

## IN BRIEF

- ◆ We congratulate **Wandle Industrial Museum** on their new exhibition, which marks the bicentenary of the opening of the Surrey Iron Railway. They have also produced an all-colour fold-out guide to *The Iron Railways of the Wandle Valley* (£2 from the Museum).
- ◆ Autumn talks in Streatham Society's programme include '**The Work of English Heritage in London**' (Malcolm Woods) at 8pm on 3 November at Woodlawns, 16 Leigham Court Road, SW16.
- ◆ At **Merton Heritage Centre** look out for exhibitions on 'Lower Mitcham' (to 20 Sept), 'Wandle Valley Mapping Project' (30 Sept-25 Oct) and 'Merton during the 1980s' (11 Nov-12 Jan). Upstairs there will be reprises of 'Golden Jubilee' (23 Sept-5 Oct) and '999' (28 Oct-8 Nov).
- ◆ Coming up is **London Open House Weekend** on 20-21 September. Information from [www.londonopenhouse.org](http://www.londonopenhouse.org) and local libraries.
- ◆ This year's **Heritage Open Days**, everywhere except London, are 12-15 September. Information from [www.heritageopendays.org](http://www.heritageopendays.org) or Heritage Open Days, The Civic Trust, 17 Carlton House Terrace, SW1Y 5AW. Mole Valley, for example, has an ambitious programme of events. Tel: 01306 879 327.

**LIONEL GREEN finds that Merton priory was involved in:**

### SETTLING 13<sup>TH</sup>-CENTURY CHURCH DISPUTES

Priors of Merton were often called upon to arbitrate in church disputes. In 1221 Westminster Abbey chose the prior to help settle a quarrel with the bishop of London [*Bulletin* No.137 March 2001 p.13]. Here is another example.

In February 1235 Henry Sandford, bishop of Rochester, died. The monastic chapter met, and on 26 March they elected a new bishop, master Richard of Wendover. He was eminently suited, being a scholar, rector of Bromley and law officer of the diocese. Archbishop Edmund Rich felt that he had to defend the rights of Canterbury of which he was trustee, and refused to confirm the election. The monks of Rochester turned to the pope to do so. Pope Gregory IX appointed the abbot of Walden, the prior of Merton (Henry Basing) and the archdeacon of Northampton to determine the matter in England, as papal judge-delegates.<sup>1</sup> If the enquiry was not finalised within four months it was to be remitted to the pope.<sup>2</sup> The matter was not resolved within the four months, and on 29 August 1236 the pope mandated the abbot of St Alban, the prior of Merton and the archdeacon of St Alban to reconsider the case and decide within four months.<sup>3</sup> The pope disallowed the findings of the panel on technical grounds (out of time?). The Rochester chapter sent representatives to the papal Curia to plead their case in Rome, and finally Richard of Wendover was allowed to be elected, but without prejudice to the archbishop's right of patronage over the see of Rochester. In November 1238 the archbishop consecrated Richard in the Augustinian church of St Gregory, Canterbury – a monastery founded by canons from Merton 115 years earlier. Four years later Richard of Wendover was petitioned by the canons of Merton "whom he was bound to hold in special favour for their shining life and conversation" to appropriate to them the church of Ryarsh, Kent.<sup>4</sup>

1 H Wharton *Anglia Sacra* 1691 I pp.348/9 This recounts the lives of English prelates to 1540.

2 *Cal. of Papal Registers* Vol. xviii p.148; A Heales *Records of Merton Priory* 1898 p.98

3 Heales *op.cit.* p.100                      4 Heales *op.cit.* p.110

**LIONEL GREEN on a topical story with echoes from the past:**

### SITUATIONS VACANT 2003 – BISHOP OF HEREFORD

A job advertisement for the post of bishop of Hereford has appeared in certain church newspapers. Candidates must be over 30, and no interview will be necessary. Applicants need not even be a priest.<sup>1</sup>

The see of Hereford was founded AD676. When a vacancy for bishop occurred in 1129 Pain Fitzjohn, sheriff of Hereford, and Miles de Gloucester, royal constable, recommended an Augustinian canon, Robert de Bethune, to be elected, but Robert was loath to accept. His CV would have stated that he had studied under Anselm of Laon, and became an Augustinian canon at Llanthony. Briefly he worked in the building trade as a mason at Weobley, and later returned to Llanthony as prior. Robert was consecrated bishop of Hereford at Merton priory on 28 June 1131 and was impressed by the standards maintained by the canons at Merton.<sup>2</sup> Miles de Gloucester became earl of Hereford in 1141, but Bishop Robert found he had to excommunicate him two years later, for unreasonable demands on church lands. Robert died in 1148 when attending the Council of Reims.

1 Thomas Becket was not a priest when he was elected archbishop in 1162.

2 M L Colker 'Latin Texts concerning Gilbert, founder of Merton' in *Studia Monastica* 12 (1970) p.243: "...though he had inspected many Augustinian houses, he approved of the practices of none so much as Merton..."