



VICE PRESIDENTS: Arthur Turner, Lionel Green and William Rudd

BULLETIN NO. 124

DECEMBER 1997

PROGRAMME DECEMBER-MARCH

Saturday 6th December 2.30 pm Snuff Mill Environmental Centre

'The Spencers of Wimbledon'.

An illustrated talk by **Richard Milward** of the Wimbledon Society.

Mr Milward has made a close study of the Spencer family papers, at Althorp and in the British Library, and has published a book on the Spencers in Wimbledon.

(For the Snuff Mill Centre drivers should park in Morden Hall Garden Centre car-park and take the path across the bridge, go through the gateway and turn right towards Morden Cottage. Buses 93, 118, 164 etc.)

Saturday 17th January 2.30 pm Mitcham Library Hall

'North Mitcham'

by Eric Montague

An illustrated talk by Mitcham's best-known historian, and chairman of the Society.

Mitcham Library is in London Road, Mitcham. Bus 152 passes the door.

Saturday 21st February 2.30 pm Snuff Mill Environmental Centre

'Surrey Water Mills'

by Derek Stidder

This illustrated talk is a joint event with the Wandle Industrial Museum.

Thursday 19th March 7.30 pm Merton Local Studies Centre,

'Tramlink and its Historical Connections'

by John Gent of Croydon Natural History and Scientific Society

Mr Gent is well-known as a transport specialist, a historian of Croydon, and the author of a number of books.

The Local Studies Centre is situated on the ground floor of Merton Civic Centre, London Road, Morden.

TRAINS TO TRAMS

On Saturday 31 May an era of Merton's railway history came to an end, when the very last 2-coach electric multiple unit trundled its way from Wimbledon to West Croydon.

For the next two years a half-hourly bus service will replace the trains, while the infrastructure is changed to that of a tramway. All being well, and on time, you will at the end of 1999 be able once more to ride the rails to West Croydon and then beyond.

The railway opened in 1855 and provided a connection between the L&SWR and the L&B&SCR. The initial service saw six weekday and two Sunday trains, and this gradually increased over the years to 1914, when there were 16 weekday returns plus five between Wimbledon and Sutton, and 12 on Sundays. Electrification came in 1930, and for this a half-hourly service operated using two 2-coach electric multiple units. On Sundays there was an hourly service, which continued until the end of the last war, when a half-hourly service was introduced. The Sunday service was curtailed in the early 1960s, and then abandoned altogether.

During the early 1970s every building on the line was refurbished, and each station and all equipment was repainted. On completion, British Rail tried their darn hardest to close the line. Fortunately commonsense prevailed and closure was refused.

The semaphore signalling gave way to colour lights in the mid-1980s. All signal boxes closed and the line came under the control of Clapham Junction's new Power Box. With the new signalling the line's service was curtailed, and even with the two passing loops both still in place, it became operational as a single line, and so required only one Emu for the services.

My own memories of the line date back to 1956 when I started at Dundonald Road Junior School. Once school was over for the day I would hurry along to the footbridge by the level crossing in Dundonald Road, and await the late afternoon Merton Abbey coal train, which always had an 0-6-0 C2X or C on. At the time I had no idea where it went, but I did know from where it had come. For while at school I could hear the trains and see the smoke, and it was not long before I started taking the long way home. If I went missing Mum always knew where to go to find me.

I cannot remember the early electric trains, for two years prior to my finding the line brand new 2-EPB units had taken over, of which units 5753 and 5754 were the line's regular performers until the 1980s.

During the final years there was a train each way roughly every 90 minutes but on the last day a half-hourly service was provided to cater for the expected many railway enthusiasts (sometimes referred to as 'trainspotters') and daytrippers. 456 electrical multiple units 017 and 024 ran throughout the day, with 024 sporting its new Connex yellow-grey livery on the very last service train, the 1905 from Wimbledon. The train did not leave in the usual style. There were no detonators or horn blowing, but with the railways now privatised it is the 'fat cat' wages and shareholders' dividends that's more important, not tradition.

Since the line closed there have been a number of letters to our local papers by readers who claim to have been regular users of the line, but to have had no idea that the line was to close until it actually had. I wonder where these people have been for the last ten years or so, in a deep coma?

Of the infrastructure along the line only Merton Park and Mitcham station buildings survive, the former out of use for many years and badly vandalised, and the latter refurbished for non-railway use. All other stations had succumbed to the 'bus shelters', all of which have been vandalised and graffitied by our local two-legged vermin.

The goods train has long gone from the line, as has the long siding and coal yard at Merton Abbey. The gasworks and electric generating station with their many connecting sidings and own locomotives are now but a memory, and how many know where the permanent way depot was in Mitcham? It was here in 1936 that the new trackwork and points for the remodelling of Waterloo station were laid out prior to installation.

Only the signal box at Mitcham Junction survived until the line closed, although it had been out of use since the introduction of the colour light signalling, but it had gone by the end of June in preparation for the new flyover here. Major reconstruction is due to start in August, when platform 10 at Wimbledon is to close, leaving only 9 for through running from the City to Sutton. On re-opening platform 10 will have City trains terminating on the western side, and the trams on the eastern. New stations in our area are due to be built at the Dundonald Road crossing in Wimbledon, and at Belgrave Walk and Phipps Bridge in Mitcham.

One major problem along the line is the frequent flooding that occurs during very heavy periods of rain, just to the west of Mitcham station. Here there is also extensive buttressing to retain the northern wall of the cutting. No doubt all this has been taken into account - and most likely we can look forward to tram services being disrupted by flooding from time to time.

Even with all the heavy industry gone from the line there are still many factories and warehouses which could generate traffic for the railway, but sadly to my knowledge tramways in this country do not cater for the goods train. This of course could change in the future as more and more roads begin to mimic the M25 carpark, and with the enthusiastic Mr Burkhardt now in charge of the vast majority of our freight network, who knows what the future might hold? (Mr Ed Burkhardt, for the non-railway minded is the new owner of England, Wales and Scotland freight operation, and such is his enthusiasm and personality he has managed to totally outshine Mr Richard Branson. No easy task that, not to mention his ordering of 250 class 59 diesel/electric locos - but that's another story.)

One final point for all those who enjoy the delights of travelling over Kingston Road in personal automobiles. You should make the most of the next two years. There was a time when the crossing gates closed roughly every 90 minutes or so. Come the tramway there could be six trams each way every hour.

David Luff

THOSE WERE THE DAYS

The article reproduced below was extracted (with permission) from a recent newsletter of the Education Department of the London Borough of Merton. It obviously relates to one of our local schools in 1925.

Tony Scott

Found during our office move ... some things do get better!

Letter from Head Teacher to Divisional Education Officer June 1925

SUGGESTIONS RE EARTH CLOSETS

Present system

The closets are furnished with movable receptacles (pails), the contents of which are removed twice weekly. On being emptied a quantity of Jeyes fluid is placed in the pail.

Proposed system

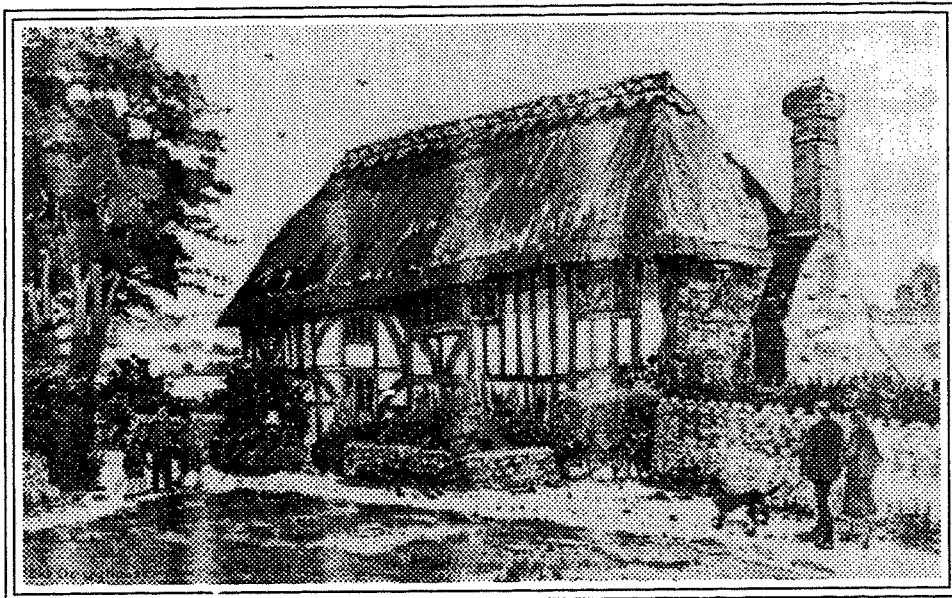
The same system to be followed with the addition of the use of sawdust as an absorbent after individual use of the closet. A receptacle containing sawdust to be placed in each closet.

Response to Head Teacher from Divisional Education Officer

Your proposed system for dealing with the closets will be quite satisfactory provided that strict instructions are given that no liquid must be put into the pans. The surveyor is of the opinion that sawdust, dry earth or ashes should be used, together with sanitary powder, not liquid. I have therefore today given an order for a supply of Jeyes sanitary powder to be sent to use for this purpose. Please let me know when this system is in thorough working order.

Can you get small boxes for holding the sawdust or ashes, and send the account to me?

CLERGY HOUSE, ALFRISTON



'Tiny but beautiful, with orchard and a sweep of lowland river behind it'. So the Clergy House was described in the 1890s by Octavia Hill, on the outskirts of the South Downs village of Alfriston, beside the Tye, or village green, and between the 14th century St Andrew's church and the River Cuckmere.

The Clergy House may have been built as early as 1350, in the aftermath of the Black Death, which struck Britain in 1348. Out of a population of 4,000,000 people, around 1,500,000 died from this strain of bubonic plague in the first two years. It killed eight of the thirteen Augustinian canons at Michelham Priory nearby. Half the land was left untilled, and the manor houses ruined or abandoned. Latin graffiti scrawled on a church in Hertfordshire sum up the desperate mood of those left alive: '1350, wretched, wild, distracted. The dregs of the mob alone survive to tell the tale'. It took decades for the economy to recover, but, when it did, building began again with renewed flourish. The Clergy House was probably built by a yeoman farmer who had prospered in this stricken land. In the 15th century it passed into the hands of Michelham Priory, and remained church property for the next five centuries.

When the Church Commissioners visited Alfriston in the early 18th century, they found the building 'in good repair'. However by the late 19th century it was practically derelict, and demolition was proposed. It is almost entirely thanks to one man, the local vicar, the Rev.F.W.Beynon, that the Clergy House survived. He set up an appeal to save this ancient building, and then in 1896 arranged its sale to the National Trust, for a token £10. The Clergy House was the very first historic building acquired by the Trust, and the first that it restored. From these modest beginnings has grown all the Trust's work with historic buildings large and small over the past 100 years.

As the Clergy House was church property, the responsibility for its upkeep had fallen on the vicar of St Andrew's. By 1885 it was so dilapidated that the then incumbent had received permission from the Church Commissioners to demolish it and sell the materials. However, the occupier, a woman who had spent her entire life there, pleaded to be allowed to end her days under its roof. Demolition was deferred, and she survived until 1888. In the following year Mr Beynon was appointed to the living.

In the 1890s there was a growing interest in the ancient vernacular buildings of Britain. Beynon, a member of the Sussex Archaeological Society, quickly realised that the Clergy House was an important relic of medieval England. For seven years he sought to save the building. He turned to his own Society for technical advice, and to the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (founded of course by our William Morris). Both were encouraging, but could not provide the money to pay for the urgently needed repairs.

In August 1892 Beynon launched an appeal for £450, to repair the building and convert it for use as a reading room and for other parochial purposes. He had the backing of both Societies and a long list of notables, headed by the Dukes of Norfolk, Devonshire and Newcastle 'who expressed their cordial sympathy and offered assistance'. However by February 1893 the appeal had produced only £124. The gaping holes in the thatch roof were covered with matchboarding, but the building remained in a perilous state.

Then, in July 1894, the SPAB advised Beynon to approach the 'National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty' - which had been formed only ten days before.

Peter D.Harris

MRS ESTHER MARIA CRANMER'S RECIPE BOOK

The following extracts were made by Miss Caroline A.Crisp, formerly Barnes Borough Librarian, and published in the Barnes and Mortlake History Society Newsletter No.16 in September 1965. Mrs Cranmer's Recipe Book, dated 1796, was acquired for the Barnes Library in or shortly before 1965. Enquiries in 1990 at the London Borough of Richmond's Local Studies Library (which since the reorganisation of the London Boroughs in 1965 has included Barnes and Mortlake) failed to locate the book, and its present whereabouts are unknown.

I am indebted to Raymond Gill of Surrey Archaeological Society for supplying me with a copy of part of the Barnes and Mortlake Society's Newsletter No.16 during the course of correspondence in 1990, and in view of Esther Maria's connection with Mitcham, reproduce the note *verbatim*.

"AN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY RECIPE BOOK"

In 1791 Esther Cranmer, member of a notable Mitcham family, married a Mr R.Dixon, and the couple came to reside in East Sheen, at the house later known as Holly Lodge on the east side of the Hare and Hounds. Mr Dixon died a few years later, but Mrs Dixon lived in the house for many years, calling herself Mrs Cranmer.

In 1796 Mrs Dixon began to keep 'A Receipt Book'. This little book contains a wonderful mixture of recipes for food and drink, furniture oil, Roman incense, a mixture to prevent the taste of turnips in milk, yellow and purple dyes, cures for rheumatism, chilblains, eye troubles, thinning hair, colds, pains in the stomach, coughs, sprains in horses and other horsey complaints, and instructions for washing linen.

Pride of place is given to a recipe for which Lady Paul paid £3 3s. This is for preserving apricots, peaches or nectarines in brandy, and to a present-day cook there seems nothing remarkable enough in it to warrant the expenditure of three 18th-century guineas, but an interesting point is that the fruit must be turned in the syrup with a bunch of white feathers.

Mock turtle stew was a calf's head stewed in veal gravy with mace, onions, nutmeg, pepper, salt, leeks, marjoram, lemon, thyme and a pint of madeira wine. An anchovy or two were added when the meat was tender, and the stew was sent to the table with forcemeat balls and hard-boiled eggs.

Oyster sausages were made of mutton, beef suet and oysters, seasoned with salt, pepper and nutmeg, and bound with eggs. French Hedgehog was nothing more interesting than stuffed leg of veal.

Most of the remedies to be applied externally for rheumatism contained camphor, oil of turpentine, or mustard, and cures to be taken internally for different complaints contained such interesting items as tutty, hartshorn shavings, eringo root, china root, snails and balsam of tolu. One recipe for the cure of a violent cold has a note at the end which states that the mixture of linseed, liquorice and stoned raisins in syrup, with a teaspoonful of vinegar or lemon juice, and the same quantity of old rum added to each dose, 'has cured an almost confirmed consumption'.

Well-known local names appear as donors of recipes, - Lady Watson (rice cake, rice cream and rheumatism), Miss Crabtree (chilblains), Mrs Peach (stewed loin of mutton, New College puddings, rice paste, ground rice plum pudding, and a pain in the stomach), Miss Best (Roman incense), and Mrs D Lysons (36 gallons of soup - 'this given to the poor of Putney'), and it is interesting to find that Nelson's Emma, Lady Hamilton, had a way of pickling beef.

Ingredients apart, the recipes and the collection of them gives an interesting insight into life of the period, particularly that of the ladies.

E.N.Montague

Tutty is zinc oxide.

Eringo is sea holly.

China root is the root of *Smilax china*, which is similar to sarsaparilla.

Balsam of tolu was obtained by incision of the bark of *Myrospermum toluiferum*, a South American tree.

LOCAL HISTORY WORKSHOPS - REPORTS

Workshop meeting on 12 September 1997

- ❖ Maps, old and new, were the theme of William Rudd's discourse. By enlarging small sections of local up-to-date survey maps to the exact scale of 19th-century maps, and comparing the two, small subtle historic changes can be recorded.
- ❖ Sixty-five acres is the quoted area of Merton Priory, we are told by Lionel Green, but that is the precincts of the church and living-quarters. The north-west boundary is a mystery. The 'ancient monument' wall parallel to the present Station Road may have been the northern boundary of the kitchen garden.
- ❖ Trying to put Stane Street into perspective, Bill Sole followed the route of the Roman Army to Morayshire in AD 84.
- ❖ A charming bone china powder bowl recently acquired by Wandle Industrial Museum was displayed by Peter Harris. Decorations on the sides and lid had a motif from William Morris's designs.
- ❖ Paucity of cartography before 19th century tithe maps and Ordnance Survey maps make the tracing of properties and proprietors of an earlier period very difficult and occasionally impossible, though the topographical details in surviving deeds and leases enables the identification of some fieldnames from as far back as the 16th century. This was the basis of the contribution from Peter Hopkins.

C.E.Sole

Workshop meeting on 24 October 1997

- ❖ Ray Ninnis made a brief appearance (curtailed by other commitments) to return a copy of the record of monumental inscriptions in Mitcham parish churchyard, made by members of the East Surrey Family History Society in 1990-2. This impressive tome, part of which was compiled by our member, the late Jack Bailey, is an extremely useful source of dates etc. for those researching local families. It still needs an index - any offers?
- ❖ The workshop proper was opened by Sheila Harris, who produced a box of surface finds collected recently from the Canons sports ground by Michael Jewry of Harlow, and deposited with the Wandle Industrial Museum. Bill Rudd will attempt identification and report back, when we shall all have a go!.
- ❖ Judith Goodman handed round enlargements of recently discovered photographs (c.1923-7), and from Sutton Archive and Local Studies Department) of West Barnes from the air, and of Dudley Lodge and its grounds. There was also a later newspaper photograph of Ivy House. Both were built by Charles Blake in the 1860s, and long gone. She had interesting comments to make about George Blay, the developer of much of the Grand Drive area in the inter-war years.
- ❖ Bill Rudd gave the story behind a cast-iron railway 'chair' from the Society's collection, loaned to the Canons Heritage Centre. Dated 1883 and marked 'L&SWR', it had come from one of the several sidings serving the Board Mills and connecting with the Merton Abbey branch line opened in 1868.
- ❖ The recent exposure by the Museum of London Archaeology Service of a fine section of Roman Stane Street (complete with flint metalling and one boundary ditch) close to the Pickle Ditch off Priory Road was described by Bill Sole. This confirms Bill's long-held conviction that the road followed a direct line between Colliers Wood and Morden, passing across the future site of Merton Priory.
- ❖ Peter Harris showed photographs of a burial found on the Priory site during excavations in the 1980s. The photographer, a fellow-member of the Scientific Society, was puzzled by the remains of a wooden stake protruding from the rib-cage. Bill Rudd recalled that no wood from coffins had survived, and the general opinion was that the object must have been from a post-medieval intrusion - perhaps a fence post.
- ❖ Peter Hopkins initiated a discussion on the confusing terminology in old deeds to describe the abutments and boundaries of parcels of land. His recent work has disclosed interesting details of the land occupied by the Mauvillains with Growtes house at Morden. Bill Rudd reported that Miss Jowett's notebooks are in the new local studies library, and it is hoped that they may lead to rediscovery of the inventory of Growtes, from which some idea might be formed of the layout of the property in the late 17th century.

- ❖ Using old maps, Lionel Green outlined the complex history of the Skew Arch and the smaller accommodation arch at Raynes Park station, as the railway companies sought to provide for additional lines. For some unknown reason the 'kink' had existed in the road to Kingston at least 50 years before the London and Southampton railway company, wishing to alter the angle, met opposition from Merton Vestry. Why the latter should object is a mystery, and we are now stuck with an extraordinary little tunnel!
- ❖ Finally E.N.M. described briefly the reported discovery during World War II of a 'secret tunnel' between Clive Road and Robinson Road, which was almost certainly a portion of the cellars of old Colliers Wood House; the interesting details that can be provided by the deeds of a cottage without which it is often difficult to say very much; a query received from John Pile of Bedhampton, Havant, concerning the possibly significant pattern of former fields off Central Road, Morden; and the final draft of a book being produced on Merton by the London Ecology Unit, on which Judith Goodman, Peter Hopkins, Bill Rudd and he have been invited to comment.

E.N.Montague

Next workshop dates: Friday 30th January and Friday 13th March, 7.30 pm at Wandle Industrial Museum, Vestry Hall Annexe, Mitcham

AN INTRIGUING STORY

Some months ago I was approached by a family who live in New Zealand to see if I could find out something about one of their ancestors.

They told me his name was Joseph Chapman Retter, and that he had been born at Blue House in Malden on September 9th 1838. His parents were Samuel Joseph Chapman Retter and Jane Retter née Phiip [sic]. In 1841 the family, consisting of the parents, Joseph and a younger boy, emigrated to New Zealand in the *Lord William Bentinck*.

Behind this event lies an intriguing tale! The story was told by a granddaughter of Joseph Retter and later transcribed from a very indistinct tape recording:

Quite a few years before, a young lady [had] arrived at their place¹ very very pregnant (and being pregnant in those days in good families!), and passed out. She was wearing at that time a grey dress and a gold bracelet.

The family took her in, and in due course a baby girl was born.

And apparently before she died her parents were looking for her. And they came through his village. And they saw her kid playing on the footpath. And they spotted the old bracelet. And they went in and saw grandfather². And the people told grandfather they recognised the bracelet, and they took the child. And they gave them³ the money to emigrate to New Zealand.

Grandfather always called her the Little One, and never said her name or who she was.

1. Presumably the Retters' house
2. 'Grandfather' would have been Joseph Retter, who must have heard the story from his father, Samuel, and who as a toddler probably played with the little girl.
3. The Retter family

Blue House was almost on the boundary between Merton and Malden, but just within Merton, which meant having to examine both Merton and Malden parish records. I also examined records of marriages and births and the census returns at the Public Record Office. I found no trace of the Retters.

In 1828 the freeholder of Blue House Farm was D.H.Rucker, and it was tenanted by Captain Alexander Clarke, a friend of Edward Rayne. From 1838-41 the tenancy was taken by Alexander Duff (senior), who ran Blue House Farm with Motspur Farm, not occupying Blue House Farm himself but leasing it. (I have extracted the information in this paragraph from detailed research by the late J.N. Wallace on 'The History of West Barnes'. The typed manuscript, bound in several volumes, is available for reference at the Surrey Record Office, but does not have a reference number.)

If any reader comes across anything which could throw light on this strange story please let me know. One imagines the events might have been the occasion for much gossip at the time.

Barbara Webb, Old Malden

[Editor's note: From John Wallace's notes, Daniel Henry Rucker was a son of John Anthony Rucker, the City merchant and calico printer of Wandle Villa at Phipps Bridge, and later of West Hill, Putney.]

KEW BRIDGE STEAM MUSEUM

Just five members and one friend turned up at Green Dragon Lane on Saturday 23rd August for what proved to be an interesting and exciting visit. The museum is housed in the former Grand Junction Water Works Company's pumping station at Kew Bridge, whose standpipe tower is a local landmark. As well as the five famous Cornish beam pumping engines, which pumped London's drinking water for more than a century, the exhibits include a range of other engines, steam, diesel and electric, a recently installed waterwheel, steam traction engines, a machine shop, a forge and a large range of items related to water treatment and supply. The tower (built in 1867), which is *not* a chimney, houses two systems of vertical pipes, in which the water pressure was stabilised between the pumping engines and the water mains.

The oldest Cornish engine here was built in 1820 by Boulton & Watt at their Soho Foundry, Birmingham, for the Chelsea works, and was moved to Kew in 1839-40. The 1838 Maudslay engine was built in Lambeth, and the 'Bull' from Hayle, Cornwall, dates from 1856-7. But the great 90-inch engine is the star of the show. It was built by Sandys, Carne & Vivian of Hayle in 1846. Now the largest beam engine working anywhere in the world, it is steamed up at weekends and on special days. We watched its 'minder' coaxing it into life, until with an extraordinary rushing roar it began its plunging action. Flights of iron steps enable you to gaze at the awesome monster from different heights and angles, and a very absorbing experience it is. Even larger (but not as aesthetically appealing) is the 100-inch engine, built by Harvey's of Hayle. It is not at present in running order, but, even silent and still, is an impressive sight.

Other attractions included an irresistible 2' gauge railway trip around the yard, a friendly tearoom, and an unusually good shop, where the emphasis is on industrial history and archaeology. The staff on duty seemed mostly to be volunteers, who were very ready to explain and demonstrate, and it was good to see that female visitors were hardly outnumbered by boys of all ages! This was a visit to recommend.

J.G.

Kew Bridge Steam Museum, Green Dragon Lane, Brentford is open daily 11am - 5pm. Admission charge. Telephone: 0181 568 7432

MORDEN WALK, LED BY BILL RUDD, 20 September 1997

On a fine sunny September afternoon 18 members met Bill Rudd outside St Lawrence church for a guided tour round the village of Morden. It soon became apparent to us all that we were in the capable hands of an expert who knew and loved his patch.

The church, of which the earliest record dates from 1205, was rebuilt in 1636, and the churchyard is even older. The gravestones cover the whole spectrum of village life.

From the church we noticed the horse trough in memory of horses that suffered in the South African War, and across the road we could see Morden First School, which was founded in 1831 in its original position in Central Road, and moved to its present site in 1910.

Passing on to Merton College, opened in 1971, we quickly moved on to Morden Park House, now sadly boarded up, and possibly to be the new Register Office in the future. This handsome Georgian villa was built in 1770 for John Ewart and later lived in by some rich bankers. Once used as a golf clubhouse, it has been empty and derelict for many years.

From Morden Park Swimming Baths opened in 1967 we could see across the Park the Mound, thought to be a Romano-British burial mound. Bill was not entirely convinced that this was so. He did agree that it was man-made, but there was no evidence that the Mound was built before the Park was laid out in 1869.

Passing through the Park we then joined the London Road by the *George Inn* - once the *George and Dragon* - named after George IV. However, as Bill pointed out, the present inn sign shows George V.

We returned to the parish church, where Bill gave us a very informative and interesting tour. The church retains much of its rural charm, and is a combination of the ancient and modern. It is comparatively little altered since rebuilding in 1636, but the original church is thought to have existed in Saxon times. Items of interest, inside and outside the church, include many monuments to the Rutter family of Ravensbury Mill, the Hoares, bankers of Fleet Street, and the Garths, lords of the manor for many generations; a three-decker pulpit of 1720 and a gallery built in 1792 for the Sunday School.

We finished our tour in the churchyard, about which Bill is a positive mine of information, having done extensive research into most of the monuments and gravestones. He truly deserves the title 'Mr Morden', as I am sure there is nothing he doesn't know about Morden, its buildings and its people.

S.Harris

EVELYN JOWETT MEMORIAL LECTURE - 17th October 1997

Some 30 members and visitors attended this year's lecture, held at the Raynes Park Assembly Hall adjoining Raynes Park Library. Our Chairman, Eric Montague, began with a tribute to Evelyn Jowett, one of the leading figures in the founding of our Society in 1951, who served as Secretary for many years, and later as Vice President until her death in 1990. She is known to most of those interested in local history as the editor and main author of *A History of Merton & Morden*, published in 1951 as part of the Festival of Britain celebrations, as well as numerous newspaper articles and other historical writings. She had been Librarian of Merton and Morden before the formation of the London Borough of Merton in 1965, and held a senior post thereafter. Many long-term users of Raynes Park Library still remember her there, working behind the scenes. In 1987 she published *Raynes Park - A Social History*, so it was very fitting that this year's lecture should be on the history of Raynes Park.

Our lecturer was Pat Nicolaysen, a member of both Surrey Archaeological Society and Kingston Upon Thames Archaeological Society. Pat is an eminent archaeologist, and co-editor of the *Surrey Archaeological Collections*, but this evening she was speaking as a resident of West Barnes for over 40 years. Her talk, *A Walk around West Barnes*, was based on the booklet of the same name by John Wallace, another respected Merton historian who died in 1995.

Although some Bronze Age pottery was found recently at the Meadbrook site in Grand Drive, there is no evidence of any permanent settlement here. The name West Barnes comes from the time of Merton Priory's ownership of the manor of Merton between 1121 and 1538. The main Priory Grange was in the east of the parish, just outside the priory walls, but the west barns were in the area between Cannon Hill and the Beverley Brook. In the early 16th century the West Barnes estate, consisting of nearly 600 acres of wood, arable and pasture land, was leased by the Priory to tenants. After the Dissolution of the Priory in 1538 it was sold to the Gresham family, who sold most of it to their tenant John Carpenter of Merton between 1568 and 1598. Successive generations of Carpenters divided the estate into three smaller farms. West Barnes Farm in the north-west, was based around the original moated farm house, and was therefore also known as Moat Farm. John Carpenter's son Henry had built another farm house in the Eastfield around 1612, and this became known as West Barnes Park, the property of the Rayne family in the 19th century. The third Carpenter farm was in the south-west, and in due course became known as Bluehouse Farm. The Carpenters remained as tenant farmers in the area until the early-19th century, though they had lost their freehold interest by 1737. A fourth farm, Blagdon's, included part of the former West Barnes estate, sold by the Greshams in 1573/4.

A map of 1723, now in the Wimbledon Society's Museum, shows the West Barnes Park estate when it was in the possession of Dr John Budgen. This estate was east of West Barnes Lane. Most of Pat's talk related to West Barnes Lane itself, though the 'Walk' started at Raynes Park Station, built at the request (and cost) of Richard Garth, lord of the manor of Morden, who had bought the Rayne estate for housing development. By switching between 'old' photographs and present day views we were able to see not only the changes that have taken place, but also remnants of an earlier age. Old field boundaries are still followed by present day roads, and boundary hedges and trees still survive, most notably the oak tree at the corner of Arthur Road. A metal hut at the Raynes Park end of West Barnes Lane may be the remnant of the old forge. An old barn off Seaforth Avenue is now occupied by an upholstery business. 'Dickson's Cottages', built around 1864 for farm labourers, still stand next to the footbridge opposite the school, and 'West Barnes Terrace', built by 'Squire' Blake (of Bluehouse Farm) around 1884, can still be seen on the east of the West Barnes level crossing. Blake also built the four 'Blue House Cottages', of which two survive, at the far south of the Borough, across Motspur Park level crossing, where West Barnes Lane meets the road called Motspur Park.

However, most of the area, apart from the many sports grounds, is covered by houses from the first four decades of the 20th century. Adela and Estella Avenues were named after the daughters of the land-owner/developer William Furmage Palmer, of Blagdons Farm, around 1900, while Phyllis Avenue was named after the daughter of Sidney Parkes, a multi-millionaire developer, in 1925, and Arthur Road after his son. In the 1930s George Blay developed roads to the east of the railway, formerly the Raynes Park Golf Course. The Golf Club was founded around 1890, on the slopes of Cannon Hill. A special rule of the Club takes us to an earlier age: "Any member finding a sheep in difficulties on the course should right it"! Many thanks to Pat Nicolaysen for a fascinating evening, and to Judy Goodman for providing the slides, both ancient and modern. We look forward to a conducted walk in the area in September.

Peter Hopkins

'BUNCE'S DITCH'

With regret I feel I have to comment on an item appearing on page 15 of *Bulletin* 123 (September 1997), in the report of the Workshop meeting on 11 July 1997.

Mindful that the wary local historian should always treat the recollections of aged minds with a degree of caution, I would nevertheless submit that, to the best of my knowledge, the stream flowing between the backs of the houses in Runnymede and the site of Merton Priory was never known as 'Bunce's Ditch.'

It is unfortunate that the Museum of London, in the book on Merton Priory published in 1993, mistakenly gave the watercourse this name. They readily admit that in the final rush to publish errors escaped notice, but the damage has now been done and, as might be expected, some people have been misled.

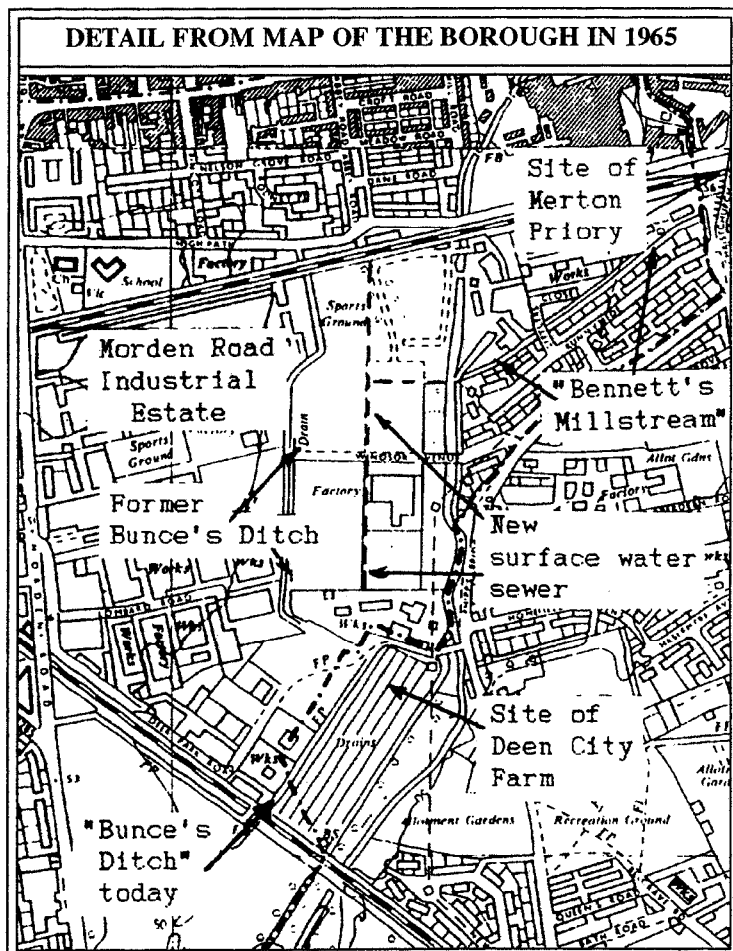
This watercourse is marked on a map of c.1825 as 'Mr. Bennett's Back Ditch' (Bennett was a local calico printer). It was known to Council officials responsible for rivers pollution in the immediate post-war period as 'Liberty's tail race'. With Liberty's gone, and after careful consideration, it was renamed "Bennett's Millstream" in the early 1990s by Merton Council's Leisure Services Department. As such it appears in the Council's Wandle Strategy Report of 1993.

The statement that 'Bunce's Ditch is shown clearly on the current OS map', incorporated in the entry in the Greater London Sites and Monuments Record is also somewhat misleading. The officer of English Heritage responsible for the G.L.S. & M.R., with whom I discussed the matter recently, assures me that whereas the watercourse behind Runnymede is marked on the OS maps, it is not given a name.

The real Bunce's Ditch was roughly a quarter of a mile to the west of the priory site, on the opposite side of the Wandle. It was called, presumably, after the farmer who, late in the 19th century, was in occupation of much of the land now covered by the factory estates off Morden Road north of Morden Hall Park. The ditch survived long after Bunce's fields had disappeared, and in the 1950s could be seen flowing in a south to north direction beside a public footpath running past the backs of the factories in Lombard Road. Frequently polluted with oil and chemicals from these works, the ditch was a constant source of complaints to Merton and Morden Urban District Council, for whom I worked at the time. The open ditch was abolished when Deer Park Road was extended northwards to meet Windsor Avenue in the development of the factory estate during the late 1960s, and was replaced by a new surface water sewer some 100 metres to the east. Today this is known by the National Rivers Authority as 'Bunce's Ditch', although as a watercourse it is no longer visible.

What most people now accept as 'Bunce's Ditch' is the drainage channel near the railway footbridge leading from 'Bunce's Meadow' (where Deen City Farm is situated) to Morden Hall Park. Strictly speaking, in these contexts neither name is historically justified ('Bunce' was adopted by newcomers to the district some 10 years ago) but both are now in general usage and serve to keep the memory of farmer Bunce alive.

The Museum's mistake is best ignored, since we cannot alter what has been printed. I trust you will agree, however, that as an historical society we must ensure that the error is not repeated in any of our publications in future, since this will not only perpetuate the misconception, but will confuse readers.



E. N. Montague

GREATER LONDON SITES AND MONUMENTS RECORD

Bill Rudd's meticulous account of observations relating to Stane Street has now been placed on permanent record.

GREATER LONDON SITES AND MONUMENTS RECORD ARCHAEOLOGY PRINT

09-OCT-1997

SMR Reference:	023155	Standing Structure?:	N		
Borough(s):	MERTON	Name:	STANE STREET		
Address(es):	LONDON ROAD	Grid Reference(s):	TQ 25075 67665 C		
Chronologies:					
Progression:	ORIGINAL				
	Period	Type	Class General	Class Specific	Part?
	RO	ROAD	TRANSPORT	STRUCTURE	
Evidence(s):	EXCAVATED/PART EXCAVATED SITE				

Additional Notes:

Observations made during building works by W.J.Rudd, 1963. A series of layers of flint and chalk were observed in three sections of a construction trench for a telephone service chamber. This was interpreted as forming part of the route of Stane Street.

Bibliographies:

PS MHS: RUDD, W.J. STANE STREET IN UPPER MORDEN LOCAL HISTORY NOTES 3 1990 Checked
UN MHS: SOLE, C.E. LETTER RE. STANE STREET IN UPPER MORDEN 1997 Checked

MERTON LOCAL STUDIES CENTRE

At last Merton has caught up with Sutton, Kingston, Croydon and Wandsworth (to name only a few). The new Local Studies Centre for the London Borough of Merton has opened. It is in what was Morden reference library, on the ground floor of the Civic Centre. At the time of writing, material is still coming in from Wimbledon and Mitcham and hard work is going on, sorting and storing maps, books, pictures, documents, newspapers and so on.

The staff are helpful and very keen that people should use this new facility, which is *not* just for 'serious' researchers. General historical reference material has been retained, and also the IGI index. Other reference stock is now upstairs in the lending library; and newspaper and magazine browsers have been allotted a corner downstairs there.

It is important that the new Centre is seen to be appreciated, and used.

Opening times are:

Monday	10am - 7pm
Tuesday	10am - 5pm
Wednesday	10am - 7pm
Thursday	10am - 1pm
Friday	10am - 5pm
Saturday	10am - 5pm

MERTON HERITAGE CENTRE

The Canons
Madeira Road
MITCHAM
CR4 4HD

0181 640 9387

Open: Fri/Sat

10am - 5pm

Admission Free

Closed from 4.30 Dec 20; re-opens Jan 9.

Heritage Officer: Sarah Gould

The Heritage Centre is always looking for volunteers to join their team. If you are interested do give Sarah Gould a call.

EVENTS

Until 31 Jan 1998

Carriages & Crinolines: Life in Victorian Merton

13 Feb - 2 May 1998

The Butcher, the Baker, the Candlestick-maker:
The changing face of the high street in Merton

If you have any pictures, objects or memories relating to any of the Borough's high streets, the Heritage Centre would like to hear from you.

REAR-ADMIRAL ISAAC SMITH OF ABBEY GATE HOUSE - A NEGLECTED LOCAL CELEBRITY?

The visit of the replica of James Cook's *Endeavour* to Brighton Marina last September gave me a chance to renew my acquaintance with this fascinating ship, first made as she lay at the dockside in Fremantle, Western Australia, in March 1994. The idea of constructing a replica of HM Barque *Endeavour*, which was built at Whitby in 1764, emerged in the 1960s, but it was not until the Australian Government decided to erect a national maritime museum on the shores of Sydney Harbour to mark the 1988 Bicentennial of European settlement that the museum trustees accepted the challenge.

By March 1994 the new *Endeavour* was ready for her sea trials, and she was commissioned on 16 April 1994. Last summer this all-Australian ship visited ports around the British coast as part of her world tour before returning to Sydney.

Merton's connection with Captain Cook's most celebrated voyage of discovery stems from his decision to take with him in April 1768 young Isaac Smith, his wife's cousin. Isaac was promoted midshipman during the voyage, and he assisted Cook in surveying and chart-making. When, two years later, in April 1770, the coast of New Holland (Australia) was reached and a sheltering bay found offering safe anchorage, it was to his cousin-in-law Isaac that Cook gave the honour of being the first to step ashore. Years later the Smith family proudly related how their worthy ancestor had leapt out of the *Endeavour*'s yawl in response to the Captain's order "Jump out, Isaac!".

Nowadays Cook's Landing is a pleasant place on a headland at Kurnell overlooking Botany Bay, to the south of Sydney. There is a fine visitor centre which tells the story of Cook's expedition, and a monument erected in 1914 commemorating the arrival of the British party in what was to become the colony of New South Wales. Today all Australian children are told of the event, but in English schools it seems to be largely ignored.

After a life at sea Rear-Admiral Isaac Smith retired to Abbey Gate House, Merton, where he died in 1831. He was buried at St Mary's, Merton, where his hatchment can still be seen, and also a memorial to the Smith family, erected by Elizabeth Cook. Captain Cook was murdered by natives on Kealakekua Beach in Hawaii in 1779, but his widow survived him by 56 years. She lived at Abbey Gate House for many years, but died at Clapham, where she was long remembered as a tall, elegant lady, with an aquiline nose, and always dressed in black silk.

Abbey Gate House, which faced immediately onto Merton High Street where Furnitureland now stands, remained a private residence for the rest of the 19th century. According to Chamberlain it ended its days as a convalescent home for soldiers. In any case it was pulled down in 1906. All that survives today as a memento is a pair of old cannon in Nelson Gardens, High Path. This little park, maintained by the Education, Leisure and Libraries Department of the London Borough of Merton, was given to the parish of Merton in 1905, to mark the centenary of the death of Nelson at the battle of Trafalgar, by the great-nephew of Rear-Admiral Smith. The two rusted cannon are placed either side of a stone bearing a dedicatory inscription, and were probably the two pieces of ordnance which can be seen in several early Edwardian postcards, mounted on gun carriages, on the rear lawn of Abbey Gate House.

E.N.Montague

[Editor's note: I was also lucky enough to see the replica ship earlier this year, when she visited Whitby, where the original *Endeavour* had been built. So great was the enthusiasm there that the ship had to stay for several extra days, and, even so, people were queueing for four or five hours to go on board. 'Welcome home, *Endeavour*!' said the home-made banners along the harbour.]

EVENTS ELSEWHERE

We and other local Societies try to help one another by telling our members of events elsewhere. We receive newsletters and programmes from the Streatham Society, the Bourne Society and Kingston upon Thames Archaeological Society, as well as LAMAS (London and Middlesex Archaeological Society) and Surrey Archaeological Society. We aim to make these available to our members at all indoor meetings.

REPORT ON ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

23 members and 2 visitors attended our 47th A.G.M. at the Snuff Mill Environmental Centre on 8th November, and 3 members sent apologies for absence. Chairman Eric Montague welcomed us, remarking that our 50th anniversary is not far off, and that we need to be thinking about an appropriate special event. Hon. Secretary Sheila Harris read the minutes of last year's A.G.M., and these were accepted as a correct record. Under *Matters Arising* the Chairman reported that the Society's involvement in the Surrey Archaeological Society's Millennium Project was proceeding, and that the participating members have been invited to a seminar in a couple of week's time. We are gathering information relating to the evolution of the villages of Merton, Mitcham and Morden, which will ultimately be presented in a common format, as a series of maps and overlays.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

I am happy to say that over the past 12 months the momentum achieved in previous years has been sustained, with activity on various fronts. Further, I understand we shall be told shortly that membership of the Society and its finances are also satisfactory.

We have held six Lectures, speakers covering such diverse subjects as Surrey & the Picture Post Card, the National Monument Record, Croydon Airport, the development of Lower Morden, the story of Anne of Cleves, and a look at West Barnes.

Four visits were organised, to the London Metropolitan Archives (formerly the Greater London Record Office), the Wandsworth Museum, the Houses of Parliament, and the Steam Museum at Kew. Two local guided walks were arranged, visiting Morden village centre and Mill Green, Mitcham Junction.

All these events have been reported in the Bulletin, so no further details are called for here.

Thanks are due to Pat and Ray Kilsby, through whose good offices members had the opportunity last summer of joining coach outings to Faversham and Quex Park in Kent, and Kelmscott Manor and Burford. Outings of this nature were a regular and popular feature of the Society's calendar in the early days. It was disappointing therefore that although these two trips were publicised in the March Bulletin, they did not meet with the response the Committee had hoped. Further outings will be considered, possibly in conjunction with other groups or societies, but you will appreciate that without an assurance of support from members we may have to abandon the idea.

A full and varied programme of talks and visits has been arranged for the forthcoming year, which we hope will meet with your approval and support. A special "thank you" is due here to your Honorary Secretary, Sheila Harris, who has been tireless in making the necessary arrangements on your behalf.

The fact we are a local historical Society is very much in mind when preparing our programmes. The Committee is, nevertheless, willing to look further afield for subjects - with a local connection if possible as a bonus.

We are, of course, always happy to consider suggestions from the general membership.

Whereas we continue to enjoy the hospitality of the National Trust at the Snuff Mills Centre (at reasonable fees, for which we are thankful) we do endeavour to hold meetings in different parts of the Borough. The cost of hiring halls has always to be borne in mind, however. On three occasions this year the Society was fortunate either in being invited, or being offered, the use of a hall or room at virtually no cost, for which we are most grateful. The financial savings to the Society have been appreciable, and by moving about we have also been able to reach a wider audience.

Your Committee has met on nine occasions during the year, facilities being made available, as in previous years, by the Wandle Industrial Museum at no charge. Without this help administration of the Society's affairs would, I am sure, be less easy. This year, in appreciation, the Committee unanimously agreed to make a contribution of £60 to the Museum.

At this point I would like to acknowledge the debt the Society owes generally to the elected members of the Committee. All stand down at the A.G.M., in accordance with our rules, but 5 are eligible for re-election. We thank those who are retiring, and should also thank those stalwarts who have, once again, "shown the flag" at the annual Green Fair.

You will have seen from the quarterly Bulletin that our Local History Workshop continues to flourish. The concept of workshop meetings was introduced to avoid the item "Any Other Business" on Committee agenda prolonging discussion long after our families had expected us home. As you will have gathered from reports in the Bulletin, these workshops have proved it great success. Meetings are quite informal, with no set agenda, and provide an opportunity for anyone to submit queries, or to exchange information on past and current lines of local history research. All are welcome - the next Workshop is at the Wandle Industrial Museum on Friday 30th January. For details of future meetings see the Bulletin.

Drawing on the expertise of individual members the Society is always pleased to help anyone or any body seeking information on the history of Merton, Morden and Mitcham. Often enquirers are referred to us by the Library Service, and we maintain links with the East Surrey Family History Society. Personal queries from abroad are common, and our postbag has extended to Canada, U.S.A, and Australia and Germany. We regularly provide information to the Museum of London Archaeology Service (MOLAS) on the background of sites, and have been pleased to respond to requests for information from English Heritage and Council Officers.

Two important archaeological discoveries have been made in our area this year by MOLAS working in advance of redevelopment. One, on a site to the south of Mitcham station, produced evidence of early Saxon settlement. The other, between the Savacentre and Colliers Wood station, was of an impressive section of Roman Stane Street (where Society members had predicted, but surprisingly a good 2 metres below modern ground level).

A notable study over the past 12 months has been a review of the Ecology of the Borough of Merton, conducted by the London Ecology Unit. The results will be published in what promises to be a definitive work dealing not only with the natural habitats and wildlife in Borough, but also providing a masterly overview of the history of its open spaces. Several members of the Society have contributed towards what, I am sure will be a best seller.

Whilst on the subject of publications I must mention our Bulletin again, and the steady stream of booklets etc., issuing from a printing establishment in Templecombe Way. The Society has progressed a long way since its first duplicated Newsletter back in the 1960s, and booklets that were offprints of articles from Mitcham Chamber of Commerce Year Book. Thanks are due to Judith Goodman, now completing her first year as Bulletin Editor, to those contributors without whom the task of producing the Bulletin would be rather difficult, and to Peter Hopkins for his expertise with the computer. I think you will agree they all deserve a round of applause.

Your Society is a subscribing member of, or otherwise maintains contact with, many organisations having similar interests. Annual publications, newsletters and other publications are exchanged. These are kept in the Society's store at Lower Morden Library. They are, of course, available to members, and wherever possible a selection is brought to meetings by Tony Scott. The Society is formally represented at meetings of Wandle Heritage Ltd., the Standing Conference on London Archaeology, the South-West London Archaeological Liaison Committee, Merton Heritage Working Party and the Conservation Areas Advisory Committee of the London Borough of Merton, Merton Town Trails Association and the Wandle Group.

Individual Committee members also maintain contact with other bodies, including Surrey Local History Council, Surrey Archaeological Society and the London and Middlesex Archaeological Society, Merton Arts Council, Merton Environmental Forum, the Wimbledon Society and John Innes Society, the Friends of Wandle Park, and Mitcham Common Preservation Society.

This concludes what of necessity is a very cursory summary of your Society's activities. I hope that what I have said will encourage some of you, particularly new members, to come and help us on the Committee for 1997/98. We also look forward to seeing you (without obligation) at the Workshops.

Finally, I wish to say a few words about the Presidency of the Society. As you will recall, Lady Hanworth, our President for 27 years, retired from office last Autumn. The question of her successor has been discussed several times in Committee, but at the present time we are not ready to make a recommendation to you for your endorsement. I am sure the new Committee will be turning their minds to this matter again in the New Year. In the meantime, it is my very pleasant duty to report the Committee's unanimous recommendation, in recognition of his many years of service to the Society and to the history of Merton and Morden in particular, that the office of Vice-President be offered to our long-standing member William J. Rudd. This proposition will be put to you as a formal motion under Agenda Item 9 and, if the membership approves, Bill will join our other Vice-Presidents, Arthur Turner and Lionel Green.

Vice-President Lionel Green invited comments from the membership, and a vote of thanks was given to Eric Montague.

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT

C E Sole reported that there were 104 members last year, compared with 107 the previous year. He thanked those who pay regularly and who signed bankers forms. Numbers seem down at present. He shared with us the statistic that only 1 in 10,000 join an historical society in the whole of Greater London, so whereas we may consider ourselves to be the elite, 9,999 others think we are nutcases! He also said that he is considering recommending at next year's A.G.M. that the subscription rates from 1999 be increased by £1 per head in line with inflation.

TREASURER'S REPORT

David Luff reported that the accounts, although accepted by the Hon. Auditor, Audrey Thomas, they have not yet been signed by her, as she has been incapacitated by an accident. (The Chairman reported that Tony Scott had been in touch with Audrey, and that she is making a good recovery, and will be signing the accounts shortly).

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 1996/1997

Income		
Balance forward 01/10/96	1614-67	
Subscriptions	565-50	
Sale of Publications	245-47	
Donations	38-35	
Teas	21-11	
Interest/Midland Bank	6-53	
Interest/Nationwide	<u>21-46</u>	
	2513-09	2513-09
Expenses		
Publications	192-35	
Bulletin	140-20	
Hire of Halls	118-00	
Lecturers	60-00	
Affiliation Fees	50-00	
Petty Cash	133-41	
Misc.	<u>91-05</u>	
	785-01	<u>785-01</u>
		1728-08
Held in Nationwide	1107-63	
Petty Cash held over	6-08	

Subscriptions do not quite meet general expenses, but the shortfall is covered by donations and income from teas at meetings. Expenses have been kept low again this year with both the Bulletin and the hire of halls being available at well below market prices. We make a small profit on our publications each year. The accounts were accepted, subject to the approval of the Auditor.

ELECTIONS

Vice-President Lionel Green took the Chair for the elections of the new Committee. Details on back page. As the Chairman had mentioned in his report, the Committee proposed that William Rudd should be appointed as a Vice-President of the Society, and he was elected by acclamation.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

C E Sole wanted to propose that in future the office of President should be on an annual basis in line with the other officers, and that a new President be elected at this A.G.M. The Vice-President, however, pointed out that amendments to the Constitution were for the Committee to consider and present to the membership after due notice had been given. The Chairman agreed that this matter would be discussed by the new Committee and that the Committee's recommendations would be on the agenda for the next A.G.M.

After a break for tea, we enjoyed an illustrated talk by Pat and Ray Kilsby, on *India's Golden Triangle*, the area enclosed by the roads that link Delhi, Agra and Jaipur.

Peter Hopkins