



PRESIDENT: J Scott McCracken BA FSA MIFA

VICE PRESIDENTS: Viscountess Hanworth, Arthur Turner, Lionel Green and William Rudd

BULLETIN NO. 129

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PROGRAMME MARCH-JUNE



Saturday 13 March 2.30 pm **The Canons House**
'The Canons House and its Setting'
Eric Montague

Our chairman needs no introduction as *the* historian of Mitcham, and his audience can expect an authoritative and absorbing account of the Canons story.

(The Canons is in Madeira Road, Mitcham, close to bus routes 118, 152, 200. There is a car-park.)

Thursday 15 April 7.30 pm **Morden Library**
'Nelson at Merton'
Judith Goodman

An illustrated account of life at Nelson's Merton Place, and what happened to the estate after his death.

Saturday 15 May 2 pm **Whitgift Almshouses, Croydon**
A visit to Archbishop Whitgift's Hospital of the Holy Trinity has been arranged. Meet outside the almshouses, at the corner of North End and George Street at 1.45 for 2 o'clock. The guided tour lasts about an hour and costs £1 per head. **Please telephone Sheila Harris if you intend to come, as numbers are limited to 20.**

Afterwards members may wish to visit Croydon's Clocktower Museum (admission £2/£1), which is in Katharine Street.

Saturday 26 June 2 pm **Carshalton House, Water Tower and grounds**
Andrew Skelton

Following his December lecture to the Society Andrew Skelton has kindly agreed to take us on a guided tour of these outstanding buildings and their setting. The cost is £3 for the tour with teas available at £2 per head. All proceeds go to Carshalton Water Tower Trust. **Please let Sheila Harris know at least a week ahead of time if you are coming, and if you will be having tea.**

Meet outside the Water Tower in West Street at 1.45 for 2.



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



THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL HISTORY OF CARSHALTON HOUSE AND THE WATER TOWER; a lecture by ANDREW SKELTON

If there is a site steeped deeply in the past, it is that of Carshalton House estate, now occupied by St Philomena's High School. In his talk on its archaeological history Andrew Skelton took us back into the distant past.

The house was built by Edward Carleton, a London merchant, in the very early 18th century, later passing through the hands of Dr John Radcliffe and Sir John Fellowes. Many others followed, including Sir Philip Yorke, 1st Earl of Hardwicke. The full story of Carshalton House estate is to be found in the excellent book by A E Jones, from Sutton Libraries and Heritage Centre.

The early occupation of the site is a fascinating archaeological study. Twice in the 19th century large quantities of human bones were found, and as recently as 1974 more were found, after a tree was blown down in a gale. The theory of a local battle has been discounted. Such a vast quantity of bones suggests a cemetery, but dating is uncertain - ranging from Anglo-Saxon to pre-Roman, perhaps pagan or perhaps not.

Recent excavations have suggested a settlement in the later Bronze Age. This may have been within a field system. An excavated part of a midden produced over 600 small shards of pottery, as well as burnt flint and bone. Excavations have also recovered fragments of a Saxon loom-weight and pottery, but in a residual context.

In the surviving foundations of two garden buildings, the hothouse and the succession house, which have been demolished since the war, fragments of medieval romanesque and gothic stonework have been found, which may have originated from Merton Priory, via the demolished Nonsuch Palace. All in all, the site produces evidence of occupation through many centuries. Farms existed long before Carshalton House was built, and the house itself has undergone a number of changes, brought about by some of the occupants.

(Illustrations from a Carshalton Water Tower Trust leaflet)

W J Rudd

MARGARET CARR briefly reviews some recent Society publications:

Railways of Merton by Lionel Green sorts out the tangle of the Borough of Merton's railways. Gives dates, names of companies, and which later amalgamated with what. Includes a very clear map and illustrations. 39pp
£1.75, members' price £1.40 - Large print edition available at the same price.

A History of Lord Nelson's Merton Place by Peter Hopkins - NOT a re-run of the Nelson/Lady Hamilton affair, but a thoroughly researched history of the house and estate before, and after, Nelson bought it; with estate maps, floor plans, room dimensions and contemporary comments. Illustrated. 47pp

£2, members £1.60 - Large print edition available at the same price.

The Patent Steam Washing Factory by Eric Montague. If it didn't concern people's livelihoods, this narrative would border on farce. New research by Mr Peter McGow adds to Mr Montague's study of 1992 of the local bleaching and textile printing industry. Map. 11pp
50p, members 40p.

Morden Hall by W J Rudd. 2nd edition. Deals with the people who owned or leased it rather than the building itself. Contains maps of the estate and a very good family tree of the Garth family. 11pp

50p, members 40p. - Large print edition available at the same price.

The 'Amery Mills' of Merton Priory, the Copper Mills and the Board Mills by Eric Montague. An easy to follow account of the mills at 'Merton Abbey' from Domesday to the New Merton Board Mills. Illustrated. Maps. 11pp
50p, members 40p.

EVEN MORE NEW PUBLICATIONS!

The Canons, Mitcham by Eric Montague *£2, members £1.60*

Phipps Bridge, Phipps Mill and Bunce's Meadow by Eric Montague *£1.25, members £1.*

Copper Milling on the Wandle, with particular reference to Merton and Mitcham, by Eric Montague
£1, members 80p.

GREAT HOUSES OF SUTTON

a lecture by JOHN PHILLIPS, London Borough of Sutton Heritage Manager

The Borough of Sutton is made up of four old parishes, Sutton itself, Beddington, Carshalton and Cheam. Their earliest known mention is in the Chertsey Abbey Cartulary. Wallington was a hamlet within Beddington. Landowners in 1086, the date of the Domesday survey, included Canterbury Cathedral.

Little that is medieval now remains. Wallington House (now demolished) had a medieval crypt. The old post office at Beddington (also demolished) was not, despite its appearance, an adapted hall house. What is now called Carew Manor was built late in the 14th century, and its Great Hall, with a hammerbeam roof, dates from c.1500.

The early Tudor Nonsuch Palace, which Mr Phillips called “the last great Gothic building”, lay just outside the area.

Carshalton House, as it stands, dates from the end of the 17th century. This important house has fine 18th-century fireplaces and an unusual and beautiful ‘painted room’ whose walls are covered with paintings on panels. In the grounds are a ‘hermitage’ and a fine water tower, with a saloon and tiled sunken bath.



Crypt between Wallington House

Some 18th-century houses which survive include the old rectories at Cheam and Carshalton, Bridge House in Wallington, and Wandle Bank, also in Wallington, though this house may incorporate an earlier building. Unfortunately the Earl of Derby’s grand house The Oaks was demolished after the last war. We were shown a slide of the proposed façade of Thomas Scawen’s Carshalton Park House, designed by Leoni, which was never completed. The grotto and canal, which survive, date from this time. Within the grotto the walls were decorated with coral and glass in the fashion of the day.

At Carew Manor the house was remodelled, the Great Hall panelled, and the grounds re-landscaped, with a canal and a planted avenue. At Carshalton House the lake and its setting were altered and a fake bridge in flint constructed.

In the 19th century it seems to have been the district’s proximity to London that encouraged the development of many rather grand houses on small estates. Examples include Cheam Park House; The Grove, in Carshalton, whose gardens sloped down to the Wandle; The Culvers, built on textile bleaching grounds; and Brandries Hill House (now Camden House) in Beddington. Alfred Smee, surgeon to the Bank of England, laid out a garden beside the mill-pond at Wallington, and his son built a house called The Grange there late in the century (since burnt down). Others include Queenswood and Sandhills in south Beddington (demolished) and Stowford in Brighton Road, south Sutton. Carew Manor was altered again, when it became an orphan ‘asylum’.

Mr Phillips told us that he could have discussed as many as 80 houses. Most have now gone, their day having passed, and, sadly, little is known about many of them. The slides shown were most interesting and varied, and the large audience thoroughly enjoyed the lecture, asked many questions afterwards, and thanked the speaker with warm applause.

This report was written by JG, based on notes taken by Sheila Harris, whom circumstances unfortunately prevented from writing the report herself.



Beddington Hall, now called Carew Manor (both illustrations from Alfred Smee’s *My Garden*, 1872)

THE ONLY ENGLISH POPE - ADRIAN IV

To be born in England at the beginning of the 12th century was to be born at an exciting time. A whole generation had passed since the Normans had arrived. Henry was secure on the throne, especially following the defeat of his elder brother in Normandy in 1106. The king began to reorganise the finances of the country, with an Exchequer to oversee the correct collection of the king's revenue. To this Exchequer, all the sheriffs of England had to attend twice each year to give an account of their stewardship. The sheriff for the counties of Surrey, Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire was Gilbert the Norman, and he soon made a name for himself in answering without fear all the searching questions when his accounts were examined at the audit. By 1116, Gilbert, founder of Merton Priory, had become the senior sheriff in Englandⁱ, and well known to those in power.

The famous persons of the new generation, as well as the only English pope, included Guy of Merton (teacher); John of Escures, bishop of Rochester, Ailwin, first abbot of Holyrood Abbey, Edinburgh; Thomas Becket; Robert of Merton, his confessor; and John of Salisbury, later bishop of Chartres. All these persons had close connections with Merton Priory, and the last three were present in Canterbury Cathedral on the fateful day in 1170.

One of the clerks in the king's chamber early in the 12th century was a man named Robert de Camera, who lived at Bedmond near Abbots Langley, Hertfordshire, and had a son named Nicholas, born about 1105. Robert gave up his position in the king's chamber and became a monk at St Albans Abbey, with the consent of Nicholas's mother. It was probably at this time that Nicholas was sent to Merton Priory for his early education. The priory attracted scholars from its beginning, for among the first canons was a famous Master Guy, of great reputation for his direction of schoolsⁱⁱ.

Later Nicholas desired to follow his father and become a monk at St Albans, but the abbot, Richard d' Aubigny (d. 1119), is said to have told him, "Wait, my son, and go to school a little longer till you are better qualified"ⁱⁱⁱ. William de Newburgh says that Nicholas left England when he was growing up^{iv}, probably around 1120.

Nicholas distinguished himself at Paris^v. He then served at the church of St James, Melgeil (diocese of Maguelonne), in northern France. This church belonged to the Augustinian abbey of St Rufus, Avignon, where Nicholas took holy orders and became a canon, adopting the Latin name Hastifragus or Breakspeare.

In 1125 Gilbert the Sheriff died, and a friend, John of Escures, bishop of Rochester, came to Merton to officiate at the founder's funeral. In 1134 Robert Pulleyn was made archdeacon of Rochester. Pulleyn had taught at Paris and knew Nicholas when he became a canon of St Rufus. It may have been at the recommendation of these dignitaries at Rochester that Nicholas soon became prior, and finally, in 1137, abbot of St Rufus^{vi}.

Robert Pulleyn was elected to be the first English cardinal and chancellor of the Holy Roman Church (1144-47). In September 1146 Pope Eugenius III journeyed to France and met Nicholas. In the following year the pope addressed a bull to the abbot of St Rufus conferring a privilege on his monastery^{vii}. In November 1149 Nicholas was invited by the pope to take up residence in Rome and nominated bishop of Albano on 3 December, making him the second English cardinal.

From 1152 to 1154 he acted as papal legate in Scandinavia to great esteem. On 3 December 1154 Pope Anastasius IV died, and on the following day Nicholas was unanimously elected Pope. On Sunday 5 December he was enthroned and crowned at St Peter's as Adrian IV - *Pontifex natione Anglicus*. Adrian was not only the first English pope, but he was an Augustinian canon, and not a Benedictine monk as were most of his predecessors as pope. Pope Adrian was tough, fearless, clear-sighted, full of energy, with an iron will.

In England in 1154 Henry II was newly crowned. He immediately sent John of Salisbury to Rome as his ambassador, and sought permission "to civilise the Irish people and bring them to Rome"^{viii}. John and the pope became firm friends, with John becoming virtually the pope's confessor. About 1157 John wrote to the pope on behalf of the canons of Merton, and concluded, "May it profit the brethren of Merton that, when you were in the church of St Rufus, their odour of sweetness reached even to you, as your highness used to tell me, your servant, when we talked together"^{ix}.

i Following the death of Hugh de Buckland who had been sheriff from Rufus's time, and sheriff of eight counties. In 1116 Gilbert had been sheriff for 11 years.

ii M L Colker 'The Life of Guy of Merton' in *Mediaeval Studies* XXXI (1969) p252

iii A Kippis *Biographica Britannica* 1778 vol 1

iv Chron. & Memorials *Historia Rerum Anglicarum of William de Newburgh* vol 1 'adolescentiam ingressus'

v D Knowles in an article in *The Month* vol 21 (1959) p89

vi *ibid*

vii R L Poole 'The Early Lives of Robert Pullen and Nicholas Breakspeare' in *Essays in Medieval History to T F Tout* (ed. A G Little and F M Powicke) 1925 p67

viii John of Salisbury *Polyeraticus* Lib. vi and viii

ix W J Millor, H E Butler and C N L Brooke (eds) *Letters of John of Salisbury* vol 1 (1986) No 50 pp87-8. When they "talked together" may have been in the winter of 1150/1 when John and Nicholas (then a cardinal) were together at the Curia at Ferentino. The canons of Merton "illumine our island by the light of their good works ... and serve the welfare of their neighbours with all their might".

BILL RUDD takes an interest, but not a personal one, in:

THE RUDD MONUMENT IN ST. LAWRENCE CHURCHYARD.

From time to time I am asked if I am related to the Rudd family in the grave in Morden Parish churchyard. The answer is, simply, NO! Yet the grave is not without interest.

The curious thing about it is that there are four interments in a single grave ten feet deep. Unusual to say the least. One wonders how it was arranged with the Rector, Revd. George Preston Kelsall Winlaw, more especially as the people all lived outside the parish.

In sequence, the burials took place in May 1909, January 1929, March 1929 and March 1974. The third is the main subject of this article.

Austin Rudd died on 24 March 1929 aged 60 in Lancaster Place, London. At the time of the first burial, that of Elizabeth Ann Rudd, he was living with her at Robinson Road, Mitcham, though it is unclear what the relationship was. On the monument she is the wife of *Arthur* Rudd. In the parish register Austin is incorrectly entered as Arthur (Austin Rudd, not Edwin Austin as appears on page 2 of the September 1998 Bulletin).

I am profoundly grateful to Dick Playle of the Music Hall Society for the following information.

"Austin Rudd was not a 'star' of the first rank, but was sufficiently good to appear on the same programme with the best known artistes, and at the best music halls.

"None of his songs is well remembered, or passed into the popular public repertoire. On the other hand, he was of sufficient importance to have his name and picture on a few song covers. I believe that Austin Rudd made no gramophone records. After giving up as a performer he became a variety theatrical agent."


The monument, at the west end of the churchyard, was numbered 116, then re-numbered 164 after the 1959 churchyard survey. It is a broken column (life broken off) on a large block, the kerb being taken away after a recent restoration. It was originally erected by Joseph Evans of Lower Morden, monumental mason.

*The Theatrical and Music Hall rights of this Song are reserved
for Pantomime permissions apply to Charles Sheard & Co.*



COME OUT!

(I HAPPENED TO FALL FROM A FIRST FLOOR WINDOW.)



WRITTEN,
COMPOSED
AND SUNG BY

**AUSTIN
RUDD**

CHORUS.
Come out of that at once,
Come out of that at once,
You're bobbing about with the girls I see,
You don't like bobbing about with me;
My word, it's grand without a doubt,
You'll bob about when I get you home,
Come out, come out, come out!

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The very latest issue of Hemy's Pianoforte Tutor is the Seymour Smith Edition. Buy No OTHER

LOCAL HISTORY WORKSHOPS

Friday 13th November 1998 - Lionel Green in the chair.

- ◆ Judy Goodman has been looking through John Wallace's notes to see whether the Charles Blake who was responsible for the original Longthornton development in Mitcham (see last Bulletin) was the owner of Blue House Farm and other properties in Motpur Park, Merton. The latter was certainly responsible for other building development in Malden, Norwood and elsewhere in London, but Judy has yet to find evidence linking him to Longthornton. Watch this space.
- ◆ Sheila Harris has been looking at the deeds of her house in Cannon Hill Lane. The house was built in 1913, long before the rest of the area had been built up. Sheila hopes to investigate the history of the land on which it stands, the boundary of which follows a brook. However, she discovered that an exchange of land with a neighbour in 1982 has been wrongly recorded, and needs to correct this, or future historians will be totally confused!
- ◆ Bill Rudd brought us up to date with the developments with Tramlink, and has collected various publications for our archives. Staying with transport, he has recently obtained a photograph of the "Flying Flea", an aeroplane that he and Lionel both remember at an air display in 1934 at Stonecot Hill. It could be built and flown by amateur aviators, costing just £70, and could be dismantled, and reassembled in 15 minutes. A brilliant idea, but the plane was apparently very unstable!
- ◆ Bill Sole had three more nominations for his list of famous Merton women:- former MP Angela Rumbold; Iris Bentley, whose campaign to clear the name of her brother, Derek Bentley, only succeeded after her death; and the much maligned Emma Hamilton.
- ◆ Peter Harris showed three recent acquisitions:- a press photo from the front of the local *Guardian* showing the brass plaque from outside the office of Robert Masters Chart, discovered in a local garden, and recently presented to the Wandle Industrial Museum; a book presented to schoolchildren in Portsmouth to commemorate George V's Silver Jubilee in 1935, which included a section on Nelson's ship, *Victory*; and a copy of a book called *Surrey at Work*, printed in 1992 and reprinted 1997, which acknowledged Peter's contribution.
- ◆ Peter Hopkins has collected together several references to mills in Morden over the last 900 years, and asked for help from fellow members to identify them. There was a mill in Domesday, and the vicar of Morden was awarded the tithes of the mill in 1331, but the mill does not appear in an extent of the manor of Morden in 1312, though Thomas the miller leased a yard and 6 acres from Westminster Abbey. There seems to have been at least two mills in the 16th century, one belonging to the manor, the other a freehold property, but their locations are not yet clear. The inclusion in Morden of the area now known as the Watermeads suggests an early mill site here.
- ◆ Lionel Green has been researching local landlubbers, and is submitting an article on the subject for a future Bulletin. Suffice it to say here that he has discovered a family connection between the Lok family of Merton, and the Caesars of Mitcham.
- ◆ Eric Montague had traced the possible origins of sparkling wine to Mitcham! In 1662, 40 years before the first reference to champagne in France, a Christopher Merret was producing a sparkling wine. Francis and Richard Merret were licensed victuallers in the mid-18th century, with three hostelryes in Mitcham, so perhaps Christopher was a Mitcham ancestor? *See opposite page.*
- ◆ Eric also referred to the steelworks of the industrialist, Sir Ambrose Crowley, whose memorial is in Mitcham Parish Church. He will be submitting an article for a future Bulletin. He had also been in touch with the Editor of the Metropolitan Police Magazine, Bernard Brown, about the history of policing in Merton. Bernard had offered to write something for the Bulletin. *See page 8*
- ◆ Finally Eric showed us photographs, postcards and memorabilia belonging to his father and grandfather, charting their wartime experiences. He has made this excellent collection available to Sarah for her exhibition at the Heritage Centre, "Keep the Home Fires Burning".

Peter Hopkins

Next workshop dates: Friday 5 March and Friday 7 May at 7.30 pm at the Wandle Industrial Museum. All are welcome.

Friday 15 January 1999

- ◆ **Lionel Green** had been on the trail of glass from Merton Priory. His account will appear in the June Bulletin.
- ◆ **Peter Hopkins** had brought along some publications produced by the West Surrey Family History Society, and likely to be extremely useful to local historians as well as family historians. They include indexes to wills 1650-1858, Feet of Fines 1558-1760, and lawsuits 1497-1835, relating to 'old' Surrey parishes including our own. Lists of publications, research aids and microfiches can be obtained from Mrs Rosemary Cleaver, 17 Lane End Drive, Knaphill, Woking, Surrey GU21 2QQ (enclose SAE).
- ◆ The history of copper working on the Wandle had been exercising **Eric Montague**, and his booklet on the subject comes out soon. The final touches still had to be put to the history of one mill which stood where Mitcham, Morden and Carshalton meet, and about which Peter Hopkins had some helpful information.

Monty also reported a letter from someone born in the old Ravensbury mill house who now lives in Spain. He had been able to send all the information requested.

The St Mary's Beddington History Group had produced a most professional audio cassette describing in words and music the winter scene in Beddington in 1846. It was an inspiring example of what could be done by a local society.

Monty's final contribution was to tell the workshop the outline of the piece published in this Bulletin entitled 'A Story Worth Telling'.

- ◆ **Bill Rudd** had done some research on Austin Rudd, the music hall artist (see page 5).
- ◆ Following up Eric Montague's account of 'Blake's Folly' in the December Bulletin, **Judy Goodman** had been to Surrey History Centre to consult the late John Wallace's dossier on the West Barnes district. However, while John had identified the West Barnes Charles Blake as a London solicitor, who carried out development at Norwood and probably elsewhere, there still seems no proof that the two Charles Blakes were the same man.

John Pile, a member in Hampshire, had directed her to further references to Edward Thomas in Merton (see Bulletin for September 1998) in *Under Storm's Wing* by Helen Thomas and *The Childhood of Edward Thomas*.

JG

RAISE YOUR GLASSES TO THE MEMORY OF FRANCIS MERRITT OF MITCHAM, LICENSED VICTUALLER!

In his *World Encyclopedia of Champagne and Sparkling Wine*, published in October 1998, Tom Stevenson (author of the best-selling *World Wine Encyclopedia*) throws new light on the history of Champagne, traditionally attributed to the blind French monk Dom Pérignon.

According to Stevenson, in a paper presented to the newly-formed Royal Society in December 1662, Christopher Merret described how, by the addition of sugar to a finished wine, a second fermentation may be induced, producing a sparkling wine. This was over 40 years before the appearance of the first French document to mention sparkling Champagne, and leads to the conclusion that London, and not Reims or Epernay, should lay claim to being its birthplace.

Merret, Merrett or Merritt - the spelling varies a little - was a name familiar in Mitcham in the mid-18th century, a hostelry belonging to "Mr Merrett" first finding mention in 1732, whilst Francis Merritt, who appears in the freeholders' list for 1764-5, was a licensed victualler occupying the *Old Nag's Head* at Fair Green. This was held on copyhold tenure from the manor of Biggin and Tamworth, and court rolls contain references to both Francis and his wife Ann. The manor court rolls of Ravensbury show that Francis Merritt also had an inn on the site of the *Ravensbury Arms* on Mitcham Common until his death in 1784, when the business passed to his son Richard. The name Francis Merritt, again described as "victualler", occurs in the mid-1760s in the deeds of property in the vicinity of Figges Marsh, but the use to which these premises were put is not clear.

Is it possible that Francis Merritt was related to Christopher Merret, and that "bubbly" was being sold over the bars of Mitcham inns nearly 200 years before Moët et Chandon first marketed their famous *de luxe cuvée*, named after its (claimed) discoverer Dom Pérignon?

E N Montague

Ex-Sergeant BERNARD BROWN, editor of the *Metropolitan Police History Magazine*, has kindly contributed the following article:

POLICING OLD MITCHAM

When Robert Peel's 'New Police' force was formed in April 1830 the Metropolitan Police District (MPD) extended only as far as the boundary of the parish of St Peter and St Paul, Mitcham, (population 4,381) with Tooting and Streatham, and it was to be another decade before the parish was placed under the jurisdiction of the 'New Police'.

The road through Mitcham had been turnpiked under the Act of 1718 (4th Geo 1. CAP 4) between Southwark and Sutton to secure repairs to the highway, which was often impassable in inclement weather and the haunt of highwaymen, especially on lonely Figges Marsh, where a turnpike gate and tollhouse was subsequently erected. These early toll-keepers were, in fact, sworn in as parish constables, and would detain felons within the toll-house, or else the parish 'cage' or 'lock-up', which was situated near the Cricketers public house in the London Road.

Despite the passing of the Watching and Lighting Acts, it was found necessary in 1805 for a detachment of the Bow Street Horse Patrols to be established at Colliers Wood, where the station survived, backing onto Wandle Park, until it was demolished in the early 1980s. A replica now stands in its place. The Horse Patrols were absorbed into the Metropolitan Police in 1839.

As the Surrey Constabulary did not exist until 1851 the parish of Mitcham was included in the MPD from January 1840, as part of the vast 'P' or Camberwell Division. Two sergeants (one mounted) and five constables were deployed in the 2,893 acre parish from Streatham police station. However directories from 1841 onwards record the presence of a station-house in Mitcham.

Development was already taking place, with the opening in May 1838 of the London & Southampton Railway, with a station in nearby Wimbledon. Mitcham finally got its own railway station in October 1855 when a branch opened from Wimbledon to Croydon.

The population now stood at 4,641, while the police station on the Causeway (overlooking the Cricket Green) was under the charge of sergeants John Thorpe and Francis Bates and ten p.c's, within the Carshalton Sub-Division. The Figges Marsh toll-gate was finally swept away in late October 1865 amidst rejoicing. The gate had always attracted much criticism, especially during Derby Week when police reinforcements had to be called in to preserve order. At the same time Mitcham ceased to be part of 'P' Division, and the two sergeants and 14 p.c's were transferred to the newly created 'W' or Clapham Division with headquarters at Brixton (then still in Surrey).

The freehold having been acquired in 1877 for £650, a new police station consisting of two cells and a one-stall stable was built on the Causeway at a cost of £994 18s 8d (£994.84) and opened on 1 January 1885. Provision was made to house one married sergeant and his family at 4s (20p) per week and six single men at just 1s (5p) per week. The new station was equipped with the latest thing in communications - the telegraph - and was identified by the station-code letters 'MC'.

A new County of London was formed in April 1889 which included the neighbouring parishes of Tooting and Streatham. Mitcham thereby became the new boundary between Surrey and 'The Smoke', and the aforesaid parishes became part of the Metropolitan Borough of Wandsworth a decade later, in 1900. As a result of the London Government Act 1899 a detached part of the civil parish of Mitcham was ceded to Tooting Graveney parish as part of London, the population (1901) now having reached 14,904. At the turn of the century the Causeway (by now known as Lower Green East) police-station was complemented by Station Sergeant John Jenkins (who had four stripes), four sergeants and 19 p.c's, the districts of Upper and Lower Mitcham being bounded by Wykford Lane. By the outbreak of war in 1914 the constable strength had risen to over 30. Mitcham became an Urban District the following year, having been part of the vast Croydon Rural District since 1894. In April 1894 there was a reciprocal exchange of land between Tooting (County of London) and Mitcham (Surrey) parishes.

The inter-war years saw many boundary changes, both police and civil, as a result of which Mitcham and Tooting police-stations became part of the Streatham Sub-Division. However, in October 1931 the latter was transferred from 'W' Division to 'Z' (Croydon) Division, and as a result Tooting was enhanced to sub-divisional status, with poor old Mitcham maintaining its usual role, as a mere sectional outpost. The present station at Tooting dates from July 1939.

The Surrey Review Order 1933 extended the Urban District of Mitcham to include parts of Wimbledon Borough and Beddington Urban District, and in exchange part of Mitcham was ceded to Croydon and

Wimbledon Boroughs, together with parts of Merton and Wallington parishes. (The author has in his possession a road sign for London Road, Mitcham Junction, bearing Wallington & Beddington UDC thereon.) Although Mitcham became a borough in 1934, one final change took place, under the County of London and County Borough of Croydon (Alterations to Boundaries) Order 1936, with an equal exchange of area between Mitcham civil parish and the County Borough of Croydon. In December 1936 it was proposed to purchase the adjoining premises, known as Causeway Cottages for £1,750 to extend the police-station, but plans were suspended at the outbreak of war in 1939. The old 19th-century telegraphic station code was changed at this time from 'MC' to 'WM', ie 'W' Division, station: Mitcham.

Unfortunately Mitcham ceased to be part of the administrative County of Surrey and became part of the new Greater London Borough of Merton on April Fools Day 1965. The new sub-divisional HQ for Mitcham (now coded VM) was changed from Tooting to Wimbledon at the same time, where it has remained ever since. Mitcham had been part of 'W' Division for a century (1865-1965), but was now part of 'V' Division. The present 'modern' police-station will itself be 35 years old in the Millennium, having opened on 6 December 1965. The station address was altered from Lower Green East to Cricket Green in October 1944. The GLC, along with 'V' Division, was abolished in September 1985, and Mitcham re-designated at last as a sub-divisional station, albeit still an outpost of Wimbledon, which was temporarily administered by 'Z' (Croydon) District.

Up until 1985 all Mitcham officers had worn the single 'V' District letter on their uniforms, together with a number first introduced in 1830, but officers now wear the 2-letter Wimbledon Divisional code 'VW'. A brief temporary change to this system took place between March 1992 and April 1996, when officers wore the letters 'ZM' instead of 'VW'. Mitcham at this time had the temporary station-code letters 'ZC'.

Sector policing was introduced in March 1992, when the Wimbledon Division 'VW' was renamed Merton Division, 'ZM'. Under this system a new sector office at Morden, 'ZE', was taken into use, with even less status than Mitcham.

By the arrival of the Millennium the Metropolitan Police will have patrolled Mitcham for 160 years, and if we include the Horse Patrols, for nearly 200 years! There are plans afoot for some Metropolitan police stations in Surrey to be ceded to the County police. Mitcham, however, will remain under the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan Police for the foreseeable future.

Sources:

Pigot's Directory of Surrey 1839

Kelly's Post Office Directories of Surrey 1850-1933

Metropolitan Police Orders and Notices 1830-1996

Turnpike notes and plans in the author's collection

'A-Z of Metropolitan Police Divisions 1829-1989', articles by the author published 1987-1989 in *The Job*, house newspaper

IN BRIEF

- ◆ A Mitcham centenary. In March 1899, the first phase in the building of the new Anglican **church of St Mark, Mitcham**, having been completed, the church was dedicated by Edward Stuart Talbot, Bishop of Rochester. The land on which it stands had been given by Mr E Mizen; the design was by Robert Masters Chart, and the builders were Stewart & Sons of Croydon. The chancel, north transept and south chapel were added in 1910.
- ◆ On Sunday 2 May at 3pm a short **service** will be held in the remains of the **chapter house of Merton Priory**. All are welcome to attend.
- ◆ As part of **Merton Local Studies Centre spring programme** Steve Griffin talks about 'People changing places' on Wednesday 28 April, and our own Bill Rudd looks at Morden 'From village shop to supermarket' on Wednesday 26 May. Both events take place at Morden Library at 7.30 pm.
- ◆ The National Trust is putting on a series of '**Ecology for Everyone**' lectures at the Snuff Mill Environmental Centre, Morden Hall Park. These are on Saturdays 6, 13, 20 and 27 March from 10 to 12. Each costs £1 per person, including refreshments, and booking is essential, on 0181 542 4232.
- ◆ The John Innes Society is putting on an exhibition of **drawings by John Wallace** of places in the Borough of Merton, made between 1968 and 1995, the year in which he died. Artist, architect and historian, John liked to draw all types of buildings. His local views will be on display at Morden Library from 13-31 March.

The following article is a précis of a booklet written by Richard Binns. RON POTTER calls his abridgement:

A STORY WORTH TELLING

At the end of the 1939-45 war many young children who had lost their fathers in action/active service grew up knowing little or nothing about them. Mothers found the subject too painful to discuss and drew a veil over that period of their lives. Where was father born? Where did he go to school? What job did he do, and where was he posted during the war? All these questions and more remained unanswered, or were never asked, for fear of upsetting 'mum'.

A few years after her mother died, Carol Cumming, in July 1998, was encouraged to seek information about her father Flt/Lt Raymond Stanley Cumming, who was killed in action on 14/15 February 1945 whilst carrying out mine-laying operations in the Baltic Sea area.

Requests for information in *Air Mail* and *Intercom* brought forth a good response, both from former squadron members and others, pointing Carol in the right direction as to where to obtain invaluable information, ie the Public Record Office at Kew, and the Squadron Association. Over the next few months much activity took place. Records were checked, Carol met a number of former members of Raymond's squadron - a great highlight - and, after all the facts were assembled, the following picture emerged.

Raymond was born in Middlesbrough on 21 July 1916, and we know that his father was employed as a grocer's manager. Our next point of reference finds him, at the age of 12 years, a pupil at Gorringe Park School, Mitcham, Surrey, which he leaves in 1930 aged 14 years. (One disappointment here was that neither Surrey County Council nor the London Borough of Merton was able to trace admission records for Raymond. These would of course have shown his home address at that time.)

Upon leaving school Raymond finds employment with an old-established firm of estate agents - G T Hodges & Sons, 281 London Road, Mitcham, where over the next ten years he rises from office junior to becoming the firm's managing clerk.

During the late 1930s Raymond meets, and courts, a local girl, Marjorie Beacock, who works at the United Dairies Depot in Kenley Road, Merton Park. Marjorie lives above the premises with her family, and by 1939 had become manageress of the dairy.

Having volunteered for the RAF early on in the war Raymond is 'called to the colours' on 30 April 1940. Unusually for the armed forces, he becomes a round peg in a round hole, in that he is employed as a 'clerk - general duties' for the next two years, rising to the rank of corporal, with a proficiency rating of 'superior'. Some time during those two years Raymond must have volunteered for Aircrew, as on 4 March 1942 he attended an Aircrew Selection Board, when he passed the standard needed, and was recommended for pilot training.

During all this time the young couple's romance was continuing to blossom, resulting in their marriage on 6 June 1942 at the church of St Mary the Virgin, Merton Park. They set up home at 16 The Park, Mitcham, perhaps with the help of G T Hodges in finding them accommodation. RAF records show that for the first 3½ months of their marriage Raymond was posted close to home, in Brighton and London; so hopefully he was able to 'get away from it all' for a few brief periods.

On 29 August 1942 Raymond reports to the Aircrew Receiving Centre situated at St John's Wood, London, to start his training as a pilot. A long haul lies ahead, before he is awarded his Pilot's Flying Badge ('Wings') on 22 December 1943.

Another red letter day arrives shortly after, in that on 17 January 1944 Carol is born at St Helier Hospital. As luck would have it, Raymond was some 600 miles away, starting his operational training at Lossiemouth in Morayshire, north-east of Inverness. Here, by process of self-selection, crews were formed who would remain together until they had completed their tour of operations.

On 26 May 1944 Raymond and his crew were posted to No.78 Bomber Squadron based at Brighton, some 12 miles south-east of York. Like the other squadrons in No.4 Group they flew Halifaxes, which although lacking the glamour associated with the Lancaster, were well regarded by those who flew in them.

Eight days later, on the night of 2/3 June, they carried out the first of their 34 missions. At this period of the war Bomber Command was not only continuing its attacks on enemy industrial targets, but also heavily engaged in strategic bombing, such as daylight attacks on V1 and V2 rocket sites - vital to keep up morale at home after five years of war, daylight attacks on enemy ground positions in support of our advancing armies in France and Belgium, and attacks on oil plants and transport systems.

On 26 June 1944 Raymond is granted a commission as Flying Officer, and two months later he is promoted to Flight Lieutenant. At this time it is noted that his grading as a pilot is marked as 'Superior'.

Raymond's last flight took place on 14/15 February 1945. On that night 54 aircraft (30 Lancasters and 24 Halifaxes) took off from various squadrons for sea-mine laying operations in the Baltic Sea area. Six aircraft, including Raymond's, failed to return to base. Ack-ack and enemy fighters were very active on this occasion, resulting in such high percentage losses.

Mining in the Baltic Sea area did, among other operational measures, interfere greatly in the known U-boat training grounds. Such mine-laying was one of the causes of delay in the appearance of the new quieter running, prefabricated U-boats in operational service. Captured German records also revealed that such mine-laying also prevented troop movements from Norwegian ports to assist German troops fighting the Allies in Europe.

Notwithstanding the fact that wartime promotions could be rapid, there must have been some inner strength that enabled Raymond to attain the rank of Flight Lieutenant after leaving school at the age of 14. No doubt he continued his education at evening classes to enable him to rise to the position of managing clerk, and to pass the necessary academic tests to become a pilot.

In June 1944, when Raymond attended before a RAF Commission Board that Board was mindful of the following requirements:-

"A commission is granted in recognition of character, intelligence (as distinct from academic qualification) and capacity to lead, command, and set a worthy example."

Carol was proud to learn that the Board found these qualities in her father.

Having visited many sites where her father carried out his training, and also the Air Force memorial at Runnymede, where his name is recorded, having no known grave, Carol is now intent on visiting all the places associated with her parents in Mitcham and nearby. Although the Odeon, Morden, and the Majestic, Mitcham, have been demolished, she will no doubt be pleased to see that the Gaumont, Rose Hill, is still standing. Raymond and Marjorie would certainly have spent many happy hours at the 'pictures'.

Apart from being in the RAF during the war I had lived for a while at Rose Hill, and was able to act as 'the man on the spot' insofar as Carol's search was concerned.

One stumbling block I encountered was Raymond and Marjorie's wartime address - 16 The Park, Mitcham. Neither the current A-Z nor pre-war directories recorded such an address. I met with no success at Merton Council offices, who were always most helpful with my many enquiries, until an officer in the Local Studies Centre suggested it might be Mitcham Park. Mitcham Library referred me to Merton Historical Society, who referred me to "Eric" as the expert on Mitcham.

You can imagine my surprise when I phoned Eric. Not only was he able to confirm that at one time Mitcham Park residents referred to their address as "The Park", but he also told me that at the time in question his wife's grandmother lived two doors away from Carol's parents. Other coincidences emerged, in that Eric, in his career as Environmental Health Officer, used to visit the offices of Raymond's former employer, G T Hodges & Sons, and knew Mr Hodges well. He also used to visit the United Dairies depot in Kenley Road, where Marjorie had worked all those years ago.

From MoLAS 98, the Annual Review for 1997 of the Museum of London Archaeological Service, quoted in Surrey Archaeological Society Bulletin 325 (December 1998):

'... Initial observations from a third of the skeletons from **Merton Priory** indicate an adult male bias. Although this may be anticipated on a priory site, such a marked bias is surprising in a cemetery thought to have also been used for lay burials from the parish. Many interesting examples of pathology have been recovered, including a high number of cases of diffuse idiopathic skeletal hyperostosis (DISH) which may be a condition associated with an opulent diet....

'Environmental analysis has revealed information about the Merton canons' diet with hazel nuts, plum, cherry, grape, wheat and charred barley seeds recovered. Also, close to the infirmary, a single sample of over 100 black mustard seeds was found, suggesting the importation of plants probably to be used in medicines.'

Peter Hopkins has been attempting to trace the origins of a property in Lower Morden

THE KENNELS, LOWER MORDEN

On the corner of Lower Morden Lane, opposite the *Beverley* public house, stands Morden Park Baptist Church and hall, next to the Assembly Rooms and car park. On this site, until it burned down in 1937, stood a farm known at the time as The Kennels, though actually a pig farm. Photographs from the 1930s show a weatherboarded building with a jettied upper storey, and the construction of the house may suggest a surviving wing of a hall-house.

The Morden Tithe Apportionment Map of 1838 shows this house (TAM 56) to have been leased from the lord of the manor, Rev. Richard Garth, by James Lucas and William Fullock, while the acre and a half in which it stood (TAM 55) was leased by William Acres. Acres lived in Central Road, or Morden Lane as it was then called. The Acres family owned several copyhold properties in Morden in the early 19th century, but this was the only property they leased from the Garths. The Morden Land Tax returns show the Acres family, sometimes spelt as Akers, as tenants from 1795.

The previous tenant had been Matthew Hawkins, who was already the tenant when the extant run of Land Tax returns began in 1780, paying £4 a year in rent. From 1780 to 1783 Hawkins also paid £10 a year rent for land which became part of the farm known as Lower Morden Farm, then farmed by Richard Mills.

In fact, this land had been included in Richard Mills's lease¹ from 1771, when the farm had been created as part of the general reorganisation of the Garth properties in Lower Morden:-

	acres	roods
4 fields late Hawkins:-		
land called Winters	2	2
Paper West Haws, a close	4	2
lower West Haws, a close	3	0
a close lying east upon Cheam Common	2	0

Perhaps Hawkins's lease was due to expire and his lands were allocated to Mills's farm from the outset, though still farmed by Hawkins for the time being. There is no mention of Hawkins's house becoming part of Lower Morden Farm, so it would seem reasonable to assume that Hawkins continued to live there until his death, at the age of 82, in 1795,² when the Acres family took over the lease.

The lands which had formed Hawkins's farm to 1771 had previously been farmed by Mary Martin, according to a 1745 list³ of Garth properties:-

message or tenement with barns, stables, outhouse, yards, backsides, garden, orchards		
Pightle adj. orchard	0	2
Winters	2	2
Paper West haws	4	2
Lower West haws	3	0
2a. lying east upon Cheam Common	2	0

Thus it seems that the plot that William Acres leased in 1838, together with the house occupied by Lucas and Fullock, was the message or tenement with barns, stables, outhouse, yards, backsides, garden, orchards, plus the half-acre pightle adjoining the orchard, which Mary Martin was leasing as part of her farm in 1745.

The name 'Winters' is significant, as a close of that name had been part of a freehold property called Wenterworth farm, owned by Bartholomew Fromond of Cheam Esq., and leased⁴ by him to David Benet of Morden Gent., son-in-law of George Garth I, lord of the manor of Morden, in 1617:-

House called Wenterworth with orchards, gardens and yards	2	0
Close called Winters	3	2
1 acre late enclosed from common field		
and 1 rood of coppice at north end	1	1
In Long Shott (Mr Garth both sides)	0	1
more in same shott		
(Mr Garth's enclosure on east, his land in common field on west)	1	2
in the same shott (Mr Garth both sides)	1	0
Hilly Field - 6 acres where Mr Garth has 1 acre on north	6	0
in Garth's Southwells Close	1	0
in Spotts (Mr Garth both sides)	1	0
in same shott	1	0

Hungrell Close	5	0
4 parcels in the common field	3	2
Close called Bowhill with 1 acre of Mr Garth's to the south	3	0
in Comstrode (Mr Garth both sides) plus 1 acre in same	1	2
in Parklonds with 3½ acre coppice	8	2
Cobbes Hawe (Mr Garth has 1 acre on the west)	3	0
Mead Close	2	0
	45	0

This was presumably the freehold property that Richard Garth II bought from Fromond in 1629.⁵

William Fromond and Thomas Jones had bought “a messuage and lands in Morden”⁶ in 1602 from William Playstowe. His father, also William Playstowe, had left “all my lands and housings in Morden” to his son William in 1596, and the rent of land at Morden and Toddington to his son John, with a life interest to his wife Ann and residue to his son Manevell.⁷

The Playstowe family had held Wynterworthes since 1459, but on the death of Richard Playstowe of Ewell it had been divided between two brothers, John and William Pleystowe senior, in 1540. William's share is detailed in a document⁸ in Surrey Record Office, but information about John Playstowe's portion is only obtainable where it abutted William's lands. It seems probable that the shares were roughly equal.

John Pleystowe of Morden, yeoman, “gives, concedes, and by these presents confirm” to William Pleystowe, his brother, 42a. 1r. arable land and 1a. 3r. meadow, lying divided in the fields and closes in the parish of Morden, with pertinents, part of a messuage called Wynters, late the devise of Richard Pleystowe of Ewell, deceased:-

5 a	lying together in a certain close called Bowhyll'
4 a	lying together in a certain close called Spottes Close
4 a	lying together in a certain close by Suttonheth
6 a	lying together in a certain close called Molthawes
3 a	lying together in another close called Molthawes
1 a	meadow in Gyldonhyll Medow,
3r	meadow in Mordon' Mede,
1 a 2r	lying together in Longfurlong at le lambpyttes next to 3x½-acres of John Pleystowe on east
1 a	at Makerelles style
1 a 2r	in byttyns next to 3x½-acres of John Pleystowe on east [?]
1r	at Hungerhyll
1 a	in Shortfurlong between land of John Hiller on west and Thomas Toller on east
1 a	in Spotfurlong, next to 1 acre of John Pleystowe on south
1 a	at Hungerhyll, by Londonwey,
1 a	in Oldemordon',
1 a	in Strutfurlong, on east of ½-acre of John Pleystowe
2r	in Tollersnewe Close,
2r	in Combstrode, abutting upon close of Thomas Heryngman
1 a	below a close of Thomas Toller called Cobbeshawe, next to 2 acres of John Pleystowe on south
1 a	below a close of John Hyller called Cobbeshawe
1 a	in Bowhyll', next to 2 acres of John Pleystowe on south
1 a	in Bowhyll', next to land of Thomas Toller on south
1 a	in Combstrode, next to 1 acre land of John Pleystowe on east
2r	in Combstrode, next to ½-acre of John Pleystowe on south
5 a	lying together upon Hungerhyll', on the north of 5 acres land of John Pleystowe
1 a 2r	lying together in Bowhyll fyrses, next to 3x½-acres of John Pleystowe on south

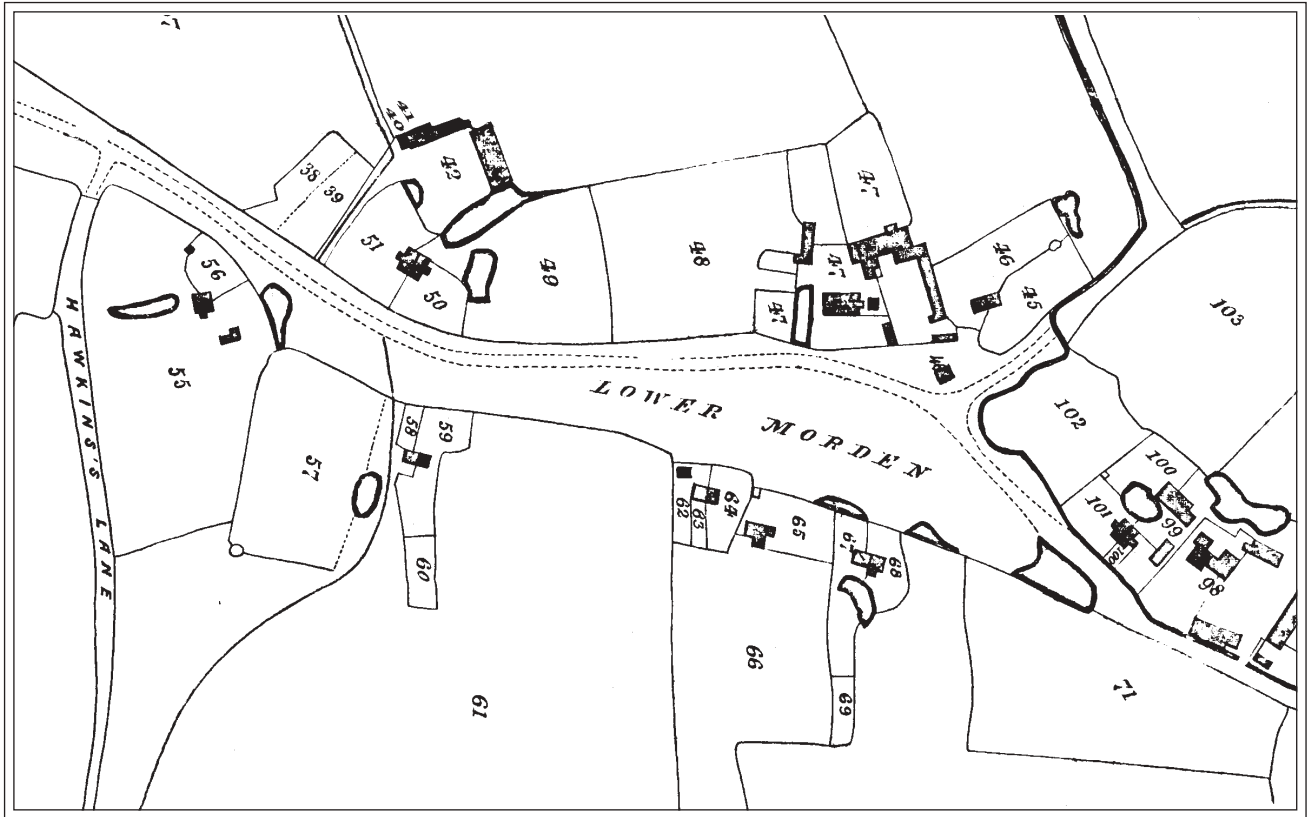
John Playstowe and Richard Best, both of Merstham, and John Bristowe junior of Horley, had bought⁹ properties in Morden for £20 in 1459 from William Lovelace:-

E	Tenement, with ..., cottage, lands, rents, etc., called Wynterworthes in Westmorden, the gift of Thomas Herst to William Lovelace, Richard Pulton and Margaret, his wife, John Chynnore and Wm. Andrew now decd.;
E	lands and tenements in Morden, gift of Richard Pulton to William Lovelace and John Chynnore;
E	land called le Parklond (8a.) in Morden, the gift of Robert Stoke, decd., to William Lovelace and John Chynnore, decd.

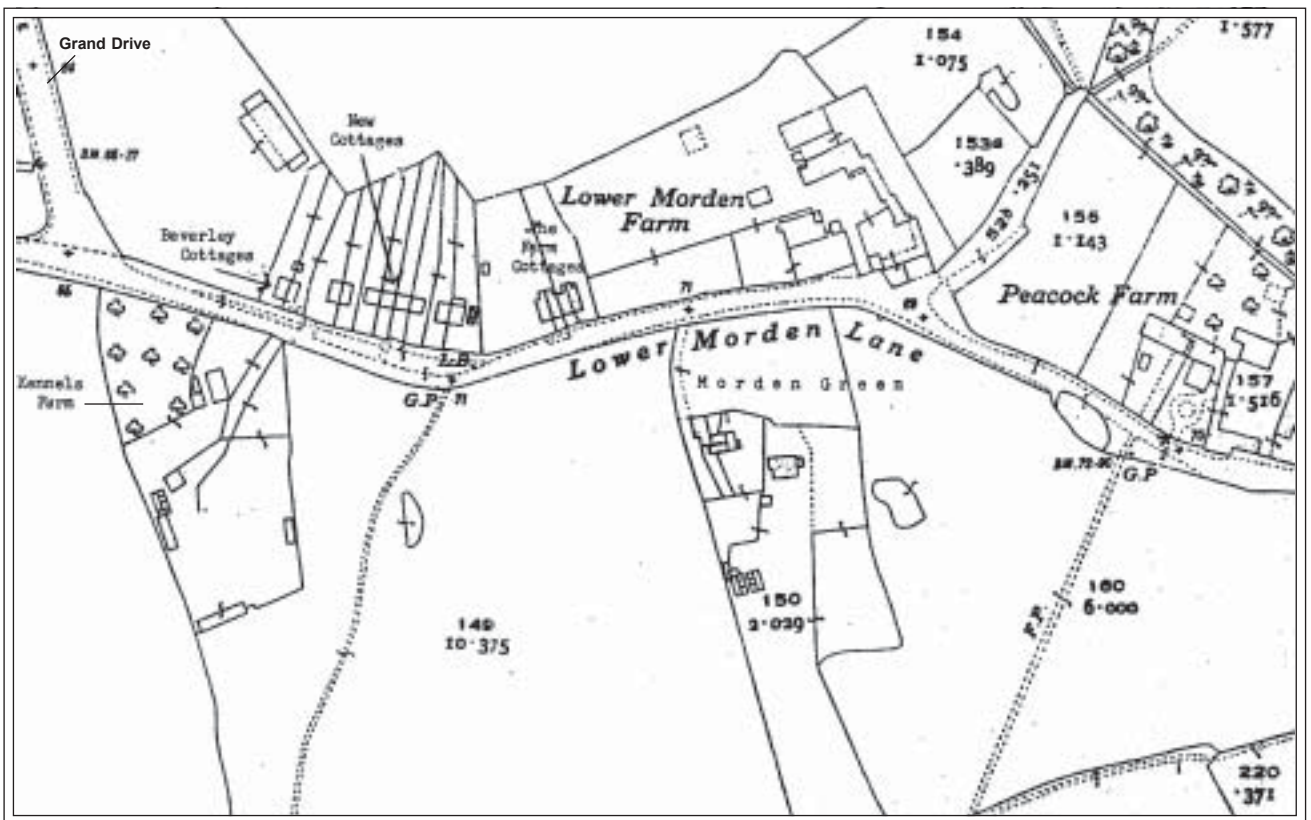
Richard Pulton appears in Westminster Abbey accounts¹⁰ as a collector of rents for their manor of Morden in 1441-42. A William Wynteworthe also appears in these accounts¹¹ in 1391-92 as 'farmer', or lessee, of the Rectory, or rectorial rights to tithes, in Morden.

The close called Winters was of 3½ acres in 1617, whereas Mary Martin only held 2½ acres of that name in 1745. The other acre was part of a farm leased to John Howard:-

messuage in Lower Morden with barns stables yards outhouses edifices gardens orchards	1	0
a close called Winters, adj. said messuage or tenement	2	0
parcell of ground lying by Hobalds mead Bridge	3	0
Westhaws, a close		



Reduced extract from the Tithe Apportionment Map of 1838, showing Lower Morden.



*Reduced extract from the 25" Ordnance Survey map of 1933, showing Lower Morden.
(Annotations by WJ Rudd)*

Thus John Howard's and Mary Martin's farmsteads in 1745 seem to have been formed from a single farmstead, known as Wenterworth in 1617, with 5½ acres around the house.

John Howard also held the lease of another farm in Lower Morden in 1745:-

message or tenement with barns, stables, yards, gardens, and orchards with lands:-

Barn Close	4	0
Long Close	4	0
Wikefield, a field	7	2
Suthwells, a close	5	2
two slips, a field	4	0
Hillyfield, a field	6	2

Howard also held copyhold property on Morden Common, which his wife, Rosa, had inherited from her father, Nicholas Dollatt, in 1732.¹² These passed to Rosa's relative, Richard Dallett of Merton, together with the lease of the two farms, though his lease¹³ of 1774 only refers to one house, in conjunction with the larger property, not Wenterworth:-

Message or tenement with barns, stables, yards, gardens, orchards, and lands:

Barn Close, meadow	4
Long Close, meadow	4
Wick Field	7½
Suthwells, a close	5½
The Two Slips	4
Hilly Field	6½

and:

all that close of meadow ground called Winters	1
a parcel of meadow ground lying by Hobalds Mead bridge	2
close of meadow ground called Westhaws	3

Some of the lands leased to Dallett were added to Hobbalds, perhaps explaining the drop in his rent shown in the Morden Land Tax returns, from £43 a year in 1804 to £26 in 1805. By 1807 James Atkinson appears in the Land Tax returns as tenant in Dallett's place. In 1804 he had also taken over the lease of the farm later known as Peacock Farm, and by 1813 the two properties were taxed as one unit.

The close called Winters had adjoined John Howard's house, so was presumably part of the larger of the two meadows called Skilton's Meadow, south of the house and east of Hawkins Lane (TAM 61). The fact that there were two adjoining meadows called Skilton's Meadow suggests that they had formerly been part of two separate properties. It seems probable that John Howard's other house and his Barn Close should be located here. Allowing 2 acres for each of the farmsteads (including orchards), and adding the 3½ acres for Winters and 4 acres for Barn Close, we match the 11½ acres of TAM 55-61. The other lands leased to John Howard and Mary Martin were probably west of Hawkins Lane.

Summary of Owners & Occupiers					
Wynterworthes				The adjoining[?] farmstead	
Date	Owner	Occupiers		Owner	Occupiers
c.1391	William Wynteworthe?				
	William Lovelace & others				
1459	John Playstowe & others				
	Richard Playstowe				
1540	John & William I Playstowe				
1596	William II Playstowe				
1602	Bartholomew Fromond				
1617	Bartholomew Fromond	David Benet			
1629	Richard II Garth				
c.1745	Richard V Garth	Mary Martin	John Howard	Richard V Garth	John Howard
c.1774	Richard V Garth	Matthew Hawkins	Richard Dallett	Richard V Garth	Richard Dallett
1795	Owen P Meyrick	Akers	Richard Dallett	Owen P Meyrick	Richard Dallett
1807	Owen P Meyrick	Jonathan Acres	James Atkinson	Owen P Meyrick	James Atkinson
1838	Rev Richard Garth	William Acres &c	William York	Rev Richard Garth	William York

References:

¹ Surrey History Centre - SRO 85/2/76

³ Surrey History Centre - SRO 85/2/51-52

⁵ Surrey Feet of Fines

⁷ Archdeaconry Court, Herringman Reg., fo. 172 - Surrey Record Society - *Surrey Wills I* (1915) p.38

⁸ Surrey History Centre - SRO 85/2/2 [Actually totals 47a 1r]

¹⁰ Westminster Abbey Muniments 27373

¹² Surrey History Centre - SRO 85/1/2

² F Clayton - *Morden Register* (1901) p.84

⁴ Surrey History Centre - SRO 2575 - Box 3 Bundle G

⁶ Surrey History Centre - GMR 1/1/49

⁹ Surrey History Centre - SRO 85/2/1

¹¹ Westminster Abbey Muniments 27345

¹³ Surrey History Centre - SRO 85/2/83-84

ERIC MONTAGUE has an evocative tale from Mitcham:

A PENINSULAR WAR VETERAN

Between 1990 and 1992 a team of enthusiasts from the East Surrey Family History Society (including our late member Jack Bailey) undertook the task of recording the monument inscriptions in the churchyard of St Peter and St Paul, Church Road, Mitcham. Their report (a volume of some 300 pages, including plans of the various sections of the churchyard) is a valuable source of local history material, and well worth studying. Unfortunately the Local Studies Centre does not appear to have a copy.

Browsing through my own copy some time ago I came across the following rather moving inscription on a headstone to be found north-east of the church, in a corner of the extension to the graveyard dating to 1855:

*Sacred
to the memory of
John French
of the 3rd Regt. of Footguards
who fought at
Corunna, Ciudad Rodrigo, Badajoz
Salamanca and Vittoria
who died at Chelsea Hospital
31st. August 1867
aged 80 years
England esteemed his worth a soldier brave
whose hope on earth was peace beyond the grave
redeemed by grace his soul to Heaven will rise
to join the faithful armies of the skies.*

In the hope of discovering a little more about this old soldier I turned to the 1851 Census returns, and there he was - living in one of the row of cottages on Commonsides East set back from the Common, just before Manor Road. John was a native of Suffolk, having been born in the village of Broughton, and in the 1840s and 1850s was earning a living as an agricultural labourer. His wife Jane, two years his senior, came from Croydon. They were recorded in the 1841 Census, and since the cottages would appear to date from the 1830s it is possible that John and Jane were among the first tenants. The tithe register of 1846 doesn't throw any light on the ownership of the property, but if anyone reading this note could persuade a present owner to produce the deeds they might find the names of the builder and landowner. Both John and Jane had gone from Mitcham by the time the 1861 Census was conducted. Jane would then have been approaching 80 years of age, had she still been alive. One suspects, however, that with his wife dead, John by this time had been accepted at Chelsea as a pensioner. Buried with John is Daniel French, who died in 1859, aged 69. Too old to have been John's son, he may have been a younger brother who came to live at Commonsides East in the late 1850s, but we shall probably never know.

I wonder who erected this monument? There are dozens of people named French in the local telephone directory - perhaps some of them are John's descendants. Does anyone know old John's story, and cherish the memory of a veteran of the Peninsular War and Wellington's victorious army? It seems a pity if, apart from his tombstone, he is now forgotten.

MITCHAM COUNTY SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

I was approached last December by Mrs Barbara Pommert (née Smith), a pupil of Mitcham County School for Girls from 1938 until 1946, for advice as to a safe repository for a box containing copies of the school magazines from 1938 until 1965, plus a fine collection of school photographs from the same period.

Mrs Pommert, who was a teacher at Rowan High School for Girls from 1961 until her retirement several years ago, had received the collection from Miss Ball, the headmistress of Rowan, in 1974. The box is believed to have been the property of Miss Dunn, who was headmistress of the Girls' County School for many years, having been appointed to the post when the new school was opened by Surrey County Council in 1929.

Since the records of Mitcham County School for Girls are now held by the County Archivist at the Surrey History Centre at Woking, this seemed the obvious home for them, and their receipt has been duly acknowledged.

E N Montague

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.