



PRESIDENT: J Scott McCracken BA FSA MIFA

VICE PRESIDENTS: Viscountess Hanworth, Lionel Green and William Rudd

BULLETIN NO. 148

CHAIRMAN: Peter Hopkins

DECEMBER 2003



PROGRAMME DECEMBER–MARCH



Saturday 6 December 2.30pm

Snuff Mill Environmental Centre

‘Merton in Wartime’

Tom Kelley, one of our members, will recall life in Merton during World War II and illustrate his talk with objects from his large collection.

Saturday 17 January 2.30pm

Merton Heritage Centre, The Canons

‘York House and Price’s Candle Factory Archaeological Excavation’

Karl Hulka, who was site director for Pre-Construct Archaeology during the excavation, will give an illustrated talk about this important site in Battersea.

Saturday 7 February 2.30pm

Snuff Mill Environmental Centre

‘Spitalfields from the Romans to the 18th Century’

An illustrated talk by archaeologist **Chris Thomas** of Museum of London Archaeological Service on an historically rich part of London, where recent excavations have provided exciting new information.

Friday 27 February 7pm

Morden Hall

Annual Dinner for members and friends

This time, to simplify arrangements on the evening, we are asking people to book ahead with Sheila Harris. An application form for places is enclosed with this *Bulletin*.

Saturday 13 March 2.30pm

The Burn Bullock

‘The History of Pub Names and Signs’

David Roe, one of our members, will give a slide presentation showing examples of pub signs which illustrate the origins of names, or depict English humour, customs, traditions and historical figures. He will include examples from Merton and surrounding areas.

The Burn Bullock meeting-room is reached through the public bars and up the stairs.

(The **Snuff Mill Centre**, in Morden Hall Park, is on several bus routes. Car drivers use the garden centre car-park. Take the path across the bridge, go through the gateway and turn right. The Snuff Mill is straight ahead. **Merton Heritage Centre**, in Madeira Road, and the **Burn Bullock**, in London Road, are near or on several bus routes and close to Mitcham Tramlink stop. **Mitcham Library**, in London Road is well-served by buses. There is a large car-park at The Canons, but only small car-parks at Mitcham Library and the Burn Bullock, though parking is possible in roads nearby.

Please note that the Snuff Mill Centre and the Heritage Centre each have a maximum capacity of 50.

Late-comers may find there is no room for them.)



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

Non-members are invited to make a small donation to help with the Society’s running costs.



VISIT TO CHELSEA PHYSIC GARDEN

A warm autumn day saw a group from Merton Historical Society taken on a tour of the Chelsea Physic Garden. A small walled garden, the Chelsea Physic Garden was founded in 1673 by the Society of Apothecaries. It is the second oldest physic garden in England. The oldest is in Oxford. Over time Oxford's name changed to 'Botanic', while Chelsea retained the name 'Physic'.

The site at Chelsea was chosen because of its closeness to the river, which provided a safe and convenient highway. Until the building of the Embankment in 1874 the grounds ran down to the river. There are the remains of a boathouse, and there is a wall tablet depicting the Apothecaries' livery barge.

The early 18th century saw the garden begin to decline. One of the reasons for this was that botany ceased to be part of the medical degree. Sir Hans Sloane, himself a doctor, came to the garden's aid. He bought the manor of Chelsea and granted the Apothecaries a lease at a nominal rent. A statue of Hans Sloane (a copy of the one in the British Museum) stands in the middle of the garden. Nearby is one of the earliest rock gardens in Europe. Made from basaltic lava, and rubble from the Tower of London, the rock garden is a Grade II listed structure.

Some of the garden's plant beds are arranged to show the botanical relationship of the plants to each other. The garden of world medicine was especially interesting, with each bed dedicated to particular ailments. There are many other varieties of plants at Chelsea. They include pomegranates, bananas, cork, quince and olive trees.

The 21st century sees the Chelsea Physic Garden carrying on the work of those early apothecaries in the teaching, conservation, research and education carried on there. Even with synthetic drugs available plants are still important in the fight against diseases.

Sue Mansell

Lionel Green recalls an earlier visit by the Society to the Physic Garden, which merited a report in the local paper (those were the days). The yellowing cutting he has preserved bears no date, but consultation with the archives reveals that it was 23 October 1983.

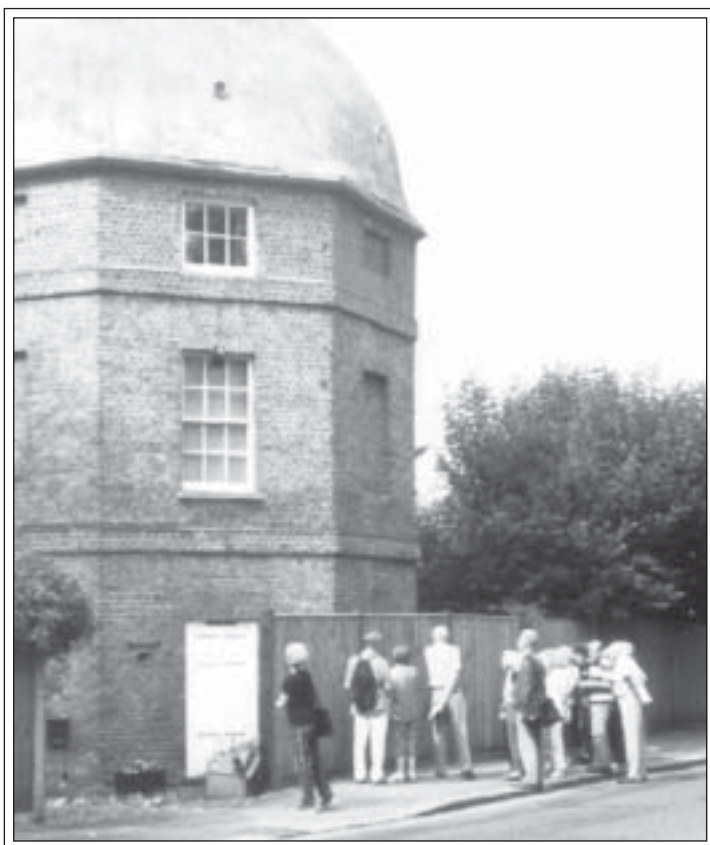
JG

IN BRIEF

- ◆ It was mentioned in the September Workshop report that **Eric Montague** had completed his MA dissertation. We are delighted to learn now that he has indeed been awarded his degree. No real surprise, but well done, Monty, and congratulations from us all!
- ◆ The current exhibition at the Heritage Centre looks back at **Merton in the 1980s**. Themes chosen for 2004 include science and invention; the Cranmers of Mitcham; and life around Fair Green. As usual there will also be a repeat programme of past displays in the ground floor exhibition space. Ring 020 8640 9387 for further details.
- ◆ At Wandsworth Museum in Garratt Lane from 13 December to 15 February an exhibition called **Painting Wandsworth** will put on display a selection of the museum's local watercolour views from the mid-18th century to the present time. Ring 020 8871 7074 for more details.

J E Nicholls, Sunset on the Wandle c.1860

WIMBLEDON PARK HERITAGE TRAIL



On Saturday 16 August members of the Society were led on this fairly new historic trail by Douglas Gardiner of Wimbledon Park Heritage Group, its creators. It takes in Home Park Road, Church Road, and a stretch of Wimbledon Park Road, before looping back through what remains of the original parkland. Plaques have been installed at 12 points along the circular course, with maps, and information about the Spencers, the estate and its history. With a bit of imagination one can still appreciate ‘Capability’ Brown’s work here and visualise the outlook he created for the lords of the manor.

Free leaflets about the trail should be obtainable at Wimbledon Library, but the route is easy to follow, provided you remember that point No.1 is just inside the Home Park Road entrance to the park itself, close to Wimbledon Park station.

Members of MHS admiring Well House, at point No.5 of Wimbledon Park Heritage Trail.

Photo by David Luff

Sir Thomas Graham Jackson, Bt., RA (1835-1924), Architect

Eagle House, Wimbledon, was the fitting location of a Wimbledon Society lecture on Sir Thomas Graham Jackson on 12 November. Fitting because Jackson bought Eagle House in 1887, for £3700, thus probably saving it from demolition. He restored it respectfully and lived there until a few months before his death at the age of 88.

A prolific and much admired architect, Jackson had begun his career articled to Sir George Gilbert Scott, but set up on his own in 1862. In Wimbledon his work included (before settling at Eagle House) St John’s Spencer Hill and, later, No.1 Lauriston Road and No.54 Ridgway, as well as the war memorial on Wimbledon Green. But he is best-known for his work at Oxford, especially perhaps the ‘Bridge of Sighs’ (1913) at Hertford College and the neo-Jacobean Examination Schools (1876-82) – this latter being a highly influential building in its day – partly because it was *not* Gothic. To John Betjeman and Maurice Bowra he was ‘Anglo-Jackson’. His prowess was recognised by his being made a Royal Academician, an unusual honour for an architect then.



St John's, Spencer Hill

2003 JG

The lecturer was the musician Sir Nicholas Jackson, grandson of the architect, who has just published a new illustrated edition of Sir Thomas’s *Recollections*. Travel sketches by Jackson are on display at the Royal Academy Library Print Room (020 7300 8000) until 30 January and at the Croatian Embassy at 21 Conway Street London W1 (020 7387 3276) until 15 December. An article about him appeared in *Country Life* for 13 November.

JG

MERTON, MITCHAM AND MORDEN COMMONS

At our October meeting we welcomed as our speaker, John Pile who, though now resident in Hampshire, spent his youth in Morden. It was during his schooldays at Canterbury Road School that he became interested in local history, joining Beddington Carshalton & Wallington Archaeological Society at the age of 13, and Surrey Archaeological Society soon after. As a schoolboy he spent many hours exploring our area on foot and on bicycle, and he even explored the River Wandle by canoe. But he also spent a lot of time visiting various record offices and archives, making transcripts of old documents relating to the history of Morden. He spent happy days working on the Morden records in the parish chest at St Lawrence church, with the help and encouragement of Canon Livermore, himself an avid local historian.

Unfortunately for us, John left Morden in the early 1960s when, having qualified as a teacher, he got a job in Hampshire. He continued his researches into local history, transferring his interest to his new home at Bedhampton. However, he still has his early notes on Morden and, when Judith Goodman published her *Pictorial History of Merton & Morden*, John wrote to congratulate her and enquired about the current state of knowledge on Morden's history. As a result John joined our Society in 1997 and has contributed several items to our *Bulletin*. He has also been corresponding with several members over the last 6 years.

The young John corresponded with Evelyn Jowett shortly after she published *A History of Merton and Morden* in 1951, so it was highly appropriate that he joined us for our 13th Evelyn Jowett Memorial Lecture, in celebration of our founding secretary and prolific local historian. John's topic was also appropriate as Miss Jowett wrote two newspaper articles on Merton Common and one on Morden Common, which have since been published by our Society.

John's vast knowledge of his subject – a special interest which he has developed over many years of research – was soon apparent, and is far beyond the scope of a report such as this. In fact he had difficulty in fitting it into the confines of an afternoon lecture!

John first confessed that the published title was a little misleading; perhaps 'Some aspects of commons with particular reference to Merton, Mitcham and Morden Commons' would have been more accurate. He also gave us a useful definition of common as 'the right that one person has over the soil of another person and the right to the produce of that soil'. For centuries manorial tenants claimed various 'common rights', including common grazing on the arable fields of the manor after harvest or when fallow; on common pasture on downlands and other pasture lands; and in common meadow following the mowing of the valuable hay crop, between Lammas (1 August) and Candlemas (2 February). But John's main focus was on the 'common waste', the less fertile area of the manor. The lord of the manor 'owned' the soil and the minerals beneath, but the tenants enjoyed ancient rights to the herbage for livestock, turf and brushwood for heating and cooking, and materials for building repairs.

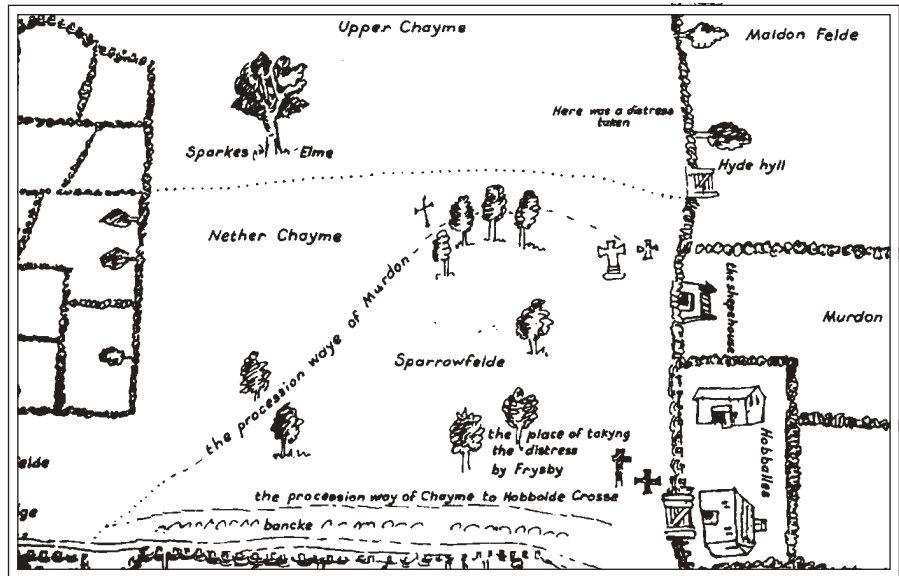
John demonstrated just how ancient some of these rights might be. Evidence from the Dartmoor area suggests that as far back as the Bronze Age the landscape was apportioned into enclosed arable and pasture fields separated by long continuous walls and hedges from land intercommoned by all the neighbouring communities. Coming nearer to our area, John has plotted Bronze Age and Romano-British find-spots in what was north-east Surrey on maps of known historic commons. Hardly any finds have been on the commons, suggesting that these same areas may possibly have been used as common pasture 4000 years ago.

John also pointed out that where droveways crossed commons, the entrances/exits often developed a funnel-shape. These have been noted on ditched droveways at Flag Fen, dating from the Neolithic and Bronze Age and in a number of banjo-shaped enclosures from the Iron Age. A 'funnel' at Leigh near Havant can still be identified, though the surrounding land was enclosed in the 13th century. These 'funnels' can be seen on many 19th-century maps, some long separated from their original commons. These may provide clues to the former extent of our commons. It is thought that the 19th-century commons were probably only half of their ancient extent.

In the Weald there survive many ancient droveways along almost parallel routes. It is believed that each settlement had its own droveway to its pastures. The multiplicity of 'funnels' around our own commons suggests that each of these also led to specific settlements or farmsteads. Often these can be identified – Merton Common had three 'funnels', one leading to the settlement around the church, one leading to Merton Priory's Lower Morden property at Hobalds (now NE Surrey Crematorium), and the other near the present Civic Centre. The question arises – why was there access to Merton Common from Morden?

John suggested that 'funnels' shown on early maps of Mitcham may also point to settlement sites which long predated the known early sites.

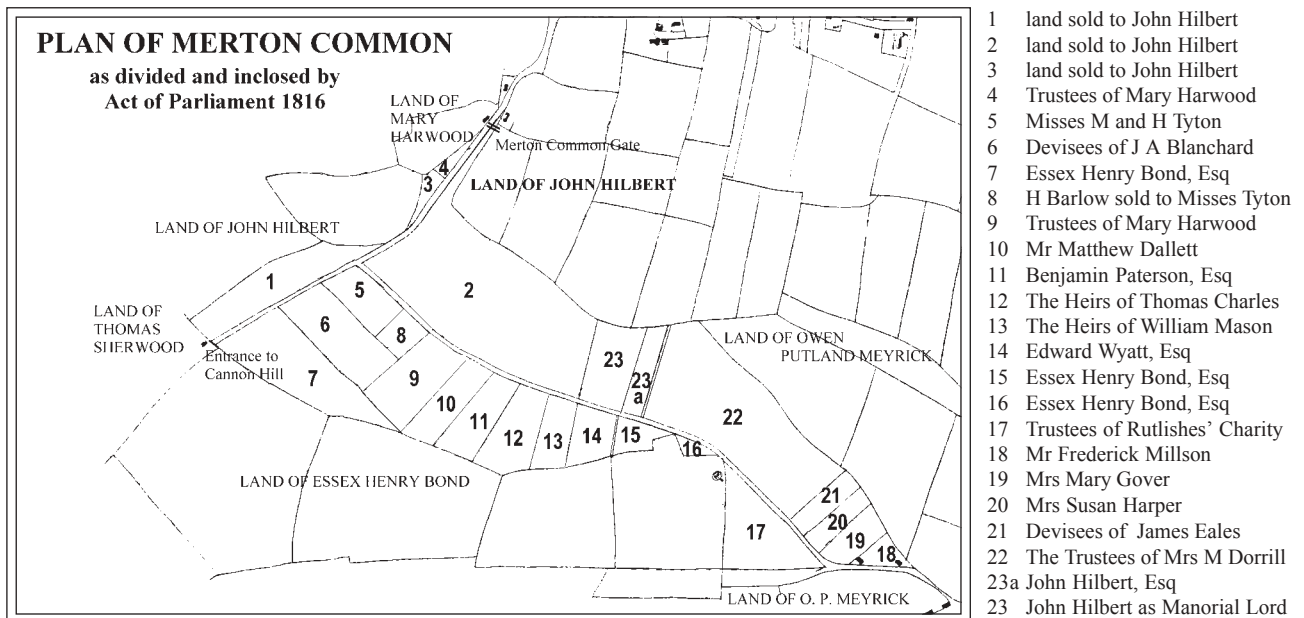
Many commons were shared between manors, some being intercommoned by legal right, others taking advantage of the rule of vicinage, whereby those with property on the edge of a common could enjoy the liberty for their animals to roam on the common, even though they had no legal rights in it. One of many disputes between tenants of Morden and Cheam over common rights on Sparrowfield led to the production of the earliest maps of the area in the mid-16th century. The two 'procession ways' shown demarcated the triangular area later known as Morden Common.



Detail from a tracing of a 16th-century 'plott' of Sparrowfield Common

The commons, though called waste, were a valuable element in the medieval and post-medieval economy and, like all scarce resources, had to be managed with care. The Merton manorial court rolls include many regulations agreed by the tenants to prevent overburdening of the pasture, either through tenants putting out more than their fair share, or through use by those who had no common rights. Thus in 1551 it was ordered that no one living outside the lordship was to put livestock on the common, under penalty of a 10s fine.

However, by the beginning of the 19th century few of the copyhold tenants of the manor of Merton were actively engaged in farming, and Merton Common was enclosed by Act of Parliament in 1816, the land being divided between the lord of the manor and his tenants. The road now called Martin Way replaced whatever route had previously crossed the old common, and rights of way, still followed by public footpaths, were established to enable tenants to reach their allotted plots. Merton Common now lies beneath houses.



The lords of the manor of Morden had been buying out their freehold and copyhold tenants over the centuries, and by the 19th century there were no tenants with rights in Morden Common. Divided at first between a brickworks and a nursery, it is now the site of houses and factories in Garth Road, the recycling centre and the Merton and Sutton Cemetery.

Only Mitcham Common and Wimbledon Common within our Borough remain as public open spaces. Cannon Hill Common was never common land, but private parkland. Eric Montague's book on *Mitcham Common* is still available to members of MHS at the special price of £12.50. Perhaps we can persuade John to write up his researches for publication? Thank you, John, for a most informative afternoon.

Peter Hopkins

PETER HOPKINS explores evidence for **MORDEN HALL BEFORE MORDEN HALL!**

The 1312 Extent or valuation of Westminster Abbey's estate at Morden places the Abbot's Court near the Wandle, mentioning a capital messuage and cattle sheds.¹ The 40 surviving annual accounts for the period 1290-1350 include regular payments for a continuous cycle of repairs to the collection of manorial buildings, which are variously described as a court house (1 mention), a hall (12), with a chamber over (1), a solar (6), a dormitory (1), a cellar (1), a bakehouse (1), a 'Werkhouse' (1), a dairy (2), two granges (20) – the great and the lesser, one of which may possibly have belonged to the Rectory estate – a barn (1), a granary (1), a hay-house (2), a cart-house (4), a stable (6), a byre (4), a cattle house or shed (2), a cow-shed (7), an ox-house (1), a pigsty (1), a hen-house (1), and a pound (1), as well as a portable sheep-fold.² No doubt different names are sometimes used to describe the same building, but we clearly have here a complex of manorial buildings, most of which would probably have been located within the curtilage of the Court. The site of the present Morden Hall, enclosed by its water channels, may represent a moated manorial site.



*Morden Hall and its moat c.1790,
drawing by John Wells*

The domestic buildings would have provided accommodation for various officials from Westminster Abbey who regularly visited the manor – the steward to hold the manor courts three or four times a year, the auditor and his clerk who checked the annual accounts, the bailiff who authorised certain transactions, and various other monks. Until 1358 the manor was run by appointees of the Abbey – either a reeve selected from the customary tenants of the manor or a 'serviens' who probably came from outside the manor. The reeve presumably had his own tenement in the village, but the serviens probably lived at the court. There was also a 'permanent' staff, which included ploughmen, carters, and a dairymaid, and often a shepherd, a cowman, and even a bird-scarer. These household servants received a cash stipend and a food allowance, for whatever period they were employed, often, but not always, the full year, and some at least may have lived-in.

From 1358 the Abbey leased the demesne land out to a succession of farmers, who took over responsibility for running the estate, paying a set annual rent or 'farm', and taking whatever profit might accrue. Some of these 'farmers' were local men, customary tenants of the manor in their own right, but in later years things changed. The final lease, for 60 years, was granted in 1511 to William Porter, a clerk in Chancery, who presumably did not expect to get his hands dirty in the day-to-day running of the estate.³

Porter died in 1522,⁴ but the lease passed to his heirs.⁵ Westminster Abbey lost its estate at Morden in 1539/1540 at the dissolution of the monasteries, and the lease was then held of the Crown.⁶ In 1555 Matthew Porter assigned the lease to John Walshe or Welche of Sutton, described as a yeoman,⁷ who was already in occupation of the farm in 1553, when the estate was sold.⁸ The lease was finally surrendered by a Thomas Welshe in 1568,⁹ three years before it expired, to the new lord of the manor, Richard Garth, who had bought the manor in 1553/4.¹⁰

The demesne farm of the manor of Morden was known as Mounkton farm or Mounkton manor.¹¹ The farmhouse was still called by this name in 1598,¹² though the spelling varied from document to document. This farmhouse with its "barns, stables, dovehowse, maltehowses and other buildings, gardens and orchards" was probably the successor to the buildings that had comprised the Abbot's court, and it was almost certainly in the vicinity of Morden Hall. In 1588 "Muncketon farm howse" was leased to John Everest¹³ together with four acres of meadow and a ten-acre close in Morden and 147 acres in Merton that had once been part of Merton Priory's Merton Grange until bought by Garth in 1564,¹⁴ and that later became Morden Hall Farm – the farmhouse on the western side of Morden Road was a later development.

Because this manorial centre was still leased to farmers when the Crown sold the manor,¹⁵ the buyers, Whitchurch and Duckett, had to make alternative arrangements for living accommodation. Whitchurch built a new mansion house on the site of a former copyhold tenement called Growtes,¹⁰ while Duckett was admitted to a copyhold property belonging to the manor of Ravensbury,¹⁶ which was still known as Duckett's farm in the 19th century,¹⁷ and later became known as The Willows. In 1606 Duckett's farm was sold to a younger son of Richard Garth, Lazarus,¹⁸ who sold it in 1614 to his brother George, then lord of the manor of Morden.¹⁹

Richard Garth had bought Growtes as part of the manor in 1553/4,¹⁰ and it formed part of the dower of his second wife, Jane or Joan,²⁰ but it is not clear whether he ever lived there. As a London lawyer he would have spent much of his time in London, and he certainly spent his Christmases at his house in Chancery Lane, as one of his leases records an agreement to supply a 'bore' or boar to that house each year a week

before Christmas.¹³ He was variously described as Richard Garth of London and as Richard Garth of Morden in different leases of 1588.²¹ However, it would appear that he did not have a permanent home in Morden at this time as, in the two leases of Muncketon Farm house and the nearby lands, dated 1588 and 1598, he reserved to his own use “all the new Parlor behynde the hall and the Chamber on the same, with free ingress, egress and regress unto the same when and as often as need shall require”.

Richard Garth was assessed for land valued at £20 in the Lay Subsidy returns for Morden for 1576, but does not appear in the returns for 1593 to 1599.²² However, his widow was living in Morden in 1598 and 1599 when she was assessed on goods valued at £6. Some of his sons were also based locally. George held the farm that was later known as Lower Morden Farm from 1590, on a 20-year lease from his father,²³ and was assessed in 1593-1599 for 16 shillings for goods valued at £6. His younger brother Alexander was assessed on £3 of land in 1599. He accumulated properties in Morden between 1599 and 1614, when he sold them to his brother George, and was later described as “of Ravensbury”.²⁴ Lazarus, as we have seen, held Duckett’s farm for a time.

George succeeded to the lordship of the manor on the death of his elder brother, Robert, in 1613, when the Lower Morden farm was leased to a William Moore, gent.²⁵ Both George and Robert were described in documents as “of Morden”. George died in 1627 and an Inventory of his goods was prepared.²⁶ His goods at “his house at Morden”, which included furniture and furnishing, plate, cash, debts owed to him, farm implements, farm produce and livestock, were valued at £2110. He also left £385 of goods at his manor of Kenton, Hants, and a haycock at Lurgeshall, Bucks, valued at £1.

George’s family also remained in the locality. One of George’s sons-in-law held the leases of two farms in Morden, assigning the lease of the later Lower Morden Farm to another of George’s sons-in-law in 1624.²⁷ One of George’s sons, John, is described as “of Merton”, and was involved in the purchase of Bakers in 1637.²⁸

George’s heir, Richard II, left a widow, his second wife Beatrice. In 1647 she bought two substantial adjoining properties in Morden, which later became Hazelwood and The Laurels in Central Road. On her death a year later these passed to her son and heir, Richard Garth of Tathwell, Lincolnshire.²⁹ The manor had been inherited by a son of the first marriage, George II. His widow, his second wife Jane, sold Growtes in 1682, in association with George’s heir, Richard III.³⁰ Jane’s involvement in this sale suggests that Growtes was part of her dower, as it had been part of the dower of the second wife of Richard Garth I.²⁰

If Growtes was a dower house, occupied by the stepmother of the current lord of the manor, where did the lords of the manor live? Was the Morden Hall site in occupation at this time?

In 1716 Peter and Stephen Mauvillain, were granted a 21-year lease of various Garth lands in the vicinity of Morden Hall together with a “Capital Messuage or Mansion House with all barns, stables, buildings, etc”. They were given “use, liberty, privilege and benefit of cutting and digging trenches, ditches and drains . . . in, by or through the said premises for the carrying on of the trade, profession, occupation or business of staining, dyeing, washing and printing of calicoes or such other stuffes . . .”, but were required to “maintain . . . the Great Garden belonging”.³¹

Peter Mauvillain II still held this lease in 1745.³² The Mansion House, rented for £40 according to a Garth rent book of 1728,³³ could not have been Growtes because Growtes had been sold by the Garths 34 years previously. In fact Peter Mauvillain I had bought it in 1726, and it remained in his family until 1753.³⁴

It seems likely that the Morden Hall site had been in continuous occupation from medieval times, first as the site of the Abbot’s court, then, as Monkton farm, occupied by successive lessees. During the 17th century it may well have been occupied by the Garth lords of the manor, their widows perhaps occupying the Tudor mansion, Growtes. The Great Garden was probably created at this time. Ultimately the Mansion House, probably past its best, was leased with its surrounding lands for industrial purposes for some 40 years until, in anticipation of the marriage of Richard Garth V in 1754, the present Morden Hall was built.

NB 1 acre = 0.4047 hectares

1 Cambridge University Library Kk 5.29
2 Westminster Abbey Muniments 27289-27328
3 Surrey History Centre K85/2/6
4 Prob 11/20/22 Maynwarding
5 Surrey History Centre K85/3/32
6 Surrey History Centre K85/2/13 p3
7 Surrey History Centre K85/2/7
8 Surrey History Centre K85/2/11
9 Surrey History Centre K85/2/8
10 Surrey History Centre K85/2/12
11 Surrey History Centre K85/2/9 etc
12 Surrey History Centre K85/2/22
13 Surrey History Centre K85/2/21
14 Surrey History Centre K85/3/28 p32v
15 National Archives Pat Ed VI pt xi
16 Surrey History Centre K85/2/19
17 Surrey History Centre K85/2/80

18 National Archives A4/9 fo.68; Surrey History Centre G1/1/50a; 2575/3/G & 2/C
19 National Archives A4/12 fo.11
20 Surrey History Centre K85/2/16
21 Surrey History Centre K85/2/21; 2575/D/1
22 Surrey Archaeological Collections 18, p199; 19, p42; WSFHS RS12
23 Surrey History Centre G1/1/47
24 National Archives A4/7 fo.105, 109, 10/353,12/76; Surrey History Centre 2575/2/D
25 Surrey History Centre G6/1/39 (1)
26 Lambeth Archives 350 – transcribed by John Pile
27 Surrey History Centre 2575/2/C & 3/G
28 National Archives A4/19 fo.40
29 Feet of Fines 1647; Surrey History Centre 212/74/1
30 Surrey History Centre K85/2/36
31 Surrey History Centre 683/1
32 Surrey History Centre K85/2/51-52
33 Surrey History Centre K85/8/1
34 Surrey History Centre K85/2/151

MADLINE HEALEY has put together A PERSONAL HISTORY OF MORDEN HALL PARK

My grandfather William Williams was born in Church Road, Mitcham, in 1883. He was the only son of John Williams who owned the butcher's shop next to the Bull inn. This shop had belonged to the Williams family since 1833. We can actually trace our family back to about 1748, so we have been in the Mitcham/Morden area since the time of the building of Morden Hall.

Sadly, when William was only 18 months old his father died. William's mother, Sarah Madeline, carried on the business for a while, but eventually she sold it and remarried. Her second husband was Abram Clark. He was at that time Head Stockman to Gilliat Hatfeild. This is where our family became directly connected with Morden Hall.

We are not quite sure of the date when Abram Clark became bailiff; it was probably about 1890. Gilliat Hatfeild bought more and more land and property as it came on the market. He wanted to build up his estate and become a country gentleman, as well as a tobacco and snuff merchant. The work of the bailiff increased, with more rents to collect, and buildings to maintain. Sarah Madeline, my great-grandmother, kept the books for him. When they were sent annually to London to be audited she was complimented on her "neatness and accuracy" (not alas something that I have inherited!). They moved into the old house that stood beside the river next to Ravensbury Mill in Morden Road. There William grew up with his three stepsisters, travelling to Wimbledon every day for school. Abram was very strict, and Sarah Madeline was very severe.



The Bailiff's House

Having served his apprenticeship as a carpenter at Harrods, William came to work for Mr Hatfeild in 1906. He worked on the estate as a carpenter, also helping on the farm as necessary with haymaking and harvesting, as did all the other men.

As Gilliat Hatfeild grew older he became more of a recluse. He employed two manservants to look after him. He rarely spoke to people. The house and park were kept very private. It is said that he never entered the snuff mills, even though they provided most of his income. His son Gilliat Edward travelled abroad and studied all aspects of the tobacco and snuff trade while he was still young. Before his father died in 1906, leaving £1.25 million, he had already taken over the running of the snuff mills. At this time Morden Hall Park was in its hayday.

By Madeline's mother, the late Mrs E M Sales (written in 1996):

I was born in 1904 and brought up at Keeper's Cottage, or Lodge as it was then called. My father William Williams was then Estate Carpenter to Mr Hatfeild. Our cottage was on the Mitcham boundary of the estate. We were quite detached, as we had a high brick wall which ran alongside the road, and one that divided our ground from Wandle Villa. There was also a large stable, that one day collapsed without warning just as we had left for school, and so we missed all the excitement! The river ran on the other side. There was a paddock at the end with a lovely little brook running through it. It went underground from there and came up in Harlands private garden.

I had a brother and a sister. We had a happy childhood on the whole. We had the garden, the river, and there was also a brick building known as the 'Fish House'. It was said that it had been used for fish breeding in its time. We had wonderful 'pretend' games in there. Adjoining that building were two cattle sheds where the cattle came in when the fields were waterlogged.

The little brook gave us much pleasure. We used to catch sticklebacks, frogs and toads with our nets. We kept them in a pail of water until the evening when we would return them carefully to the brook. We never hurt any of the little creatures. Mr Hatfeild occasionally walked down by the river from the park. He would stop and have a chat. He was always interested in whatever we were doing.

The whole of our large garden was cultivated. Our parents worked very hard. We always had fresh vegetables and fruit. Our favourite was the large strawberry bed! We did not have the luxuries and comforts of the children of today, but we always had good food and warm clothing. During the 1914 war my father went into the army and my mother kept everything going. I suppose we were better fed than many. We had chickens and rabbits. I well remember the excitement when the chicks were hatched!

My grandparents, Abram and Sarah Clark, who lived at the Bailiff's House beside Ravensbury Mill, left Morden in 1916. They went to live at Westgate-on-Sea on the Kent coast, owing to my grandmother's ill-health. Mr Reuben Mears then took over and stayed until about 1942, when my father became Bailiff and moved to Ravensbury. The house was a large Georgian one by the river with a lovely garden. He lived there until he died at 80 years of age. My mother left there as it was too large for her. She went to live at Cranmer Farm Close. She was 101 years of age when she died. The Bailiff's House is no longer there sadly, and the lovely garden is now the entrance to Ravensbury Park.

I married in 1920 and left Keepers Lodge at Phipps Bridge to live in one of Mr Hatfeild's cottages in Garth Road. In 1939 we moved into another cottage in Lower Morden Lane, where I still live. My elder son has written his memories of Ravensbury and the calico printing mill which stood over the river. It was a wonderful old mill still in working order.

I remember going to the flower shows in Morden Hall Park. It was the usual village show, with vegetables, flowers and cakes from the ladies. The Holborn School boys from Mitcham played in the band. We were allowed to walk in the grounds, and I particularly remember the kitchen gardens where, of course, the garden centre now stands. We were allowed to walk through the glasshouses, and I can recall the lovely smell in the tomato house. There was a gardener on duty at the entrance, I suppose to see that the door was not left open. Even now, whenever I enter a tomato house it takes me back to Morden Hall all those years ago.

Another happy memory is that of haymaking time. All the men helped with it and we used to take tea to our father. We children hurried home from school and mother would be waiting with sandwiches, cakes and hot tea to take. Sometimes we were in the stack-yard, which was at the end of Central Road. At other times they would be in the field. We loved it, especially when we were allowed to ride back in the empty wagon behind the big old horses. All that changed with the coming of the St Helier Estate.

After Mr Hatfeild's death my father was asked to look after the estate until the war ended. Mr Hatfeild's two nephews came up from time to time and took lunch alternately with my parents and Mr Moore the head gardener, and his wife.

I remember Mr Hatfeild's funeral. He was brought to the church, via Central Road, in a plain farm wagon, drawn by an old farm horse, and led by Harry Greenleaf. It was very moving. I believe it was his wish to have a simple funeral.

My family have worked for Morden Hall Park for many years. My grandparents, my father and my brother for Mr Hatfeild, my daughter in the National Trust shop, and my two granddaughters in the café – making five generations.

ANOTHER MITCHAM HISTORY

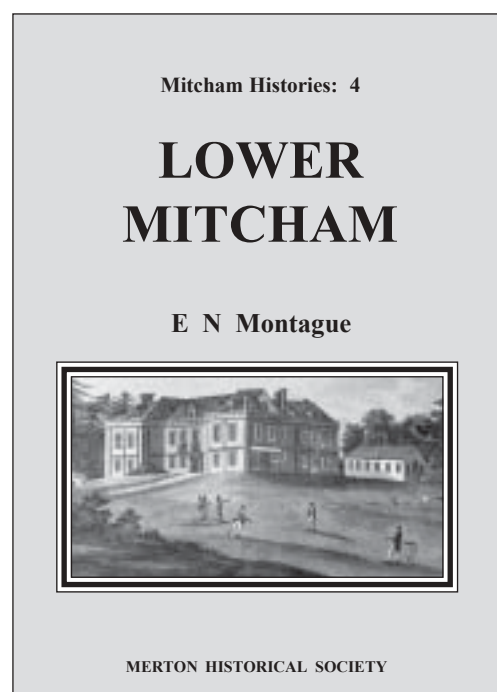
The fourth in our series of *Mitcham Histories* is now available. Written by our own Eric Montague, *Lower Mitcham* will be a welcome addition to the collections of members and friends alike.

Lower Mitcham, part of the Domesday 'vill' of Whitford, is the area lying between the Cricket Green and the river Wandle. Here, in the 16th century, stood two large houses, both grand enough to provide accommodation for Queen Elizabeth and her retinue on several occasions. This book recounts what is known of the origins and subsequent histories of these houses and their successors, and concludes with an account of the erosion and final disappearance of the surrounding parkland during the urbanisation of Mitcham in the 20th century.

At a special members' price of £4.80 (full price £5.95), it is ideal for that extra Christmas present!

Copies of the first three *Mitcham Histories* are still available at the same price, though stocks are running low.

Available at meetings or from our Publications Secretary.



LOCAL HISTORY WORKSHOPS

Friday 8 August 2003. William Rudd in the chair

- ◆ **Sheila Harris** gave details of the Merton Older Persons' Festival for 6-21 September. Plans included walks around the Borough, talks and an exhibition on by-gone Mitcham.

She brought to our attention a news item that Sandersons, the wallpaper and furnishings company, went into receivership on 7 August. Throughout the 20th century they led fashion, producing fabrics of high quality and classic form, from patterns designed by Voysey, Pugin and Morris. When Morris & Co at Merton Abbey went into liquidation in May 1940, Sandersons bought their patterns, and no doubt obtained their archives.

- ◆ **Lionel Green** recounted events at the suppression and destruction of certain monasteries in the 16th century [see pages 11–13 in this *Bulletin*]. Bill Rudd said he had taken photographs of the site where lead from the demolished priory of Merton had been recycled.
- ◆ **Don Fleming** had heard an interesting programme on Radio 4. An American millionairess was supporting the Jane Austen Chawton Project with her collection of Austeniana. As she went round the Austen house at Chawton, Hants, her interviewer asked an untimely question. What did she think of the William Morris wallpaper? (Here Don adopts an American accent.) "I do not like William Morris wallpaper. Nor do I care for William Morris. He has been idealised and immortalised far beyond his very limited capabilities. I hate his wallpaper."
- ◆ **Peter Hopkins** had transcribed and printed the Morden Land Tax records. He asked workshop members to help decipher the handwriting of certain people's names.
- ◆ **Bill Rudd** produced copies of *Britain Beautiful* from the 1920s and *In Britain* from the 1970s. These had been donated to the Society.

He gave details of the 'Rudd Portrait Collection', which consists of framed pictures of famous persons of the Borough, one of which, suitably autographed, shows three early MPs of the Borough: Sir Michael Havers, Miss Janet Fookes and the Rt. Hon. Robert Carr. Others are signed photographs of Mayors.

Lionel Green

Friday 26 September 2003. Five present – Eric Montague in the chair

- ◆ **Peter Hopkins** mentioned a forthcoming television programme on Sir Joseph Bazalgette (of Morden and Wimbledon).

He had had a letter from Dr Jackie Latham about James Pierrepont Greaves (1777-1842), a son of Charles Greaves of Merton Place. J P Greaves, an eccentric idealist and 'sacred socialist', set up a utopian community in Ham influenced by the ideals of Pestalozzi, Alcott (father of Louisa), Thoreau and others.

Another correspondent was member Audrey Fry, who had written that, according to a schoolfriend of hers, who was also a friend of Amy Shuard, it was Miss Dighton, headmistress at the Willows in Morden, who probably launched Amy's singing career by introducing her to Ralph Vaughan Williams. Miss Dighton happened to live in Dorking, as did RVW [see *Bulletin* No.147 pp.2,11].

However Peter's main contribution to the session was the impressive dossier which he has been constructing on the early history of the Morden Hall site. He read his account [see pages 6–7] to appreciative listeners. It was commented that Dennis Turner had once suggested that Morden Hall was an early moated site.

- ◆ **Madeline Healey** had brought along a photocopy of a 1904 brochure put out by Oscar White of Morden Hall Farm, advertising the milk, cream, butter, egg and poultry produced at the farm, sold at his five depots and delivered by his carts – twice daily. Illustrations included portraits of contented cows, scenes of haymaking and a fine 'aerial' view of the farmhouse and buildings. Madeline has been putting together some of her, and her mother's, memories of life on the Morden Hall estate [see pages 8–9].

She had seen a query from ESFHS about an Abraham Clarke of Morden, but he was clearly not Abram Clarke, one of her forebears.

- ◆ **Judith Goodman** had been to the Royal Academy to see the pick of Andrew Lloyd Webber's collection, and had been pleased to find some items of local interest. There is an oil by G A Storey [see *Bulletin* No.147 pp.6/7] called *The Bride's Burial*, rather mawkish but skilfully done; another oil, by Atkinson Grimshaw, of an autumn scene in Wimbledon Park, showing a couple of large houses in a leafy road; several of William De Morgan's 'Merton Abbey' ceramics, made at his works off Colliers Wood High Street and Byegrove Road [see *Bulletin* No.132]; and a number of carpets and pieces of furniture produced by and for Morris & Co.
- ◆ **Don Fleming** spoke about the consultation paper put forward by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport about a scheme for a single list embracing all sites of archaeological, historical, architectural, landscape etc. etc. importance. There was an article in October's *History Today* and information on www.culture.gov.uk.
- ◆ **Eric Montague** had completed his dissertation for his Local History MA at Kingston University, on the development of Colliers Wood from a small and unstructured settlement to a metropolitan suburb. There was then some discussion about 'antiquarianism' and how it has today become downgraded as a discipline (not altogether fairly?).

Judith Goodman

Dates of next workshops: Fridays 30 January and 19 March at 7.30pm at Wandle Industrial Museum

All are welcome.

LIONEL GREEN reflects on: **THE DESTRUCTION OF A PRIORY**

Imagine for a moment that in the village is a cathedral-like church which was there in the days of parents, grandparents and their forebears. This was a monastery which was the be-all and end-all of almost every family. All had a part to play in a working complex of buildings and farms.

Rumours began to circulate that the monastery was to be closed, and gossip tells of the king wishing to pull down everything. Cardinal Wolsey, with the pope's blessing, closed 21 understaffed monasteries between 1525 and 1529. This precedent "made all the forest of religious foundations in England to shake, justly fearing that the King would finish to fell the oaks, seeing the cardinal began to cut the underwood".¹

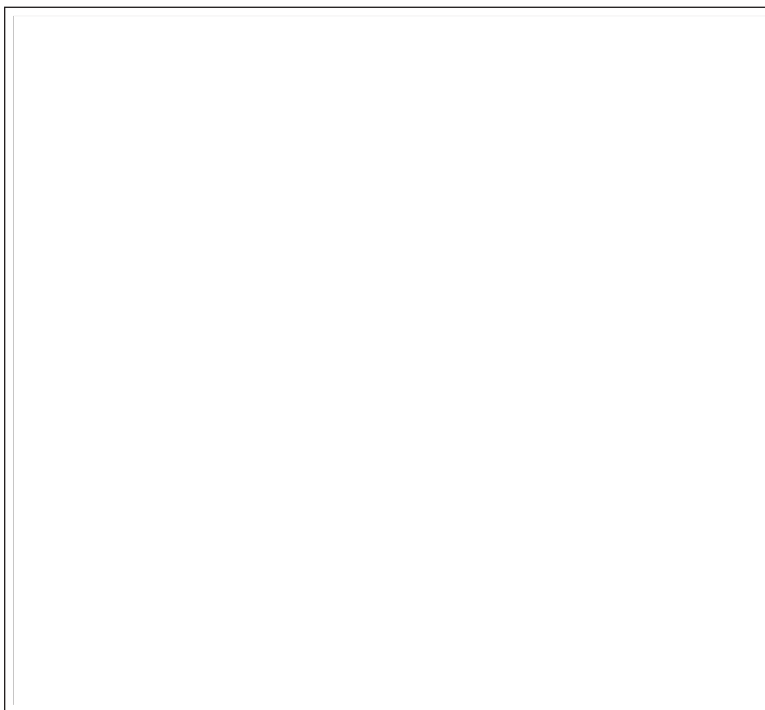
In July 1531 an Augustinian priory at Aldgate in London was suppressed. It was similar in size and importance to Merton, with a tower housing a ring of nine bells. It was to be demolished and "then was the priory church and steeple proffered to whomsoever would take it down and carry it from the ground, but no man would undertake the offer".²

The owner of Aldgate, Sir Thomas Audley, decided to realise the value of the stone, timber, lead, iron etc. and employed his own workmen, who "with great labour, beginning at the top, loosed stone from stone, and threw them down, whereby the most part of them were broken, and few remained whole, and those were sold very cheap for all the buildings then made in the city were of brick and timber. At that time any man in the city might have a cart-load of hard stone for paving brought to his door for 6d or 7d with the carriage".²

In March 1537 it was the turn of Lewes priory to be demolished. This was entrusted to a Reverend John Portinari who brought 17 workmen from London. The agent of Thomas Cromwell remarked that "these men exercised much better than the men that we find here in the country".³ The agent continues, "Now we are plucking down a higher vault borne up by four thick pillars 14 ft. from side to side and 45 ft. in circumference ... and that we brought from London ... 3 carpenters, 2 smiths, 2 plumbers and one that keepeth the furnace. Everyone of these attendeth to his own office. Ten of them hewed the walls about, among which there were three carpenters; these made props to underset where others cut away, the others broke and cut the walls". This referred to the eastern part of Lewes priory church which was 150 feet in length with 32 pillars supporting a groined roof, which, above the high altar, rose to the height of 93 feet from the ground.³ The high cost of this operation may have saved other monasteries from complete destruction.

Gothic buildings were easy to demolish. Each arch depended on the support of a neighbour. A miner could dig under one of the crossing piers, shoring up with timber as worked progressed. A fire lit within the shoring would sink the pier, and all the arches above it would collapse. Adjoining arcades, deprived of their abutment, would fall, bringing down the heavy vaults they had safely carried for centuries.⁴

In the spring of 1538 two men rode into Merton to visit the priory. One was Christopher Dickenson, master bricklayer, and the other William Clement, master carpenter. They were on their way from Hampton Court to the king at Greenwich palace carrying building plans for royal approval. These were for new palaces at Oatlands and Nonsuch, and they called at Merton to assess suitable material to be removed for the king's use at Nonsuch. They went on to the proposed site at Cuddington in order to set out work and confirm requirements.⁵



An Impression of Nonsuch by J Tavenor-Perry 1911, pictured in *Memorials of Old Surrey* 1911 p143

The Surveyor-General of the King's Works was James Needham, but the works group for Surrey was based at Hampton Court under the control of Richard Benese. He was a leading surveyor and a canon of Merton from

before 1530. While at Merton he wrote a book on surveying in 1537, which passed through five editions. He was present in the chapter house on 16 April 1538 and witnessed the surrender of the priory into the king's hands. (A list of the canons with signatures to the deed of surrender appeared in *Bulletin* No.135 [Sept.2000] pp.6-7.)

Merton priory was now suppressed, and demolition began immediately. There would have been countless workmen and craftsmen employed at the priory, but would they have been willing to destroy the work of their own hands? All strata of society had difficult decisions to make. Principles could so easily be forgotten, especially where there was a family to feed and no prospect of other employment.

Dickenson and Clement, the earlier visitors to the priory, were to supervise the salvage work and the conveyance of materials to Nonsuch,⁶ and the building accounts of Nonsuch begin with payments for two clerks on 22 April 1538.⁷ Fifty carters were employed from Cheam, Clapham, Cuddington, Malden, Merton, Mitcham, Morden, Putney, Sutton, Tooting, Wandsworth and Wimbledon. Each received eightpence for a ton load for the four-mile journey.⁸ At first the stone was thrown indiscriminately into carts which travelled as fast as the rough roads would allow. These deliveries, in early May, were mainly of worked stone which went into the foundations of the new palace, being unsuitable for use above ground.⁹ It included sculptured heads, fruit and animals.

In May 1538 "John de Whytaker of Merton was paid 13s. 4d. for uncovering the body of the church at Merton Abbey", presumably removing roof tiles, because in July/August the same man was "dry laying" 27,000 tiles on the king's barn at Cuddington at 9d per thousand tiles.¹⁰ When the roof fell, one of the early 14th-century keystones (bosses) survived the crash without shattering. It was manhandled onto wagons and used to support the new palace.

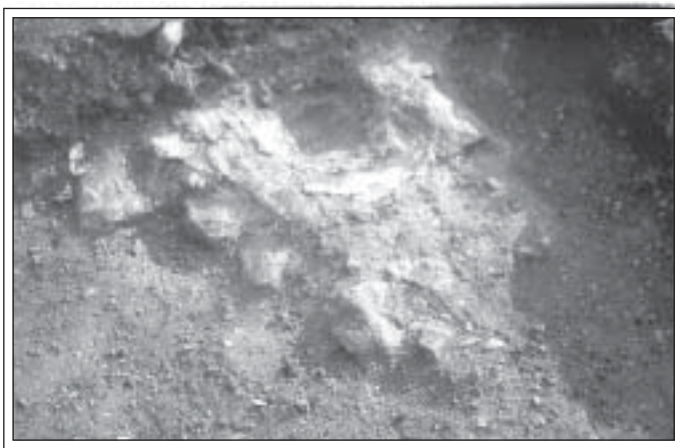
By July 1538 2719 tons of stone had been conveyed from Merton. Thereafter the loading decreased, with only 924 tons between July and September, suggesting that the bulk of the demolition was completed by July.⁸

Day after day, day after day, the smoke and dust must have pervaded the district, visible from the surrounding hills. Tears must have been shed as the villagers of Wimbledon, Morden, Mitcham and Tooting witnessed the collapse of the tower, so familiar as part of the view from the heights of Wimbledon and St Mary's church, from the Ridgway, from Cannon Hill, from Morden and St Lawrence's church, from Mitcham and its church of St Peter and St Paul and from Park Hill in Tooting. That which had dominated the view for centuries was no more.

When the tower of Merton fell the bronze bells would have broken into portable pieces for transportation to the foundries, to be cast into cannon for the new coastal castles.

The building accounts show that £184 was spent in 1538 on wages for plumbers.¹¹ At the priory site, excavations in 1976 between the chapter house and the infirmary revealed a clay bowl-like hole containing lead-drops and a possible hearth. This could have been the place where lead salvaged from roofs and windows had been melted to form 'pigs'. The fires would have been fuelled with old, well-seasoned wood-carvings, easily available.

Further excavations in 1988 south of the infirmary hall revealed large quantities of window lead, glass and fragments of floor tiles from a spread of rubble. This suggests a deliberate sorting of materials during demolition.



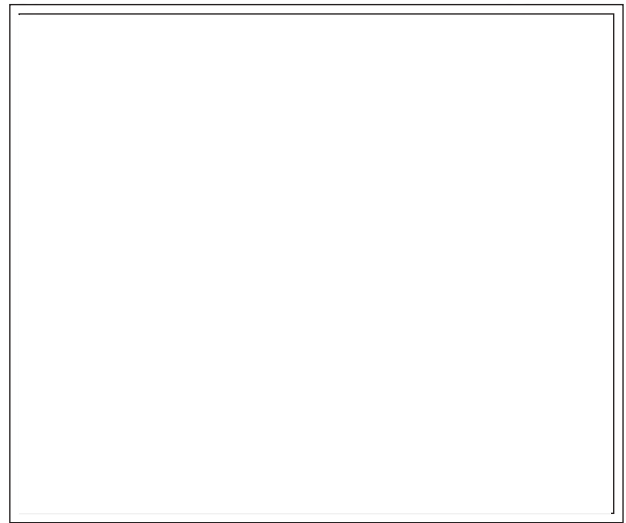
Lead smelting hearth [?] excavated at Merton Priory in 1976 (W J Rudd)

Bands of workmen travelled from monastery to monastery and occupied themselves for days or even weeks in melting the covering of roofs, gutters, spouts, pipes and windows into pigs and sorting them into fidders¹². The pigs were stamped with a Tudor rose surmounted by a crown, and when casting had been completed other workmen conveyed the fidders along the Roman road to Cuddington. As a fodder was almost a ton it required teams of horses to drag the wagons laden with lead.

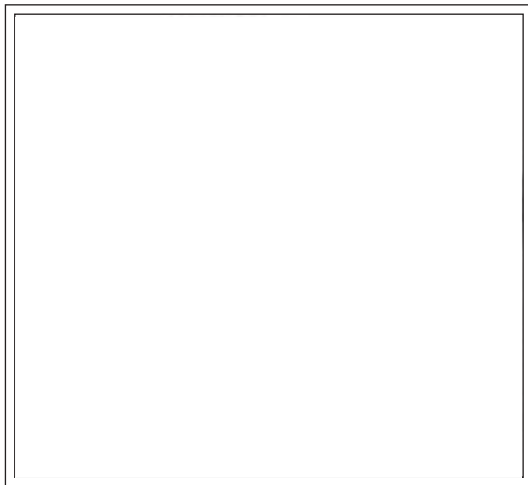
When a similar Augustinian monastery at St Osyth, Essex, was demolished in July 1539, it yielded 255 tons of lead. Over 100 fidders came from the abbey church, another 100 from the claustral buildings and 47 fidders from other buildings.

The lead from Merton was well used at Nonsuch. The corner towers and south front bore decorated plaster panels held in position by wooden beams covered by carved slate hangings and scales of lead. Samuel Pepys visited Nonsuch in 1665 and commented on the walls "covered with Lead and gilded". The octagonal towers had an overhanging storey surmounted by a leaden dome.

By 1541 men were employed at Merton to sort material before it was carted to Nonsuch. Now only the squared facing stone was sent.¹³ Some ashlar stone from Merton was used for outer faces of the walls and the masons set the stones so that carvings were hidden. Many pieces of moulding, a lion gargoyle and a female head were discovered at Nonsuch in 1959. The lion was “carved in the late 15th century ... [and] after spending more than four centuries resting on the flattened top of its head, it was in a remarkably good state of preservation, even its teeth being intact”.¹⁴ Next to the lion gargoyle the excavators discovered a 4½ cwt carved roof boss which would have been part of the vaulted roof of the priory church. It is painted red and gilded and was found embedded in the foundations of the south-east tower of the inner court of Nonsuch which was probably built in 1543.¹⁵ It would seem that, with the lead covering, Merton priory was present in the south-east tower, from top to bottom.



*Lion gargoyle and female head, both from Nonsuch
Photo from J Dent The Quest for Nonsuch*



Some stone at the priory would have been used locally and in 1550 stone was supplied to Thomas Mabson,¹⁶ but soon all above-surface stone had been removed. In 1559 the churchwardens of Battersea paid “14/- for three loads of stone from Merton and 6d to John Tyler for **digging up** the stones we bought”.¹⁷ Now only the foundations could provide stone in quantity.

The remains of the priory church thereafter were lost to sight. The land needed time to make it suitable for farming. The sedge withered from the stews and no birds sang.

It would be another 360 years before Colonel Bidder and his gardener revealed the true size and extent of the priory of Merton.

Epilogue

Whilst looking back to the events of four and a half centuries ago, there must be some regrets. We may spare a thought for the difficulties of the inhabitants of the district, and we may regret the demolition of important buildings, but even if the priory had continued to exist, it would have been rebuilt many times in different styles.

1 T Fuller *Church History of Britain* 1655 p.306
 2 J Stow *Survey of London* 1603 (ed. Kingsford 1908 I p.142)
 3 T Wright *Letters Relating to the Suppression of the Monasteries* Camden Soc. 26 (1843) p.181; W St J Hope in *Archaeological Journal* 41 (1884) p.6
 4 H Braun *English Abbeys* 1971 p.234
 5 National Archives E 36/245 p.253; S Thurley *Royal Palaces of Tudor England* 1993 p.110
 6 J Dent *The Quest for Nonsuch* 1981 p.38
 7 *ibid.* p.261
 8 National Archives E 101/477/12

9 Dent *op. cit.* pp. 42,80
 10 *ibid.* pp.272/3
 11 Dent *op. cit.* p.47
 12 1 fodder (or fother) = 6 x 364 lbs = 6 x 26 stones = 19.5 cwt (just less than 1 ton)
 13 Dent *op. cit.* p.80
 14 *ibid* p.101; *Daily Telegraph* 9 September 1959 p.14. The carvings are on display in the Museum of London.
 15 *Surrey Archaeological Collections* 58 (1961) p.3
 16 Surrey History Centre 281/2/18
 17 Battersea Churchwardens' Accounts f.2a p.236

News from Merton Priory

There was an open day at the Priory site on 19 November, when David Saxby and his MoLAS team were on hand to explain recent work there, including the unearthing of the impressive remains of a medieval mill. Earlier David had informed us, “The mill we are uncovering is likely to turn out to be the biggest, the best preserved and well-built mill ever found. Today we found that it has a complete headrace built of stone, at least 4m in length (so far) with a very big ?water tank about 15m by 8m (function so far unknown)”.

EAGLE HOUSE, MITCHAM

Members will probably be interested to hear that a Planning Application was on public display during October concerning a change of use of Eagle House, Mitcham, from office accommodation to a day school for 50 children with special educational needs.

According to the application, Eagle House was extensively renovated in 1990 for use as offices but has only been occupied since then from 1995 to 2001. It has been vacant for the last couple of years.

The use of Eagle House for educational purposes involves relatively little internal conversion and its Grade I Listed character has been preserved both inside and out.

Eagle House was built in 1705 and is virtually 300 years old and for a significant part of its life has been used for educational purposes. It was a private residence until 1825 when the house became a private boarding school for young gentlemen run by James Dempster. The school appears to have lasted until about 1840. Census records for both 1841 and 1851 show the house to be the location of Eagle House Academy run by Daniel Roberts.

In 1855 the house and its land were bought by the Board of Guardians of St George the Martyr (Southwark) Union and were soon used as an "Industrial School" for pauper, orphan and miscreant children from Southwark. Land along London Road each side of Eagle House was bought to extend the school and a large H-shaped building forming virtually a double quadrangle was constructed to the north of Eagle House. This was used to accommodate the major part of the school which had a total of 400 boys, girls and infants as residents.

In 1870 Eagle House and the much larger building were sold to the Guardians of the Poor of the Holborn Union, again to accommodate and educate children of the poor. In 1883 land was acquired to the rear of the site, bordering on Bond Road, to build a large workhouse to accommodate 1000 adults. Some time towards the end of the 19th century Eagle House ceased to accommodate the school part of the workhouse and became the children's infirmary. The workhouse complex was closed in 1929 and in the following year ownership of the site passed to the London County Council. In 1932, Eagle House together with the late-Victorian school building immediately to its south, was sold by the LCC to Surrey County Council and Eagle House took on a new role as a day-nursery. After the Second World War as women ceased war-work employment, the nursery was closed and Eagle House became a school for children with, what we nowadays call, learning difficulties. In 1965, as a result of Local Government re-organisation, ownership of Eagle House, along with other local school properties, passed to the London Borough of Merton. The school was closed in 1971 and after some delay, Eagle House was renovated and re-opened in 1976 as an Adult Education Centre. Subsequently the house became a Teachers' Centre. This it remained until its closure in 1987 and three years later the building was sold for refurbishment and conversion into offices. It may now revert to an educational establishment again.



Eagle House, Mitcham – drawing by Peter Harris

Tony Scott

From the Bourne Society *Bulletin* 194 for November 2003

Elsie M Little, born in 1893, recalling in 1960 her childhood in Coulsdon, wrote of "... The Ninehams Road which got its name from Ninehams the house in which **people by the name of Rutter lived who were famous for Rutter's Mitcham Shag**".

...and in the East Surrey Family History Society *Journal* Volume 26 No.4 (December 2003)

Sheila Gallagher has an interesting piece, which she calls 'Child abduction & other offences in Merton – 1826/7'. She recounts how a six-year-old boy was taken from the Bermondsey children's workhouse, which was in Merton, by a sweep, and traced by the local constable to a house in Tooting where he was holding the sackcloth against the fireplace while the sweep climbed the chimney. Soon afterwards the indefatigable constable tracked down three turnip thieves. The writer found her material in the Brixton Petty Sessions records.

(These publications are among those which we receive from other societies. Tony Scott always has a selection of them at indoor meetings, which you are welcome to browse through or borrow.)

JG

NICOLE WELLER, who, at our AGM on 1 November, spoke about her role, has kindly sent us this introduction to herself and her appointment:

Hello, I am Nicole Weller, the newly appointed Portable Antiquities Finds Liaison Officer and Community Archaeologist for Greater London. So, what is the Portable Antiquities Scheme?

Every year many thousands of archaeological objects are discovered, mostly by metal detectorists, members of the public out walking the dog, gardening, etc. These objects offer an important source of information about the past, yet only a small proportion of them are seen or recorded by museum finds specialists or archaeologists, and so such information is being lost.

The government recognized that there was an urgent need to improve arrangements for recording these 'portable antiquities' which fell outside the scope of the Treasure Act 1996, and so the Portable Antiquities Scheme was set up in 1997, funded by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, and since then also funded by the Heritage Lottery Scheme. At first there were only pilot schemes set up in six English counties, but since then more counties have been included, so that by the end of this year the whole of England and Wales will have Finds Liaison Officers in place.

From the outset the aims of the Scheme have been:-

- 1) To advance our knowledge of the history and archaeology of England and Wales
- 2) To initiate a system of recording archaeological finds and to promote better recording practice by finders
- 3) To strengthen links between metal detectorists and archaeologists
- 4) To estimate how many objects are being found across England and Wales and what resources would be needed to record them

My role as a finds liaison officer based at the Museum of London is to be the first point of contact for the Society of Mudlarks or members of the public/metal detectorists to make an appointment to bring in their finds for me to identify, take a grid reference for the find spot, weigh, measure, take a digital image, and input this information onto the National Portable Antiquities database (www.finds.org.uk). This site provides an excellent research/general information tool, and as of today there are just over 55,000 finds recorded on the database.

The general rule of thumb is that we record artefacts onto the scheme if they date earlier than 1650. However artefacts of a later date can be added if they are unusual etc., at the discretion of the individual Finds Liaison Officer. Only a four-figure grid reference is shown on the database, to try to prevent this information from being used by the criminal faction.

Apart from finds identification and recording I can also advise people on finds conservation and storage. I can also give advice on the Treasure Act and what actually constitutes 'treasure', and what action is required if such an item is discovered.

My other role, as Community Archaeologist, builds on the invaluable work of my predecessor Vanessa Bunton. Communicating and liaising not only with archaeological societies but with as many sections of the public as possible. Offering targeted archaeological training to societies and groups. Bringing archaeology into the community and liaising with as many sections of society as possible.

Contact details: Museum of London, London Wall EC2Y 5HN; 020 7814 5733;

nweller@museumoflondon.org.uk

For the Christmas stocking:-

Clive Whichelow, one of our members, has produced another in his enjoyable series of booklets with local historical appeal. *Pubs of Merton (Past & Present)* looks at the old parish of Merton and tells the stories of all (probably) its drinking-places, from the important White Hart, once used for vestry meetings, to the scruffy and ephemeral Uncle Tom's Cabin. While in no sense is this a pub guide the author brings the histories of the survivors up to date, and his lively text and well-chosen illustrations from many periods make it an attractive and useful publication. 52pp. ISBN 0 9524297 £3.95 from local libraries and bookshops.



The minutes of the AGM are enclosed with this Bulletin.

A Word from our Membership Secretary

By this time of year subscriptions are overdue. Please note that, to ensure continuity of membership in 2004, outstanding payments should be sent to the Membership Secretary:

Letters and contributions for the Bulletin should be sent to the Hon. Editor. The views expressed in this Bulletin are those of the contributors concerned and not necessarily those of the Society or its Officers.

Printed by Peter Hopkins