, CR4 2YR.

MERTON MEMORIES DISCOVERY DAYS AT MORDEN LIBRARY

Saturday 22 March : 1.30 – 4.00 and Saturday 26 April :10.30 – 4.00

Children's crafts and story-telling; competitions; photographic displays; local history talks; heritage stalls; photography workshops; and access to a unique collection of historic Merton photographs.

Free admission

For further information tel: 020 8545 3239 or email: local.studies@merton.gov.uk

'150 YEARS OF THE LONDON UNDERGROUND'

On 12 October about 40 members enjoyed a very interesting presentation on the history of the London Underground given by Mike Ashworth. He told us that in the early 1990s he was the curator of the London Transport Museum and is now the London Underground Design and Conservation Manager. The relevance of his work is illustrated by the fact that London Underground has 262 stations and 82 of them are listed buildings.

The first railway in London was the London Bridge to Greenwich line, opened in 1836. To reduce the cost of acquiring very expensive land just to construct the railway, the whole line was built upon brick arches, between which the land could be let or re-sold. However, building the brick arches was expensive. The next railway to be built was the London to Blackwall line. Soon, the Government prohibited railways from entering central London because of the demolition of properties required for their construction and so the railway companies' termini were built on the green fields to the north and west of London (Paddington, Euston, St Pancras and King's Cross). This was not only inconvenient for passengers but it also contributed to the terrible traffic congestion in central London and the City. Various proposals were made to tackle this problem, one was an underground road for horse-drawn freight traffic, and another was an underground railway.

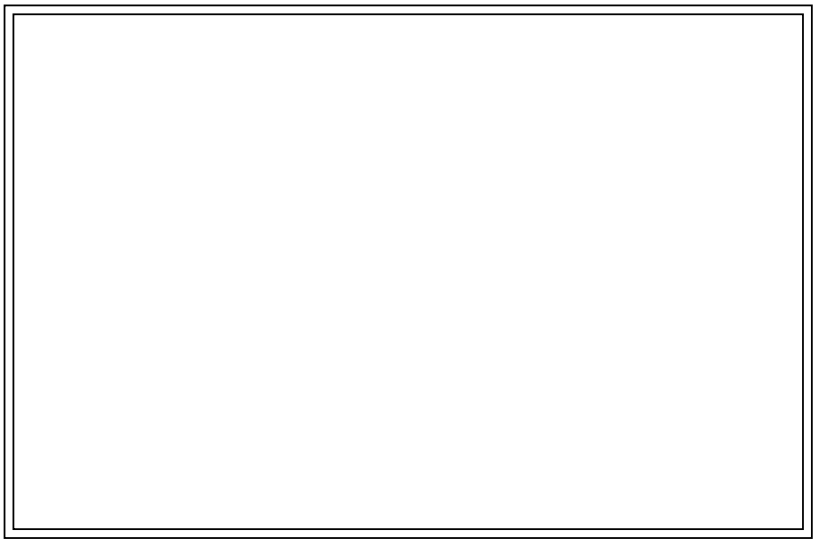
In 1855 Charles Pearson, solicitor to the Corporation of London, proposed an underground railway line running from Bishop's Road, Paddington, the four miles to Farringdon Street in the City. This would link the railway companies' termini of Paddington, Euston and King's Cross and later St Pancras. Construction work on the railway commenced in 1860. It was built by a cut and cover method running under Praed Street, Marylebone Road, Euston Road, King's Cross Road and Farringdon Road, incidentally causing even worse traffic congestion during the construction. The Metropolitan Railway Company opened their line on 10 January 1863 with steam traction.

The Metropolitan District Railway was opened on 1 October 1868 and linked the southern part of central London, running from South Kensington to Westminster and very soon afterwards extended under Victoria Embankment to Blackfriars. As the years passed, these 'twin lines' were extended and eventually linked in 1884 to provide a circle around London to the benefit of both railway companies. The Metropolitan and the District Railways later expanded east and west into the countryside in the confident expectation that, where the railway ran, new housing would spring up and provide commuting passengers for their services.

The first deep line was the City and South London Railway from King William Street (just north of London Bridge) to Stockwell. The work commenced in 1886 and the line was opened on 18 December 1890. The tunnels were bored for a running diameter of 10ft 2in. The City & South London Railway used electric locomotives for the first time and was the first railway in the world that was classless. In 1900 the line was extended to Clapham Common.

The Central London Railway was opened on 30 July 1900 with a route from Shepherd's Bush to Bank. This was, in effect, the first modern underground railway. It had been found that electric locomotives caused excessive ground vibration and so the Central London Railway used electric multiple units. They also excavated a larger diameter tunnel of 12ft, which became the standard on the London Underground. Their route under Oxford Street from Marble Arch to Oxford Circus helped the development of the shopping area there.

At about this time an American came on the scene, Charles Tyson Yerkes. He had been involved in buying up public transport companies in Chicago since 1870 but had been disgraced when it was revealed that he had bribed the city authorities to do this. Yerkes formed the Underground Electric Railways Co of London, Ltd., in 1902 and started buying up railway companies here. He had Lots Road power station built for his company but died in 1905 before its completion. At his death, it was found that Yerkes's railway empire was based upon loans and he had very little true capital.



Baker Street 1863, courtesy of London Transport Museum

In 1906 the Baker Street and Waterloo Railway (Bakerloo line) and the Great Northern, Piccadilly & Brompton Railway (Piccadilly line) were opened and were bought by the Underground Railways of London group. In 1908 this group published the first map to show all of the separately owned lines on one sheet. The Underground Railways group bought the London General Omnibus Co (LGOC) and used the profits from its bus operations to subsidise its underground railways.

Leslie Green was the architect who designed the Art Nouveau light brown tiled underground station interiors for the Bakerloo and Piccadilly lines and this was one of the first signs of a corporate identity for the underground lines. In 1908 the corporate logo of a red disc with a white horizontal line through it carrying the station name was introduced. The word 'Tube' was removed from station names in 1910. In 1916 Edward Johnson designed a specific typeface for the Underground Railways group and in 1919 Johnson designed the logo of a red circle with a white horizontal line through it carrying the station name, and this is still used today.

Charles Holden, the consultant architect of the Underground Railways group in the 1920s, designed the Modernist Portland stone faced stations of the City and South London line's 1926 extension from Clapham Common to Morden. Incidentally, before this extension was opened, the Bank to Clapham Common section of this line was closed and bored out from 10ft 2in diameter to 12ft to permit the use of standard rolling stock. Southern Railways were bitterly opposed to the extension of the City & South London Railway to Morden. The surface line from Wimbledon to Sutton was originally planned as a District Line extension but was dropped due to Southern Railway's opposition and it was they who eventually built the present line. The name City and South London line was changed to the Northern line in 1934.

Boston Manor Art Deco Station 1934 stamp design copyright Royal Mail Group Ltd 2013, courtesy of British Postal Museum & Archive

Charles Holden also designed the iconic Underground headquarters building of 55 Broadway, opened in 1929. This also accommodates St James's Park station and is a Grade I listed building.

Harry Beck, originally an electrical draughtsman, was employed as a design consultant by the Underground group. In 1931 he suggested that instead of using a street plan of London with the Underground lines and stations superimposed onto it, a simple diagrammatic map should be used where station names and line interchanges should be shown but directions and distances were of little relevance. This overcame the problem of showing the location of the many stations that are very close together in central London. On 13 April 1933 the newly incorporated London Passenger Transport Board (LPTB) acquired the ownership of all of the underground railway companies and apparently grudgingly accepted Beck's diagrammatic map of the lines. It was an immediate success with the public. The colours of the lines were standardised by 1937/8 and are still used today. The maps were revised each year by Beck until 1960 when he parted company with what was then London Transport Executive.

During the Second World War many deep stations were used as shelters and some closed stations (e.g. Museum) were re-opened for this purpose. Moorgate Station took a direct hit during the Christmas Blitz in 1940 and Bank and Balham suffered direct hits later, all with considerable loss of life.

In 1969 the Victoria line was opened; the Piccadilly line extension to Heathrow was completed in 1977 and the Jubilee line in 1999.

Mike Ashworth's lecture was very well received by the members present and its popularity may be judged by the fact that his question and answer session continued until stopped by the Chairman due to reaching the time for us to vacate Christchurch Hall.

Tony Scott

1938 tube interior
courtesy of London Transport Museum
ref: DD 1998-59072

‘56 YEARS OF THE PARISH PLAYERS OF MERTON’

After the AGM on Saturday 9 November at Christ Church Hall the audience was treated to an entertaining presentation by members of the Parish Players – the parish in question being that of St Mary’s Church, Merton. We welcomed Maggi Chick (Chair), David Golder (longest serving member – 52 years!), and Hazel Abbott (modestly describing herself as ‘tea-maker and understudy’).

Proceedings began with a brisk run-through by Hazel of the history of the connection between drama and the Church. She reminded us of the strong centuries-old English tradition of local people presenting plays to put over moral messages. A medieval village audience saw sinners at the mouth of Hell; today’s pantomime audience watch the battle between good and evil. (And, let us remember, Noah’s wife in the Mystery plays was always played by a man!)

The *Merton Church Monthly*, as the parish magazine was then called, was first published in1888, and in its pages that year was discussed the important topic of ‘Winter Evening Entertainments’: ‘Lectures, Concerts, Readings and Exhibitions … Tuesday has been the regular day for these Entertainments’. (Is it just a coincidence that the Parish Players still meet for rehearsals on Tuesday?) Lecture topics were dry, and audiences thin. However, in the following decade, the magic lantern, and the phonograph proved to be attractions.

In the first decades of the 20th century there was a regular round of concerts, school ‘entertainments’, lectures and magic lantern shows. In the 1940s the York Play was put on in the church and there was some idea (not realised) of setting up a Religious Drama Group.

However, in 1957 the Parish Players were born. The then vicar, Revd Squire Heaton Heaton-Renshaw, gave his approval, only reserving the right to scrutinise the text of any production. The old hall was the venue – a ‘tin tabernacle’ bought second-hand from Belvedere, Kent, in 1917. It had a collapsible stage, mixed-sex dressing accommodation, and, because school dinners were served there during the week, a pervading smell of gravy. With the opening in 1964 of the present church hall things improved greatly. At last a proper stage, with lighting and curtains, and separate male and female dressing-rooms.

Among the Players’ productions pantomime has always featured (sometimes written by members), but their range is and always has been much wider. Comedy, tragedy, Shakespeare, farce, social realism, song-and-dance, satire, religious plays. From *Journey’s End* to *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*; from *Cabaret* to *The Man Born to be King*.

As well as the actors there are many, many busy people behind the scenes and ‘front of house’. Often it is entire families who are involved – two, three, even, in one case, we were told, four generations. The talent and skill developed among the Players have enabled a few to go on to become part of the professional stage world: a well-known costume designer for one.

The Players give 10% of all revenue to the NSPCC and other charities, £25,000 so far. They have also given £7000 for improvements to the church hall itself, which, like other users, they have to pay to hire.

The audience thoroughly enjoyed this copiously illustrated presentation – and we did not need the sound system, as our talented visitors projected their voices so well.

Judith Goodman

‘A HISTORY OF MAGIC’

The Society’s meeting on 7 December was chaired by David Luff in the absence of the Chair (who was ill) and the Vice-Chair. Michael Symes is a magician who has published a book on the subject: *Magic and Illusion* (2004). It is out of print, but copies are obtainable from Davenport’s Magic Shop in Charing Cross Underground Arcade.

Michael said that the first recorded reference to a magician came from 2600 BC; in the early Egyptian civilisation ‘magic’ involved various rituals to invoke the powers of the gods. The first trick that he demonstrated, ‘cups and balls’, dated back to Roman times. In Europe early magicians were often thought to have supernatural powers, and a book by Reginald Scott in 1584 was an exposé of medieval witchcraft as magic and trickery. In the 18th century audiences were sometimes gullible in thinking that supernatural events were to be witnessed. In 1749 a large audience filled the Haymarket Theatre, having paid for tickets to see the ‘bottle conjuror’, who would transfer himself into an empty quart bottle on stage. He failed to appear, and, after rioting, the theatre burnt down.

By the 19th century in Britain magic and conjuring were very popular – in market places, at fairs, and in private houses. It was a hobby of many, including Dickens, Disraeli and Brunel. One of the greatest performers of the day was John Henry Anderson, the ‘Wizard of the North’, who perfected the ‘catching a bullet in the teeth’ trick. Jean Robert Houdin, a French magician, is known as the ‘father of modern magic’, by performing more sophisticated tricks in evening dress in salons and theatres. A conjuror, Eric Weisz, took Houdin’s surname as the basis of his own stage name – Harry Houdini. He was known as the ‘king of cards’ before he took to escapology.

In between talking about some of the great magicians of the past, Michael Symes demonstrated some baffling card tricks. He also puzzled the audience by correctly guessing the word selected by a member of the audience from a random line and page in a book she held.

The late 19th century and early 20th century was the Golden Age of magic, with many large-scale glamorous performances in theatres, as well as smaller-scale solo acts in salons. John Nevil Maskelyne and his friend George Cooke established regular performances at the Egyptian Hall in Piccadilly. Maskelyne was also the inventor of the ‘penny in the slot’ public convenience. He wrote a book with the psychiatrist Lionel Weatherley that offered rational explanations for occult and spiritualistic practices, paranormal phenomena, and religious experiences. He formed a partnership in 1905 with David Devant, whom Michael described as the greatest ever British magician. Devant was the first president of the Magic Circle.

Female magicians came to the fore in the early 20th century. The greatest of all was Adelaide Herrmann, the ‘Queen of Magic’. She was assistant to her magician husband, but after his early death in 1906 she carried on with her own show, and was a great success in the USA and worldwide. Before the second World War some magic shows became huge spectacles, with lions, tigers, water fountains, and so on. Michael then talked about the influence of TV from the 1950s onwards, and the special features in the acts of magicians such as Robert Harbin (the first TV magician), David Nixon, Tommy Cooper, Paul Daniels and David Copperfield. The last-named is famous for his astounding large-scale illusions, such as making the Statue of Liberty disappear, and walking through the Great Wall of China. He is the highest-earning solo entertainer ever.

Michael Symes ended his talk with a most impressive three-card trick using oversize cards. In answering questions, he said that there was no evidence that the Indian rope trick had been done with the performer disappearing up the rope. He also confirmed that ‘psychics’ used magic and trickery, not special psychic powers.

This was a most interesting and entertaining talk. It was a pity that the attendance was disappointingly small – only about 25.

David Roe

Photographs courtesy Rosemary Turner

‘RECENT RESEARCHES’

January’s meeting, on the 18th, was an ‘in-house’ occasion, with talks by three of our members – all on the Committee, as it happens.

Tony Scott spoke about **The Poor Law and local workhouses**. He reminded us that the principle of care of the poor has a long history. From Deuteronomy ‘… thou shalt not harden thine heart nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother’.

In Saxon times the monasteries helped the poor, and tended the sick in their infirmaries. Later, under feudalism, there was also some obligation of support in the manor, and this devolved later on the parish, or on private charity.

The Poor Relief Act of 1601 remained the basis of poor relief for more than 200 years. There were poorhouses for the elderly infirm, and ‘outdoor’ relief (i.e. small payments) for poor families. Relief was provided in the parish of the petitioner’s ‘settlement’ (usually birth or employment). Some parishes set up workhouses, but provision varied widely, and there were abuses.

Under the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 parishes were grouped into Unions, presided over by Boards of Guardians, who were required to build workhouses. Outdoor relief was now officially forbidden. Ratepayers grudged paying poor rates, and conditions in the workhouses were deliberately harsh. The system lasted until 1929.

From 1737-1782 The Poplars, a house on a site now covered by a part of Lavender Avenue, Mitcham, served as a workhouse. The inmates were then removed to this purpose-built workhouse on Mitcham Common – a site which became Tower Creameries and has now been developed for housing. With the 1834 Act Mitcham became part of Croydon Union, which built a workhouse on Duppas Hill.

In 1855 Eagle House in London Road was taken by the Guardians of a Southwark parish to house pauper children in an ‘industrial school’. In 1870 the Holborn Union bought the site and went on to build a workhouse for 1000 paupers in Western Road, the last remnant of which disappeared in the 1980s. Only Eagle House now remains to remind Mitcham of the Poor Law.

Though **Rosemary Turner** labelled her talk on The Lodge, Morden, **Trials and Tribulations of a Trainee Local Historian**, she hoped that her account would encourage others to embark on their own research.

The house her family moved to when she was ten backed onto allotments and trees beyond which was Morden Recreation Ground. Bill Rudd’s mention of medieval foundations uncovered in 1975, when the council installed a playground there, inspired her to investigate. His photos located the site, at the back of her family’s garden, but she could not find that it had been officially recorded. By the early 19th century Spital Farm ‘a handsome mansion’ (later Lodge Farm) was in place. Although the estate was owned by the Hoare banking family from the late 18th to the early 20th century, Rosemary found there is nothing about it in Hoare’s Bank archives.

She decided to get together as many maps, from different periods, as possible. Handling and photocopying from large maps was tricky; and sometimes it was expensive; sometimes she could photo but not photocopy; sometimes no

copying was allowed. Tracing was sometimes possible, and acceptable. Scales were not all the same, and maps had to be reconciled with each other.

However the maps showed a substantial main building, with some alterations over the years, plus farm buildings. Frustratingly, no pictures of the main house have emerged, though some of the outbuildings appear on postcards and in, for example, a 1929 drawing by Vincent Lines.

Further work with maps enabled Rosemary to conclude that her house was on the site of one of the farm buildings. She now believes that the excavated foundations were not medieval but those of the Hoares' house.

She was able to trace occupiers from directories, censuses, fire insurance records (at the Guildhall Library), electoral records and the Morden Land Valuation records of 1910. The house then had 20 principal rooms, but was in bad condition. It ceased to be listed in the street directories in 1913.

Rosemary has not given up on The Lodge – she is sure there is more to find out.

Katharina Haunton's research into the life of peripatetic painter **George Augustus Wallis (1761-1847)** was then recounted by her husband David.

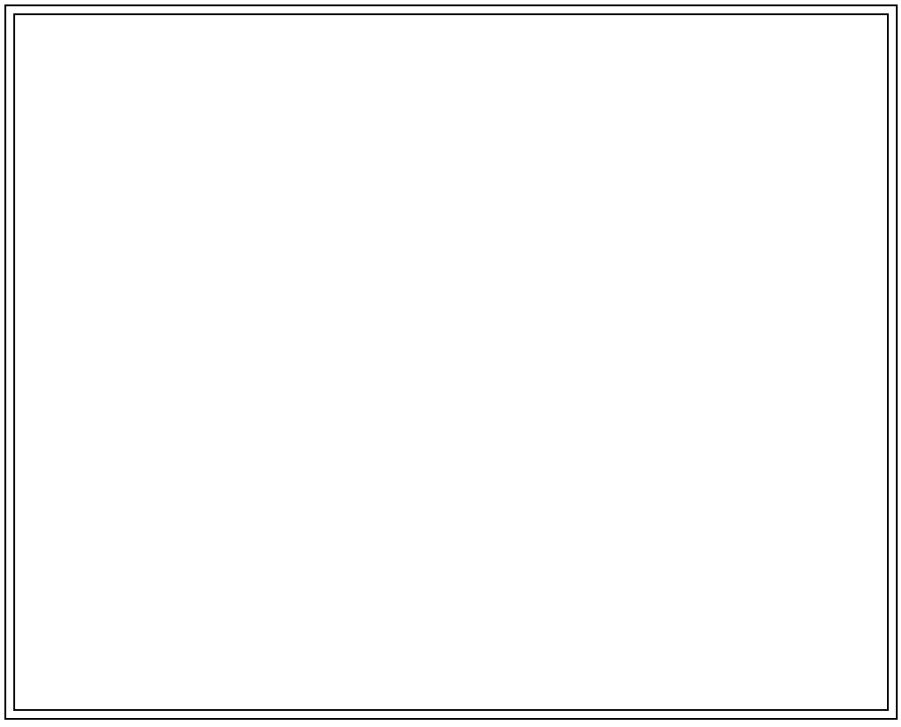
Wallis was 'of Merton in the County of Surrey' – as it says on his gravestone in Florence's Protestant cemetery and on the frames of two of his works. He does not, however, appear in Merton's register of baptisms, though of course it is perfectly possible to be born in one place and baptised in another.

Where he trained, as draughtsman and watercolourist, is not known, but he was in London when he exhibited sketches at the Royal Academy in 1785/6. In 1788 he married Maria Magdalena Boyick of Montrose, who had money and property, and they began to travel, through France and Switzerland to Italy, settling for a while in Naples, where a daughter, Emily, was born. He was painting and sketching landscapes and buildings as he travelled, and developed a taste for drawing tree trunks and rocks. He mixed with many prominent figures, meeting German neo-classical artists in Naples, and in Rome, where he also came to know the Danish sculptor Thorvaldsen.

In 1794 a son, Trajan Raymond, was born, but in 1798 Wallis moved his mistress Orsola Pomardi into the family home; Maria Magdalena had a breakdown, dying in 1804 in an asylum.

As well as his successful career as an artist Wallis began dealing, and smuggling, works of art in strife-torn Europe, including Spain during the Peninsular War. Some of his acquisitions are now in national collections. He also continued to be exhibited, and favourably reviewed, at the Royal Academy

After a spell in Germany (Heidelberg, Stuttgart), and rich by this time, he settled in Florence and branched out into figure painting. There was at least one more mistress and an uncertain number of children. He died in 1847.



A view at Tivoli on the River Aniene

Wallis is much better known on the Continent than here; most of his identified works are in private collections in southern Germany.

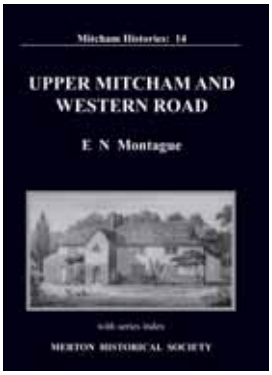
This is only the briefest sketch of an interesting man and career, but Katharina Haunton is working on a publication for the Society about Wallis.

The three speakers were thanked for a varied and enjoyable programme. This is a formula that could happily be repeated in the future.

Judith Goodman

BOOK REVIEWS

UPPER MITCHAM AND WESTERN ROAD (Mitcham Histories 14) – E N Montague



The area covered lies south of Figges Marsh and north of Fair Green. It has been subjected to piecemeal, poorly funded, and small-scale development over the last century or so, and is not one of Mitcham's prettier parts, but as Monty laments, 'Western Road was not always such a mess'.

Evidence is sparse before about 1700, and only sporadic afterwards. Monty describes a landscape of smallholdings and country lanes, with one large farm (Pound Farm) and a big house or two. Parts of The Elms dated from the late 16th century, but the whole had a gloomy feeling – 'forbidding' says Monty – even before it burnt down in 1891. It stood opposite Eagle House, a restrained and beautiful Queen Anne house 'in the Dutch style'. It is listed Grade I, and Monty does it full justice.

The area began to bustle in the 19th century, with the coming of the *Swan* inn (*c*.1805), Zion chapel (1818), varnish factories (from mid-1840s), the gasworks (from 1849), and the Holborn Schools (1856) and Workhouse (1885), while for a century or more from the 1840s a population of horse-dealing travellers made Mitcham a semi-permanent winter base.

The 20th century is less happy, with large-scale changes inflicted by both bombs and developers.

There is a nicely varied selection of illustrations. I particularly liked *Band of the Holborn Schools 1922* and the map placing the four big farms of Mitcham.

I must mention the 86 pages of the cumulative index to the complete series, a heroic feat of amalgamation by Peter Hopkins. As well as names of individuals, streets and buildings there are, for instance, 51 sub-headings under 'Archaeology', 110 under 'Field Names', and 36 under 'Industries', the last of which, 'unique/unusual entries', gives us makers of ice cream, jujubes and crossbows. Well done!

David Haunton

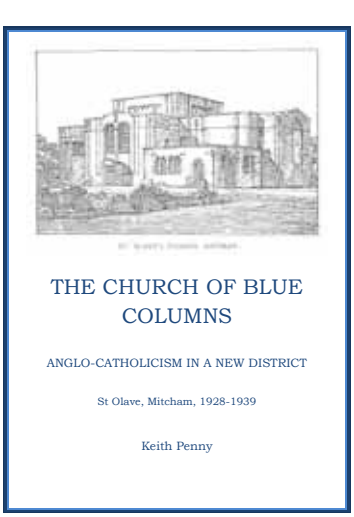
THE CHURCH OF BLUE COLUMNS – Keith Penny

The subtitle, 'Anglo-Catholicism in a New District: St Olave, Mitcham 1929-1939', is an excellent summary of the contents.

An introduction describes how Lonesome in the 1920s, before much of the housing was built, formed a district almost by default, cut off as it was from Mitcham, Streatham and Norbury. It was opened up a little in 1921 when a bus service started from the *Greyhound* down Streatham Vale.

Bishop Cyril Garbett was working to set up new parishes in growing centres of population in Southwark Diocese. Lonesome, in the parish of St Mark, Mitcham, saw its first building, asbestos cement and timber, go up in 1927. This was replaced in 1930 by a permanent building, austere externally but Byzantine within, with blue concrete columns. Most of the cost was defrayed by the sale of the redundant St Olave in Tooley Street, Southwark, and the pulpit and font of that church were re-used at Lonesome. The new building was consecrated on 17 January 1931.

Much of the book is devoted to the first priest-in-charge, Revd Reginald Kingdon Haslam, his background, his Anglo-Catholic leanings, the effect on the parish liturgies, and the parishioners' reactions. All this against a backdrop of the acrimonious debate in 1928 in the Church of England and in Parliament over the proposed changes, considered too Catholic by many, to the 1662 Book of Common Prayer. At St Olave there was dispute about the rituals used and the altar decoration. An interesting chapter describes the content of the service parishioners could expect on a typical Sunday in 1933.



Also covered is the establishment of a hall, and of the church of the Ascension as a daughter church. The parish's 1930s demographic statistics, fund-raising and social life are discussed, and the book ends with the outbreak of war on 3 September 1939.

Keith Penny has produced a useful and interesting book on a key period in St Olave's history.

It is available for £7.50, including post and packing, from the author, or for £5 at any MHS meeting.

Tony Scott

LOCAL HISTORY WORKSHOPS

Friday 13 December – six present. Rosemary Turner in the chair.

- **Peter Hopkins** had been given by Audrey Monk a number of small pieces of stone collected by the late Dennis Turner from the Priory excavation in the 1960s. They included Reigate and Horsham stone and Welsh slate. It was decided to donate them to Merton Priory Trust.

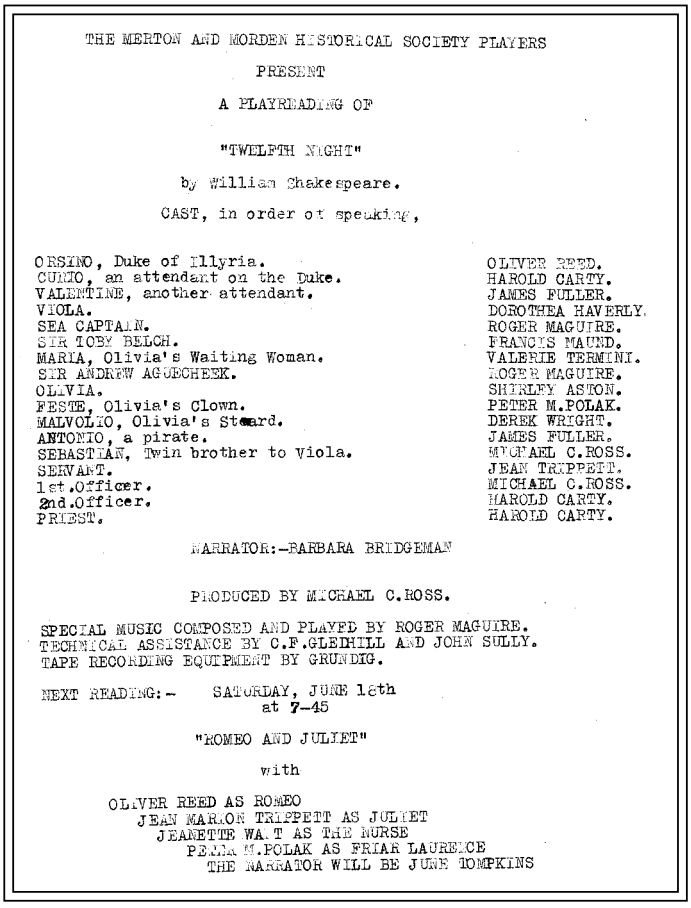
  He had an article from *London Archaeologist* Vol 13 No.6 (Autumn 2012) about the Pre-Construct Archaeology dig at the former Royal Sun Alliance Sports Ground, off Fairway, Raynes Park. It was found that this Late Bronze Age site, which was, and is, waterlogged in winter, but offering good grazing in summer, features early holding pens for stock, likely to be associated with a local settlement.

  Betty Whittick had passed to him a copy of the St Lawrence parish magazine for July 1926.

- **Cyril Maidment** had been preparing laminated display panels for the Priory exhibition at the Wimbledon Society's Museum later this year. They told the story of Nonsuch Palace, built using so much stone from the demolished Priory.

- Mike and Hilary Nethersole, long-standing members (he is a founder member, having joined in 1951 aged 13!), had sent **Judith Goodman** a bundle of Society memorabilia dating from the 1950s, when it was Merton and Morden Historical Society. As well as two photographs of M&MHS archaeological activities, there were a number of local scenes, not all identified.

  The package also contained, and this was a real surprise, programmes and cuttings from 1954 and 1955 relating to the Merton and Morden Historical Society Players. Productions and play readings included works by Shakespeare, Goldsmith and (in translation) Molière. Venues included the old British Legion hall at 217 Kingston Road, and church halls. Tantalisingly, the star of *Romeo and Juliet* and *Twelfth Night* is listed as Oliver Reed. Was this *the* Oliver Reed, who certainly was a local boy, but would have been only about 17? (Right age for Romeo, but too young for Orsino.) The Nethersoles cannot confirm. Can anyone? Unfortunately the *Bulletin* had not yet come into being at this time, and we have no more information.



THE MERTON AND MORDEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY PLAYERS

PRESENT

A PLAYREADING OF

"TWELFTH NIGHT"

by William Shakespeare.

CAST, in order of speaking,

ORSINO, Duke of Illyria.	OLIVER REED.
CURIO, an attendant on the Duke.	HAROLD CARTY.
VALENTINE, another attendant.	JAMES FULLER.
VIOLA.	DOROTHEA HAVERLY.
SEA CAPTAIN.	ROGER MAGUIRE.
SIR TOBY BELCH.	FRANCIS MAUND.
MARIA, Olivia's Waiting Woman.	VALERIE TERMINI.
SIR ANDREW AGUECHEEK.	ROGER MAGUIRE.
OLIVIA.	SHIRLEY ASTON.
FESTE, Olivia's Clown.	PETER M.POLAK.
MALVOLIO, Olivia's Steward.	DEREK WRIGHT.
ANTONIO, a pirate.	JAMES FULLER.
SEBASTIAN, Twin brother to Viola.	MICHAEL C.ROSS.
SERVANT.	JEAN TRIPPETT.
1st.Officer.	MICHAEL C.ROSS.
2nd.Officer.	HAROLD CARTY.
PRIEST.	HAROLD CARTY.

NARRATOR:-BARBARA BRIDGEMAN

PRODUCED BY MICHAEL C.ROSS.

SPECIAL MUSIC COMPOSED AND PLAYED BY ROGER MAGUIRE.
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE BY C.F.GLEDHILL AND JOHN SULLY.
TAPE RECORDING EQUIPMENT BY GRUNDIG.

NEXT READING:- SATURDAY, JUNE 16th at 7-45

"ROMEO AND JULIET"

with

OLIVER REED AS ROMEO
JEAN MARION TRIPPETT AS JULIET
JEANETTE WA.T AS THE NURSE
PETER M.POLAK AS FRIAR LAURENCE
THE NARRATOR WILL BE JUNE TOMPKINS

- **Madeline Healey** had been reminded by the recent 'St Jude storm' of the 1987 storm, and had brought along a dramatic photo of a plane tree which fell across the river in Ravensbury Park. It later had its crown reduced and was restored to a vertical position. It recovered.

- **David Luff** had some large photos of the Station Road area of Merton Abbey, which he had taken in the 1980s – a jumble of light industry, car-breakers and so on, much of it shabby and run-down.

- **Rosemary Turner** had wondered what had been on the Lewis Road site before Robertson's Pickle Factory had been built. It was probably a 'greenfield' site.

  She was going to thank Roger Logan for his information about Benefit Societies (see *Bulletin* No.186), and confirmed that her original notes had been correct. 'Benevolent' was clearly an editorial slip (many apologies, Rosemary – JG).

  She was hoping to return to TNA to do more on the Morden Valuation Records.

  She reported that Sheila Gallagher had extracted from Brixton Hundred Petty Sessions records at Wandsworth Archives details of Merton licensees 1827-29.

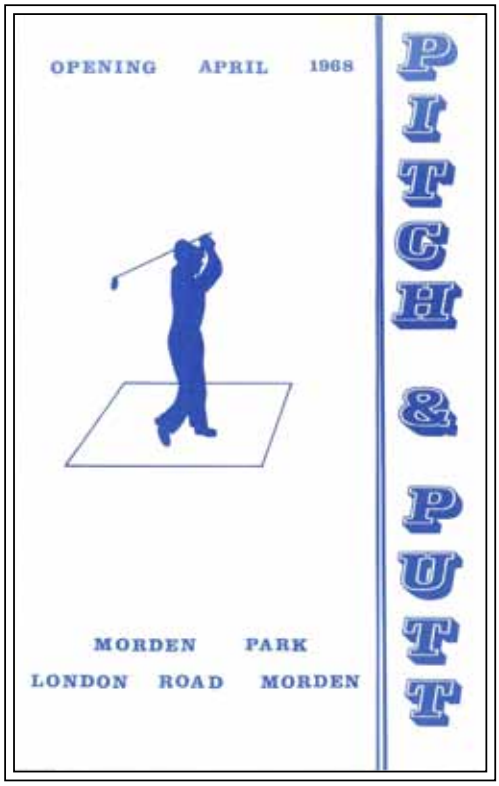
Judith Goodman

Friday 31 January 2014 – six present. Judy Goodman in the chair

- **David Luff** reported on the Priory wall. On 22 January Gillian King of English Heritage (EH) had emailed to say that clearance works to assess the scope of necessary repairs to a section of the wall (see last *Bulletin*) were taking place. These were led by the National Trust (NT), advised by the EH Heritage at Risk and the Greater London Archaeological Service teams. David has photographed the cleared section in detail. NT and EH agreed that structural engineers would need to assess further action for the leaning section of wall, and that the backfill from Sainsbury's car park should be removed. David's previous photos illustrating Cyril Maidment's campaign to alert NT have produced a valuable result, and he and Cyril are to be congratulated.

  There has also been a brief archaeological dig ahead of redevelopment at Christchurch Road/Runnymede, which David photographed just before it was backfilled. This exposed a straight length of the base of the precinct wall, about 15in thick, which had been hidden underground. There was a later brick wall built against it, and a sump and curved drain, features associated with a building demolished in 1951. This narrows the search for the point where the precinct wall bends.

- **David Haunton** had been lent some material by the Friends of the Nelson Hospital and he read extracts from one of these documents. This was a report by the Matron on what happened when the hospital was damaged by incendiary bombs on 19 February 1944, and the subsequent actions by the nursing staff. [*Full report forthcoming*]



- **Peter Hopkins** showed us a variety of local documents received from member Pat Brown, including an order of service for Mitcham's Annual Civic Service (1957), the first issue of the official guide to the new London Borough of Merton (1965), this pamphlet for the opening of the 'Pitch and Putt' course in Morden Park (1968), and an unused diary (1966) produced by Porter Bros (Newsagents & Stationers) of Hartfield Road, Wimbledon, containing reproductions of paintings showing aspects of their operation. Since it falls outside our direct area of interest, it was agreed that the diary should be offered to the Wimbledon Museum.

  Following Rosemary's report at the last Workshop, Peter had received from Sheila Gallagher transcripts of further Merton items from Petty Sessions Minutes for East Brixton Hundred in Wandsworth Archives, including victuallers' licences, and summaries from early censuses.

  Peter himself had been following up references to Morden in *The Westminster Circle* (2006), a scholarly book by David Sullivan on the people of Westminster 1066-1307.

- **Keith Penny** brought some adverts reflecting different social priorities in different times. One was for houses on Long Thornton Park Estate in 1927 – three bed, two recep, 'electric light and gas', £575 freehold – with a misleading illustration and a promise of 'long gardens front and rear', which used an unusual definition of 'long'. A page from the parish magazine, *St Olave's News* (1935) advertises a 'Confectioner, Tobacconist and Lending Library' and an Ideal Boiler for hot water which allows <u>one</u> 'small radiator or towel rail' to be connected. At £3 12s 6d this would cost most of an average worker's weekly wage.

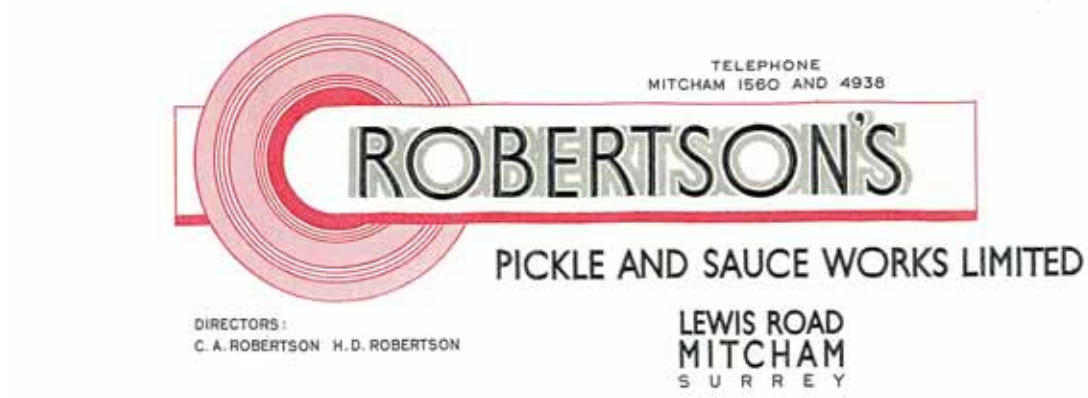
- **Judy Goodman** had been given Vol. 15 of *The Charters of Glastonbury Abbey* (2012), which contains the text and full discussion of two Anglo-Saxon charters relating to Merton (in Latin). Glastonbury had no known connection with our parish, and the charters may have been copied assuming they related to the abbey's estate in Martin, Hampshire. They show Merton's 20 hides as a unit in 949 and 967, and the parish boundaries are described in Old English (Anglo-Saxon). This includes the intriguing word *hoppinge*, located where the Beverley Brook meets the Wimbledon boundary. This can mean either 'enclosure in a marsh' or 'place where hops grow'. (In Saxon times hops were used as a vegetable, not yet for flavouring beer.) We don't know which meaning is to be preferred.

David Haunton

Dates of next Workshops: Fridays 14 March, 25 April and 20 June at 2.30pm at Wandle Industrial Museum. All are welcome.

BRUCE ROBERTSON concludes his account of

ROBERTSON'S PICKLE AND SAUCE WORKS LTD



Part 3

Glass Bottles and Jars

These were mainly obtained from E Duncan Doring Ltd, London EC1, although other manufacturers were also used. Broken or cracked bottles were inevitable, especially if they had been used several times, after being returned from customers, and these were disposed of into a large bunker-sized bin. This was brick-built on three sides and sealed across the front with a large removable sheet-iron plate secured with angle iron. Broken glass is called 'cullet'. When the bin was getting full the manufacturers were called to collect the cullet for melting down and reuse. As a kid I became particularly good at spotting broken vessels, especially cracked gallon jars, as it was really satisfying to throw them against the back of the bin, and listen to the terrific sound of destruction as they shattered – always remembering to close one's eyes as protection against flying shards.

Lids, Caps and Corks

The pickle jars were sealed with white or gold printed metal screw caps, sometimes with 'Robertson's Pickles' across the top, and fitted with vinyl wood pulp or cardboard wads inside. These were obtained from Premier Closures Ltd, London SE25, who also supplied the red or yellow plastic pouring caps with vinyl wood pulp wads used on the vinegar bottles. These were popular with cafés and fish-and-chip shops, as they could be put directly on the tables or counters for the convenience of customers. The firm also supplied the 1¼-inch barrel corks for sealing the tops of barrels and casks of vinegar.

Barrel and Cask Repairing (Coopering)

Most of the vinegars arrived in 36-gallon traditional metal-hooped wooden barrels, and were then transferred into 6- and 12-gallon metal-hooped wooden casks for transporting to customers who used vinegar in bulk. For a 6-gallon cask of vinegar, for instance, a customer was charged 24s 6d (£1.22½) for malt vinegar or 13s 6d (67½p) for non-brewed condiment, plus a deposit charge of 10s (50p) which was refundable when the cask was returned. The casks had a hard time going backwards and forwards between factory and customer, and needed frequent repairs and the hoops tightened to keep them leak-proof. Next to the cullet bin, an area was set aside for coopering tools, such as spokeshaves and draw-knives for shaping the staves, and a hammer and hoop driver for tightening the hoops. A small anvil mounted on an iron spike set in a block of wood was used to tighten the rivets holding the hoops together. The coopering was done by my great-uncle Herbert Robertson, my grandfather's younger brother, who was in his seventies and came to the factory part-time.

This area was where the mustard sauce tipped over. It was also the scene of tragedy. One morning in 1964, when I was 17, Herbert and I were standing talking when I saw his eyes suddenly look up to heaven, and he just fell backwards onto the floor. His trilby hat fell off and the back of his head cracked open on the concrete floor. For a moment I was in shock, then I ran to the office for my father, while my mother phoned for an ambulance. My father drove off to fetch Herbert's wife Alice, and I had to go with the body to the Wilson Hospital. I remember that as the ambulance moved off on the bumpy road outside the factory Herbert started to fall off the couch, and I had to hold him on. I was told that he had probably died before his head hit the floor – a wonderful way to go, but a shock for everybody else. The shock of someone dying in front of me as we were talking will remain for the rest of my life.

War Damage

Another tragic event was witnessed by my father in 1944. While in the small yard he heard the deep-throated rumble of a V1 flying bomb or 'doodlebug' coming towards him. As he looked up the engine cut out and the bomb started its rapid descent, heading towards the factory chimney. He threw himself on the ground and looked up to see the bomb glide past the chimney to land behind the factory in Glebe Avenue, where there was a massive explosion. He jumped in a van and drove round to the scene of destruction, and he took a badly injured woman in the van to the Wilson Hospital.

Among the factory papers is a 'Specification for war damage reinstatement repairs to Robertson's Pickle and Sauce Works' dated 7 November 1950. It states that 'The work required to be done is the re-building of the War Destroyed portion of the factory including the walls and roof to the Vegetable Store …'. As the vegetable store was at the rear of the factory, backing on to the houses of Glebe Avenue, the blast from the V1 must have damaged the factory wall. However it seems to have taken six years to get the repairs done.

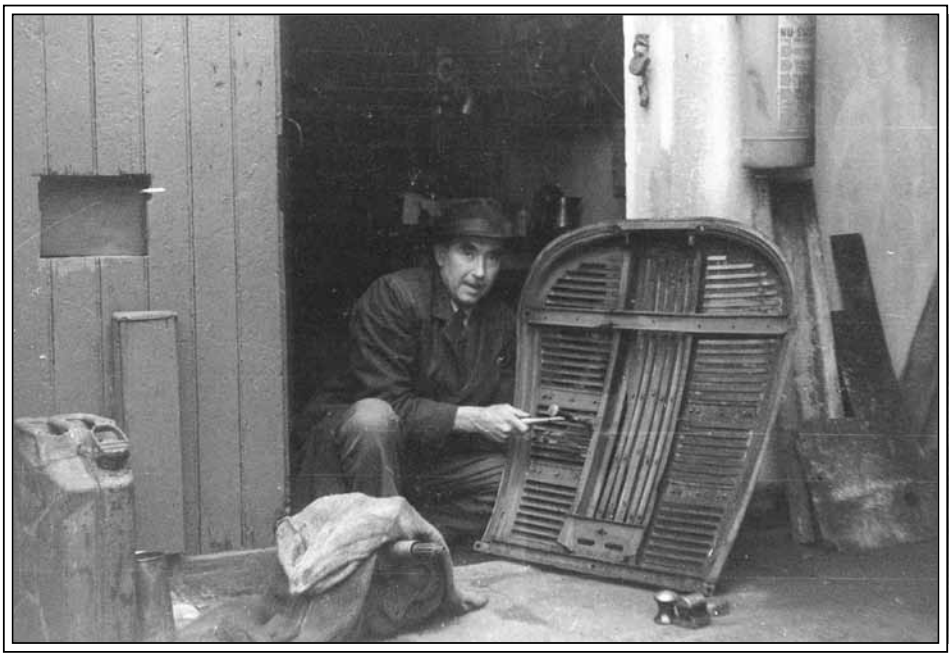
Heating

The boiler room had a tall chimney above and two boilers inside – one for central heating, and the other for steam heating the sauce cooking pans and hot water for the vegetable cooking troughs. Returned bottles and jars were also steam-cleaned before reuse. Fuel was broken coke in hundredweight sacks from Hall & Co or, later, Charringtons. The coke was supplemented with scrap wood from the Standard Furniture Co, nearby in Lewis Road. A local man with a short-wheelbase Bedford tipper truck cleared rubbish from the local factories. We paid him 15 shillings a week to clear our rubbish. The main rubbish from the Standard Furniture Co was scrap elm chair legs and arms and larger blocks of wood, which he just drove round and dumped in our small yard.

Transport

The earliest vans I have found evidence of were four probable Bedfords in a photo *c*.1935. I was told that there used to be a motorcycle with its sidecar body cleverly made and painted to look like a jar of Clear Mixed Pickles on its side. The lid of the jar was the door, which opened to reveal inside the boxes of pickles for delivery locally.

The earliest vans I remember in the 1950s were two Bedfords reputedly built on Duple coach chassis, and so seemed longer than usual. Each had a covered body and a rear tailboard that left the top part open. A rope from the roof hung down to just below the top of the tailboard to enable the driver to pull himself up and get into the back. I was not tall or athletic enough to do this, and used a trolley and boxes to stand on. A smaller Bedford 14 2-ton van *c*.1950, used as a spare for local deliveries, I could climb into. The big Bedfords were normally reversed into the yard, for ease of loading. However in the cold winters we seemed to have then they were driven out and back in to face the wall, for some protection. As there was no antifreeze, the radiators were drained overnight and refilled in the morning.



These were replaced by 1955 and 1961 Austin 30cwt vans with sliding doors into the cab, and lower floors. Two doors at the back gave easier access to the rear. There was also a *c*.1950s Austin K8 van used as a spare. As a kid I loved sitting in it and pretending to drive. I have this photo of Uncle Harold repairing its radiator grill outside the workshop, which was his domain. The vans were painted a turquoise blue with 'Robertson's Pickles and Sauces', sign-written in white script that matched the jar labels, down each side. The vans were fuelled from a 500-gallon underground tank in the main yard, using an ancient petrol pump which had to be hand-wound. This was another of my jobs.

1950s advertising poster.
(This is 'double crown' size – 30 inches by 20 inches)

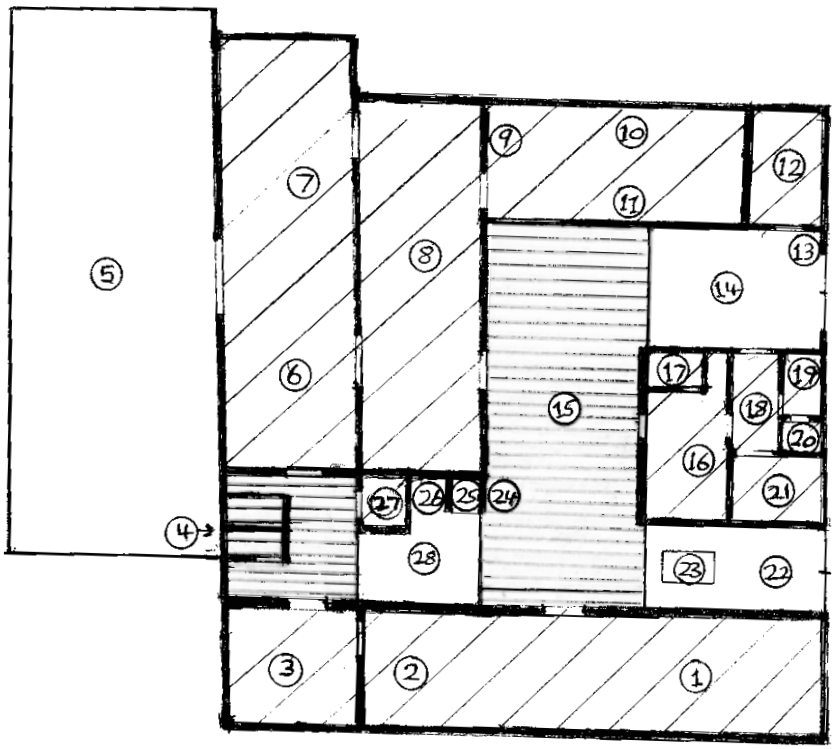
Advertising

Apart from the vans I wasn't aware that much direct advertising was done. Travelling salesmen visited suitable shops, cafés and fish bars, which were the main customers. Mr Hart, of Brighton, and Mr Abrook, of Alton, were the two I remember. However I did come across a 35mm film shown in local cinemas before the war. The words 'Zalmo Pickles' appear in the middle of the screen and then burst out to fill it entirely. When my middle daughter Samantha was at Ricards Lodge School her food technology class was shown a poster as an example of how food advertising used to be done. When opened it revealed the slogan 'Among the good things of life … Robertson's Pickles, Sauces and Vinegar'. Across the centre were illustrations of jars of pickles and bottles of sauces, followed by 'Their Better Quality emphasises "Good Taste"! Products of Robertson's Pickle & Sauce Works Ltd. Mitcham, Surrey – that's how good they are!' Samantha proudly revealed to the class that that was her grandfather's factory, and she was eventually given the poster to keep. We hadn't known of the poster and were very pleased to be presented with it.

Before the war there was a scheme where customers could collect the jar lids with the Robertson's name and exchange a number of lids for cutlery with bone handles. We still have some of the knives, which we use regularly. They are stamped in a lozenge: 'Robertson's Sheffield Made Stainless Steel Cutlery'.

1.	Cardboard box flattened 'nets' store
2.	Ingredients store
3.	Kitchen
4.	Toilets under covered roof area
5.	Open empty barrel and cask storage
6.	Vegetable preparation area
7.	Fresh vegetable store
8.	Bottling room
9.	Clocking-in cards and clock
10.	Labelling and boxing area
11.	Product storage area
12.	Workshop
13.	Petrol pump
14.	Main yard with entrance gates
15.	Covered yard
16.	Spice room
17.	Laboratory for testing vinegar strength
18.	Corridor
19.	Front office
20.	Safe Room
21.	Back office
22.	Small open front yard with gates
23.	Covered pit for van servicing
24.	Barrel and cask repairs (Coopering)
25.	Cullet (Broken glass) bin
26.	Coke store
27.	Boiler room
28.	Small open back yard partly covered

Pickle Factory Site Index



Aberdeen Road Site

Among the papers are council and solicitor's letters from 1946-49 referring to the purchase of land in Aberdeen Road, Mitcham. This cul-de-sac off Church Road no longer exists, but lay about where the south side of Hogarth Crescent is. The site had been occupied by houses, which had been destroyed by enemy action. The council agreed that it could have a factory built on it, and the land was purchased for £1500. It was intended to transfer from the Lewis Road site due to the war damage there, and build a new factory. However this never happened – probably because the old factory was repaired in 1950. I only visited the site once, to collect some barrels stored there, and have no record of when it was sold. However I was told that this was where Deen City Farm was started, the name deriving from the last syllable of 'Aberdeen'.

Closure

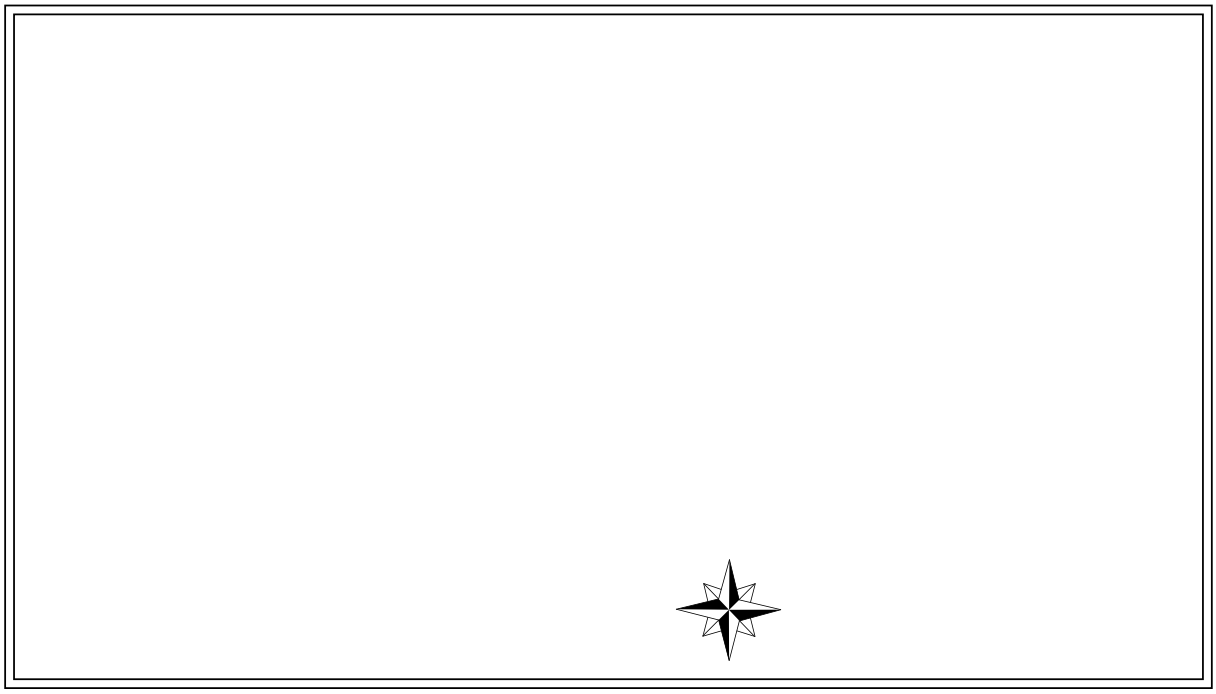
After making losses for several years my father closed the firm down in 1970 after 44 years of trading. In a letter to Mr Hart, one of the reps, my father said that he was sorry to hear that the new firm Mr Hart was working for had given up on pickles. He had heard from one of the vegetable suppliers that the pickle trade was a dying industry, and that there used to be about 250 pickle manufacturers before the war, but now there were only about 22 left … They were closing every week. He also said he had read that by 1975 80% of the food retail trade would be in four supermarket groups. The factory premises were sold for £30,000 to a plastics extrusion company, and my father and uncle retired.

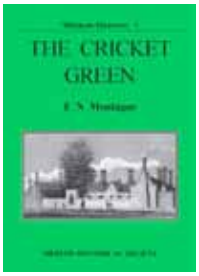
Postscript

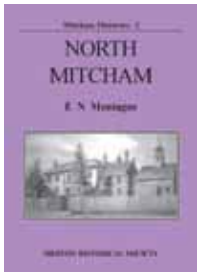
After finishing this account I sent a copy to my cousin Colin Robertson, who is nearly 80 and so knows a bit more about the early history. He congratulated me on the article, and provided some additional background.

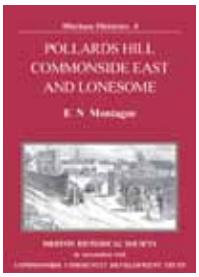
Back in the early 1920s my grandfather Alfred Daniel Robertson ('Dan') and his younger brother Herbert worked at George Mason & Co, Chelsea Works, 265 Merton Road, Southfields, where the well-known 'OK' brand sauces and pickles were manufactured. (Although Mason's are gone the white-tiled art deco building is still there.) Dan was clerk of the warehouse. Also working there was a P J Nash, who left Mason's and started on his own in Lewis Road, Mitcham, making pickles and sauces. Dan and Herbert also left and went to work for him. Herbert was commercial traveller for the London area, using his cycle three days a week to get around. (When I knew him he just repaired barrels!) According to a Certificate of Registration dated 19 April 1927 the firm was registered as P J Nash. But very shortly my grandfather must have bought him out, as in another Certificate dated 16 August 1927 the name was changed to Zalmo Pickle and Sauce Works. There is no further mention of Nash.

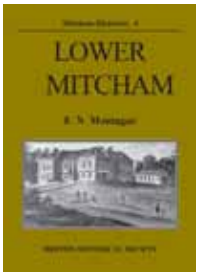
My father, Cyril Alfred Robertson, joined them in 1925 and my uncle Harold Daniel Robertson in 1929. After the second world war there was another name change. On 2 November 1946 it became Robertson's Pickle and Sauce Works. My grandfather died in 1957 aged 78. My father then took over as Managing Director, and his younger brother as co-director. From 1957 my mother Doris worked three days a week as office typist, and my auntie Gladys (Harold's wife) did the same as wages clerk.



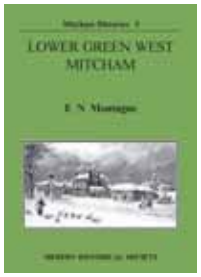


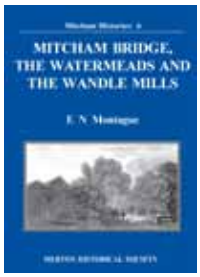




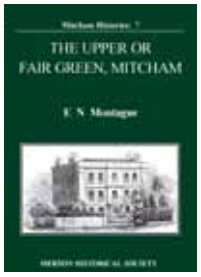


ERIC MONTAGUE AND THE *MITCHAM HISTORIES*

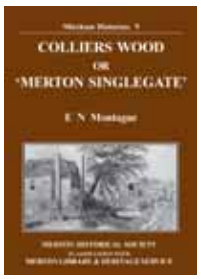


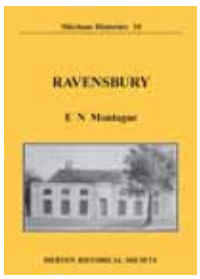


With the publication in 2013 of *Mitcham Histories* Volume 14, *Upper Mitcham and Western Road*, this epic of historical writing has come to a triumphant conclusion. When we consider the total of more than 2000 pages and 500 illustrations, buttressed by more than 200 scholarly references per volume, 'epic' is the right word. We published the first volume, *The Cricket Green,* in 2001, but planning and writing began several years before that. Monty has been studying and researching the local history of Mitcham for a lifetime, not exactly hindered by his jobs, first in Mitcham's Public Health department, and later as an Environmental Health Officer for Wandsworth, which enabled him to enter and record premises not otherwise open to public view. A member of the Society for more than 50 years, his interest in archaeology meant that he participated in, or directed, most of the Society's digs.



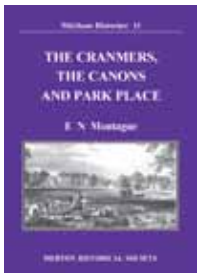
Monty phoned me recently to record his formal vote of thanks to all members of MHS who have assisted him along the lengthy road, adding that completion would not have been possible without the many and varied contributions from so many members of the team. I think we should thank him.

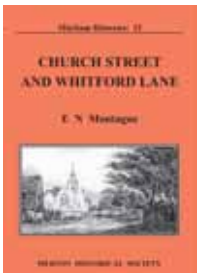


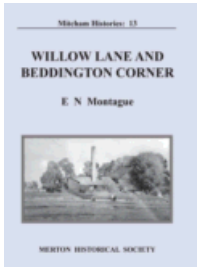


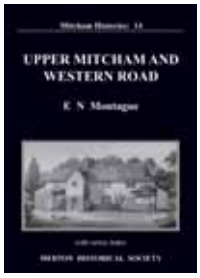
I would like to formally record both the Society's congratulations and its appreciation of Monty's sustained effort and scholarship in producing such a complete historical and topographical study of a single ancient parish, a study which is probably unique in Britain. It is a huge achievement.

David Haunton









Letters and contributions for the *Bulletin* should be sent to the Hon. Editor.

The views expressed in this *Bulletin* are those of the contributors concerned and not necessarily those of the Society or its Officers.

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

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