



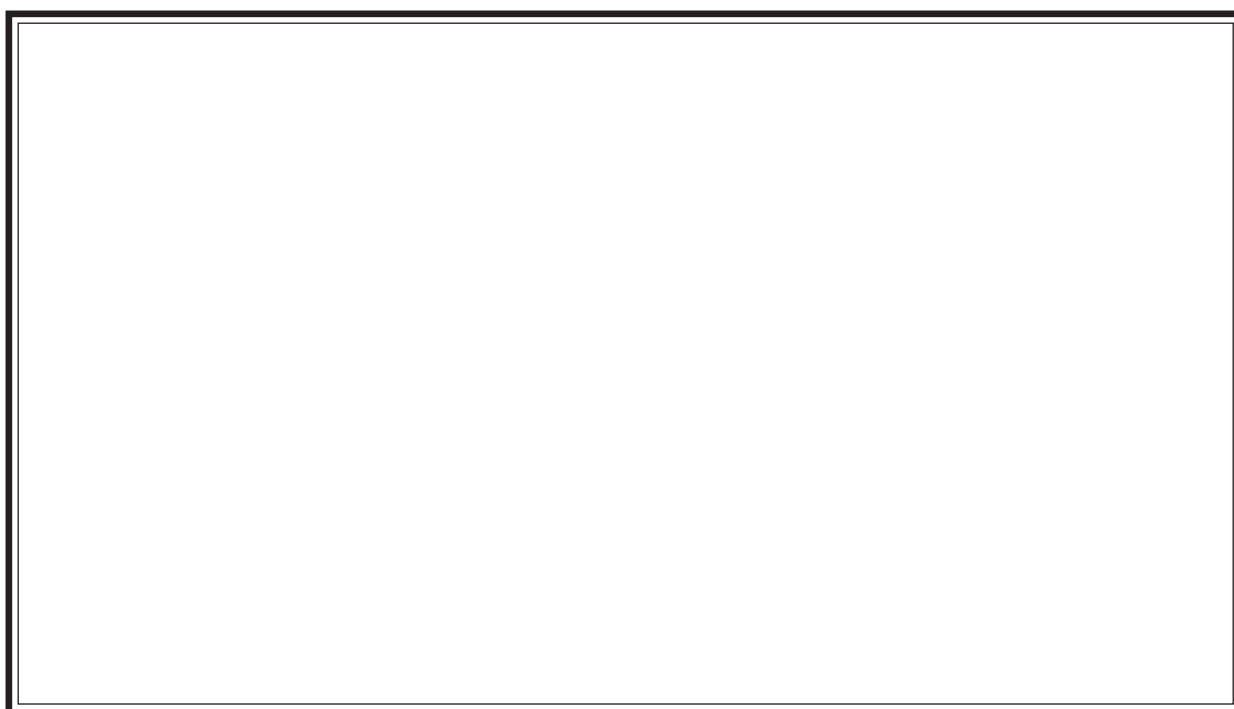
PRESIDENT:

VICE PRESIDENTS: Viscountess Hanworth, Eric Montague and William Rudd

BULLETIN NO. 177

CHAIR: Dr Tony Scott

MARCH 2011



*Engraving of Mitcham Common showing The Cranmers, The Canons and Park Place,
reproduced by courtesy of Merton Library & Heritage Service – see page 10*

CONTENTS

Programme: March – May	2
Reports:	
‘The Princess and the Brewer; their Duel for Richmond Park’	3
‘The Spas of Surrey’	4
Local History Workshop:	
14 January: Napoleonic age Volunteers; a Saxon landowner; Sunday School medals; an early achievement by Evelyn Jowett; Morden 40 years ago; a proof-reader’s musings	6
Messages over Merton – Geoffrey Wilson	8
In Search of a Lacemaker – Rosemary Turner	9
Book review: <i>The Cranmers, The Canons and Park Place</i>	10
V-1s on Merton and Morden: the Details – David Haunton	11



PROGRAMME MARCH – MAY 2011

Saturday 12 March 2.30pm

Raynes Park Library Hall

‘Here Yesterday - Gone Tomorrow’

A talk by **David Roe** with photos from the Society’s Photographic Record Project that capture the historical significance and changing nature of Merton, Morden and Mitcham today.

David is the project’s leader.

Saturday 16th April 2.30pm

Raynes Park Library Hall

‘The Croydon Canal at Croydon and east Surrey’s integrated transport system’

Paul Sowan will be our knowledgeable speaker about this waterway which once linked Croydon to the Grand Surrey Canal and hence to the Thames.

[Paul will be leading a walk relating to this talk on **Sunday 27 March**, organised by Croydon Natural History & Scientific Society. Called ‘The Pitlake central interchange’, it will celebrate the 200th anniversary of the completion of the Croydon Canal in 1811 and its links with the horse-drawn tramways. If you would like to go, meet at 2.00pm at the Waddon Marsh tramstop.]

Raynes Park Library Hall is in Aston Road, off Approach Road, on or close to several bus routes, and near to Raynes Park station. Very limited parking.

Please use the hall entrance in Aston Road.

Saturday 14 May

Coach trip to Knole and Chartwell kindly arranged by Pat and Ray Kilsby.

For the details please see the enclosed sheet.



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



SOCIETY TALKS

We used to hold all our talks in the Snuff Mill – excellent central location, free parking, nearby café – normally achieving audiences of 50 – 60 people. However, poor physical access via the steep staircase (difficult for the disabled) and the unsatisfactory emergency exit route were always worries for your Committee. The new limit of only 50 people allowed upstairs in the building is monitored by the National Trust, and must include those Committee members present to organise the event. This has given rise to unpleasant arguments with some later-arriving members, when they were denied entry because 50 persons had already been admitted. These considerations led your Committee to look elsewhere.

We have tried various halls over the past few years, located throughout Merton, Morden and Mitcham, but since we left the Snuff Mill, the number of people attending our talks has declined noticeably – only occasionally achieving an audience of 40 out of our total membership of over 150. Note that all the venues have drawbacks, some because of their non-central location and difficulty of access, and some because of the poor provision of the blackout required for showing slides. Our current favouring of Raynes Park Library Hall is partly for its reasonable cost, but mainly because it has very good disabled access and excellent light blackout, and because it is the only venue that has digital projection facilities for hire – a feature increasingly required by speakers.

We would like to find out why so few people come to our talks. Is it the venue? The subjects? The day? A clash with other events? Or some other consideration entirely?

Please help us by completing the enclosed (anonymous) survey about last year’s talks, and sending it to David Haunton, using the enclosed SAE, by the end of March.

It’s your Society, please let us know what **you** want.

‘THE PRINCESS AND THE BREWER: THEIR DUEL FOR RICHMOND PARK’

Our December lecture was given by Max Lankester, who is the Secretary of the Friends of Richmond Park. To introduce us to his main topic he explained the origin of the Park. Though the whole area of what is now the Park had been a royal hunting-ground for hundreds of years, it was Charles I who decided to stock it with red and fallow deer and enclose it with a brick wall. The land included estates of the gentry and prosperous farms, and their owners were reluctant to sell. However they were leaned on and ‘persuaded’, and by 1635 Charles had acquired land from the manors of Petersham, Ham, Richmond, Wimbledon, Mortlake and Putney. In most cases he paid at least a fair price, but some Mortlake land he seems never to have paid for. There had been no chance to put the matter to Parliament because there had been no Parliament since 1629.

The wall went up. In order to retain communications among the neighbouring towns gates were installed at Richmond Hill, East Shene, Roehampton, Wimbledon (Robin Hood Gate), Coombe and Ham Common. There were also stepladders for pedestrians, and two rights of way across the Park were kept open. The poor were allowed to come in and collect firewood. But there was general resentment at what had happened and the way it had been done. At first Charles made frequent use of the New Park, as he called it, but as his problems grew he came less often, his last hunt being in 1647.

In the next century Robert Walpole, when Prime Minister, secured the lucrative post of Ranger for his son from George II, and he himself spent a lot of time at the Old Lodge, often holding cabinet meetings there. He and the King enjoyed hunting together there. But Walpole felt himself entitled to privacy and took steps to secure it. He removed the ladder-stile gates from the wall and built lodges at the gates, with keepers whose job was to admit only ‘respectable persons’ on foot and carriages with pass-tickets.

When the younger Walpole died George II gave the Rangership to his daughter Princess Amelia, who proved to be even more high-handed than Walpole senior. The people admitted to the Park were now restricted to a named few, her guests in fact. Pedestrians were kept out entirely. Even the beaters of the parish bounds who had had to climb as best they could over the wall and back again were in 1751 denied admittance. It is said that part of the wall was knocked down, or it may be that a section had fallen down.



The bounds-beating party effects an entry into Richmond Park in May 1751 (frontispiece to Two Historical Accounts of ... New Forest ... and Richmond New Park) (taken from John Cloake Richmond Past 1991 p.116)

A long memorial was drafted to the princess referring to ladder-stiles, historic rights to dig gravel, 'restraint of trade' and so on, with flattering tributes to the princess, and signed 'The Committee'. To no avail. The princess's secretary sent snubbing replies to further letters.

A hearing in front of the Lord Chief Justice and two other judges, despite copious evidence of historic rights of access, found in favour of the deputy Ranger.

Finally in 1755 John Lewis, a brewer of Richmond, determined to take up the fight for ancient rights, and with a friend attempted to walk in at Sheen Gate behind a carriage that was admitted with a ticket. The gatekeeper, Martha Gray, refused them entry and they allowed themselves to be ejected. Whereupon Lewis brought an action. Despite various delaying tactics by the princess and her supporters which held up the hearing for three years the case was finally heard at Kingston Assizes in front of Sir Michael Foster, a judge who, fortunately for the cause, was of a radical way of thinking. The trial took a day and the judge found in favour of Lewis. Access was to be reinstated. Did Lewis favour doors or ladder-stiles? He chose the latter – doors could be bolted. Princess Amelia was ordered to reinstate the ladder-stiles. She did so, but three years later she gave up the Rangership. John Lewis later lost his business in a fire and was supported in his last years by an annuity from his fellow-residents in Richmond. He died in 1792 aged 79.

Today happily anyone can enjoy Richmond Park. We were told that there are 630-650 deer, about half red deer and half fallow. A pair of Highland cattle and a pair of Dexters have been introduced. The Park is a SSSI and supports about 1300 species of beetle as well 20 pairs of skylarks.

Max Lankester's well-illustrated talk was very much enjoyed. I am sure we will all remember John Lewis the brewer next time we are in Richmond Park, and not take our rights of access for granted.

Judith Goodman

'THE SPAS OF SURREY'

Our programme for 2011 started on 8 January at Raynes Park Library Hall with a very well illustrated talk on the spas of Surrey by our immediate past Chair, Judith Goodman.

Judith said that 'Surrey' in the title was the historic (pre-1889) county, which extended to the banks of the Thames in central London. 'Spa' comes from the town of that name near Liège in Belgium that was a popular bathing place in Roman times and then revived in the Middle Ages.

The popularity of spas in England peaked in the 18th century and declined during the 19th century. Some spas produce clear pure water and Malvern is an example of this; some are sulphurous, and some contain salts. The spas of Surrey were all saline, containing mainly magnesium and sodium sulphates. These waters were used as laxatives and diuretics and were normally not used for bathing, since they, like most English waters, produced cold waters.

Judith described nine Surrey spas in detail.

Epsom Wells. In the early 1600s a Henry Wicker noticed that cattle refused to drink from a certain spring on Epsom Common, and he found that the water had a strong purgative effect. A well was dug and a shelter provided, and by 1653 it was recorded that the place was so popular that the water was scarce and muddy during the day, and abstraction was best in the early morning.

More substantial buildings were put up round the well, and by the mid-1660s the town could offer 300 beds for visitors, with grander people staying in local country houses. Charles II visited twice. In 1692 assembly rooms were built in the town, and they are still there today, as a Wetherspoon's pub.

Epsom salts (hydrated magnesium sulphate) were sold all over Europe by the early 18th century. People came to Epsom as much for entertainment as for their health, and a new well opened in the town, which was more convenient. This well has now gone, but the old one, now capped, is located in the middle of the Wells housing estate.

Streatham Spa I. There were two spas in Streatham, the earlier being at the upper end of Streatham Common in an area known later as The Rookery. The presence of saline water there was first recorded in 1629, but it was not marketed commercially until 1659. A well house was built later. The water was said to be stronger than that at Epsom. By the 1790s all facilities had closed.

Streatham Spa II. This opened c.1790 on a site just off the modern Valley Road and it closed in the 1860s. In the 1870s the Curtis family took over the site as a dairy and also bottled and sold the water. As Curtis and Dumbrell they continued to deliver the water with the milk until the last war. The site was later taken over by United Dairies, and now the main part of the site is a Dairy Crest distribution depot, while the well house survives in a sheltered housing development.

Richmond Wells. In the 1670s a purging spring on the hillside at Richmond, overlooking the Thames, was opened as a spa, and assembly rooms were built. Many of the visitors came by boat. Soon gambling and raucous behaviour became commonplace, and in 1763 Susanna Houblon, who lived opposite, bought the spa and its buildings and closed it down.

Lambeth Wells. A spa in what is now Lambeth Walk, then Three Coney Walk, opened in the early 1690s. It is recorded that St Thomas's Hospital bought water from it for medicinal purposes at one penny a quart. By 1755 the spa had closed.

The Dog & Duck. Over the parish border, in Southwark, a spa which took its name from a local inn in St George's Fields was operating at least by 1730. Trade increased with the opening of Westminster bridge in 1750 and there was soon a breakfast room, bowling-green and swimming-pool. The name was changed to St George's Spa, but, like many other spas, it attracted some disreputable characters. In 1780 it was the headquarters of the Gordon rioters, and it was closed down in 1799. The site was later occupied by the Bethlem Hospital, part of which survives as the Imperial War Museum.

Dulwich Wells. This spa originated from a well dug in 1739 by Francis Cox, landlord of the *Green Man*, and was located in the grounds of the present *Grove Tavern* at the junction of Lordship Lane and Dulwich Common. It closed in the 1780s.

Bermondsey Spa. Thomas Keyse, a flamboyant self-taught artist, bought a beer-house in Bermondsey in 1766 and 'found' spa water in the garden. He opened the attraction as Bermondsey Spa c.1770, with three acres of pleasure gardens. By 1795 its popularity was fading and it eventually closed in 1804, four years after Keyse's death. The spa gave its name to Spa Road, Bermondsey, and to a railway station that opened in 1836 and is now closed.

Beulah Spa. This opened in Upper Norwood in 1831 and was the last spa to be opened in this country. The proprietor, John Davidson, employed the famous architect Decimus Burton to design several buildings for the site, and one of them, the entrance lodge, still remains. Beulah Spa was never a great success and it is probably no coincidence that it closed in 1854, the year that the Crystal Palace opened within a mile or so. The spa is still perpetuated in the road name Spa Hill close to its location.

Not only did Judith give us all this information about each spa, but also she enlivened it in many places with contemporary quotations concerning life in the spas and the effects of their waters.

Tony Scott

LOCAL HISTORY WORKSHOP

Friday 14 January 2011 – seven present – David Haunton in the chair

- ◆ **Sheila Gallagher** had noticed the article in the September *Bulletin* about the Merton Abbey Volunteers. She has been researching the Volunteers in general for some time and has gathered much information. They were active between 1792 and 1808, being formed to defend their parishes in the event of invasion, and were distinct from the county yeomanries. She had come across references to Merton, Wimbledon and Mitcham Volunteers. Mitcham's were set up in 1798. She had been unable to find references to Morden Volunteers, and she thought that as Morden was very small at that time they may have linked to Merton or Mitcham.
- ◆ **Judith Goodman.** Peter Hopkins had passed her a discussion document from a Surrey Medieval Forum meeting, in which there was a reference to the Saxon ealdorman Ælfheah who was granted ownership of Merton in 967. The paper gave details of his ownership and disposal of estates at Send and Sunbury. He had much other land elsewhere. His father was an ealdorman of Mercia, and the family claimed kinship with royalty, and also with Bryhtnoth, ealdorman of Essex, commander of the English force at the battle of Maldon in 991. Ælfheah himself died in 971/2 and was buried at Glastonbury.
- ◆ **Peter Hopkins** had more information about the Sunday School medal mentioned at the last workshop. It turned out to be from Marden in Kent, not Morden. However, his sister had a similar one presented to her by Martin Way Methodist church for collecting money for overseas missions. And another medal had been found by his niece in her garden in South Nutfield.

Peter showed the group some drawings Rosemary had done for Lionel Green's book on Turgot of Durham.

He had found help with some of the words in the document in medieval French about Cheam Common. He had been surprised to discover *A Dictionary of the Norman or Old French Language* (1779) on Internet Archive, which explained several obscure words! Members of the meeting also had some ideas.

He had also found there *The Illustrated Companion to the Latin Dictionary and Greek Lexicon* (1849), so he now knows what some of the household utensils listed in the manorial accounts would have looked like!

Judith had passed a CD of the 1841 Census for Surrey to him. It gives a facsimile only – no index.

- ◆ **Rosemary Turner** had continued her research about a local lacemaker (see page 9). She had found that the Lady Palmer at whose house Blanche Goad had held classes was the wife of a man who may have been knighted for his work in local government. He was listed as 'Sir' from 1952. The Palmers were living in Wimbledon in 1915, then moved to Mitcham, and finally arrived in Grand Drive, Raynes Park, in the 1940s. Rosemary will try to do some more research about them.

Rosemary had watched a BBC programme called *Britain by Bike*, and heard the name Evelyn Jowett mentioned. The programme, set in the Bronte country, mentioned an abandoned village called Wycoller, whose ruined buildings had featured in *Jane Eyre*. It and the surrounding area had been bought by the water board, which was going to turn it into a reservoir. The village was saved when Evelyn Jowett, a local librarian, set up the Friends of Wycoller in 1948. Rosemary had discovered that it was indeed our Evelyn Jowett, who was then librarian at Colne, very near to Wycoller.

(Evelyn Jowett became Librarian of Merton and Morden, and in 1951 published *An Illustrated History of Merton and Morden* on behalf of the Merton and Morden Festival of Britain Committee. She was the first Hon. Secretary of this Society.)



Peter's sister's medal from Martin Way Methodist Church Sunday School 1948-57

- ◆ **Cyril Maidment** had been asked to write an article about Merton Priory as a World Heritage Site candidate for the Wimbledon Society *Newsletter*.

He had used his computer skills to reproduce John Harding's 1723 survey and plan of West Barnes; in one version he had overlaid a modern map.

He had also been working on maps for the new Town Trails publication. An extra trail had been added.

- ◆ **Bill Rudd** had brought some more of his old photographs (see below). One of them showed Morden town centre in 1970, with scarcely any traffic or street furniture.
- ◆ **David Haunton** had made some notes when proof-reading Monty's latest book (see page 10). He noted that there was a dean of Manchester Cathedral before the cathedral was dedicated – a dean was needed to supervise the building work (p.122). At Ascension Church in Mitcham there was a vicar in place when building was begun (1939), who supervised the crypt/air raid shelter during the war (see *Bulletin* 173), but did not actually have a church in which to hold services until 1953.

He suggested 'inholder' might mean 'tenant' rather than 'innkeeper'(p.83).

'De Fraxineto' could plausibly be 'of Ashtead' (p.12).

The first name of Firman van Fleet, Dutch resident of The Canons, could be 'Firmin', a Catholic name from St Firminus, but van Fleet was a Protestant (his daughter married in Mitcham parish church). The name might mean a partner in a business (p.87).

Rosemary Turner

Next Workshops: Fridays 25 March, 6 May and 24 June at 2.30pm at Wandle Industrial Museum

BILL RUDD'S MORDEN



Green Lane 1969

Green indeed – these large trees have now gone, but younger ones are growing fast.

GEOFFREY WILSON puts us in touch with

MESSAGES OVER MERTON

‘How’s the wind?’

Such was the prosaic question put by a shareholder on the London and South Western Railway on 31 January 1847 to a recipient at Gosport, who replied, ‘South by west’. This instant response inaugurated the newly installed electric telegraph laid alongside the railway between its London terminus at Nine Elms and Gosport, then the terminus for Portsmouth.

At 88 miles (142km) it was the longest electric telegraph so far installed, its course traversing part of Merton parish, between the Skew Arch and Beverley Brook, and worked according to the patents of inventors Sir William Fothergill Cooke and Sir Charles Wheatstone. The system needed two wires between sender and receiver. In this instance the cross-arms affixed to the upright poles fringing the railway carried four wires – two for the railway and two for the Admiralty, the partners sharing the cost of £24000 (today’s equivalent would be over £1m).

Those Mertonians able to read a newspaper may have understood why the still novel invention had been dubbed ‘the wires that hanged John Tawill’. Before the line to Gosport was in hand, shorter sections of electric telegraph had been laid alongside the South Eastern and the Great Western Railways. The latter’s telegraph linked London and Slough. John Tawill had murdered his mistress in Slough. Hoping to make good his escape, he dressed as a Quaker and boarded a London train. However, he had reckoned without the swift action of the telegraphist at Slough, who, suspicious of the ‘kwaker’ (the way the word needed to be rendered by the encoding machine), wired his colleague at Paddington, with the result that Tawill was arrested on arrival at the terminus, and subsequently tried, convicted and hanged. The notoriety may have satisfied Cooke and Wheatstone that the general utility of their invention was now full recognised.



*Sir Charles Wheatstone
drawn by Samuel Lawrence in 1868,
from Wikipedia, the free online encyclopedia*

Of greater practical moment was the completion of the Gosport line which gave a fillip to more lengthy lines, and before too long the establishment of a countrywide system.

Locals who thought that the wires in fact carried the voices of users would have to wait until the late 1870s before such a refinement was afforded by the invention of the telephone.

The Admiralty’s telegraph was continued into Portsmouth harbour by a marine cable, the first of its kind. *The Illustrated London News* is the authority for a statement that during tests on the Gosport line a game of chess was played by wire.

The new communication enabled the Admiralty to close its visual telegraph between Whitehall and Portsmouth Dockyard. Its relay stations on high buildings or high ground with tall masts and movable arms spelled out routine messages letter by letter. The service had functioned remarkably well, considering the vagaries of our climate: mist and fog were its bane. When this line closed with the introduction of the electric system, *The Times* was moved to commiserate with the veteran lieutenants at the stations, whose occupation was now gone.

Some locals may have watched the movements of the visual (so called) telegraph on Putney Heath and equally wondered what cabalistic messages its arm movements signified. They may have bidden farewell to its last officer, Lieutenant Lardner Dennys. The new electric communication gave neither visual nor audible indication of its working.

Postscript: It is worthy of note that in only a few years’ time the electric telegraph had spread so rapidly that, not wholly to their liking, the British army commanders in the Crimea were at the beck and telegraphic call of the war ministers in London and Paris.

ROSEMARY TURNER describes how she went

IN SEARCH OF A LACEMAKER

Some years ago I came across a park bench near the formal gardens of Nonsuch Park, on the border of Ewell with Cheam. It was outside the mansion house, where adult education classes were held. Carved along the back was the inscription 'Remembered with love by her friends H Blanche Goad 1899-1982 Lacemaker'. As a lacemaker myself I was very intrigued, and made enquiries among my lacemaking friends. Unfortunately no one had heard of her, so I tried to find out more, using my family history resources. At that time there was hardly anything on the internet, and as I did not know if Goad was her married name I did not get very far.



At the beginning of last year, while I was putting the new pages in my Filofax, I came across the name again and decided to have another go at finding out about her. The Friends of Nonsuch were unable to help, but another lace friend decided to help and began phoning around. She made contact with the man who looks after the Nonsuch grounds, but he was unable to help as they did not keep any records relating to the benches. He however had his interest piqued, so decided to try to find her online. I had already tried Google. He Wikipedia'd the name, and came up with a burial entry in Rushden cemetery, Northamptonshire:

Sleeping H Blanche GOAD née Knowlton (lacemaker)

Remembered with love 1899-1982

William Norman Henry KNOWLTON Born 23rd August 1905.

Died 1st July 1964 Rushden Cemetery.

This made the hunt even more interesting. What was the connection between Ewell and Cheam, Surrey, and Rushden, Northants?

I contacted the Rushden Local History Group. They had not got any further information, but put me in touch with a local lacemaker. She was able to find out that Mrs Goad was not buried there; her ashes had been scattered on her brother's grave.

Via the internet I was able to find out that her birth was registered in Wellingborough, Northants, as was her brother's. She was married in Bedford in 1925 to Reginald L Goad, and they had one son, whose birth was registered in Epsom. Her death was registered in Sutton.

I also found her, with her family, in the 1901 and 1911 censuses in Podington, Wellingborough. It said that she had been born in Hinwick, Wellingborough. Both places are in fact just over the border in Bedfordshire.

This told me about events in her life, but I still had not found out about the lace connection.

My friend was telling members of our lace group about my search, and suddenly people started remembering her. They thought she had taught in Cheam and they gave me the names of a couple of lacemakers who would have known her. One person used to be a member of my local group, but now lives in Dorset. I contacted her and she was able to tell me that she had her introduction to lace at Blanche Goad's class in The Cedars, which was connected to Epsom Art College. The students started as I did by making their own pillow. There were organised lace trips, and students were also introduced to Honiton lace classes in Exmouth. I was told that after her retirement Blanche Goad used to demonstrate lace in Cheam.

I decided to write an article for the Lace Guild's magazine, and this resulted in me receiving several letters from former students and other people, including her niece, who confirmed that her aunt never used her first name, Hilda, but was always known as Blanche. This explained the inscriptions on the bench and on the Rushden grave.

I learnt that Blanche taught at Wimbledon School of Art in the 1940s, and possibly Reigate, as well as for the Townswomen's Guild in Tolworth. The Wimbledon class moved to Lady Palmer's house in Grand Drive, Raynes Park. The site of the house would have been next to St Saviour's church and is now occupied by flats. Blanche also held classes in Hampton and in her own house.

Everyone refers to Blanche as living in Morden, but the only address I have found for her was in West Sutton, just over the Morden boundary. Her niece says that she moved into this address when the houses were built, and lived there until her death.

I was sent a couple of newspaper articles showing Blanche with her students. One, dated 1977, shows her still teaching in her 70s at the Epsom School of Art and Design. The article states that 'it was the encouragement of the Women's Institute to enter their examination in lace making that started her off on her teaching career.'

It goes on to say that she had taught in Canada and was invited to appear on television for a current affairs programme there. In 1976 she had taken her lace samples and collection of bobbins to South Africa and talked on a Women's World radio programme. The article refers to Blanche having been taught lace making as a child by her mother in Podington. Lacemaking had been in her family for about 200 years. Maybe that is another trail to research.



A Correction – Admiral Fitzroy

In my report of our Brompton Cemetery visit I mentioned that we had been shown the grave of Admiral Robert Fitzroy once of the *Beagle*. This is indeed what we were told. However Ray Kilsby points out that the Admiral Robert Fitzroy (1805-1865), who in 1831-36 had captained the *Beagle* with Charles Darwin on board, is buried in All Saints churchyard, Church Road, Norwood. After a busy and useful life, sadly, he died by his own hand.

Ray has taken the matter up with the people at Brompton, and they were grateful for the correction, and suggest that one of their number, in his/her enthusiasm, confused one nautical Fitzroy with another more celebrated one. No doubt they are amending their records.

JG

The Cranmers, The Canons and Park Place

This, the 11th volume in Eric Montague's monumental series of Mitcham Histories, sets out the stories of three large houses, two of which survive and which for 250 years were connected with the Cranmer family and then with their descendants, the Simpson family. Many other interesting people – East India merchants, soldiers, and Huguenots among them – came and went in the story of this part of Mitcham, and Monty tells their tales. He also traces the early histories of the sites through archaeological evidence and medieval records, as well as bringing his narrative right up to the 21st century. The book concludes with short accounts of the adjacent area, including Commonsides East and West and Three Kings Piece. He has illustrated the narrative with a splendid selection of maps, early views and his own fine photographs.

This book will be essential, and enjoyable, reading for anyone interested in Mitcham's history.

It retails at £5.95, but is only £4.80 to members, plus £1.15 postage from our Publications Secretary. Cheques payable to Merton Historical Society. You can also purchase it at our indoor meetings.

V-1s ON MERTON AND MORDEN: THE DETAILS

This article complements my previous article on ‘V-1s on Mitcham’ and follows the same format. It aims to record all the V-1s known to have fallen on the Urban District of Merton and Morden in 1944. In what follows, [X] refers to V-1 no.X in the accompanying list.

Sources

The basic information is taken from files in The National Archives (TNA) (HO 198/79 - HO 198/93) which contain the original forms completed by the reporting RAF technical officers, usually accompanied by a small sketch map.¹ The Merton and Morden Incident Map, compiled after the war and now held by the Wimbledon Society Museum, plots all the high explosive bombs and V-1s (‘Fly Bombs’) which fell on the District.

The numbers of deaths have been compiled from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission’s List of Civilian War Dead for Surrey, where they are recorded by name, address and date and place of death and/or fatal injury.

In the accompanying list, K = number of people killed, DH = Direct Hit, ‘Front’ or ‘Rear’ = Front or rear of the premises, N,E,S,W = Compass directions, and ‘Nearest Feature’ is a more or less permanent feature of the landscape from which a measurement was taken – usually a road junction. Damage to dwellings was recorded in categories: A = completely demolished, B = not repairable, may need attention to make safe, C = repairable, but possibly not inhabitable at present. These classifications are those made immediately after the incident, and could be adjusted later, as more rubble was cleared from a site.

The Effects

The V-1 inflicted damage and destruction by the power of its explosive blast, but did not by itself cause fires. In general, buildings within 80 ft (24 m) of an explosion were destroyed, those within 120 ft (36 m) rendered non-repairable, and those up to 200 ft (60 m) away seriously damaged but repairable. There could be a good deal of variation in these figures. The phrase ‘general blast damage over a wide area’ (covering the effects on glass, plaster and roofs) is very common, and in many of the later reports is omitted as understood.

About two-thirds of the houses destroyed or damaged were classed as terraced dwellings, with about a quarter semi-detached and the remaining one-tenth ‘2 and 3 storey houses’, presumably detached, though the Gladstone Home, damaged by [9], is dignified as ‘mansion-type’.

Most V-1s fell on residential areas or open spaces. Only four sites affecting the war effort were hit: [5] damaged a steel-framed timber store, and ‘gutted by fire’ a paint store, shop and house 120 ft (36 m) away; [16] hit a corner of Merton Board Mills, causing ‘very heavy damage to this and surrounding factory buildings, production being stopped’; [10] fell near the Council’s No.2 Depot in the south-east corner of Morden Recreation Ground, and [17] hit the main railway line west of Raynes Park station.

Notes on some individual V-1s

[6] This is the only report for the District that details casualties – three men and four women killed, three men and five women seriously injured (ie. taken to hospital), and six men and three women lightly injured (ie. treated at local first-aid stations).

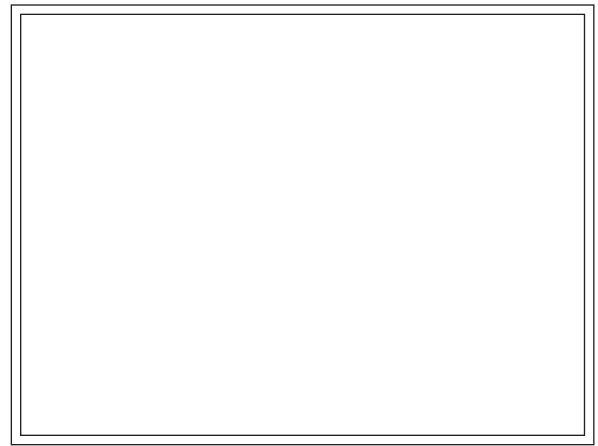
[7] ‘Blast damage to Church buildings up to 60 ft (18 m) away [from the bomb]’. But St John’s is sturdily built and withstood the blast, though losing a lot of window glass.

[8] The report gives the addresses of the demolished houses as 23 and 25 Cannon Hill Lane and 2 Springfield Avenue.

[9] This V-1 struck trees so there was no crater to measure. Half the Home was assessed as damage of B-class, the remainder as C-class.

[10] This bomb fell 100 ft (30 m) east of the main Recreation Pavilion, and rendered unusable two Civil Defence buildings of Morden Depot. The walls of the Decontamination Building were sucked out and the roof fell in. The walls of the Sleeping Quarters block were pulled out but the collapse was not total. Ominously, a ‘lack of reinforcement in the brickwork and the tie with the roof were evident’, indicating slipshod construction work. The four men who died here were all members of the Rescue Services.

[12] The V-1 hit a tree and a ‘brick surface shelter (unreinforced) at approximately 40 ft (12 m) [away from the bomb] cracked. 48 occupants uninjured.’ This was so surprising – at that distance the shelter should have been demolished and all the occupants killed – that a special technical investigation was made (TNA file HO 192/1508), and photographs taken. The investigator down-graded the damage to houses from B to ‘bad C’, noted that the shelter was not built to current standards, and concluded ‘The house damage in this incident is smaller than usual. ... Hence the explanation of the good performance of the shelter seems to be due to a “dud” bomb rather than a good shelter.’



The astonishing shelter in Central Road that withstood [12]. Note the crack in the left-hand corner, and the ‘repairable’ damage to houses beyond. Crown copyright The National Archives, ref. HO198/1508

[15] The bomb left a crater 14 feet across, demolished two houses and damaged five others so badly they had to be pulled down. Certainly 15-18 Church Lane were rebuilt. Some of my relatives had been re-housed in no. 15 after being bombed out in the Blitz of 1940: they had just made it into the Anderson shelter in the garden when the V-1 exploded, and slammed the door shut on my cousin so fiercely that it broke some bones in his hand. After inspecting the wreckage of no. 15, the family went back to their original home and camped out in the more or less weather-proofed shell of their old house at 5 Church Lane for the rest of the war. I suspect that 9, 11 and 13 Dorset Road may have been further damaged by this V-1 (after previous ‘piloted’ bombs), requiring their demolition. We have no information about the other obvious rebuild, at 17 Dorset Road. This V-1 also caused “extensive blast damage over a wide area”, such as destroying the east window and damaging the roof of St. Mary’s Church.

[17] This V-1 blocked all four railway lines – 90 ft (27 m) of the Down lines (ie. for trains going away from London) were torn up, and 60 ft (18 m) of the Up lines were warped. Damage to HT electrical cables affected the Motspur Park, Chessington South, Hampton, Feltham, Gunnersbury and Richmond branch lines. The damaged lines were reopened to trains by 18:35, with a speed restriction until 16:00 the next day. The technical officer was unable to examine the ‘damages to the lines’ because he arrived after they had been cleared. One has to admire the Southern Railway engineers. Repair on this scale involved a massive organizational effort to assess the damage, clear the wreckage, fill in the crater, level the ballast bed, lay the sleepers, and emplace new rails for both trains and electrical supply. And this job was completed not for one track, but for four, inside 7½ hours. It was a major logistical exercise just to assemble the workers



The scene after [17] must have looked much like this earlier one outside New Malden station, but with a crater twice the size, and with four times as many men. From Wartime Southern

V-1 Flying Bombs reported in Merton and Morden 1944

N	Date	Time	Street or Area		Nearest Feature	K	A	B
1	18 June	00:28	Morden Hall fields		NE of Kenley Road / Morden Road jcnctn	-	-	-
2	" "	00:45	16 Northway	Rear	North Close	3	4	6
3	" "	03:15	Allotments (NW corner)		NE of Battersea New Cemetery	-	-	-
4	19 June	18:37	Battersea Sports Ground		Tennyson Avenue	-	-	-
5	22 June	21:13	Burlington Road	Road	Junction with Belmont Avenue	-	-	-
6	27 June	02:35	59 Malmesbury Road	Rear	Middleton Road	7	4	8
7	29 June	06:33	Nelson Gardens		High Path	-	-	-
8	2 July	00:15	23 Cannon Hill Lane	Rear	Springfield Avenue	1	3	5
9	3 July	01:27	Gladstone Home (SW corner)		Bishopsford Road / Seddon Road	-	-	-
10	" "	05:13	Wood in Morden Rec. Ground		No.2 Depot, Middleton + Faversham Rds	4	-	-
11	" "	07:56	16 Hazelwood Avenue	Rear	Beeleigh Road	3	2	11
12	4 July	09:10	Central Road (outside 169)	Road	Farm Road	1	1	10
13	" "	20:18	Office, Middleton Road	DH	Malmesbury Road	1	6	5
14	5 July	19:21	12 Martin Way	DH	Links Avenue	2	5	2
15	10 July	19:35	17/18 Church Lane	Rear	Sheridan Road	6	2	5
16	12 July	15:26	Merton Board Mills (SW corner)		Wandle Bank / Kingston Road	4	-	-
17	16 July	11:10	Southern Railway main line	DH	West Barnes Lane bridge	-	-	-
18	18 July	22:08	Sports Ground, Nursery Road		Morden Road	2	1	7
19	21 July	05:12	58/60 Morden Hall Road	DH	Bardney Road	3	5	1
20	" "	12:33	59 Shaldon Drive	Rear	Thurleston Avenue	-	1	5
21	22 July	05:32	Green beside Middleton Road		Junction with Malmesbury Road	-	-	-
22	23 July	04:36	54 Elm Walk	Rear	Southway	3	11	3
23	24 July	03:42	Chestnut Road (opposite 81 on cleared site) / Bushey Road	1	-	8
24	27 July	17:58	Spring House, Kingston Road	Garden	Mayfield Road	4	1	6
25	28 July	21:47	Cemetery, Garth Road		Garth Close	-	-	-
26	29 July	23:09	Science Lab, Rutlish School	DH	Station Road / Shelton Road	-	-	-
27	" "	23:11	147/153 Seymour Avenue	Rear	Cleveland Rise	1	4	-
28	3 Aug	00:54	Morden Park Golf Course		N of Peacocks Farm	-	-	-
29	4 Aug	19:05	Claremont Avenue (outside 53)	Road	Burlington Road	1	6	7
30	9 Aug	17:46	c.71 Whatley Avenue	Pavmnt	Martin Way	1	2	11
31	14 Aug	07:01	c.17 Vernon Avenue	Rear	Carlton Park Avenue / Kingston Road	9	9	16
32	20 Aug	14:12	John Innes Horticultural Ground		Cannon Hill Lane / Aylward Road	-	-	-
33	21 Aug	02:36	Joseph Hood Recreation Ground		(on tennis court)	-	-	-
34	24 Aug	18:22	169/171 Kingsbridge Road	Front	Cleveland Rise	1	4	6
35	29 Aug	21:19	c.53 Adela Avenue	Rear	Douglas Avenue	1	3	5

and the replacement components. As much of the work was done by manual labour, a large number of men was required. For example, to move a standard 60 ft (18 m) length of rail weighing about 2.7 tons (or tonnes) took a team of 25 men, with 12 on each side, and one to call the step.²

[18] This exploded on striking trees in the sports ground west of Nursery Road. Morden Road (rail) Halt was extensively damaged, and the single (goods) line closed until 23:10, while the signals and phones were not restored until 07:15 the next day. The house at 28 Nursery Road was demolished, being only 70 ft (21 m) from the explosion. Unfortunately, the family shelter in the back garden was also demolished, where John ('Jack') Wisbey, the stationmaster, died and his wife was severely injured, though their two small daughters escaped unharmed.³ Other 'extensive blast damage' included some as far away as Kendor Gardens public lavatory.

[20] This almost completely demolished a public shelter (fortunately unoccupied).



* V-Is (35)

Sites superimposed on an undated map issued with Merton and Morden: The Official Guide by Ed. J. Burrow & Co. Ltd., Publishers (Cheltenham and London) Crown Copyright Reserved

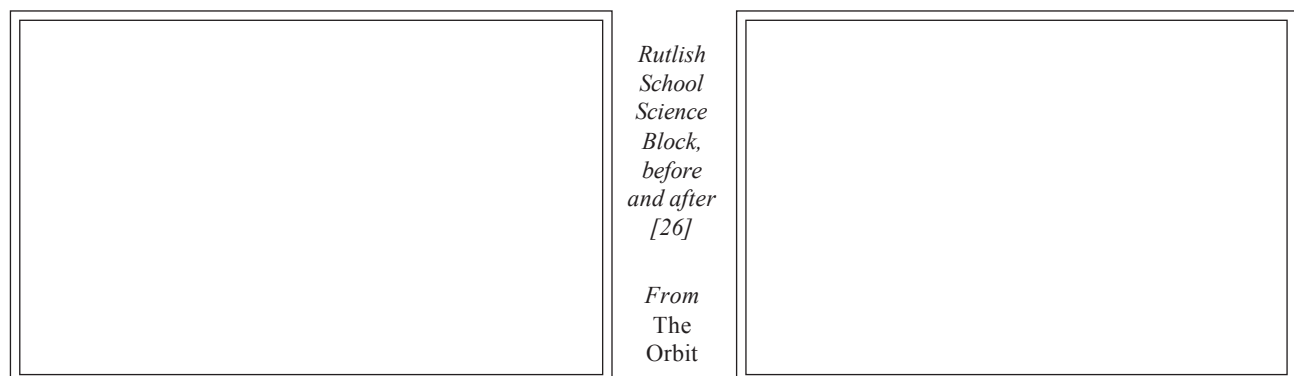
[21] The report laconically notes ‘no damage’. Since this V-1 had fallen in Malmesbury Road within 150 ft (45 m) of the sites of both [6] and [13], presumably this is shorthand for ‘no further damage can possibly be specifically attributed to this bomb in this already smashed-up area’. The whole area had to be completely rebuilt post-war.

[22] The local paper named nine people seriously injured here, as well as the three dead. ‘2 storey brick built houses ... not old property but not well built’. This is the only report to make any comment on the standard of construction. Numbers 48-62 Elm Walk have been completely rebuilt.

[23] The local paper reported that ‘the Rescue Squad extracted three seriously injured men’ from the wreckage of one house, but ‘toiled for hours in the ruins of another, only to learn that the occupants had been sleeping elsewhere but had failed to notify the ARP wardens’. Not surprisingly ‘this carelessness is resented by the men’.

[24] Unusually, this V-1 did not dive to earth immediately its engine stopped, but glided down in a semi-circle to hit this block of flats from the north, destroying 12 of the 18 flats.⁴ Four occupants were killed and three were seriously injured. The Council noted that properties along Kingston Road between Mayfield Road and The Rush had been severely damaged, including 160, the new terrace at 205a-c and the British Legion building at 217, which housed one of the Council’s British Restaurants. Obviously there was further damage north of the District boundary, to property in Wimbledon Borough. This included 43-51 Wilton Grove, which have all been rebuilt. The unfortunate British Legion building had already been damaged earlier the same day by a V-1 which had fallen on Wilton Crescent, and had previously suffered from the first ‘Wimbledon’ V-1, which fell on Cliveden Road on 16 June.⁵

[26] Rutlish School was closed and unoccupied for the holidays, so there were no casualties. However, the Science Block and part of the Junior School were demolished. Young Maurice Elton, living at 1 Rutlish Road (then Station Road), recalled the ‘horrifying scream of a dive-bomber’ as the V-1 dived and its deafening bang: ‘our shelter lurched as if being hit by a large wave of water’. Then as thick dust slowly settled, a Salvation Army refreshment van arrived on the scene, and neighbours stood around drinking cups of tea, discussing the near miss.⁶ Damage extended over the boundary into Wimbledon, up Hartfield and Gladstone Roads. Debris from the destruction of school buildings was thrown onto both railway lines, the conductor rails were displaced, and the Merton Park signal box, booking office and station house were all damaged. Despite the fact it was Saturday night, the lines were clear for steam trains by 02:50, and for electric trains by 08:30, though the telephone links to Wimbledon were not restored until 11:00.



[30] The house number is my estimate from the report measurements, and the fact that the sole death occurred at no.71 Whatley Avenue. Nos. 69-71 are the only obviously rebuilt properties, though 52-64 were also rebuilt by the Council. A few months after the bomb the Council asked for tenders to repair 35 other houses on the Whatley Estate.

[31] The house number is my estimate from the report measurements, and from noting that numbers 7-27 Vernon Avenue and 14-30 Carlton Park Avenue have been completely rebuilt.

[32] The report states ‘no casualties’, but Hubert Bradbury told me that this was not strictly true. Then a teenager, he heard the siren and decided to do a dramatic swan-dive into the Morrison shelter in the back room of the family home in Aylward Road. Alas, his timing was a little slow and he ‘met the French windows coming the other way’, as he put it. He received a nasty cut on the top of his head, later stitched at the Nelson Hospital. The following day he was much impressed by the *coach-loads* (his emphasis) of tilers and glaziers who descended on the street to effect emergency repairs.⁷

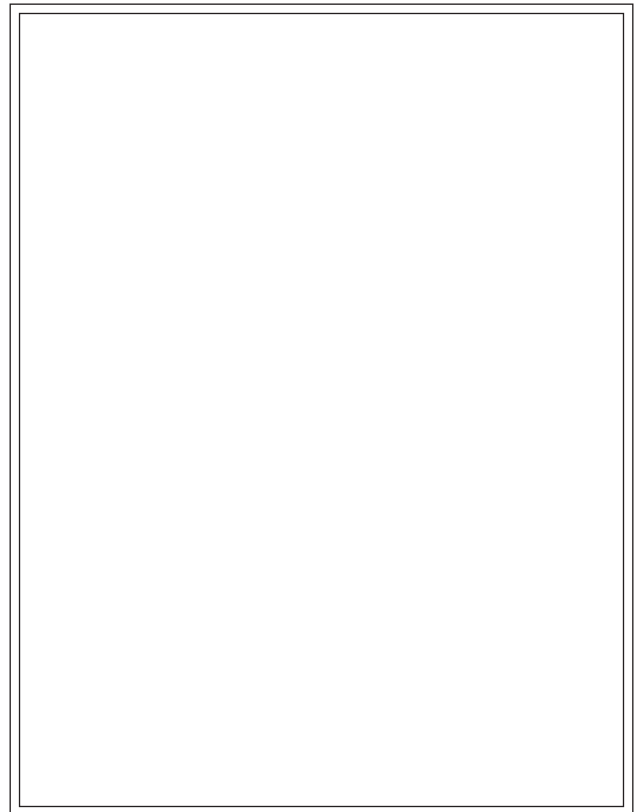
[34] Four people were seriously injured. It could have been much worse: a Womens Voluntary Service (WVS) member commented to the local paper ‘had it occurred a quarter of an hour earlier, there would have been a big crowd of men in the road, who are engaged in repairing damage caused by a previous incident’ (ie. by [27]).

[35] The house number is my estimate from the report measurements, and from observing that the upper storeys of 49-55 Adela Road have been rebuilt. This was the last V-1, and probably the last enemy action, on Merton and Morden – no V-2s or air-launched V-1s struck the District.

The Toll

The V-1 barrage is known to have killed 59 civilians in Merton and Morden⁸ – 28 men, 23 women and eight children. Of the 51 adults, no fewer than 16 were in public service – three men were in the Home Guard, five in the Rescue Squads, three were Air Raid Wardens and one lad was a messenger in the National Fire Service (NFS). Three women were in the WVS while a fourth was both in the WVS, and, unusually, a ‘Firewoman, NFS’. (Contemporary reports all give a total of 60 deaths: this probably includes a man who was injured in his Wimbledon home and who later died in the Nelson Hospital.) In Merton and Morden, a total of some 400 people had been injured by the V-1 campaign.

By early September just over 200 houses had been heavily damaged (or destroyed) and some 800 builders were under contract to the Council, in order to repair well over 12,000 houses with lesser damage, to a standard of ‘reasonable comfort’. Walking around our area nowadays, it is difficult to realise the sheer scale of the physical damage inflicted on the Urban District of Merton and Morden as almost all of the damaged houses have been rebuilt to the original plans, or to very sympathetic new plans, such as can be seen at 165-175 Kingsbridge Road.



*Emergency Repair Squad, all too common a sight in 1944
From The Doodlebugs*

- 1 Some details are taken from the meeting minutes of various Merton and Morden Council committees. As always, *London Main Line War Damage* by B W L Brooksbank (Capital Transport, 2007) has been invaluable for incidents affecting the railways. I have also used *The Doodlebugs* by Norman Longmate (Hutchinson, 1981) and *Wartime Southern* by Kevin Robertson et al (Noodle Books, 2009). It has been possible to glean some additional details from the local paper despite the efforts of wartime censors.
- 2 David Luff, pers. comm., Feb 2008
- 3 Joan Hall *Memories of Morden Road Station – Part 4* in Newsletter 220 (John Innes Society, March 2010)
- 4 John Wallace *Spring House in Merton* (John Innes Society, 1996)
- 5 Norman Plastow *Safe as Houses* (The Wimbledon Society, 1972, revised 1994)
- 6 Maurice G A Elton *Science at Rutlish in 1944* in *The Orbit* (Old Rutlishians Magazine, February 2003). Copy of the article kindly supplied by Hubert Bradbury.
- 7 Pers. comm., April 2007
- 8 One lady is recorded in the Civilian War Dead list for Surrey as having died in January 1945 at home in Crowland Walk, Morden. This normally indicates death due to a bomb, but no such incident is recorded in the District after the last V-1, nor is there any mention in the local papers, either of incident or funeral. Perhaps the date is wrong.

After the AGM

On 6 November, after the business of the Annual General Meeting, we held a not-too-serious local history quiz, with questions set by David Roe, Tony Scott and Judith Goodman. The worthy winner of an event which actually proved quite testing was **Bill Rudd**, whom we congratulate. Well done, Bill!

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

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

Printed by Peter Hopkins