

MERTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

PRESIDENT: Lionel Green

VICE PRESIDENTS: Viscountess Hanworth, Eric Montague and William Rudd

CHAIR: Judith Goodman

BULLETIN NO. 165

MARCH 2008

PROGRAMME MARCH-JUNE

Saturday 1 March 2.30pm

Raynes Park Library Hall

'London's Markets, Market Halls and Exchanges'

Professor David Perrett will speak about a once highly important, and picturesque, aspect of London's commercial life that is fast declining.

Raynes Park Library hall is on or close to several bus routes and near Raynes park. Please enter the hall via the Aston Road entrance. Very limited parking.

Saturday 5 April 2.30pm

Snuff Mill Environmental Centre

'A Social History of the London Bus from Shillibeer to Bendi'

An illustrated talk by **John Wagstaff**

To reach the Snuff Mill Environmental Centre, Morden Hall Park, from Morden Hall Garden Centre car-park, cross the bridge between the café and the garden centre, go through the gateway in the wall, turn right and follow the main pathway to the right, which leads to the Snuff Mill Centre.

Please note that numbers are limited at this venue.

The bus stop near the car-park is served by many routes.

Thursday 15 May

Visit to Haslemere

A guided tour of the museum, plus town tour, will cost £5 per person.

Travel will be by train.

Tuesday 17 June 11.30am

Goldsmiths' Hall

Group visit to exhibition 'Treasures of the English Church', which is free.

Saturday 5 July

Coach trip to Waterperry Gardens and Sulgrave Manor

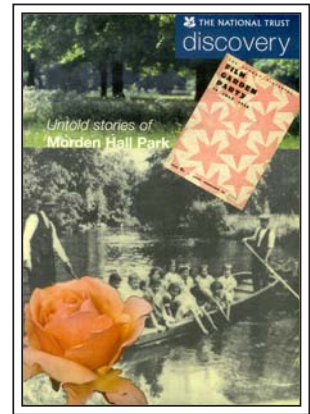
Pat and Ray Kilsby are again kindly arranging a summer trip for us.

Information and booking details are on an enclosed sheet.

The Society's events are open to the general public, but entry to lectures for non-members is £2 per head, towards our running costs.

UNTOLD STORIES OF MORDEN HALL PARK

We had a full house at our AGM in November, no doubt in anticipation of hearing Maureen Patel of the National Trust speaking on the project, run during 2004 and 2005, to discover people's memories about the park. We were not disappointed. Maureen spoke with enthusiasm of the way that she and colleagues from the Trust worked with Age Concern Merton to gather the stories and to use creative and performing arts to find new and interesting ways of sharing them with a wider audience. In the first part of the project weekly sessions were held where people shared their recollections. These were followed by art workshops using screen-printing to create three large banners with images and quotes from the stories uncovered. The project finished with drama workshops culminating in an event at which the stories and memories were transformed into a special promenade performance. So much information was gathered that a 20-page illustrated booklet has been published by the Trust.



The earliest recollections were of the period when Morden Hall was occupied as a convalescent home by the London Hospital, Whitechapel. During WWI it was used for wounded soldiers, but later for women and children until the National Trust took over the estate. Many of the stories recalled the children's parties held in the park hosted by Gilliat Edward Hatfeild, the last lord of the manor, who lived in Morden Cottage – and all remembered his kindness and generosity. On his death in 1941 Mr Hatfeild left the park to the National Trust for the benefit of local people. From 1947 to 1952 the *Sunday Pictorial*, in collaboration with the British film industry, hosted Film Garden Parties in the Park, to raise money for the NSPCC and the Children's Society. Each year some 25,000 people would buy tickets to come and meet their favourite film stars and to get their autographs. Maureen finished by showing various newsreels of these events, and we were all keen to spot faces that had been so familiar half a century ago!

Thank you, Maureen, for a most enjoyable afternoon. Hopefully it inspired others to offer their own 'untold stories'.

Peter Hopkins

... and ERIC MONTAGUE makes a confession in

MORDEN HALL PARK – ANOTHER UNTOLD STORY

In 1949 I joined the staff of the Environmental Health Department of Merton and Morden Urban District Council, which at that time was based at Morden Hall. One of my first recollections of the park is of the herd of beef cattle (mostly heifers and bullocks) belonging to a Mr Sullings of Lower Morden who was using the pasture to fatten cattle before they were sent to market.

The northern part of the park, where the cattle mostly grazed, was then prone to flood, and during the spring our department routinely carried out spraying with insecticide to minimise breeding of mosquitoes and to avoid nuisance to the public during the summer months.

During the late spring of 1950 the department arranged, at the request of the Clerk of the Council, to spray the grounds of the park in the vicinity of Morden Hall itself, in order to reduce the number of mosquitoes and midges, of which guests at the film stars' garden party had complained the previous year. This was done by our workmen, using a 'swing-fog machine', which produces a cloud of insecticidal smoke and was then the favoured method of treating such infestations. All went well on the day of the party, but the following Monday the department received a strongly worded complaint from a gentleman who kept bees in the orchard near the old stables. It appeared the 'fog' had drifted through the shrubberies to beyond the orchard where the hives were located and had killed most of the bees! We were horrified at what had happened and duly apologised, but the damage had been done and there was nothing we could do. Moreover the organisers of the party seemed to have been well satisfied, for few people complained that year of being bitten by insects.

The following year my chief was away at a conference when preparations were being made for the annual party, so I was summoned to the Clerk of the Council's office and asked if our department would carry out the fogging again. I had heard somewhere that by using a thin oil instead of insecticide in the swing-fog machines a spectacular white cloud would be produced which, of course, had no insecticidal properties but would look quite impressive. I decided this was what we should do. The next week we were thanked once again for carrying out an effective treatment. No one had complained about mosquitoes or midges and, most important, the bees were not harmed. I thought I had better keep quiet, and since this was the last film star party to be held at Morden Hall the situation did not arise again.

I think it was about this time that grazing of cattle ceased, and controlled tipping of inert waste material took place on the low-lying land in the northern part of the park to raise the level and reduce flooding. When work had finished topsoil was replaced and the land was re-seeded. Today, as the 'wetland', this part of Morden Hall Park is probably one of the most interesting areas ecologically, supporting a diversity of plants and insect life rare in an urban area, and providing a valuable teaching resource.

‘REMEMBERING THE MIZENS’

A presentation by Rachel England on 8 December

I use the word ‘presentation’ because this was not just a lecture on the subject but contained in addition video clips of a number of people’s reminiscences of the Mizen family and their market gardens.

The Mizens lived in Mitcham from the late 1860s until 1980, when the last local member of the family died. Rachel worked on a one-year full-time project sponsored by the Heritage Lottery Fund to collect together documentary evidence of the activities of the Mizen family, to trace their family tree and to combine this with personal memories, so as to produce a teaching pack for primary school children (typically aged 9 to 11). She had an advisory group comprising teachers from two schools, a number of local people who remembered the Mizens, and two members of the Mizen family.

Edward Mizen, a market gardener and horticulturalist, had a farm in Battersea, and in 1866 he and his wife Sarah and their five children moved to Mitcham, and bought land in the original East Commonfield which was being sold upon the break-up of the Moore/Bridger physic gardens. The Battersea farm was retained until the land was bought by the London County Council at its formation in 1888 to provide a park for Londoners.

By the late 1880s Eastfields Farm was a thriving concern, covering land between Grove Road and the present Acacia Road, both north and south of Tamworth Lane. Eastfields farmhouse was built fronting Grove Road. By 1895 Mizens had created the Elm Nurseries on the site of Pound Farm in London Road, an area now covered by Armfield Crescent and its four blocks of flats and maisonettes. Some of the produce was sold through a retail shop on this site, but most was taken overnight to Covent Garden and Borough markets.

Edward and Sarah had six children, but one (Mary) did not survive her second day of life. There were three sons – Edward Johnson, Edward Ernest and Alfred – and it was from these that the firm’s name, Mizen Bros, arose. There were two surviving daughters, Elizabeth and Alice. We were shown a number of photographs of these members of the family. In 1903 the firm bought 120 acres (48ha) of land at Cobham and in 1921 55 acres (22ha) at Leatherhead. Alfred remained in charge of the Mitcham operation, which at its peak covered 300 acres (120ha), whilst the other brothers, especially Edward Johnson, managed Cobham and Leatherhead.

Mizen Bros had 20 acres (8ha) under glass in Mitcham, and grew salad crops, flowers and plants for sale both outdoors and in their glasshouses. The list of plants grown was very extensive and comprised all the salad crops as well as mushrooms, marrows, onions, garlic, thyme, cress, parsley, sage, chervil and horseradish. Watercress was the speciality at Leatherhead.

Alfred, at Brook Cottage, Grove Road, married Emily Jane Bull in 1891 and had five children, the last surviving two dying there in 1978 and 1980. Ernest, at Elm Lodge, Grove Road, married Ada Louise Bull (Emily Jane’s sister) in 1889 and had eight children. Edward, the eldest, who married Mary Ann Oakley c.1890, remained in Eastfields Farmhouse.

The Mizens were good employers who paid above the national rate and were the first in the business to give their staff a half-day off on Saturdays. They built houses for rent in Lansdell, Carew, Feltham and St Mark’s Roads. Those in the first three roads were built cheaply, but satisfied basic needs; those in St Mark’s Road were of a higher standard. All these houses still exist. They were not solely for employees, but employees paid a discounted rent.

The family supported local activities. Alfred and Ernest were members of Mitcham Parish Council, Alfred serving during the whole of its existence from 1894 to 1915, and its chairman 1897-1903 and again in 1914. He was the first chairman of Mitcham Urban District Council at its formation in 1915. He also represented Mitcham on Surrey County Council. Passionate about education, he was instrumental in establishing Mitcham County School for Boys in 1922 (now St Thomas of Canterbury Primary School) and a similar school for girls in 1929 (now Cranmer Primary School). Edward Mizen (the elder) gave land to enable St Mark’s church to be built (opened March 1899), and Alfred gave various items of silver plate to the church. Kate and Mildred, his daughters, paid for the bell in the church in memory of their parents. Ernest Mizen was a churchwarden.

Rachel then moved on to video oral histories. We learnt that the firm employed five women to make cress punnets on-site, and had its own forge. They were horse-ploughing at Eastfields in the early 1940s (wartime petrol shortage?) though they had bought their first motor lorry in 1920. They were apparently the largest fern growers in the country.

The whole presentation was most interesting, and it was appropriate that it took place in St Mark’s church, with its many associations with the Mizen family.

Tony Scott

Four Mizen houses in St Mark’s Road, Mitcham – photo: JG 2008



‘THE LIFE AND TIMES OF HENRY TATE, STREATHAM’S SWEET BENEFACTOR’

For our first lecture in 2008 our old friend Brian Bloice of the Streatham Society was the speaker, at Mitcham’s Methodist Church hall, on 19 January. His last talk to us, in October 2006, was about ‘lost’ country houses of south London, concluding with a look at Park Hill, Streatham. Last summer some of us had visited Park Hill and enjoyed a guided tour of the grounds. This time Brian recounted the story of the house’s most famous owner.

Henry Tate was born at Chorley, Lancashire, in 1819, the eleventh child of a Unitarian minister, and was educated at his father’s private school until the age of 13, when he went to Liverpool to be apprenticed in the grocery trade to an elder brother, Caleb. Liverpool was an immensely prosperous place at the time, even boasting a branch of the Bank of England. At the age of 20 Henry was able to set himself up, after his seven years, as a master grocer, when he acquired an established business. By 1857 he was the owner of six busy shops in and near Liverpool, had expanded into the wholesale trade, and was looking for the next challenge. This turned out to be sugar refining, from imported cane. At first he joined in partnership with John Wright of Manesty Lane, Liverpool, but in 1869 the business became Henry Tate & Sons (they were Alfred and Edwin).

Always one to be innovative, Tate bought the rights to a French process for purifying sugar, using lime and carbonic acid, which gave a much whiter product than traditional methods. In the mid-1870s he bought a derelict shipyard at Silvertown, east London, and began to build his largest refinery. It started production in 1878 under Edwin’s direction, and is still there. At this time too Tate bought the British rights to a Belgian process for making ‘cube’ sugar. This was a great advance, as traditional processes produced large cones (‘loaves’) of solid sugar which had to be broken into pieces for sale to the public.

The company opened an office in Mincing Lane in the City, and Tate looked about for a suitable house for himself and his family. He chose the neo-Palladian house Park Hill, at the top of Streatham Common, which had been built c.1830 for a silk merchant, William Leaf, by the prolific architect J B Papworth. Tate’s wife Jane died, after some years of illness, and in 1885 he married the much younger (Jane) Amy Fanny Hislop of Brixton Hill.

By this time Tate was a very rich man indeed, but, influenced perhaps by his Unitarian upbringing, he chose to live a quiet domestic life, and to use much of his money unobtrusively in the fields of education and health. He endowed libraries in Streatham, Lambeth, Balham and Brixton, using his favourite architect S R J Smith, and gave money to college libraries in London and Liverpool as well as to hospitals in the latter city. In Silvertown he gave £5000 to the Tate Institute, which had meeting-rooms, reading and billiard rooms, and bathrooms.

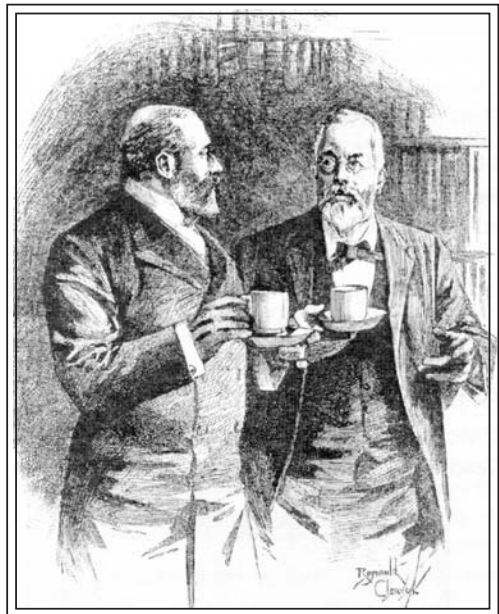
At the same time he was collecting British modern art. His preference seems to have been for narrative paintings, often in the pre-Raphaelite tradition, and his acquisitions included works by Madox Brown, Stanhope Forbes, Luke Fildes and Sir John Millais. They were hung in the billiard room, where on Sunday afternoons members of the public were able to inspect them – the first Tate Gallery.

His interest in British painting and his friendship with Millais led directly to the founding of the National Gallery of British Art – what became familiarly known as the Tate Gallery. Tate’s original offer of 65 of his paintings to the National Gallery to be displayed in a purpose-built extension (paid for by him) became bogged down in arguments. Finally the site of the obsolescent Millbank penitentiary was offered by the government. Tate again chose S R J Smith as the architect and gave the promised paintings. The cost of construction was born partly by him, and partly, after his death, by his family, who would later pay for the first extensions to the gallery. He and they would perhaps be surprised by the three modern galleries that also bear their name – at Bankside, Liverpool and St Ives.

Henry Tate was persuaded to accept a baronetcy in 1898, having several times turned down the honour. He died at Park Hill in the following year, leaving an estate of more than £1.25m, and was buried in a terra cotta mausoleum, designed of course by Smith again, in West Norwood cemetery. Tate’s firm did not join with that of Mr Lyle until after the deaths of both gentlemen. The present holder of the title is Sir (Henry) Saxon Tate.

Brian Bloice’s audience very much enjoyed his knowledgeable talk about a remarkably able and generous man.

Judith Goodman



*The Prince of Wales & Henry Tate at the opening
of Brixton Library in 1893*

LOCAL HISTORY WORKSHOPS

Friday 19 October, evening meeting. Five present, Peter Hopkins in the chair

- ◆ **Bill Rudd** produced photographs of St Helier railway station in former times. The Southern Railway station looked very smart, with shops at the entrance, and employed five staff including the stationmaster. Across the road could be seen a horse and cart. The later British Rail version looked rather drab. The modern station, not photographed, has clean lines but is a skeleton of its former self.

With regard to the massive and carefully co-ordinated St Helier Estate, it was noted that many of the new private owners sought to indicate the change by pebbledashing the attractive brickwork. Attempts had been made to preserve the character of the Estate by a Conservation Area, but these were unsuccessful because they were not welcomed by a majority of residents.

- ◆ **Cyril Maidment** asked members to identify the location of a photo. It turned out to be Colliers Wood and Wandle Park, taken from the top of the Black Tower. Apparently there had been a Society visit in the past [June 1996 – Ed.] when many photos were taken of the Wandle and the sites of Stane Street, Merton priory and the Surrey Iron Railway. There was some surprise that a good use had been found for the unpopular structure. The photo in question had been taken by the Council. It would be interesting to see members' photos, if any could be found [Why not bring them to the next workshop? – Ed.].

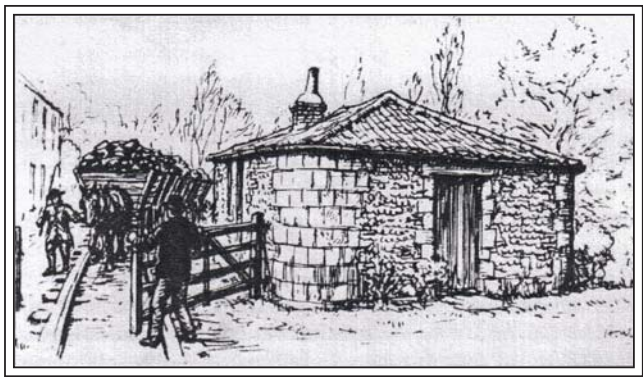
Cyril had mounted together these two Hubert Williams sketches of Stone Cottage, the Colliers Wood gatehouse of the Surrey Iron Railway. One view was from the road and the other probably from the back, looking across the road.

Judy had provided a photograph of a beautiful watercolour of Rose Cottage (101 Hamilton Road) when newly built in 1810. To facilitate comparison this was seen alongside a modern photograph. Sadly, the beautiful windows and porch are gone forever, together with the chimney stacks. [These photographs were included in the report on Cyril's August walk in the last *Bulletin* – Ed.].

- ◆ **David Haunton** had continued his study of the wartime activities of Lines Bros (see *Bulletins* 163 and 164). There had been a 60ft-square building busily engaged in producing 'passive reflectors', but he had not established what a passive reflector was. Similarly, for training purposes there was production of model aircraft and 'T'k's. What was a T'k? Can anyone help?
 - ◆ **Judith Goodman** had continued to research the substantial material on the Leach/Bennett families, but had nothing to present to the workshop at present. Cyril had put together detailed maps showing the Bennett house in Haydons Road in 1850, 1865 and 1894, and its absence in 1933.
 - ◆ **Peter Hopkins** reported that Sheila Harris had asked for help with any details of a timber merchant's manager named Ansell, living at 145 Dorset Road in 1938. Judith said she would check the electoral rolls.
- In the September *Bulletin*, Judy had mentioned the architect, John Thomas Groves (c.1761-1811), who



St Helier Station, Green Lane, Morden, April 1969 – WJR



'Stone Cottage' and the gateway on the Surrey Iron Railway, from a pen and ink sketch, probably by Hubert Williams, copyright not traced



The "Stone House" signed by Hubert Williams

designed Abraham Goldsmid's house at Morden. Peter told us that Goldsmid had bought the site of Morden Lodge from Groves' father, John Groves, a 'bricklayer' or builder, a process begun in 1797 but not completed until 1804. Had the Groveses already built the house before Goldsmid purchased the property? Or did Groves junior recommend his father's property as a suitable site when Goldsmid commissioned him to design a new house? The Poor Rate and Land Tax records show increased valuations here in 1780, 1784, 1798 and 1804, so it is not obvious which increases relate to the new building!

Cyril Maidment

Friday 30 November, afternoon meeting. Five present, David Haunton in the chair.

- ◆ **Judith Goodman** listed four pieces of information that she had learnt in her reading of the Bennett papers:
 - (i) Charles Smith of Merton Abbey, thought to have been a lifelong bachelor, had in fact, late in life, married Eliza Lancaster, the vicar's daughter.

- (ii) There was a (probably very short-lived) volunteer force called the Merton Light Infantry, raised at the time of the Napoleonic wars.

- (iii) There was a Horse Patrol ('Bow Street Runners') station at the corner of Haydons Road and the High Street.

- (iv) The cannon, now in Nelson Gardens, assumed to have once been the property of Admiral Isaac Smith of Merton Abbey Gate House (in the High Street, the site later of Wimbledon Palais) came in fact from Captain James Barber, who lived in the Gate House from at least 1855 into the 1860s.

- ◆ Ravensbury Farm, later known as The Grange, Morden, was the subject that **Peter Hopkins** had been gathering material about, and the meeting heard his impressively detailed account, which will be published in some form in the near future. With its associated land, Ravensbury Farm made up most of the Ravensbury estate, the remainder being in Mitcham, where the principal house was situated.
- ◆ **Bill Rudd** referred to a report in *Bulletin* 32 (January 1973) on a small-scale excavation carried out by MHS members at The Grange in 1972. They uncovered foundations, of various dates, of outbuildings, as well as drains, pottery fragments, bricks and tiles.



A member of the Merton Light Infantry

- ◆ **Lionel Green** had been to the exhibition at the Royal Academy celebrating the tercentenary of the Society of Antiquaries, and had (of course!) spotted some local connections. William Lock (of Merton) had premises in Cheapside, clearly shown in a picture on display; and there was a casket connected with Thomas Becket (educated at Merton priory).

On a different tack he highly recommended the National Trust's Wightwick (pron. 'Wittick') Manor, Wolverhampton, as somewhere with a remarkable collection of William Morris/William De Morgan textiles, furniture, glass and ceramics.

Finally he admitted to writing another book – this one is an account of Turgot, prior at Durham, the unsung man who essentially oversaw the construction of the great cathedral.

- ◆ **David Haunton** was investigating Palmer-Reville & Co, once of 14 Merton Park Parade, at The Rush, off Kingston Road, Merton Park. They were the first occupants of these premises, which have an unusual, triangular, floor-plan, with a flat above, and are now occupied at ground level by a used-car business and an upholstery business. The existence of No.14 has some extra significance, as its construction effectively put paid to the possibility of Sheridan Road linking directly with The Rush as a vehicular route.

He had also been pursuing the little mystery of the cluster of 'Merton' and 'Morden' roads in the Ilford area. The clue seems to be that a builder called Robert Stroud, who had been responsible for these developments, had earlier worked with a contractor called Benjamin Cook, of Battersea, on sewerage schemes in Merton.

Judith Goodman

Friday 11 January 2008, evening meeting. Seven present, Judith Goodman in the chair

- ◆ In the Wimbledon Society Museum, under reference A4.64, **Cyril Maidment** has discovered particulars of the sale by auction of 'Merton Hall Estate' in 1882, comprising 'Farmhouse, Villa and 115 acres', accompanied by an estate map (with different plot numbers ...). PH opined that there may never have been a Merton Hall as such, the name possibly being a corruption of Merton Holts, occupied by a 16th-century John Holt. JG noted that part of the estate, from Merton Hall Road along Kingston Road to Bushey Road, had later been owned by Quintin Hogg for a few years, when it was used as the (Regent Street) Polytechnic playing fields, before being built on.
 - ◆ **David Haunton**, following up a letter in the local press requesting details of Palmer-Reville & Co, makers of 'midget racing cars' in Merton Park Parade (at The Rush, Kingston Road), had found that the firm occupied the premises 1931-1938, while the principals lived in Ewell. He showed a dramatic photo from the internet, and some others supplied by Mr Bridgett, the letter-writer. David mentioned his plans for further *Bulletin* articles on Second World War subjects, and it was suggested he write a book. Which came as a bit of a shock.
 - ◆ **Bill Rudd** had brought along a series of photographs he took in the 1950s, detailing the work and equipment of the Morden Delivery Office of the GPO, including the daily scheduled '20 minutes bicycle maintenance'. He accompanied these with a most entertaining running commentary, which included memories of his customers' gifts of Xmas cake, tots of whisky and snowdrops.
 - ◆ **Peter Hopkins** had been reviewing the excavation records of The Grange, Morden (WJR 1973) to expand a chapter in Eric Montague's Ravensbury book, and showed us some of the original photographs and sketches.
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- Bill Rudd sorting mail in 1955*
- He announced that the Society's website is nearly ready, and requested help in selecting which articles from past *Bulletins* should (or should not) be made available on it.
- ◆ **Madeline Healey** brought some family items concerning the last years of the Ravensbury printworks building and grounds. They included photographs, a 'Plan and Sale Particulars' of G E Hatfeild's properties at Morden and Mitcham (1946), and the plan of a fascinating proposal (1959) to divert the River Wandle at Ravensbury, which was not carried through, but was superseded by a later design.
 - ◆ **Judith Goodman** amused us with some snippets from *A Surrey Anthology*, by Eric Parker (1952). These included a splendid letter from John Evelyn (1620-1706) to John Aubrey (1626-1697), who published his 'perambulation' of Surrey as *Natural History and Antiquities of Surrey*. The letter was full of applause for the book – and carefully listed its seemingly endless omissions.
 - ◆ **Sheila Harris** showed us her pictures of the re-opened St Pancras Station, whose restoration/adaptation was much admired.

David Haunton

Next workshop meetings: Friday 14 March at 2.30; Friday 25 April at 7.30; Friday 20 June at 2.30, at the Wandle Industrial Museum. All are welcome at these friendly, informal sessions.

ROSE'S STORY – THE WSPU IN WIMBLEDON 1908-1915

The Wimbledon Society Museum of Local History's special exhibition for 2008 will examine local aspects of the epic struggle for women's suffrage in the early 20th century. At the heart of the exhibition will be the story of Rose Lamartine Yates of Dorset Hall, Merton Park, who became a leading figure in the movement. The Wimbledon Society's own collection of women's suffrage material, including the Wimbledon WSPU banner, will be supplemented by images and material from the John Innes Society Yates collection and from the Women's Library.

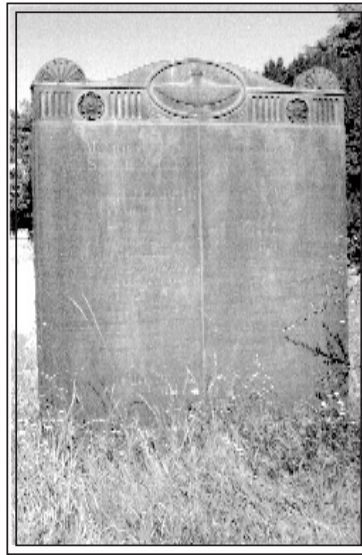
Rose's Story will be open from Saturday 12 April to Sunday 30 November, Saturdays and Sundays only, from 2.30pm to 5.00pm. Admission free.

Wimbledon Society Museum of Local History, 22 Ridgway, Wimbledon SW19; tel: 020 8296 9914; email wimbledonmuseum@yahoo.co.uk

A MITCHAM TRAGEDY

In the churchyard of Mitcham's parish church of St Peter and St Paul in Church Road, close to the north-east corner of the chancel, is a large monument, with the following inscription:

IN MEMORY OF
MARY SARAH and ELIZA
the daughters of
WILLIAM and ELIZABETH
ATWOOD
who were POISONED by eating
Fungous Vegetables
Mistaken for champignons
on the 11th day of October 1808 and
Died
at the ages of 14 7 and 5 Years
within a few hours of each other
in
excruciating agonies
The FATHER MOTHER and
now alas an only CHILD
partakers of the same meal
have survived
with debilitated constitutions
to lament so
dreadful a calamity



THIS MONUMENT
is erected
to
perpetuate the fatal
event
as an *awful caution* to others
let it be too
a Solemn Warning
that in our most grateful
enjoyments
even in our necessary food
may lurk a deadly poison
and that when
age and health
are most apt to flatter us with
length of days
some
unforeseen misfortune
may snatch US in an instant
to
ETERNITY

This terrible event was reported in the October issue of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, on page 942, as follows:

Monday, October 17.

This day an Inquest was held on the bodies of Mary Attwood, aged 14, Eliza, aged seven, and Sarah, aged five years, daughters of William Attwood, of Mitcham, Surrey, print-cutter.¹ Mr. Parrott, surgeon,² deposed, that on Tuesday the 11th instant he was desired to visit Wm. Attwood, his wife, and four daughters, who were supposed to be poisoned in consequence of their having eaten stewed champignons³ on the preceding day; that he visited them immediately, when he found each of them suffering under severe vomiting and purging, attended with great pain in the head, and violent pain in the bowels; that he administered such remedies as appeared to him best calculated to get rid of the offending matter, as he knew of no method whereby vegetable poison could be decomposed; that he attended the said children till their respective deaths, which happened as follows: Mary died about two o'clock on Friday morning; Eliza at half an hour after; and Sarah at about half past four on Saturday morning; that they died violently convulsed; that on opening the body of Sarah, who seemed to suffer the most excruciating pain in the bowels, no appearance of disease existed in any part of the alimentary canal; hence he inferred that the poison acted more immediately upon the brain and nerves. These people were intoxicated within ten minutes after having eaten their meal; and the eldest daughter observed to her father how cheerful they all were. This exhilarating effect was soon followed by stupor, and the symptoms already described. A dog, which had partaken of the same stew, died on the 16th, apparently in great agonies. Mr. Attwood, his wife, and their daughter Hannah, aged 11 years, are recovering; the latter, however, only ate two spoonfuls of the stew, alledging that she did not like its flavour. It is here proper to remark, that the stew was made in an iron vessel. From this statement of facts it is sincerely hoped that persons will in future be cautious of purchasing what are usually termed champignons; as these fungi are indiscriminately gathered off the commons in the vicinity of London, and sold at the London markets for the purposes of making catsup, with the addition of mushrooms.³

1. Perhaps we can guess that Mr At(t)wood was employed at one of the local textile-printing works on the Wandle.
2. John Parrott, the local surgeon, was probably living at Mitcham Court, in Cricket Green, at this time – later he would be at Elm Lodge next door. He was a well-known figure and was the respected medical man of choice of the prosperous citizens of Mitcham and the neighbourhood. This unusual emergency was probably unique in his years of practice.
3. It is difficult to be sure here of the distinction between 'champignons' and 'mushrooms'. An old *Encyclopaedia of Domestic Medicine* (no author, no date, but perhaps c. 1840) on my shelves names the 'large flat Mushroom which grows in moist meadows' as *Agaricus Campestris* (field mushroom) and the 'Champignon' as 'another wholesome kind ... of smaller size' but 'similar to the common sort in every other respect'. This the author identifies as '*Agaricus Pratensis*' (meadow mushroom), but, as far as I can ascertain, that distinction is no longer made. The name *Agaricus pratensis* does not appear in today's reference books. Perhaps '*pratensis*' was just the unripe form of *campestris*. In any case, whatever the unfortunate family ate, it was not the field mushroom. While most *Agaricus* are edible, a few are poisonous (there is one that, strangely, only affects some people), and many members of other genera are also dangerous.

The tragedy does not seem to have been reported in the pages of *The Times*, which at that date were filled mainly with military news from the Peninsula, but an account of it was included on pages 114-5 of the *Annual Register* of 1808, in almost the same words as in the *Gentleman's Magazine* (probably in both cases a transcript of the court's findings), but including the name of the coroner, which was Charles Jemmett.

Our Mitcham historian Eric Montague knows of no other mention of the At(t)wood family. Nor has he come across any record of who commissioned the very handsomely executed gravestone. He tells me he has always assumed that it was the parents themselves who did so, but personally I would be surprised if a print-cutter, particularly one with an 'impaired constitution', could have afforded it. I wonder whether one or more local parishioners subscribed for it, and composed its solemn message to passers-by, which is still legible after 199 years.

Judith Goodman

MHS WEBSITE NOW UP AND RUNNING – AT LAST!!

After a very long delay (the web-designer offered to create it for us free of charge in between his professional commitments) the Society's website is now up and running. Visit us on www.mertonhistoricalsociety.org.uk. There are 120 'pages' so far, half of them descriptions or reviews of our **Publications**. We hope that the website will drum up a lot of custom for our publications – we have already had a few orders from people who somehow managed to find the draft site! We even have an email address – mhs@mertonhistoricalsociety.org.uk.

Other pages are **About the Society** itself, our programme, the *Bulletin*, Workshops and, of course, how to contact us and become a member. Within a week of the launch we had an enquiry about membership from a lady in Australia. There are pages on various **News** items concerning the Society and local history, as well as details of the many **Projects** being undertaken by the Society and its members. Tell us about your project.

The remaining pages give information about the history of our area. We have some area pages on **Merton, Morden, Mitcham, Wimbledon** and the **River Wandle**, as well as the first few local history **Topics**. We hope to add to these over coming months – volunteers with ideas and articles will be welcomed! We also hope to link to articles from earlier *Bulletins* – there is already one on our Home Page below. Many of the pages have links to relevant local organisations' websites (so please let us know if you change your website address). Please do explore the site and feed back your comments and suggestions. And again, apologies for the delay.

Peter Hopkins



MERTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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About the Society

The Society is concerned with the history of the London Borough of Merton, England.

Founded in 1951 as the Merton & Morden Historical Society, it has always had a respected reputation for its publications on aspects of the Borough's history.

Membership at present costs £10 a year (£1 for students). Members receive the Society's quarterly Bulletin, and are entitled to 20% discount on the Society's publications.

The Society organises monthly lectures and talks of local historical interest during the winter months and arranges visits and local historical guided walks during the summer. It also runs regular Workshop sessions to share current research. Meetings are informal and do not pre-suppose special knowledge of history, local or national.



The Society's logo is the 12th-century arch found at Abbey House in 1914 and re-erected at St Mary's churchyard in 1935

WHAT'S NEW?

In our December Bulletin:

- Goodbye to Lampert's
- Madder at Mitcham
- Surfing the Net for Merton Abbey Station
- St Martin's Church, Lower Morden
- Flooding in 1903
- Lines Bros' Products in WWII
- and much more

Hot off the press!

- Mitcham Histories 9: *Colliers Wood* or 'Merton Singlegate'

BULLETIN ARTICLES

 [Click here to access President Lionel Green's reminiscences of the foundation of Merton Historical Society](#)

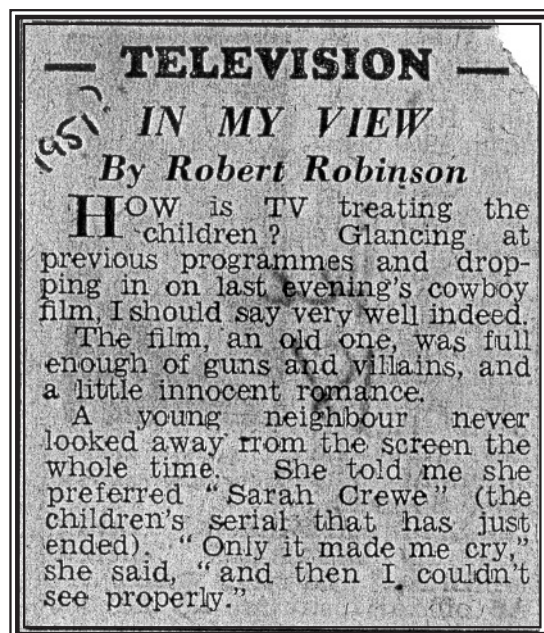
MERTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY – BULLETIN 165 – MARCH 2008 – PAGE 9

ROBERT ROBINSON RECALLED

Hilary Nethersole, a long-standing member who now lives at Reading, was interested in the reference to broadcaster Robert Robinson on page 7 of the December *Bulletin*, in David Roe's review of the talk on 'literary' Merton. Hilary writes:

"... As a child I lived next door to 'Bob' and his parents at Motspur Park. Very early in his career he was a reviewer for a newspaper (I can't remember which one)* and was provided with a TV set. My sister and I were invited round to watch the children's programmes. The 'young neighbour' in this review is me! "Bob's" TV enabled us to watch the Coronation two years later."

* Possibly the *Sunday Chronicle*. See p103 of the paperback edition of Robinson's memoirs, *Skip All That*. JG



MERTON HERITAGE CENTRE

The current exhibition, until 20 April, is *Nature's Gift – the Story of the River Wandle*. The Heritage Centre, at The Canons, Madeira Road, Mitcham, is open Tuesdays and Wednesdays 10-4 and Fridays and Saturdays 10-4.30. Tel: 020 8640 9387

AN EMAIL RESPONSE ABOUT LINES BROS

We have received via our email address an interesting letter from Peter van Lune of the Netherlands. On our website he had come across David Haunton's article in the December *Bulletin* about Lines Bros' products in the Second World War. He writes that he is interested in the 'Frog', and particularly the 'Penguin', products, and in 2003 he started a website called www.frogpenguin.com dedicated to the Penguins, the world's first range of all-plastic model kits. The idea came after finding a couple of these now very rare models, and discovering no website existed at the time. He spent several months gathering information and photos to share with others interested. It was in the course of preparing an update that he discovered David's article in the *Bulletin*.

Mr van Lune has found it difficult to trace anything published about the Frog Penguin. He has also been trying for years to obtain a copy or scan of Walter Lines's *Looking Backwards, Looking Forwards*, and asks for help or advice in this respect, and also for any reminiscences such as those of Hubert Bradbury quoted by David Haunton.

However he reports that he has managed to acquire so-called 'packed-by slips', small pieces of paper with the number of the (female) employee who had packed the box with model parts. On the back is stamped the month and year of production. Dates on his slips include December 1940, January 1941, January 1942 and August 1944 – indicating that at least some production continued until late in the war.

In addition to the bakelite and pressed paper recognition models also described by David, Mr van Lune tells us that there were wooden ones covered with buckram and painted black.

He would be grateful for any further information about the Lines factory, particularly Penguin production, and for any publicity our Society can give to his search.

His email address is penguin@frogpenguin.com

From Monty's Postbag

A few months ago Eric Montague received a letter from one of our long-standing members, Mrs Pat Robins, who now lives near Maidenhead. She explained that an old photograph of South Lodge, or New Barns Farm, Mitcham, had come into her possession. It had been taken – date uncertain – by the aunt of the second cousin from whom she had received it. She enclosed a copy for Monty.

In Monty's reply he mentioned that he had discussed the building in his *Pollards Hill, Commonsides East and Lonesome* (2002), but had only been able to illustrate it by borrowing postcard views from Graham Gower of the Streatham Society. For that reason he thought the picture ought to go (after appearing here) to Sarah Gould, for the Local Studies Centre collection. He commented on the house as follows:

'The house is rather interesting. It had obviously been extended and altered over the years, but first finds mention in local documents dating from the early 17th century. Certain features (like the roof line and the massive chimney stack) suggest it was probably erected before the Civil War. The land which went with it was referred to as "New Barns Grounds", and the farm itself may date from the period of agricultural expansion in the latter part of Elizabeth I's reign.'



BOOK REVIEW

London Main Line War Damage BWL Brooksbank Capital Transport Publishing, 2007, pp.144, illust, £19-95

So many recent books on the Second World War have been lazy scissors-and-paste jobs that it is a real pleasure to encounter this work of meticulous scholarship. The author has consulted a wide range of original sources to document the damage suffered by London's railways during the Second World War, and the efforts to repair and work around such damage. Written as a tribute to the people who worked hard to restore service after an attack, the book covers suburban 'over-ground' lines, as well as the Main Lines of the title.

The Introduction gives a succinct account of the war on the Home Front and the railway companies' preparations for it. This is amplified by frequent comments throughout the text, while thoughtful Conclusions summarise the overall effects on the railways and on the country. The main text, in a different typeface, lists by date and time the effects of every incident of enemy action that affected the railways, from large bombs disrupting a main line terminus, to a small bomb breaking the glass in a signal box. Over 50 unnumbered but well-captioned photographs dramatically depict the destruction faced by the repair teams. The captions to the photographs are included in the excellent index; sampling this gives an idea of its coverage and our local damage – from the 22 entries for Wimbledon, through 12 for Mitcham and five for Merton Abbey, down to single references to Wimbledon Chase, Morden South and Waddon Marsh Halt. I enjoyed the occasionally sceptical end-notes, such as no.73 "All cash (about £4,000) was recovered (really ?)..."

This book is packed with information, not just for railway buffs and students of the War, but also for London's local historians, who will quarry it for years. I know that I shall. Highly recommended.

P.S. Only after reading this book did I discover that, by a happy chance, Mr Brooksbank lives in Lower Morden. Support your local author !

Dave Haunton

The Tale

We begin with a story. It is set during the Battle of Britain, when the German *Luftwaffe* was trying to destroy RAF Fighter Command by attacking its airfields. The date is Friday 16 August 1940, and there is a great deal of cloud over much of southern England.

At about five o'clock that afternoon, some 30 Junkers Ju 88 twin-engined bombers, accompanied by Messerschmitt Me 110 fighters, were over the Isle of Wight, flying northwards at a height of 18,000 feet. Half an hour previously the aircraft of this *Kampfgruppe* of the *Luftwaffe* had taken off from their base in Normandy, had assumed tight formation and climbed to altitude. They were loaded with high-explosive bombs, for the destruction of buildings and the cratering of airfields. Most of the bombs were 50-kg (1-cwt) in weight, with a few bigger ones of 250-kg (5-cwt), and some were equipped with delayed-action fuses.

The formation turned eastwards over Winchester, and then split, each group of planes heading for the airfield that was their particular target. One *Staffel* of twelve aircraft was tasked to attack the Brooklands airfield at Weybridge, just south of the main London-Portsmouth railway line. Their orders were to fly in four 'vics' (or *Ketten*), each of three aircraft in tight V-formation, but during the long climb to altitude the *Staffel* commander had decreed that each of the three 'youngsters' forming the rearmost 'vic' should join one of the other 'vics', which were flown by more experienced crews. Thus it was in three groups of four aircraft that they flew north-east at 200 mph. They neared their target about twenty minutes after crossing the coast, and began their descent. Once below the clouds, at a height of about 2,000 feet they spread out a little, the leading *Kette* forging half a mile ahead, the left-hand one dropping behind the same distance. However, hampered by the clouds, the *Staffel* navigator had had trouble plotting their precise position, and had steered them rather east of their intended course. He followed a railway line north-east for a while, until he suddenly realised he had the wrong railway and had overshot the target. The *Staffel* commander noted their nearness to heavily-defended London, at low level and unescorted, and decided to attack 'targets of opportunity', and soon.

At about twenty past five, the right-hand *Kette* aimed their bombs at a group of buildings with typically industrial zig-zag roofs standing beside the Kingston Bypass in New Malden. The veterans in the left-hand *Kette* immediately followed suit, assuming the other guys knew what they were aiming at. The inexperienced 'youngsters' in both *Ketten* were a bit slower off the mark. Each aircraft took about 20 seconds to drop its 20-25 bombs, in groups of four or five, flying straight and level the while. The commander did not bomb at this point, but swung his central *Kette* sharply eastwards and then a little south, their formation a little ragged by now, and aimed their bombs at the cluster of industrial roofs and chimneys at Merton Abbey. The other two *Ketten* followed in his track as he headed swiftly south, away to the Channel coast and home, no more than two minutes after the first bombs had fallen on New Malden. The airmen did not notice the few shots aimed at them from the heavy anti-aircraft (AA) guns on Prince George's Playing Fields, but a couple of rear-gunners reported that some bombs appeared to have fallen short of their targets.



*Junkers Ju 88A-1 bomber as used on the raid
(from Stahl p16)*

The Evidence

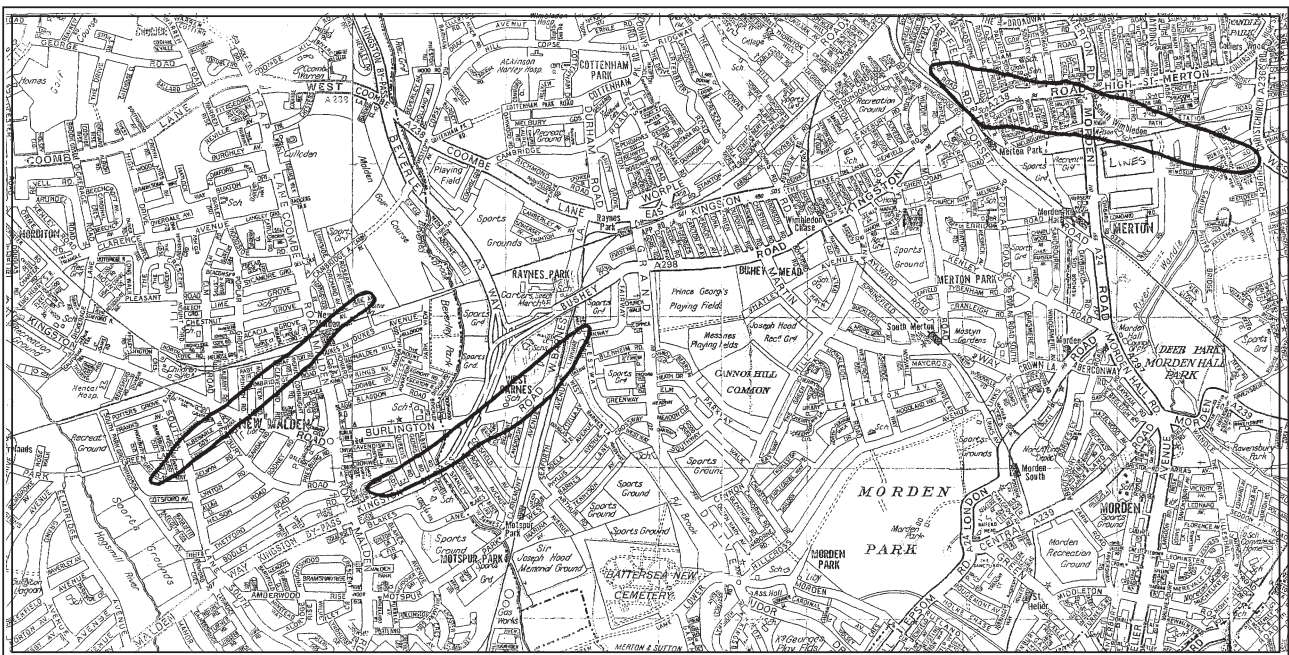
Parts of that tale are fact, some pure speculation, while others are reasonable deduction. We do not know the identity of the *Luftwaffe* unit that bombed Merton, and only a few notes from official local sources have survived. Our main evidence comprises summaries of what the RAF saw, plots of where the bombs fell, the damage they did to buildings and people, and witness accounts. So, what may we be sure of, and what may be deduced?

We are certain that the weather was fine but very cloudy, with a cloud-base as low as 4,500 feet,¹ and that the aircraft type was the Junkers Ju 88, confidently identified by Merton eye-witnesses who must have included gunners competent in aircraft recognition, while the course of the bombers near Merton is universally described as “towards London”.

There are many pointers to a low level attack: the simultaneous noise of explosions and loud engines (noted by both Vida Brown and Bill Rudd);² the airmen’s need to come below cloud level to identify their targets; eye-witness statements;³ the confidence of the aircraft type identification; and the New Malden, Wimbledon and Merton sirens sounding only shortly before the bombs fell,⁴ which indicate that the formation had only recently been reliably seen and reported.

It is obvious from the general bomb plot⁵ that the aircraft were flying in three groups (see sketch map),⁶ that two of these bombed New Malden while on the same north-easterly course and that the third hit Merton while flying in a slightly south of east direction.

The heavy defences of London: as well as the numerous AA guns ahead (more than 300 in inner London alone),⁷ to anyone flying north-east along the railway at low level the barrage balloons over Earlsfield would appear perilously close. The danger from this “line of shiny grey balloons... like great big fat fish”, that young Irene Bain could see from Mitcham,⁸ arose not from the balloons themselves, but from the heavy steel cable each one supported, strong enough to cut off the wing of any aircraft unwise enough to collide with it.



Where most of the bombs fell (see footnote 6)

We can make some solid assumptions about speed, 200 mph being the normal *Luftwaffe* formation-flying speed for the Ju 88 bomber, and V-formations: again, normal *Luftwaffe* practice at the time.⁹ Though operations orders normally designated three pilots by name for each *Kette*, we know that, once in the air, pilots did not rigidly adhere to these orders, but could move between or even away from formations as they saw fit.¹⁰ During his first few combat missions, a *Luftwaffe* bomber pilot was known as a ‘youngster’ by his more experienced colleagues.¹¹

Half an hour previously: British RDF (radar) stations watched four large formations building up off the Normandy coast between 16:33 and 16:40, and then heading steadily northwards. These aircraft must have taken off a few minutes before being detected. With no other suitable candidates, we assume that one of these formations bombed Merton.¹² From these four possible formations, we can eliminate the two most easterly ones, as their

bombers were identified as Heinkel He 111s when they were intercepted by RAF pilots, and the third, which only “demonstrated” around the Solent area. We are left with the fourth, western, formation, whose aircraft type was not reported. It did reach the Isle of Wight at 17:00 and did turn east over Winchester, but then English clouds and the ‘fog of war’ concealed its subsequent movements.

We assume that our large formation was similar to both of those engaged by RAF fighters, which were accompanied by Me 110 fighters, and were flying at 15,000 - 18,000 feet altitude. This was the normal *Luftwaffe* cruising and bombing height, above AA range.¹³

We can make some firm deductions. We can work out the bomb mix from the varied effects in Merton.¹⁴ No fewer than seven light bombs exploded on Lines Bros main factory roof, which was hardly a serious obstacle, but they “did not cause too much damage to the plant below”.¹⁵ Contrast this with the effect of a single heavy bomb which fell on Mina Road, and alone demolished four or five terraced houses.¹⁶ The account of Wimbledon’s war, based on contemporary documents, notes “the bombs were small, only 50 kg”,¹⁷ while a New Malden newspaperman reported that they ranged in size “from 110 to 250 lbs”.¹⁸ The serio-comic tale of the bomb at Merton Park level crossing gives us our delayed-action evidence.¹⁹

We may estimate that it took 20 seconds to drop a complete bomb load, by dividing the length of the main bomb plots (over a mile long, in each case) by the standard 200 mph.

A little guesswork now creeps in. That the formation bombed New Malden and Merton in swift succession rather than simultaneously is a local tradition, which accords with logical deduction. Locally reported times are very varied, and really only record when information was written down, not when the attack actually happened. One observation which helps us was made by our own Bill Rudd, in his works air-raid shelter at Liberty’s: more technically minded than other witnesses, he noted that he heard “a roar of engines, with the bombs going whump ... whump ... whump, then there was a pause, and then a roar of engines again”,²⁰ which I interpret as the leading flight dropping bombs on Merton, followed shortly after by the other two (now empty) flights.

That the left-hand *Kette* dropped behind is inferred from the western New Malden bomb pattern starting half-a-mile (or 10 seconds flying time) before the parallel eastern one, and the ragged formation from the Merton bomb plot being wider than the two New Malden plots, which I ascribe to the bombers swinging apart as they hurriedly changed course.

And then even more guesswork is required. The number of aircraft is the trickiest question. Roughly equal numbers of bombs fell in each area, presumably from equal numbers of aircraft. There were 92 bombs in Merton and Wimbledon, 87 in the easterly New Malden trace, but as many as 110 were marked in the westerly New Malden one. The maximum number of bombs that a Ju 88 could carry was 28,²¹ so in theory four Ju 88s could account for the latter.²²

I eventually opted for a strong *Staffel* strength of twelve aircraft because: 20-25 bombs form an acceptable load for a Ju 88, (if most are 50-kg, to remain within the usual maximum of 1500 kg per aircraft); the narrow width of the New Malden bomb plots (about 180 yards) is consistent with about four aircraft bombing abreast; while from later WW2 experience twelve aircraft is the greatest useful number with which to attack a smallish airfield (more than that tend to get in each other’s way, apparently). There is also the circumstantial evidence of other incidents that day, where nine planes was the largest number observed in any one attack.²³

Brooklands as the target: An airfield target is probable because of the then-current *Luftwaffe* campaign and because, on 16 August, Farnborough and Brize Norton airfields were also attacked by Junkers Ju 88s, and Heathrow, Heston and Feltham airfields were the targets of the Heinkel 111s of *Kampf Geschwader 55*.²⁴ Our *Staffel*’s target was evidently south of the railway line and there was no other suitable airfield around that area. Brooklands was home to Vickers, manufacturers of the Spitfire fighter,²⁵ and was attacked in strength a few days later.

Sheer speculation is needed for the remaining points. Obviously I have invented all the actions attributed to the bomber crews. On the other hand, flying from Winchester to Merton has a feel of ‘inherent military probability’ and the time to fly the distance is right; following a railway can help navigation at low level (if you choose the right railway), and not turning back to Brooklands is likely, since turning a formation of nine large aircraft 180° while staying in touch is no easy matter (even more difficult while flying at low level) and, tactically, war-time pilots tend not to fly again over defences they have just alerted.

In allowing the commander to choose targets of opportunity, we note the *Luftwaffe* were not generally attacking population centres at this date, but their main targets, besides airfields, were still factories, docks, railways and freight yards. I could see no suitable target for the western *Kette* on the map, hence I opted for their bomb release being triggered by that of the eastern *Kette*. This is perhaps supported by a local newspaper editorial

comment that “not a single military objective was struck”, though we have to consider the possibility of war-time censorship when using such evidence.²⁶ In each New Malden bomb trace, a few bombs fell well beyond the general group, presumably because the crews were slower off the mark.

I allow only a few shots from the Prince George’s AA guns since there would have been little warning, after which the gunners would need time to estimate the height, range and speed of the target aircraft, and then to adjust fuses, load, aim and fire. (But I am not completely sure that the guns had been installed by this date.)

The Broad Picture

The very cloudy conditions meant that 16 August 1940 was a day of confusion for both attackers and defenders. Bombs fell in Esher, New Malden, Wimbledon, Merton and Mitcham, but overall the German bombing was adjudged “ill-directed and scattered”. There was no radar coverage inland from the coast, so the RAF and the Observer Corps had to depend on the ‘Mark 1 Eyeball’ to plot the positions of enemy aircraft. Only eight of fifteen RAF fighter squadrons that took off that afternoon made any contact with *Luftwaffe* aircraft, and the RAF historian commented “it may [seem] outrageously conjectural [to suppose]... that 200 German bombers ranged at will over Southern England for at least an hour without being brought to battle, but this was undoubtedly the case”.

My purpose in writing this story has been to give some idea of how much information has to be considered when composing the slightest historical narrative. Here is a tiny tale from the 1940s - very recent history, and we still have a lot of question marks. How much harder it must be to write a tale of the 1840s or even earlier! My excuse for this one is that it forms a plausible story that is consistent with the evidence we have. I would be glad to hear from anyone who can confirm, add or contradict any detail.

Acknowledgement

My thanks are due to Dr. Martin Dearne, archaeologist and lecturer, for introducing a class of adult education students to the technique of “imaginative reconstruction, followed by examination of the evidence” in his course on “Roman Lives in Britain”, which was run locally under the auspices of Birkbeck College, University of London.

- 1 The National Archives (TNA) AIR41/15 RAF Narrative *Air Defence of Great Britain Vol.II Battle of Britain* (1953) Air Historical Branch, Air Ministry, pp.191-193. All subsequent mentions of RAF and RDF are from these pages.
- 2 *pers. comms.*
- 3 *Surrey Comet* Wednesday 21 August 1940, p.1 [Much of this report is self-evidently about New Malden.]
- 4 Plastow, Norman *Safe as Houses* (1972, revised 1994) Wimbledon Society, p.12
- 5 TNA HO193/12 Map 56/18SW *Summary of Night Bombing up to 6/7 Oct 1940* (contemporary) [This actually records all bombs, day and night, which fell before daybreak on 7 October 1940.]
- 6 Map compiled from sheets of *Master Map of Greater London* (1968) Geographers Map Co., Sevenoaks
- 7 Mason, F K *Battle over Britain* (1969) McWhirter Twins Ltd, London, p.616
- 8 Bain, Irene *I Remember – Childhood Memories of Wartime Mitcham* (1994) MHS Local History Notes No.7, p.3
- 9 Indeed, in theory, much of the bomber force was organised in threes: 3 aircraft = 1 *Kette*; 3 *Ketten* = 1 *Staffel* (9 aircraft), and so on through *Gruppe* and *Geschwader*. In practice a bomber *Staffel* would have 10-14 aircraft. Officially, there was also a *Staff Kette* for each *Gruppe* and *Geschwader*.
- 10 Stahl, Peter *The Diving Eagle: A Ju 88 Pilot’s Diary* (1978) Motorbuch Verlag, Stuttgart (English translation 1984, William Kimber) pp. 47,49,52, etc
- 11 Stahl p.46
- 12 Another series of raids coming west up the Thames estuary was intercepted by RAF fighters well before five o’clock.
- 13 Stahl *passim*
- 14 I have also consulted Fleischer, Wolfgang *German Air-dropped Weapons to 1945* (2003) Motorbuch Verlag, Stuttgart (English translation 2004, Midland Publishing) *passim*. [He mentions (p.67) that “The great majority of air-dropped bombs over Great Britain in the summer of 1940 consisted of SC-50 [and] SC-250... *Minenbomben*” ie. 50-kg and 250-kg high-explosive weapons.]
- 15 Lines, Walter *Lines Brothers: Looking Backwards, Looking Forwards* (1958) Private publication, p.30
- 16 TNA HO193/12 Map 56/18SW detail; Merton and Morden UD Council War Damage Repairs Committee Minutes for 8 October 1945, ref. 3-13 Mina Road; and personal observation of the rebuilt properties.
- 17 Plastow *loc. cit.*
- 18 *Surrey Comet loc. cit.* [Presumably he was told “50-250 kg” and only converted the first number to pounds.]
- 19 Plastow p.15 [For the full story of this incident, see Part 2 (forthcoming).]
- 20 *pers. comm.* 11 Jan 2008, expanding WJ Rudd *Liberty Print Works: Wartime Remembrances* (1994) MHS Local History Notes No.8, p.5 [Bill would like to think that the second lot were RAF fighters in hot pursuit, but I feel that perhaps he is being a bit patriotic here.]
- 21 Ramsey, Winston G (Ed) *The Blitz: Then and Now* (3 vols. 1987-1990) Battle of Britain Prints International Vol.I p.75
- 22 Rather late in the day I remembered that the map covers the whole period from 16 August to 6 October. It is just possible that the New Malden trace shows bomb sites for two raids, and that some unfortunate residents were bombed on a second occasion during the period.
- 23 RAF Narrative *loc. cit.*
- 24 Goss, Chris *The Luftwaffe Bombers’ Battle of Britain* (2000) Crécy Publishing Ltd., p.105
- 25 However, *Luftwaffe* intelligence was faulty on this point, since it was Vickers-Armstrong that occupied Brooklands, making Wellington bombers, while it was Vickers-Supermarine that made Spitfires, elsewhere.
- 26 *Surrey Comet* Saturday 24 August 1940, p.4

THE WANDLE IN LITERATURE – an occasional series

5. Harry Graham

If not high literature, the verses composed by Harry (Henry Jocelyn Clive) Graham (1874-1936) are skilful, amusing and memorable. His best-known collection was *Ruthless Rhymes for Heartless Homes*, but there were many others, including *More Ruthless Rhymes*, *Departmental Ditties* (a reference to Kipling's *Departmental Ditties*) and *Adam's Apples*.

Graham was educated at Eton and went on to Sandhurst and a commission in the Coldstream Guards. Having served in the Boer War, he left the Guards in 1904, but rejoined in 1914. He served for a time as private secretary to Lord Rosebery; he joined the *Tribune* as a columnist; adapted plays and wrote lyrics for musicals; co-wrote *White Horse Inn*; was a trustee of the British Museum; and produced nearly 30 publications. An early collection was *Ballads of the Boer War* (1902) by 'Col. D. Streamer' (i.e. 'Coldstreamer').

Graham had great natural geniality and charm. When he died *The Times* published not only a handsome obituary but also a leading article. His memorial service was held at St Martin-in-the Fields. His daughter Virginia's talent for amusing but pointed verse – she was a frequent contributor to *Punch* – owed something to her father.

Most of Graham's verse is short and packs a wicked punch at the end.

A characteristic one goes:

Billy, in one of his nice new sashes,
Fell in the fire and was burnt to ashes;
Now, although the room goes chilly,
I haven't the heart to poke poor Billy.

In his longer poems he indulged his relish for pun, parody and allusion. And *Elsie Gloy* is a good example. Luscious Elsie swam in the Wandle, and there she caught, at first fish, and then the eye of an artist ("a human pike"), before becoming "Queen of all Bohemia" as model, muse, and hostess of a *salon*. Her simple rustic adorer was left lamenting. At 22 stanzas the poem is too long to reproduce in full here, but the first two and the last are the ones that mention the Wandle.

ELSIE GLOY

She dwelt among the untrodden ways
Beside the river **Wandle**;
A maiden, in those early days,
Whom there were very few to praise,
And fewer still to fondle.
She had a rustic woodland air
That was extremely hard to bear.

Oft had I heard of Canon Gloy,
And, by the **Wandle** Water,
Where I went poaching as a boy,
I used to gaze with secret joy
Upon his seventh daughter;
And while her father was in church,
She helped me snare the local perch.

* * * *

Ah, me! By **Wandle** now
I roam in deepest dudgeon.
I wander lonely as a cow,
For there is none to show me how
To snare the smallest gudgeon.
I'm left with naught but eggs to poach,
A knight sans perch et sans (rep)roach!

No doubt it was the sound of 'Wandle' that dictated its choice for the scene of this epic – the rhyme was irresistible. Unfortunately there is no evidence that I know of to suggest that Harry Graham, resident mostly in the West End, knew the Wandle's "untrodden ways" or indeed any aspect of its topography.

Judith Goodman

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.