



PRESIDENT: J Scott McCracken BA FSA MIFA

VICE PRESIDENTS: Viscountess Hanworth, Lionel Green and William Rudd

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CHAIRMAN: Lionel Green

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## PROGRAMME MARCH-JUNE



**Thursday 14 March 2pm**

**Visit to Surrey History Centre**

This behind-the-scenes tour should be fascinating, and will include a glimpse of the Centre's conservation work. The Centre is at 130 Goldsworth Road, Woking, about 15 minutes walk from the station. Local buses pass the door, or there are taxis at the station. The 11.50 fast train from Wimbledon will give time for lunch first (cafés etc in Woking). You can park at the Centre, access from Kingsway. There is a group charge for the visit of £20. Numbers are limited to 24, and there are still places available.

**Saturday 20 April 2.30pm**

**The Canons, Madeira Road, Mitcham  
'The Wandsworth Mills'**

**Dorian Gerhold**, who is a House of Commons Clerk, is a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society and author of several books, including *Wandsworth Past* and a history of Westminster Hall. In July 1992 he guided some of our members on a memorable walk around Roehampton. This time he will give an illustrated talk about the flour mills once powered by the lower waters of the Wandle.

**Thursday 23 May**

**Visit to Morden**

**11am: Church of St Lawrence**

**2.30pm: Morden Park House**

Our own **Bill Rudd** will guide us on a visit to Morden's Grade I listed church and to the recently restored 18th-century Morden Park House, now the Borough's handsome Register Office. Lunch available at *The George*.

Public transport: buses, 80, 93, 154, 293 (alight at Merton College); Morden South station.

Drivers use Morden Park car-park.

**Friday 14 June 1.45pm**

**Visit to Croydon Airport**

Cost £2 a head.

Meet at the *Rayon d'Or* café on the ground floor of the Croydon Airport visitor centre, in Purley Way (A23). There is a Heron aeroplane in front of the building, which is opposite the Hilton Hotel. The café serves snacks and lunches from 11am.

The tour includes three floors of the old control tower (there is a lift). There is a historical exhibition as well as the preserved booking hall to be seen.

Bus 289 (every 15 min.) goes past and can be picked up outside Sainsbury's, near Waddon Marsh Tramlink stop. A more reliable service is the 119 Bromley-Purley Way (every 10 min.) from opposite East Croydon station/tram stop.

Car parking is possible at or behind the visitor centre.



**The Society's events are open to the general public, unless otherwise stated.**



## LOCAL HISTORY WORKSHOPS

Friday 23 November 2001 - 8 members present

- ◆ **Amy Warren** sent a magazine article (date unknown) on English cottages. Twelve are illustrated, including this from Mitcham. The caption reads:

*Late 18th-century weatherboarded timber frame cottages at Mitcham, Surrey: once common in what is now south London. Originals of U.S. 'colonial style'.*

There was some discussion at the Workshop as to its identity – possibly one of the Watermeads group – but no consensus was reached.

- ◆ **Peter Hopkins** reported that when he helped with the Shere Village Project he was interested to find that they had a map produced by John Harding in the same style as his 1723 survey of West Barnes (reproduced in E M Jowett *Raynes Park* 1987, and P Hopkins *Discovering the Past 2: West Barnes & Cannon Hill* 2000).

At the Surrey Villages Day (20 October 2001), Peter had been chatting to Graham Gower, who had given a talk about Streatham. Graham had noticed a reference in Peter's display to Dead Man's Furlong in Morden, and had asked about the origin of the name. Peter believes it may relate to the mound in Morden Park, or a gallows nearby. Graham had just published an article on an Anglo-Saxon signalling system along Stane Street, based on a study of placenames with the element 'tot'. The sequence is interrupted between Banstead and Tooting, and Graham wondered whether the mound in Morden Park was in existence at this time.

- ◆ **Bill Rudd** reported that Margaret Carr had donated photographs of the Society's Addington visit, for the archives.

He gave an update on the Morden Park House booklet. Judith Goodman had a note, from the local newspaper, of the date of opening of the golf-course in Morden Park, in late March 1934, on temporary greens. It only lasted a few years because of the war. Bill had found pictures of the park's conversion to a golf-course, with the lay-out of the greens. He had not found any photographs of the fishpond, but has aerial photos from 1938 and 1950. The pond was produced by abstraction of clay.

- ◆ **Madeline Healey** had noticed in the Wandle Industrial Museum newsletter an article about ducks at Ravensbury Mill, taken from an old *Poultry Magazine*. She said that they were kept on the adjacent premises. Her grandparents moved to Ravensbury in 1933.
- ◆ **Steve Turner** said that the Ordnance Survey maps on the Internet were no longer in the same format. He now has a complete set for Surrey.
- ◆ **Judith Goodman** had spoken to Alan Crocker at the Surrey Villages day, about Merton Board Mills. She had previously noted that the mills ran into financial problems in the mid-1920s, after which they became the New Merton Board Mills. She had now given Alan Crocker the references. He had not been able to find photographs of the mills, particularly of the interior. Bill will check to see if there are any in the store.
- ◆ **Lionel Green** spoke about the new gallery in the Museum of London, which traces the changes in London life between 1789 and 1914 and contains 3000 objects, most of which have not previously been on display. These include Nelson's ceremonial sword, the hilt of which bears the same coat of arms as his hatchment in Merton church.

He went on to talk about the origin of the Ordnance Survey late in the 18th century, when a French invasion was expected. Surveying was carried out in 1792-1816, and the maps, mostly 2" to the mile, were not available to the public at first, the first published map being produced in 1816, at 1" to the mile (photocopy of Surrey map in Local Studies Centre). Lionel commented that this first one showed the mound in Morden Park.

- ◆ **Don Fleming** had been wondering why the name of Robin Hood was so popular as a street name – there are 12 Roads, Lanes etc between North London and Sutton. Judith commented that Clive Whichelow (a member) had published a booklet about 'the local mystery of Robin Hood' in Wimbledon, Kingston and Richmond Park.

Rosemary Turner



**Friday 11 January 2002** - Lionel Green in the chair

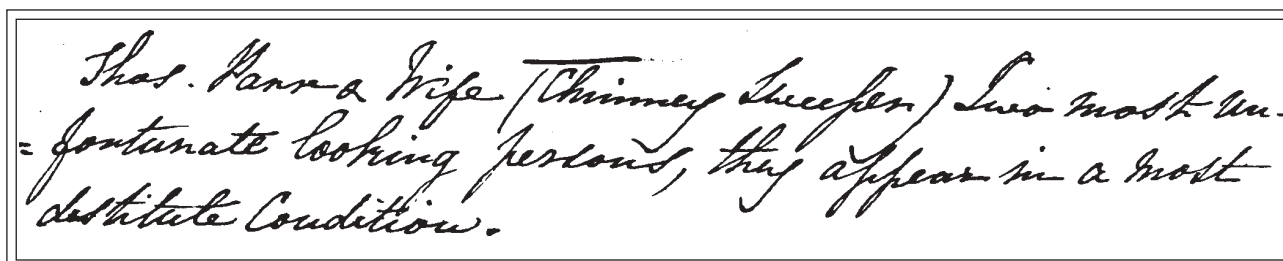
- ◆ **Sheila Harris** reported receipt of a letter explaining, *inter alia*, ideas being considered by the Commonside Community Development Trust for promoting awareness of the history of Pollards Hill. It was agreed that a draft version of MHS's proposed book on Pollards Hill be made available (with copyright reserved) to assist the Trust.

She had also received a request for a speaker on the local lavender industry.

- ◆ **Judith Goodman** had followed up information from Dave Saxby about a collection of 19th-century deeds of the Merton Abbey estate at Surrey History Centre. These include a number of plans, details of leases of the Morris site, an inventory of fixtures and fittings at Gate House etc, and promise to be a valuable source of new information about the site.

Judith also reported having confirmed that copper-engraver James Hudson, said to be son-in-law to Thomas Cribb, Nelson's gardener, had *not* married "Thomas Cribb's daughter Emma", as stated by Chamberlain in his book. Hudson's wife was Maria, daughter of a Francis Cribb of Wimbledon. Probably they were related, but sadly Chamberlain got it wrong!

- ◆ **ENM** described how work by Peter Hopkins at Surrey History Centre, transcribing details of the large collection of Mitcham deeds they hold, has led to a much clearer understanding of the origins of several big houses built in Lower Mitcham in the 16th century. Details have been incorporated in the draft text being prepared for the next book in the Society's 'Mitcham Histories' series.
- ◆ **Don Fleming** gave a brief, and entertaining, preview of the talk he is preparing on the early life of Elizabeth I, to be given after the business part of the Society's AGM on 2 November.
- ◆ **Peter Hopkins** handed out copies of an early draft of a Local History Note being prepared, based on the diary and notebook of the Revd Herbert Randolph of Mitcham in 1837/8. This, a fascinating social study in its own right, has been augmented by Steve Turner, drawing upon Messrs Crawters' survey of Mitcham in 1838, following which detailed maps were prepared and particulars of the occupancy of every house in the village were recorded. Supplemented by information from local directories and the 1841 census a uniquely detailed picture should emerge of Mitcham at the beginning of Victoria's reign.



*An extract from the Revd Herbert Randolph's Notebook*

- ◆ **Bill Rudd** has rediscovered the record of a survey of churchyard memorial inscriptions in which members of the Society, notably Evelyn Jowett and Mrs Reeves, were involved in the early 1960s. Results of their work at St Mary's, Merton, were deposited with Surrey Archaeological Society as part of a countrywide project, but copies were retained locally, and are now at The Canons. More recently, surveys have been conducted of inscriptions in the parish churchyards at Mitcham and Merton by the East Surrey Family History Society. These are already proving of great value to family historians.

Bill also announced that Sarah Gould, the Heritage Officer, is making part of The Canons available to the Society this coming May and June for use as an exhibition space. **Volunteers with expertise or just willing to help are asked to contact Bill as soon as possible.**

- ◆ **Lionel Green** concluded the Workshop with a description of Edward III's visit to Merton and the celebrations organised in 1347/8, following various victorious campaigns, which had done much to enhance the king's popularity. The following year, however, plague arrived, appearing first in the west country, and spreading rapidly throughout the kingdom. The impact on the religious houses was, as might be expected, well recorded, and it is evident that the effects of the Black Death were truly devastating. (*See article on pp. 8-9*)

**Eric Montague**

**Dates of next workshops: Friday 8 March and Friday 17 May at 7.30 pm at Wandle Industrial Museum.**

**Everyone is welcome.**

**‘From our post-bag’ - ERIC MONTAGUE’s in-tray provides another Mitcham snippet.**

## **JOHN ARBUTHNOT OF MITCHAM – GENTLEMAN FARMER**

Most of us recall from our schooldays how the agrarian revolution of the late 18th century was led by innovators, such as Coke of Norfolk and ‘Turnip’ Townsend, who introduced new methods of farming, including the marling of soils to improve fertility and the growing of root crops as fodder, which facilitated the over-wintering of livestock. We also heard of Robert Bakewell of Leicester, whose selective breeding of cattle and sheep so greatly improved British blood lines. But what most of us probably failed to appreciate was that the new ideas were taken up with enthusiasm all over the country.

I was therefore fascinated to learn recently that John Arbuthnot, who I was aware was the owner of the Ravensbury print-works, had other interests, and I am indebted to Dr Elspeth Veale of the Wimbledon Society for the following snippet of information from page 540 of *The Correspondence of Edmund Burke* (edited by Lucy Sutherland) Vol.11 (July 1768-June 1774) published by Cambridge University Press in 1960:

In a letter written to Burke in June 1774 the Marquess of Rockingham, who rented a house there between 1771 and 1782, observed “I have passed a pleasant day at Duckets Farm with some gentlemen farmers who afterwards dined here. Arbuthnot met us and dined here - he seems so right in his ideas”. Sutherland in note 2 refers to A Young, *On the Husbandry of three celebrated British farmers, Bakewell, Arbuthnot and Duckett*, a lecture read to the Board of Agriculture on 6 June 1811, and adds that “John Arbuthnot of Mitcham” was “noticed as a farmer c.1760”. Duckets Farm, I understand from Dr Veale, was at Petersham.

John Arbuthnot was first recorded in Mitcham in 1753, when the vestry minutes describe him as the proprietor of “a most extensive manufactory” at Ravensbury. There is also a lease extant dated November 1755 in which Sir Nicholas Hackett Carew granted land and appurtenances in Mitcham and ‘Moredon’, including Ravensbury Manor House, to Arbuthnot for 30 years. The property is described as including “barns, outhouses and buildings” together with “fields arable and pasture”. Research by Peter Hopkins indicates that most of the land lay on the south side of the Wandle extending towards Rose Hill. Nothing more is known of the farm, apart from the comment made by James Malcolm in his *Compendium of Modern Husbandry*, published in 1805, to the effect that the clay soil here was “tenacious” but capable, if well drained and ploughed early, of producing “moderately good” crops. Arbuthnot remained as Ravensbury until about 1780, and his subsequent career seems to have taken him to County Mayo, where it is believed he held office under the Irish Linen Board.

## **‘THE MITCHAM VIRGATE’**

I am indebted to John Pile (Bulletin No.140: Dec 2001) for demonstrating how difficult it is to make sense of medieval land measurement, and what a minefield 13th-century assessments for fiscal purposes can be. The hide (itself a variable, dependent on soil quality) might include anything between two to eight virgates, depending on land fertility and local usage. John Blair, an authority on the subject, to whom John Pile refers, devotes several pages of his *Early Medieval Surrey* (Alan Sutton and SyAS 1991) to the subject, and shows that in the north-east of the county virgates could range from 15 acres in Wandsworth and Putney to 20 in Morden and 21 at Cheam. No figure is quoted for Mitcham, but given the rich loamy soil which comprised much of the de Redvers estate, a 15-acre virgate seems feasible. I used the conventional four 30-acre virgates to one hide when attempting to convey some idea of the extent of Aelmer’s pre-Conquest estate, hypothetically located in Mitcham on the basis of its subsequent descent. By the 13th century, Blair points out, the topographical significance of the virgate had diminished, and it had become more a unit of seigneurial assessment. Regardless of the basis adopted to calculate the total acreage of tenant holdings, it is quite obvious the latter cannot be the sole factor in the equation, and allowance has to be made for land in demesne, common waste etc, when attempting to estimate the size of a particular estate. Beguiling as the 13th-century de Redvers rental might be, with its references to Phipps mill and Hugh at church, this is clearly insufficient in itself. However, an Aelmer/Mortain/de Redvers/Vauxhall continuum for the tithing of Mitcham can be argued holistically. With hindsight, I can see that in my desire not to bore the reader with over-much detail, I was too drastic when editing the draft for page 19 of the Cricket Green book.

**E.N.M.**

## **PARHAM HOUSE**

With this Bulletin is enclosed an application form for the Society’s visit to Parham House on Saturday 13 July. Please note that this trip starts and finishes at **Park Place, Mitcham**, and not as listed in the Annual Programme.

## **NEWS FROM YOUR COMMITTEE**

At the first meeting of the new Committee Judith Goodman (Bulletin editor) was co-opted onto the Committee.

## MERTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY AT THE HERITAGE CENTRE

Sarah Gould, the Merton Heritage Officer, has kindly offered us the use of the Heritage Centre in the basement of The Canons, Madeira Road, Mitcham, from Tuesday 30 April to Sunday 2 June. We have set up a small committee and plan an exhibition to demonstrate some of the interests of, and researches by, our members - including archaeology, social history, industrial history and so on. The 50th-anniversary exhibition last year was much appreciated by those who came, and we hope we can count on members' support this time. Please let your friends know! Opening hours as in the first 'In Brief' item below. Admission free.

### IN BRIEF

- ◆ Hospitals and health form the theme of the current exhibition at **Merton Heritage Centre**, at The Canons, Madeira Road, Mitcham. Opening hours: Tues, Wed, Thurs 10am-4pm; Fri, Sat 10am-5pm (last admission 4.30pm); Sun 2-5pm. Admission free.
- ◆ A performance of T S Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* by the K-Bis Theatre School will take place at the Chapter House of Merton Priory (entrance from the Savacentre south-side car-park, off Merantun Way) on Tuesday 26 March at 7.00 pm. Tickets £10 (£5 conc.) at the door.
- ◆ One of Mitcham's athletic heroines has received an honour in the New Year list. **Dorothy Tyler** (née Odam), who now lives in Sanderstead, has been awarded an MBE, in recognition of her outstanding achievements over many years. (See Bulletins 134,135 for a summary of her career in athletics.) It was Ray Kilsby, of this society, who is a neighbour of Dorothy's, who approached the right people and organised the support for Dorothy's award.
- ◆ **Edna ('Peggy') Duke**, who kindly and efficiently examines our annual financial statements, was another recipient of an MBE in the New Year. This was for her work with Merton Voluntary Service Council over the last 15 years or so, and particularly in recognition of her efforts in support of people with hearing difficulties.
- ◆ The January/February issue of the Wimbledon & Putney *Time & Leisure* Magazine carried an article by John Hawks of Merton Abbey Mills about the **Wandle**, with a photo of the recently excavated wheel-bed of Bennett's Mill at Merton Abbey Mills, as well as some 'autumn colour' views.
- ◆ Our Chairman **Lionel Green** speaks on **Merton and the Augustinians** at The Ralli Room, Ashted Peace Memorial Hall, Woodfield Lane, Ashted, on Friday 3 May at 7.30 for 8pm (tea/coffee available beforehand). This is one of a series of lectures in April and May at Ashted, arranged by Surrey Archaeological Society, on the theme of *Friars, Monks and Canons: some Religious Houses in Surrey*. Cost £4 at the door or telephone 01483 532454 for a booking form and further details. There may be follow-up visits to one or two of the sites.
- ◆ The **annual service** to commemorate the opening of St Mary's Priory, Merton, on 3 May 1117 will be held at the **chapter house** (under Merantun Way) on Sunday 5 May at 3pm.
- ◆ A reminder, prompted by the coming talk by Dorian Gerhold (see p.1), that **Wandsworth Museum's** permanent display includes a historic look at the lower reaches of the Wandle. There are also frequently changing temporary exhibitions. The museum is in Garratt Lane, just off Wandsworth High Street. Open Tues-Sat 10am-5pm; Sun 2-5pm. Admission free. Tel: 020 8871 7074
- ◆ Also in Wandsworth, a new home has been found for the De Morgan collection that has been housed temporarily for some years at Old Battersea House (Society visit in June 2000). The local authority has offered the former West Hill Library for what is to be the **De Morgan Centre for the Study of 19th-century Art and Society**. At different times the ceramic artist William De Morgan had his pottery works at Chelsea, Fulham and 'Merton Abbey' (actually Colliers Wood - see Bulletin 132, December 1999). His wife Evelyn was an admired artist in the pre-Raphaelite tradition.
- ◆ **LAMAS (London and Middlesex Archaeological Society)** lectures coming up include Bridget Cherry (Editor, Pevsner Architectural Guides) on *Medieval Churches of Middlesex* on 20 March; and Angela Evans (British Museum) on *Sutton Hoo: Past, Present and Future* on 17 April. Lectures are held in the Interpretation Unit of the Museum, 150 London Wall, London EC2Y 5HN at 6.30pm. Refreshments from 6.00pm. All welcome, especially visitors from affiliated societies (includes MHS).
- ◆ The **Society of Genealogists** have recently renovated their Goswell Road premises. Their members have access to the computer suite and to the superb library of books, periodicals, manuscripts and other records such as census and will indexes. There is a members' magazine, a bookshop and a programme of lectures, visits etc. Tel: 020 7553 3291 or members.fl1@socgen2.demon.co.uk or www.soc.org.uk

## REIGATE PRIORY

On 1st December a goodly gathering listened to the story of Reigate Priory imparted by Mrs Audrey Ward, founder of the Reigate Priory museum. She recounted 800 years of history in 1½ hours, but it was never a race against time. Her talk was illustrated with views of the Priory Park and Mansion, with some slides, specially prepared, which related to Merton Priory.

Audrey Ward came to the Priory school in 1971 and immediately made everyone aware of their historic surroundings. The age range of the children then was 8 to 12 – ideal for stimulating their imaginations. With a co-operative head she was able to form a museum in the library.

Reigate Priory was founded by William de Warenne about 1200, and it was dissolved with the lesser monasteries in 1536. Edmund Howard was made steward of the priory until his death in 1539. In 1541 his older half-brother William was granted the buildings, which he converted to a comfortable residence. Today the priory can boast that it possesses the only remaining example in Surrey of a roofed monastic church, and it is a Grade I listed building.

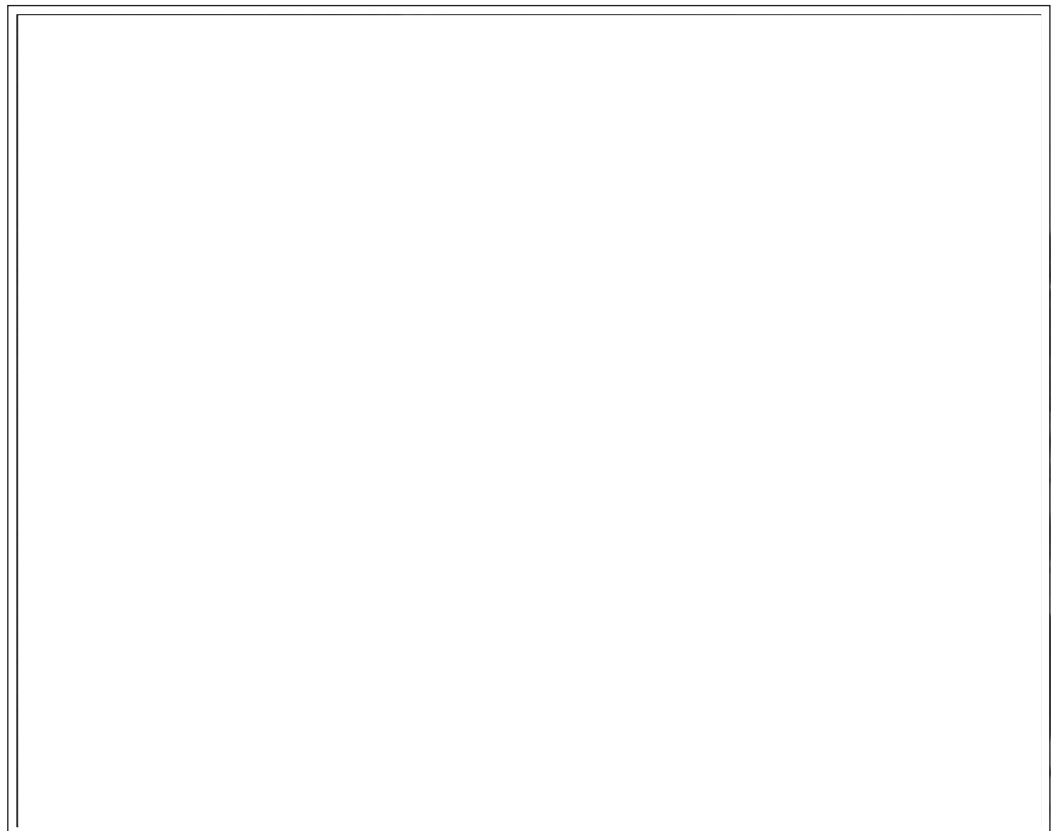
The grading no doubt also takes into account the 16th-century chimneypiece, said to have been designed by Hans Holbein. Audrey dealt with this conundrum in a way to upset nobody. Did it come from Nonsuch Palace or Blechingley Place? She felt that it was designed for Nonsuch, but that Henry VIII changed his mind, and it was delivered to Blechingley. There seems little doubt that Elizabeth, Countess of Peterborough, had to give up residing at Blechingley about 1650 and arranged for the wooden overmantel to be removed to Reigate. Another feature that enhances Reigate Priory was provided by Sir John Parsons, who bought the priory in 1681. He constructed a grand staircase at the west end and decorated the ceiling and walls. The painter may have been Antonio Verrio (died 1707) before he started decorating the extensions to Hampton Court. Sir John was Lord Mayor of London in 1703 and 1704, and possibly one of the first commuters from Reigate.

The priory passed from the Parsons family (1681-1760), to the Irelands (1760-1801), to George Mowbray (1801-7) and the Somers family (1807-1921). The last family to live in the priory were the Beattys, until the outbreak of the second World War. Audrey brought us into this century by showing recent achievements at the school, where there are now 550 children proud of their inheritance.

**Lionel Green**

*The Society has arranged a visit to Reigate Priory on Saturday 28 September at 2.30pm. Numbers are restricted to 30, at £2 a head.*

*The 'Holbein  
chimney-piece' at  
Reigate Priory,  
from T F W  
Hamilton,  
Holmesdale  
Towns: Reigate  
and Redhill,  
(Homeland  
Association  
1899)*



## THE VESTMENTS OF WESTMINSTER ABBEY

At the Society's first meeting in 2002, held on Saturday 26 January at the Snuff Mill Environmental Centre, Morden Hall Park, Rosemary Turner, who is one of our members, held 29 members and four guests fascinated with her account of the work of the Guild of St Faith at Westminster Abbey. The Guild, which Rosemary joined soon after its foundation in 1981, takes its name from the only chapel in the Abbey which is dedicated to a female saint (apart from the Lady Chapel), and is one of numerous similar groups of volunteers formed all over the country to care for the vestments and furnishings of churches, large and small. Many of these beautiful articles are not only very old, but being of perishable materials do call for expert attention. The cost of professional conservation and repair would be prohibitive, and it is only through the devotion of workers like Rosemary that this magnificent heritage will continue in regular use.

With the aid of colour transparencies Rosemary took us through the original cloisters of the Abbey, with a glimpse at a secluded little garden, and into the medieval infirmary hall, where the ladies meet every Wednesday. Whether professional seamstress, experienced embroiderer or just 'plain needlewoman' (as Rosemary modestly described herself) each obviously welcomes any challenge. They have been filmed at work by the BBC - the programme has yet to be shown.

Rosemary's talk included some amusing anecdotes, such as the one about the pocket accidentally inserted back to front in the verger's cassock, so that he found he had been sitting on the chocolate bar he planned to eat after the service ...

She ended as all good speakers hope to do, with the audience wishing to see and hear more. Audrey Thomas's vote of thanks neatly expressed everyone's appreciation, and was warmly supported.

**Eric Montague**

## NEW FROM THE WIMBLEDON SOCIETY

*The Lull before the Storm – The Last Years of Rural Wimbledon* – Richard Milward & Cyril Maidment - £4.95

Further collaboration between Richard and Cyril, both members of Merton Historical Society as well as the Wimbledon Society, has brought to life the final years of rural Wimbledon. By bringing together the essential facts from the 1841 Census and the 1848 Tithe Apportionment, it is now possible to look closely at rural Wimbledon on the eve of the radical transformation brought about by urbanisation.

Richard Milward needs no introduction to our members, and his text, as always, transforms a list of names into a lively sketch of Wimbledon's inhabitants and their way of life at this crucial period of their history.

Those who have seen Richard and Cyril's previous book, *Wimbledon – A Surrey Village in maps*, will be familiar with Cyril's excellent work in recreating early maps on his computer. Hours of painstaking re-drawing of the 1850 Tithe Apportionment map have resulted in an edition both easy to read and easy to interpret. Eight A4 sections cover the whole of the ancient parish of Wimbledon at a scale of approximately 14 inches to the mile, enabling each plot to be labelled with owner and occupier, as well as plot number. The village centre is reproduced at the original scale of about 19 inches to the mile. In addition, a series of A3 spreads, covering the whole parish, show land utilisation, modern place names, and a copy of the 1865 Ordnance Survey map for comparison.

As the Wimbledon Tithe Apportionment does not give many field names, it has been possible to present the information in a concise format without losing essential detail. Each landowner's property is listed, with each occupier's holding described and its acreage and rent-charge totalled. In this way it has been possible to contain the book within 63 pages without sacrificing content or appearance. Two watercolours from the Wimbledon Society Museum's collections adorn the covers.

This book will prove both enjoyable and useful, not only to those interested in Wimbledon's history, but also to those in adjoining parishes. (Our forebears were never restricted by parish boundaries, and several names are recognisable from other parishes). MHS's edition of the Mitcham Tithe map, due out later this year, will complete the set for the Borough of Merton.

*The Lull before the Storm* is available from The Wimbledon Society Museum of Local History, 22 Ridgway, Wimbledon, LONDON SW19 4QN (Tel. 020 8296 9914). The Museum is open Saturdays and Sundays from 2.30 to 5.00pm.

Richards Milward will be giving a slide presentation based on the new book, on **Thursday 14 March** at Wimbledon Village Hall, Lingfield Road, 8pm for 8.15. All are welcome. Admission free.

**Peter Hopkins**

**LIONEL GREEN, with more episodes from the story of Merton Priory:  
IN THE MIDST OF LIFE WE ARE IN DEATH**

**Joyous celebrations**

Edward III loved to show off. In 1344 he constructed a circular building at Windsor (Round Tower) to house a large round table around which the knights could meet. Invitations were issued, and a lavish first gathering took place - but without the round table. The king enjoyed dressing up and wearing disguises, and had two suits of red velvet made for the occasion. One was long (traditional), and the other short (a new fashion). In addition he wore a cloak made of 369 ermine skins.<sup>1</sup>

In England, Edward III had never been more popular. There were celebrations for the victory at Crécy over the French on 26 August 1346, and at Neville's Cross near Durham over the Scots on 17 October the same year. The king came to Merton and allowed the priory to host royal sports and plays. On 6 January 1347 he ordered 13 masks with heads of dragons and another 13 with heads of men, and having diadems. Also ten short cloaks of black buckram requiring 12 yards of English canvas of flax.<sup>2</sup> Masks were worn in mystery plays, by men representing devils and demons, and mummers wore the heads of animals. The reference to short cloaks may hint at the king's new style.

In the 1330s Edward had welcomed Flemish weavers to England, and the demand for wool increased. Soon every country in Europe was relying on England to supply both wool and finished cloth. It was probably Edward III who placed a sack of wool in the upper chamber of Parliament which became the official seat of the lord chancellor.

In 1346 Edward's ships sailed from the port of Melcombe (Weymouth) for the successful siege of Calais, which surrendered on 2 August 1347. The army returned triumphantly in October with much loot. It was chronicled that no woman of any standing had not her share of the spoils of Calais, Caen and other places across the Channel, such as clothes, fur, pillows, household utensils, table cloths, necklaces, gold and silver cups, linen and sheets.

Celebrations continued in 1348, and on one occasion when the king was dancing with Joan, Countess of Salisbury, he picked up her dropped garter and placed it on his own knee with a chosen remark. He told his courtiers that he would make it the most honourable garter that was ever worn, and instituted the Order of the Garter, creating 24 knights on 23 April 1348.

**The Pestilence and the Monasteries**

It was Cardinal Gasquet (1846-1929) who suggested that the crews of the ships returning from Calais to Melcombe in 1358 brought the plague to England.<sup>4</sup> And it was a canon of the Augustinian monastery of Bridlington, Nicholas Trivet, who records the plague passing southern districts of England in the summer of 1348. On 24 October 1348 the bishop of Winchester, William de Edington, ordered the archdeacon of Surrey to make full use of the sacrament of Penance, in view of the terrible plague which was approaching. Processions were to be made with bare feet in towns through the market-places, and in the villages in the cemeteries round about the churches.

By the autumn it had reached Farnham, where up to 700 succumbed. According to the annals of Bermondsey, the disease reached London on 29 September, and the months of February, March and early April 1349 proved the most severe.

In January Thomas Plomer was instituted vicar of Leatherhead, but died in March. His successor, Reginald Goderynton, was instituted in March 1349, but died the following month.

The shortage of priests meant that untrained clerks were placed into parishes. Richard le Clerc de Chaddesley was instituted to St Mary's Guildford by Merton priory in 1349, but he was not ordained until some time later. This was a temporary appointment and Robert atte Mere took his place in Guildford in 1350.



William de Hastings of Wotton died in 1349, and almost all his tenants. Lawrence de Hastings, who owned Westcott mill, also died.

Near the modern Godstone, the villages of Langham and Marden suffered. The manorial lord, John de St John, succumbed to the plague on 8 April 1349.

The manorial court at Cuddington recorded the deaths of five freeholders and 15 villeins.

The monasteries were clearly affected. Abbot John of Waverley died early in 1349. Also the abbot of Chertsey and abbot John de Waring of Boxgrove, in May 1349. Two priors of Merton died,<sup>5</sup> and the prior of Reigate. Newark (Surrey) was impoverished. At Michelham in Sussex only five canons survived out of 13. The prior, sub-prior and third prior of Lewes all died.

All the eight chaplains at Sandown hospital near Esher perished at the beginning of 1349,<sup>6</sup> but the bishop of Winchester held an ordination on 6 June 1349 and appointed William de Coleton as the new head.

In May 1349 abbot Bircheston of Westminster perished, along with 26 monks. About 15 canons died at St Bartholomew's Smithfield, and St Thomas's hospital suffered badly, with the number of brothers reduced to five. St James's hospital Westminster, part of the abbey, lost about 24 brothers and sisters, with only a single inmate surviving.

The pestilence continued, and in 1350 at Shulbred priory, Sussex, near Haslemere, many servants perished.

The primacy itself underwent four changes. John Stratford died on 23 August 1348, and John Offord in May 1349, but before he was consecrated archbishop. Thomas Bradwardine was consecrated on 19 July 1349, but died in London in the following month. Simon Islip succeeded on 20 December 1349, and he lived until 1366.

Monastic life was affected by the loss of experienced seniors, with a relaxation of discipline, for youths requiring sound training, which could not be renewed by the surviving community.

### The Round Table

In 1356 the king bought 50 oak trees from woods near Reading belonging to Merton Priory. These were used to construct a round table for Windsor castle.<sup>7</sup>

### References:

1. T James *The Palaces of Medieval England* 1990 p120
2. *Archaeologia* xxxi p43; A Heales *The Records of Merton Priory* Henry Frowde, London 1898 p248
3. Close Roll 21 Edw.III pt.2. m28d; Rymer's *Foedera* iii p131.  
England, 155 years earlier, had to find 50,000 sacks of wool as ransom for the release of Richard I. A sack held about 364lb (165kg) of wool from some 250 sheep.
4. F N Gasquet *Henry VIII and the English Monasteries* 1889
5. *Victoria County History of Surrey* Vol ii p15
6. Lowth *Wykeham* p84
7. Heales *op.cit.* p254

### A Costume Note

The reign of Edward III is one of the most important eras in the history of costume. The drawings on the left illustrate the sharp style change Lionel Green refers to in his first paragraph. The king, with his patriarchal beard and long hair, wears the dalmatica and under-tunic, which with only small changes had served many previous generations. By contrast his second son, clean-shaven and with cropped locks, wears the new close-fitting cote-hardie, which finishes at mid-thigh (lower ranks wore a longer and looser version). William's mantle is also in the new style - very long, with 'dagged' borders, and fastened on the right shoulder with large buttons. Information and illustrations are from an anonymous *History of British Costume* published for the Society for Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, London 1834.

JG



*Effigy of Edward III in Westminster Abbey, and of his second son William of Hatfield in York Minster*

## THE WANDLE NAVIGATION

### Did it ever exist?

#### ERIC MONTAGUE examines the evidence:

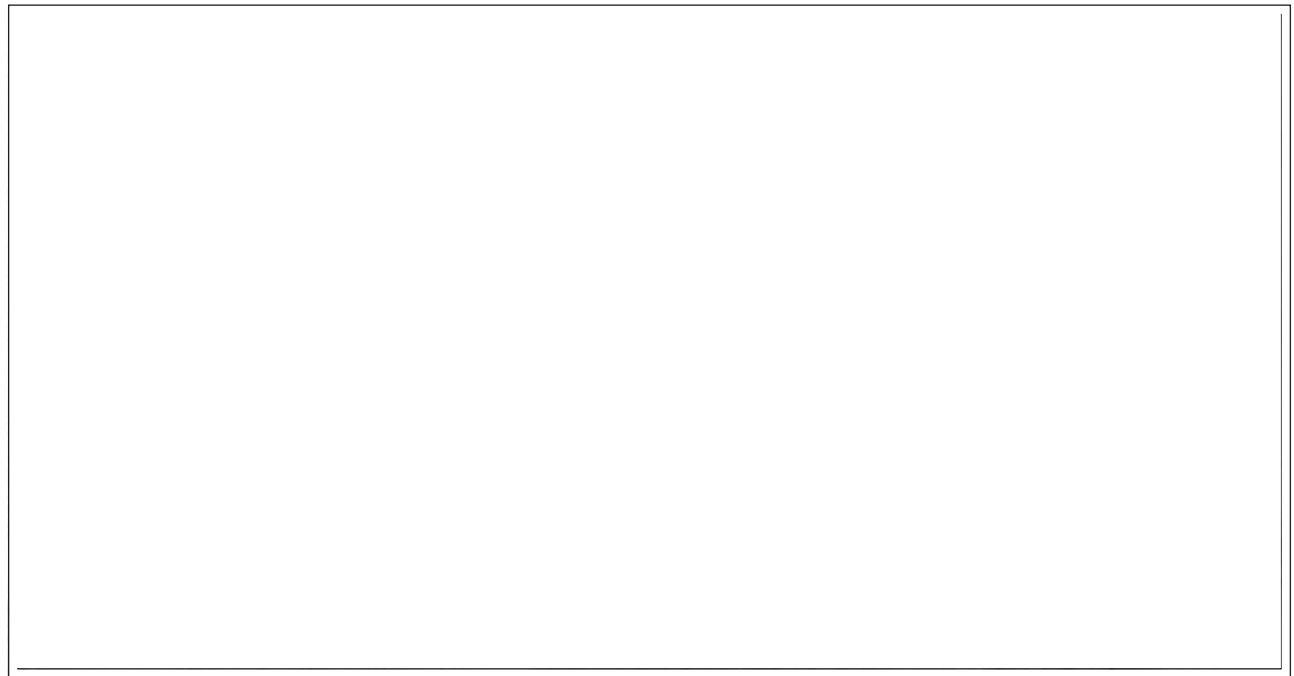
Writing of the industries and natural resources of Surrey in the late 17th century, Thomas Cox, after mentioning the transport of coals to towns and villages on the river Wey, observed:

“And not only on this River is the Traffick maintained, but there is a Way found to carry up Coal upon the Wandle to Croydon where there is a great Trade for them”.<sup>1</sup>

The implication is that, like the Wey, the Wandle had been made navigable from Wandsworth Creek as far as Croydon, presumably in the latter half of the 17th century, and that it was still functioning commercially as a ‘navigation’ or canal at the time Cox was writing.

No other published source I have seen refers to such a use of the Wandle, and in the absence of supportive evidence I have tended to dismiss Cox’s comment as suspect.

I have nevertheless always been puzzled as to why, when and by whom the very straight (and obviously artificial) ‘cut’ was made between Morden Hall and Phipps Bridge. It predates the earliest map we have of the Garth estate, made for Richard Garth of Morden in 1750,<sup>2</sup> and there is no record of it serving a mill downstream at Phipps Bridge. Improvement of land drainage north-east of Morden Hall is one possibility, and another is an attempt to speed the flow away from a mill leased from the Garths by a Nicholas Davison, the site of which may have been immediately downstream from the Hall, where there is a small island. The mill was operating *c.* 1620, but seems not to have survived beyond the mid-17th century.<sup>3</sup> Neither theory, however, offers a convincing explanation for the expenditure of what must have been a large sum of money and an immense amount of labour.



Other, separate, ‘improved’ sections of the Wandle in its course through the borough of Merton are associated with mills, but may not have been dug specifically for them. For example, the Papermill Cut in the Watermeads takes its name from Richard Glover’s paper mill, which functioned *c.* 1780-1830,<sup>4</sup> but there is no record of when and by whom it was excavated, and it could have been intended originally to serve the copper mills which were here from *c.* 1700,<sup>5</sup> and were working until the mid-18th century. It is even possible that the cut pre-dates the copper mills, and was dug for some other purpose.

The present mill-head above Ravensbury Mill, is another obviously ‘improved’ length of the Wandle. It was presumably there in 1680, when an entry in a rent roll of the manor of Ravensbury mentions “Mr. Westbrooke’s new mill”.<sup>6</sup> Again, the construction of a mill-head of this size seems excessive for a relatively humble mill. Was the channel dug several decades before the mill was built, and if so, why?

Other clearly man-made stretches of the Wandle can be seen above and below the Morden Hall snuff-mills; below Phipps Bridge as far as Merton Abbey Mills; and between Merton Bridge and the 'Merton' corn-mills (later Connolly Leather Ltd). Each is associated with a mill or mills working in the mid-18th century, but may have been designed for other, earlier, mills. Nothing survives in local records, however, to identify the original instigators of these enterprises, or their motivations.

There, it seemed, the matter had to rest - to remain a mystery. Until, that is, my attention was drawn early last year (2001) to a 'River Wandle Navigation Act 16 & 17 Charles II c.12', which, I was told, provided "for certain rivers to be made navigable".<sup>7</sup> This enabling measure applied to several watercourses in Surrey, including the Wandle and the Mole, and stipulated that unless acted upon within 11 years the power conferred by the Act would lapse, ie in 1676/7.

Neither Surrey History Centre nor the archivist at Sutton Archive and Local Studies knew of this legislation, but on enquiry of the House of Lords Record Office I found that the measure did exist,<sup>8</sup> that it was a Private Act, and that its full title was 'An Act for Making Diverse Rivers Navigable or Otherwise Passable by Barge or Other Vessels'. Since this was a Private Act only one copy exists, but the membrane has been copied on microfiche, and prints can be obtained for a modest charge.

Did knowledge of this legislation lie behind Cox's comments, and, in the absence of any physical or documentary evidence of a Wandle navigation having been completed, should his observation perhaps be rephrased as:

"... and there has been identified a means whereby  
coal might be carried on the Wandle to Croydon ..."?

In other words, Cox was aware of the scheme, but did not consider it necessary to add that it had not been implemented. One of course wonders who the promoter(s) of the Act were, and further research in the journals of the House of Commons and in contemporary Parliamentary records could be productive.

Interesting light is shed on the historical background to the pioneering efforts to create what is now known as the Wey Navigation by two articles in *Surrey Archaeological Collections*.

Michael Nash has noted that stretches of the old river course were navigable and used by vessels in the early 17th century, but that mills and natural shallows presented serious obstacles.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, in the 17th century government authority was hard to obtain. The attraction of linking various 'cutts' to create a continuous waterway from the Thames to Guildford, and hence revive the town's flagging industries, spurred Sir Richard Weston of Sutton Park both before and after the Civil War to proceed with such a scheme, but opposition was fierce, and it was not until 1651 that an Act was secured for making the Wey navigable. Work started immediately, and the project was substantially completed in 1653.

Hector Carter has shown<sup>10</sup> how disputes and demands for compensation etc beset the project within a few years, so that Parliament eventually appointed trustees to settle matters.

Is it possible that Weston's enterprise and vision inspired landowners in the Wandle Valley to follow suit and start opening up sections of the river to water-borne transport? Before the Civil War the Carews of Beddington might well have been attracted by such a project, for their large riverside estate extended downstream as far as Merton. Unfortunately the Carews were Royalists, and by the time hostilities ended they were impoverished. Moreover, the many local interests, including mills and other industries along the Wandle, may well have presented daunting obstacles in the years that followed, and made agreement virtually impossible. If this is so, it seems likely that the difficulties faced by the otherwise successful Wey Navigation were enough to dampen whatever initial interest there might have been in the Wandle Navigation, and the powers conferred by the Act were allowed to lapse.

1. R Cox *Ecclesiastical and Natural History of Surrey 1700*, p443

2. Merton Local Studies Centre *A Plan of the River Wandle in the Parish of Morden and County of Surrey Survey'd 1750*

3. Surrey History Centre 85/2/27

4. A Crocker 'The Paper Mills of Surrey Part III' in *Surrey History* Vol 5, No.1 p16

5. E Montague *Copper Milling on the River Wandle* Merton Historical Society 1999, pp10-13

6. Surrey History Centre, Rent Rolls of the manors of Bandon, Norbury and Ravensbury 212/9/2

7. My informant was a visitor at a meeting of Merton Historical Society on 21 April 2001.

8. House of Lords Record Office and Parliamentary Archive (tel: 020 7219 2570)

9. M Nash 'Early Seventeenth Century Schemes to make the Wey Navigable 1618-51' *Surrey Archaeological Collections* Vol. LXVI (1969) pp33-40

10. H Carter 'The Wey Navigation Claims of 1671' *Surrey Archaeological Collections* Vol LXII (1965) pp94-108

## **TONY SCOTT reports on the CONSERVATION AND DESIGN ADVISORY PANEL (CADAP)**

This is the name of the new body which replaces, and has a broader brief than, the Borough's CAAC (Conservation Areas Advisory Committee). **Merton's CADAP aims:**

1. To promote good design and conservation in the urban environment.
2. To advise on matters concerning the care, maintenance and enhancement of the Borough's built heritage, including Conservation Areas and other areas with heritage assets.
3. To advise on the preservation of buildings of special architectural or historical interest on the Statutory and Local Lists.
4. To advise on archaeological matters.
5. To advise the Planning Application and Licensing Committee on the conservation area and design implications of major development proposals.

**The membership of the CADAP** will continue more or less unchanged, but now including representatives from the Mitcham Society and Groundwork Merton.

**The Buildings at Risk Register** has been revised, and is currently:

Garden wall enclosing playing field, Church Lane, Merton Park  
Mitcham parish churchyard  
66 Church Road, Mitcham  
475 London Road, Mitcham  
The Canons, Mitcham (to apply for Heritage Lottery funding)  
Chapter House, Merton Priory (risk from development)  
Bazalgette mausoleum, St Mary's, Wimbledon, churchyard  
Churchyard walls, St Mary's, Wimbledon  
Section of Priory wall, Station Road SW19  
Section of Priory wall, rear of 27-33 Windsor Avenue SW19  
Base of windmill, Windmill Road, Mitcham

Recommended removals from list:

Wall and gateways, Sacred Heart church, Edge Hill SW19  
Eagle House, London Road, Mitcham

Recommended additions to list:

Morden Cottage, Morden Hall Road  
Mitcham vicarage, Church Road, Mitcham

### **Merton Abbey Mills site**

Foundations have been found on parts of the site where new buildings would be located. Developers will need to reposition buildings as well as meeting the Mayor of London's requirements.

## **LOCAL HISTORY WEEK 4-12 MAY 2002**

This is a national event initiated by The Historical Association in conjunction with the BBC's *History Magazine* and Channel 4 Learning, and is supported by Phillimore & Co.Ltd of Chichester, the local history publishers. This Society's exhibition (page 5) is timed to include this special week.

The Society of Genealogists are putting on a Family History Fair at the RHS New Hall and Conference Centre, Greycoat Street, London SW1 on 4 and 5 May from 10.00am-5.00pm.

Channel 4 Learning are sponsoring a conference at Senate House on 11 May, which will look at current issues and local projects. Contact Debra Birch at The Institute of Historical Research. Fax: 020 7862 8745. email: [d.birch@sas.ac.uk](mailto:d.birch@sas.ac.uk)

For other events visit the Historical Association website at [www.history.org.uk](http://www.history.org.uk) and click on the Local History Week logo, or tel: 020 7735 3901.

There are also special offers for HA membership and *History Magazine* subscriptions.

## RECENT ARCHAEOLOGY

The English Heritage Quarterly Review for Greater London, August-October 2001 contains the following report:

**Borough:** MERTON

**Site Name:** FURNITURELAND, MERTON HIGH STREET SW20 [*sic*]

**Arch Org:** MoLAS **Report Type:** POST-EXC ASS **Site Code:** MHH 00

**Summary:** TQ2630 7010: the earliest feature encountered during the excavation was an east-west aligned ditch and recut. This ditch could date to any time between AD100 and the 15th century.

The first evidence for occupation comes from the structure dated to the middle of the 15th century which was open to the south and probably abutted a tile kiln (not found during the excavation). It is likely that the structure represented a forming shed for tile making and also a work area in front of the kiln.

A second kiln was constructed around 1480 and this was recorded during the excavation. The kiln itself was partly built with waste tiles from earlier kiln firings. The excavated part of the kiln comprised three furnace chambers and a flue had been placed along the back of the kiln to help feed air to the kiln fires. The presence of this flue would appear to indicate that the 'forming shed' was still attached to the kiln and so there may have been a circulation problem. After a number of firings, the kiln was rebuilt and a replacement series of furnace chambers constructed. The back wall of this replacement kiln was constructed from reused Reigate capitals from a 12th century building belonging to the priory of St Mary Merton. During the tile making phase it seems that the immediate area of the site was stripped of the natural layers of brickearth (and any overlying layers) in order to provide raw material for the tile works. It is likely that the tile kiln was situated near to an entrance into the Prior precinct.

Truncating the kiln was a chalk foundation wall for the 'Gatehouse' built around 1500. The walls were generally truncated to cellar floor level. The foundation formed a small building measuring 7.20m wide and running into the northern trench section, with the majority of the buildings probably lying beneath the current Merton High Street. These foundations could form the back end of a western tower, if the superstructure were in brick (which would not require a large, wide foundation). If this is the case it is possible to reconstruct a potential gateway, where two towers are astride an entrance arrangement c12m wide. Associated with this building is a thick dumped layer, where the ground was raised up after the clay extraction had finished.

During the middle of the 18th century the medieval building was enlarged with the addition of extensions to each side, thus extending the cellar to a width of 13.20m. Walls with more shallow foundations had been truncated during the 20th century demolition.

The gatehouse was demolished in the early 20th century and the site was also truncated horizontally at this time, in order to prepare the wooden suspended floor for the subsequent Palais de Dance [*sic*]. This truncation had removed the post-medieval external surface and shallow wall surfaces.

**Date of Report:** MAR 2001

(See Peter Hopkins' report in Bulletin 138 on Dave Saxby's talk to the Society, 'Recent Work on the site of Merton Priory'.

The site, on the corner of Merton High Street and Mill Road, is of course in SW19. The building which replaced the gatehouse in 1909 was used for roller-skating and then for making airships. It was not converted to a palais de danse until 1922.

The same issue of the EH Quarterly Review carries brief and largely negative reports of other archaeological investigations in the Borough of Merton.



*The rear of Gatehouse, Merton, from a old postcard*

**JG**

## ‘MR. T. WELCH’S TABLE-CLOTH PRINTING WORKS, MERTON, SURREY’

A recent contribution to the Wandle Industrial Museum’s library is a copy of an anonymous article in *The Illustrated Exhibitor and Magazine of Art* Vol.II No.30 pp.53-6 dated July 1852.<sup>1</sup> It describes in detail the processes used at Welch’s works, which stood partly on the site of Trellis House in Merton High Street, and partly on the east bank of the Wandle, where Savacentre now stands. (The premises were, in fact, those taken over by William Morris in 1881.) Several of the picturesque weatherboarded buildings familiar from photographs taken early last century undoubtedly dated from Welch’s time, if not before, and can be seen clearly in the 25-inch Ordnance Survey maps of 1874 and 1894-6.

The history of Welch’s works can be traced back to Halfhide & Son in the late 18th century, and their successor, William West, whose “calico and printing grounds” were mentioned by James Malcolm in his *Compendium of Modern Husbandry* of 1805. The date West left Merton is not known, but he seems to have ceased production in the early 1820s. The trade had by this time shifted more towards meeting the demand for finer materials and luxury goods, and accordingly the activities at the Merton workshops were directed increasingly to the printing of silks and challis. West was succeeded by a Mr Allchin, and a map of c. 1825 shows, to the east of the river at the head of a large mill-pond, “Mr. Allchin’s Silk Mill”.<sup>2</sup>

In 1853 Braithwaite visited “Mr. Welch’s print works” located on what he described as the south side of Merton bridge,<sup>3</sup> and there seems to be little doubt that they were in premises formerly occupied by Allchin. Welch would have been “Thomas Welch the younger”, whose name is mentioned in an indenture dated 1846, now at the Surrey History Centre.<sup>4</sup> A wheel of eight horsepower was employed, and the millhead was described as a “large basin” fed by an overflow from the Wandle. There was also a rinsing wheel worked by the main river, and here ten men were constantly employed.

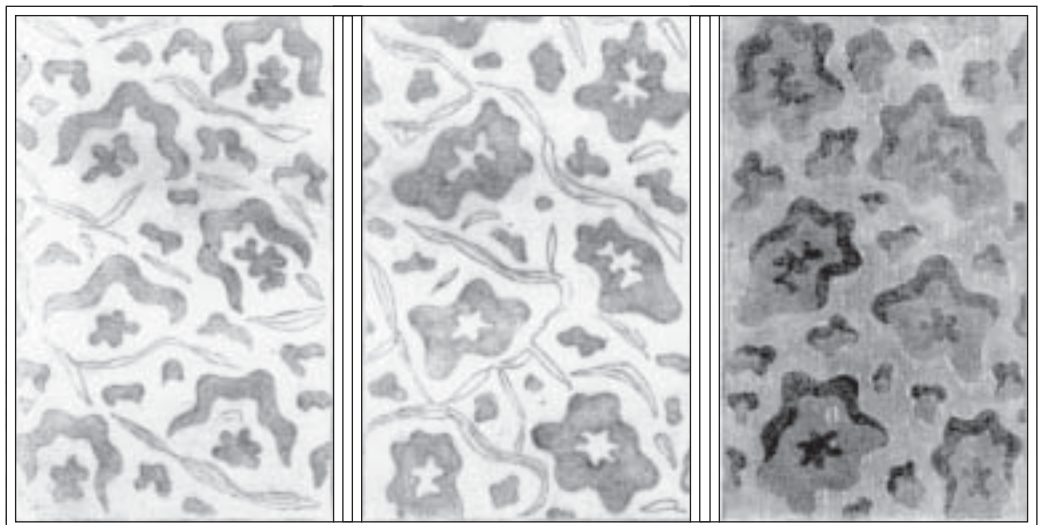
At this time Welch was considered to be one of the foremost printers of table-cloths in the country, and had been awarded a prize medal at the Great Exhibition in 1851. Four classes of table-cloth then being produced at his works at Merton are listed in *The Illustrated Exhibitor* as

- I Table-cloths printed in squares or oblongs
- II Table-cloths printed in pieces about 40 yards long, and cut up to the size required
- III Table-cloths of velvet pile, in squares or oblongs and
- IV Table-cloths of which the material is embossed

The fabrics used were not produced locally. The material for the first category of table-cloth came from Yorkshire. The long lengths of fabric were supplied ready-dyed to order, commonly green and crimson, whilst velvet pile material, composed of silk and wool, was produced in Glasgow.

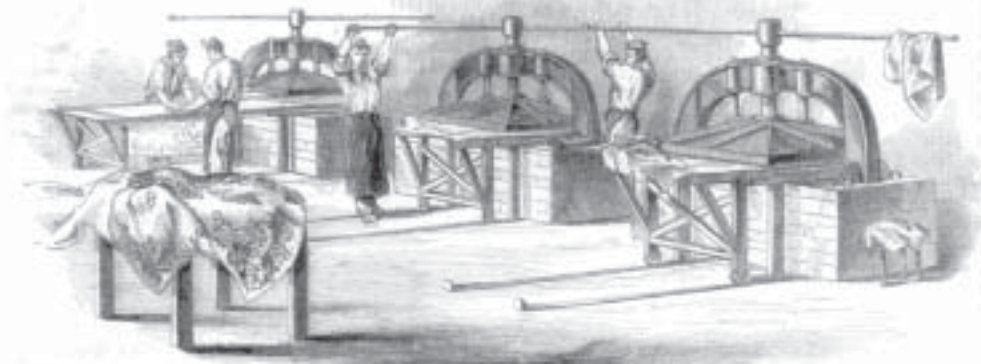
The article follows in great detail the processes employed, that of embossing being of particular interest since it seems not to have been described at Merton before. Colour mixed with flour was applied to the dyed material in sections using deeply-cut brass plates. The cloth was then placed in steam-heated presses for 15 minutes, achieving a “metamorphosis” which, the reader is told, “greatly increased its beauty and value”.<sup>5</sup>

Welch’s was one of the many textile works in the Merton area the history of which has been somewhat eclipsed by firms like Littler, Liberty and Morris & Co., and the article from *The Illustrated Exhibitor* is a valuable addition to the Museum’s archive.

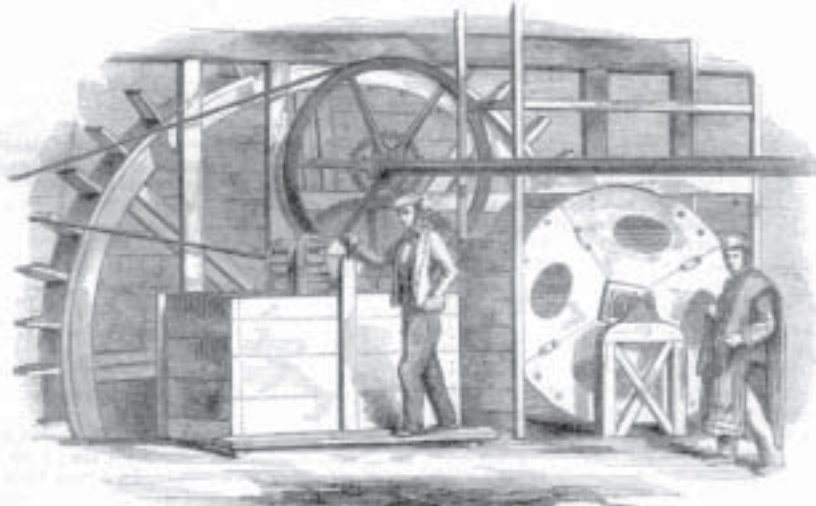


‘Block for printing, and printed pattern’  
an illustration  
from  
*The Illustrated Exhibitor*

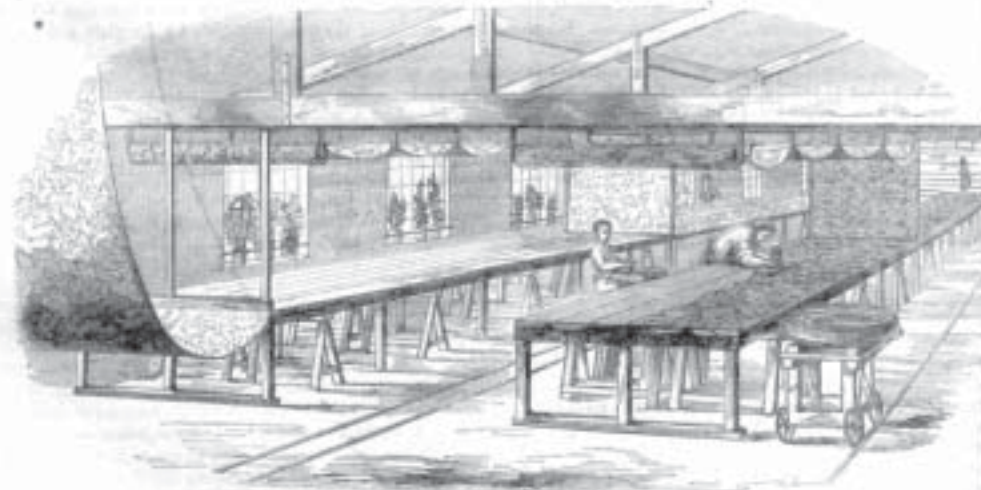
## MR. T. WELCH'S TABLE-CLOTH PRINTING WORKS,



EMBOSSING TABLES.



DYE WHEEL, 2000, &amp;c.



PRINTING BY HAND.

### Notes and References

1. There is also a copy of this article at Merton Local Studies Centre.
2. Wimbledon Society's Museum: map of the River Wandle. There is a copy at Merton Local Studies Centre.
3. F Braithwaite 'On the Rise and Fall of the River Wandle' *Proceedings of the Institution of Civil Engineers* Vol. 20 (1861)
4. Surrey History Centre 3057/1/7
5. Thirty years later tastes were changing, and Welch's table-cloths were evidently viewed with disapproval, at least by leading members of the Arts and Crafts Movement. William Morris, writing to his wife Janey on 19 March 1881 after viewing Welch's Merton Abbey works, left no doubt as to his opinion of what they were producing, referring to "... those hideous red and green tablecloths and so forth ...". By that date the works were being run by George Welch (Note 4).  
N Kelvin (ed.) *The Collected Letters of William Morris* Vol. II 1881-1884 p.37  
See also R Watkinson 'Merton Before Morris' *William Morris Society Journal* Vol. IX No. 4 (1992) pp.25-8.  
(I am indebted to Judith Goodman of Merton Historical Society for supplying the information in notes 4 and 5.)

**E N Montague**

## THE CATHERINE GLADSTONE HOME, MORDEN

In the archives of the Royal London Hospital, Whitechapel Road, there are three files of cuttings, photographs, notebooks etc relating to an institution which was a landmark in Morden for more than 40 years.<sup>1,2,3</sup>

Catherine Gladstone was the wife of William Ewart Gladstone, the 19th-century Liberal leader who was four times prime minister. In the cholera outbreak in East London in 1866 she made daily visits to the London Hospital, and as a result of what she saw she set up an orphanage for children who had lost their parents to this dreadful disease. The information in the file states that the institution was in Watford, but this was not so. It was first at Clapton, but soon moved to Woodford Hall on the edge of Epping Forest.<sup>4,5</sup> This was a handsome Georgian house with a wing at each side and large grounds. (From 1840 to 1848 it had been the home of William Morris, as a boy.)

As it turned out, thanks to cleaner water and much improved sewage disposal, the outbreak of 1866 was the last such in London, and provision for 'cholera orphans' was no longer needed. The home became Mrs Gladstone's Convalescent Home - for women and children of the East End.

Though imposing, Woodford Hall may have been becoming dilapidated, for c. 1897 it was demolished. However, new premises for the Home had been found, at Morden, in the shape of Ravensbury Park House. This large gaunt structure had been built in 1864 by George Parker Bidder the railway engineer,<sup>6</sup> who had died in 1878 and who had sold the estate the year before to his eldest son, also George Parker Bidder. After the death in 1896 of the latter the house and most of its land came on the market.

The Home moved in, continuing, as before, to depend on subscriptions for its support. During the 1914-18 war it was a military hospital, and then in 1922 there was a crisis in its affairs. It was offered, as premises and furniture, to the London Hospital as an annexe, with an endowment of £20,137. The hospital could not afford to accept and referred the trustees to the 'Marie Celeste' Samaritan Society. This charity had been set up in 1791 by Sir William Blizard to provide social welfare services at the London Hospital. The name 'Marie Celeste' was added in 1899 as a memorial to the wife of a generous benefactor. The Society had just closed its own home at Whipps Cross. Under the new arrangement the committee of the Society would act as agents for the London Hospital in running the Home. The Society paid for structural alterations, new furniture and (new) electric lighting.<sup>2</sup>

To mark the occasion there was an opening ceremony on 19 November 1923, performed by Sir William Joynson-Hicks Bart., Minister of Health. It was widely reported in national and local papers and in the nursing press. A special feature appeared in *The Commercial Motor*, as the Samaritan Society had taken delivery of a new Lancia ambulance to bring patients from the East End to this country convalescent home.

The Home (or 'Homes' as it was usually called) was set in seven acres of grounds, including orchard and kitchen garden. There was room for 42 patients - 28 women and girls and 12 children, plus an isolation bed and an isolation cot. The Home continued to depend on subscriptions for most of its income, and the matron's cash-book for 1919-23<sup>3</sup> lists some of these (including donations from the Duke of Westminster and Viscount Cobham) as well as accounts with local (Mitcham) tradesmen.

The archives contain a number of photographs, from the late 1930s, showing patients in the grounds - on beds, in deckchairs, women knitting in the sunshine, children on swing-seats or being pushed in wicker carriages.

In 1940, following the outbreak of the second World War, the Samaritan Society closed down the Home. Later in the 1940s the house was demolished and the site was soon covered with houses. The Catherine Gladstone Home stood close to where Seddon Road meets Bishopsford Road.



JG

*Catherine Gladstone Home, Morden  
postcard view from the north-east*

1. Royal London Hospital Archives LH/P/2/68.
2. Royal London Hospital Archives LH/D/4/21
3. Royal London Hospital Archives SS/F/102.
4. J Thorne *Handbook to the Environs of London* (1876) reprinted by Godfrey Cave Associates 1983 p.736
5. H V Wiles *William Morris of Walthamstow* The Walthamstow Press, London 1951 pp.6-7
6. E F Clark *George Parker Bidder: the calculating boy* KSL Publications, Bedford 1983 pp.284-7, 358-9, 388

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.