



PRESIDENT:

VICE PRESIDENTS: Eric Montague and William Rudd

CHAIR: David Haunton

BULLETIN No. 187

SEPTEMBER 2013



Past their 'best before' date? But see page 15.

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PROGRAMME SEPTEMBER-DECEMBER

Saturday 7 September at 2pm

Billiard Room, Honeywood Museum, Carshalton

Talk and tour by **Jane Howard**, curator, plus (optional) look at Carshalton Water Tower.

No charge. Book with David Haunton.

Nearest station, Carshalton; bus routes 127, 154, 157; pay and display car park in Pound Street.

Saturday 12 October at 2.30pm

Christ Church Hall, Colliers Wood

‘London’s Underground and its Maps’

The speaker will be a member from **Friends of London Transport Museum**.

Saturday 9 November at 2.30pm

Christ Church Hall, Colliers Wood

Annual General Meeting followed at 3.30pm by

‘56 years of the Parish Players of Merton’ presented by **Maggi Chick**, their chair.

Saturday 7 December at 2.30pm

Christ Church Hall, Colliers Wood

‘History of Magic’

An illustrated talk by **Michael Symes**.

Christ Church Hall is next to the church, in Christchurch Road, 250m from Colliers Wood Underground Station. Limited parking at the hall, but plenty in nearby streets or at the Tandem Centre, 200m south. Buses 152, 200 and 470 pass the door.

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

BLAKESLEY REMEMBERED

As I write, the demolition team is knocking down the last building, once a nurses’ home, on the Blakesley site, next to where the Nelson Hospital stood. The original house, called Ellerslie, dated from the mid-19th century, and was quite unassuming, but after being bought c. 1890 by the Edwards family it was greatly enlarged. Patrick Edwards, from Ireland, was the brother of George Edwards of Daly’s Theatre, but, according to his descendants, Patrick seems to have had no talents other than ‘knowing about horses’ – and marrying a rich woman. Ada’s family home near Woodbridge, Suffolk, was called Blakesley.



*July 1907: wedding reception of Gladys Edwards (third daughter) at Blakesley
(courtesy of Mrs Jane Newell)*

The large household – there were 12 children – led a comfortable life for more than 20 years in their spacious creeper-covered house, with its several conservatories and fine lawns. After they left c. 1913 the house became a small private preparatory school, Blakesley House, until the outbreak of war in 1939 when the school moved to Worcester Park and Blakesley was requisitioned as a first-aid post. It was officially acquired by the hospital in 1943 and went on to house the X-ray and physiotherapy departments. In 1985 Blakesley was finally pulled down, and since then the site has served as the hospital car-park.

Judith Goodman

A VISIT TO WHITECHAPEL BELL FOUNDRY

On Saturday 18 May twelve members met outside the Whitechapel Bell Foundry at 32-34 Whitechapel Road for a tour of this 'ancient establishment', which claims to be the oldest manufacturing company in the UK. On entering we were introduced to Mr Alan Hughes, who was to be our guide, and whose family have owned and run the foundry since 1904. He started the tour by pointing out that the foundry was not a museum, but a working factory, 'where traditional craftsmanship and modern technology combine to produce bells to meet the requirements of the modern age'. Bells of all sizes are made here, from the largest, such as Great Peter in York Minster, the famous Big Ben, and the Liberty Bell (USA) to sets of small handbells. Also bells for pocket watches, musical boxes, ships, town criers etc are made. Old bells are sent back to the foundry to be retuned and reconditioned.

We were taken through to the workshop and shown how bells are made. The process starts with the inner mould, or core, and then the outer mould or cope (where any inscriptions will be impressed, in reverse). The two moulds are made of a mixture of sand, clay, horse manure, goat's hair and water. They are shaped to the exact profile required, and, when they have been dried, molten metal – about 77% copper and 23% tin – is poured in and left to cool. The cast is then removed and the bell cleaned up. Smaller bells are usually cast in sand, using metal patterns.

The final stage is the tuning, done nowadays with an electronic tuner, until a perfect note is achieved, by paring off metal from the inner surface with a special lathe. We were then taken to the top floor where ringing fittings and bellframes are made, as these days the foundry offers a complete service. In another upper room is the handbell workshop. Sets of handbells are used for practising change-ringing, and also as musical instruments in their own right.



photos by Melinda Haunton



Though there are some modern elements to bellfounding the basic system has not changed since medieval times. The Whitechapel Bell Foundry, known to have been established in 1570, though the founders can be traced to 1420, has been at the present site since 1738. Some modernisation and enlargement of the building has been made, the last time being in the 1970s/1980s.

This was an extremely interesting tour, giving us a history of bellfounding and showing us the fascinating craft from start to finish. It is sadly a dying trade – Whitechapel is one of the only two foundries left in the UK. One of the reasons for this is that bells are made to last, and, looked after and cared for, will last for centuries!!

The quotations are taken from the good guidebook *Whitechapel Bell Foundry – A Short History*, obtainable at the foundry shop. Guided tours take place on Saturdays and must be booked.

Bea Oliver

LOCAL CHURCH BELLS – WHITECHAPEL AND OTHERWISE

It is clear that some bells of each of our Borough's four original parish churches are connected with the Whitechapel foundry, though some records are deficient, and some bells have not been competently inspected in decades.

St Mary, Wimbledon

P J Heather remarked in 1910 that the first three bells are 'recent' (and thus by implication uninteresting). However the other three can all be identified as having been made by the Whitechapel firm at various considerably earlier dates.

No.4 is inscribed 'PRAYZE YE THE LORDE AN^o 157-', with the S and the N both inverted (or back to front, if you prefer). The last figure of the date is missing from the casting, but during our visit to the Foundry I noticed that the date was given as 1572 in a video. Enquiry revealed that this is the date of the bell in the surviving accounts, under the charge of master founder Robert Mot, who flourished c.1572 – 1606. Bell no.5 is probably earlier. It is inscribed 'Sancte Bartholomee' and bears a shield (see right), which is probably the device of William Culverden, citizen and brazier of London, and the master founder at Whitechapel 1506 – 1522. Finally no.6 carries the 'prosaic inscription RICHARD PHELPS MADE ME 1715'. Phelps was the sole master at Whitechapel 1700 – 1735, and then worked on in partnership with his successor, Thomas Lester, for a further three years.



St Lawrence, Morden

The church had three bells in an inventory of 1552, but none of these survive. However, Livermore and Rudd record that in 1604 the Garth family celebrated its jubilee in the parish by the gift of a bell which is still in use. It is inscribed 'R Garth 1604 WS' (or maybe 'SW'),¹ though the founder with those initials has not yet been identified. The second bell is dated 1637 and probably commemorates the rebuilding of the church. It is inscribed 'Gloria in Excelsis Deo. B.E.' The initials are those of Bryan Eldridge the elder, a member of a family of master founders working in Chertsey in Middlesex between 1619 and 1716, who were notoriously in competition with the Whitechapel founders. The third bell is another by Richard Phelps of Whitechapel and is inscribed 'R PHELPS FECIT 1717'. It also bears the names of 'GEORGE KNAPP DD RECTOR', who is believed to have given the bell to the church, and of 'PETER BATT JONAH LOUGEE CH W' (ie. the churchwardens).²

St Mary the Virgin, Merton

The oldest of the six bells at St Mary's (and indeed in the whole London Borough of Merton) bears the inscription in black-letter characters 'Sancta Margareta Ora Pro Nobis' (i.e. St Margaret pray for us) and a shield which Heather says represents 'the Royal Arms uncrowned'. This shield identifies the maker as Robert Danyell or Daniel, master at Whitechapel 1456 – 1470, so his bell is still going strong after at least 540 years. Examples of Danyell's work are found as far north as Durham, and are widely distributed south of the Humber, in no fewer than 20 English counties.

The next bell is simply inscribed 'BRYAN ELDREDGE MADE MEE 1621'. This is made by the same member of the Chertsey family referred to above. Evidently the Merton vestry had shopped around for a bargain. Unfortunately their next choice fell on the Eldridges' competitors at Whitechapel, for the third bell is inscribed 'THOMAS MEARS OF LONDON FECIT 1803', in the mixture of English and Latin common in the 18th and early 19th centuries.

C J Pickford *et al* tell us that in 1785 the Rev William Ludlam, a Leicester clergyman with much experience in the fields of music, engineering and bellfounding, described Whitechapel bells as 'leaden ones' and dubbed the current founders as 'great traffickers but no artists'. His comments applied to the partnerships of Pack and Chapman, and of Chapman and Mears (together covering the period 1776 – 1784), but Pickford *et al* remark that the comments 'could well have applied to Thomas Mears I [master founder 1787 – 1810] alone ... He ran the factory on strictly commercial lines ... the majority of his bells bear only his name and the date of casting ... He introduced a new set of moulding gauges, altering the shape of his bells with little regard for the resulting quality of tone, and in short he brought the art of English bellfounding to its lowest ebb.' So Merton cannot boast too loudly of the quality of its peal.

¹ The initials are apparently intertwined, but there is no illustration to allow us to see for ourselves. They were reportedly rather lightly 'scratched' on the mould, in contrast to the inscription, which was done with proper stamps.

² My thanks to Peter Hopkins for making sense of a poorly-recorded inscription, and for confirming that Batt and Lougee / Lowgee / Lovejoy were well-known surnames in Morden at the time.

St Peter and St Paul, Mitcham

The church was famously rebuilt in 1819 – 1821 by John Chart, local builder, undertaker and much else. It was originally intended that the old bells should be re-hung in the new tower, but it was decided in December 1819 that, as the whole peal of eight bells were now considered to be defective, they should be exchanged for a new peal of ‘not less weight’.

It is perhaps fortunate that Thomas Mears II was in charge (1810 – 1844) at Whitechapel by the time Mitcham required the services of a bell-founder, for he had effected something of an improvement over his father’s founding methods. The total cost was £575 (about £170,000 today), but that included an allowance of £336 for the weight of metal in the old bells, so only £239 had to be raised. The new peal was in place for the re-opening of the church on 14 April 1822, and is still there.



Mitcham's bells
photo by Madeline Healey

David Haunton

Sources

P J Heather *Some Notes on the Church Bells of Wimbledon and Merton* in *The Wimbledon and Merton Annual No.4* (1910, Edwin Trim & Co)
Christopher J Pickford, Kathryn Hughes and Carolyn Baker *Whitechapel Bell Foundry: A Short History* (2011, The Whitechapel Bell Foundry)
Robert G Eldridge *Family of Thomas Eldridge ??? – 1597* consulted via members.iinet.au (updated February 2009)
T L Livermore *The Story of Morden and its Churches* (1968, revised W J Rudd 1983)
E N Montague *Church Street and Whitford Lane (Mitcham Histories 12)* (2012, Merton Historical Society)
J C L Stahlschmidt *Surrey bells and London bell founders* (1877, consulted via www.ebooksread.com)

A VISIT TO HISTORIC EAST GRINSTEAD

On 19 June, which turned out to be easily the hottest day of the year – until then – a party of MHS members was met at East Grinstead station by David and Katharina Haunton and their daughter Melinda, who, with David’s brother and sister-in-law, were spending a few days’ holiday in this pleasant town. Also greeting us was Dr Chris Wheatley, Vice-Chairman of the East Grinstead Society, who was to be our guide.

The brand-new stylish station impressed, as did the news that the Bluebell Railway has now reached East Grinstead, and, when its southern end is extended to Lewes, this London-Brighton route, axed in the 1960s by Beeching, will have been restored.

While the town is built on a sandstone ridge, the railway keeps to the lower ground, from where there is a gentle climb south up London Road, with its mixture of commercial premises. Chris prompted us to look up above what is at street level, to appreciate the variety of building styles – always good advice. There used to be a pottery in East Grinstead that made terra cotta architectural trimmings, and he pointed out a fine heraldic beast surmounting a gable. The East Grinstead Society tried and failed to get the handsome post office building listed when it closed – alas there were too many in similar style elsewhere. On the other side of the road a striking art deco cinema building is being converted into flats.

On reaching the east-west High Street we paused in front of Old Stone House, handsome but newer, at c.1630, than most of the buildings we could see. Chris told us that though East Grinstead does not have the most timber-framed buildings of any town, it does have the longest continuous row anywhere. And, of the 47 of these, as many as 27 are in more or less original condition.

From c.1000 there was a church here, and early in the 13th century the town was laid out, close to the churchyard and in the form of a wide street that would serve as a market-place. The more substantial houses, called burgages, on both sides of the road, each had a long strip of land behind, called a portland. The town thrived as a market and Assize town, as the centre of a prosperous farming and ironworking district, and as a ‘rotten’ borough. The earliest surviving houses date from the mid-14th century, and there are many more from the 15th to the 17th century. Their heavy timber framework was originally filled in with wattle-and-daub, but much of this has been replaced, over the years, with brick. These houses once would have had stalls incorporated into their street

frontages from which produce raised in the portland behind was sold. Chris pointed out how these frontages had been extended beyond the original building line, as the occupiers competed to attract passing customers. Over the years the open hall which would have featured in most of the houses disappeared, as upper floors and staircases were installed and other 'improvements' made.

The north side of the High Street has been lowered, to enable heavy horse-drawn carts to turn round more easily, and the old street-level access is visible on some of the buildings. The 'island' called Middle Row is an attractive group of mainly 15th-century buildings constructed to replace market stalls. We walked along the High Street, peering into interiors to admire their heavy beams, some of them with carved decoration, and in one case, at the invitation of the friendly proprietor, crowding into a shop that was being refitted.

At the east end, on the north side, is Sackville College. The Sackvilles of Knole, the earls of Dorset, bought the borough in 1607, and in 1608 founded this almshouse for elderly poor people. A very fine building, in local stone, it is listed Grade I.

Having reached the end of our guided tour, we thanked Chris Wheatley for his enthusiastic and knowledgeable introduction to East Grinstead.

Opposite the College is Sackville House. This was where the Haunton family were spending a few days. They kindly invited us in, to explore and to partake of very welcome refreshments. The house was built c.1520 as a hall with chambers at one end, and was remodelled about 50 years later. It is a timber-framed continuous jettied house, roofed with slabs of Horsham stone. In 1919 it was rescued from decay by stained-glass artist Geoffrey Webb (uncle of the better-known Aston Webb, architect), who lived in it and had his studio on the top floor. His daughter left it to the Landmark Trust, who repaired it and modernised the facilities, tactfully, so that it could earn its keep as a holiday let, but retain its character.

On the ground floor there is a splendid main room with a huge, welcoming fireplace. There was once a detached kitchen building to the rear, but the gap has long since been filled in, forming a wing at right-angles to the main house. Throughout the house unexpected staircases and changes of level add to the quirky charm of a characterful building. It still has its original wagon way, giving access to the rear, and to a remarkable feature. For (uniquely in this town) Sackville House has retained its portland intact. Elsewhere, over the centuries, portlands have been divided, sold off and/or built on. But here the 192m (630ft) strip of land slopes down to the south, formed into terraces at the top and ending in a shady copse far below.

After thanking the Haunton family for their hospitality we dispersed, for lunch and possible visits to St Swithun's church, the museum and Sackville College. Our gratitude to David Haunton for planning such an enjoyable outing.

Judith Goodman



Above: Sackville College, photo by David Luff

Below: Sackville House, photo from Landmark Trust website



COPPERFIELDS BOOKSHOP

Wimbledon's (and the Borough's?) only secondhand bookshop is in Hartfield Road. This friendly and well-stocked shop displays our programme in the window and will give members a 10% discount on any history books. Why not drop in and have a browse?

A VISIT TO St LAWRENCE'S CHURCH, MORDEN

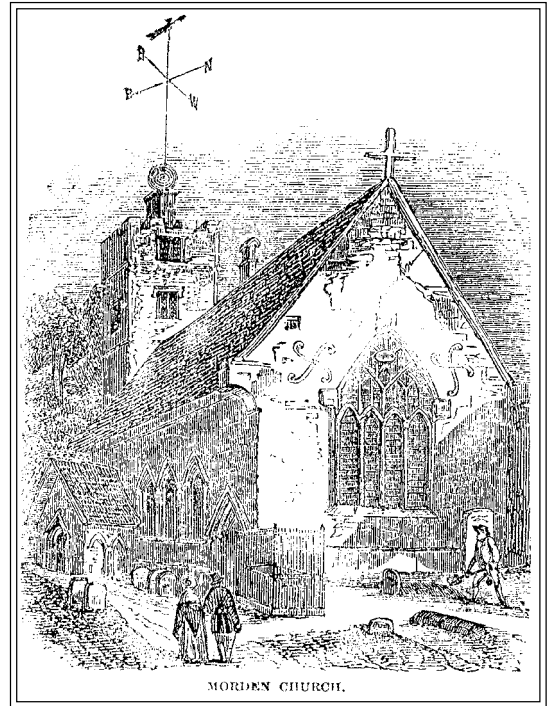
On the hot afternoon of Friday 19 July, 11 members were met by Peter Hopkins in the shade of the lychgate to St Lawrence's. (This gate is Morden's World War I war memorial and the short list of names on each side is a reminder that Morden was still a small village in the early 20th century.)

Peter began by reminding us of our debt to Bill Rudd's immense accumulated knowledge of the church's fabric and history, derived from many years of research. In 1983 Bill revised Canon Livermore's *The Story of Morden and its Churches* (1968). Peter had now prepared a leaflet (with the title above) updating some sections of the booklet in the light, mainly, of his own work on the medieval Morden documents at Westminster Abbey.

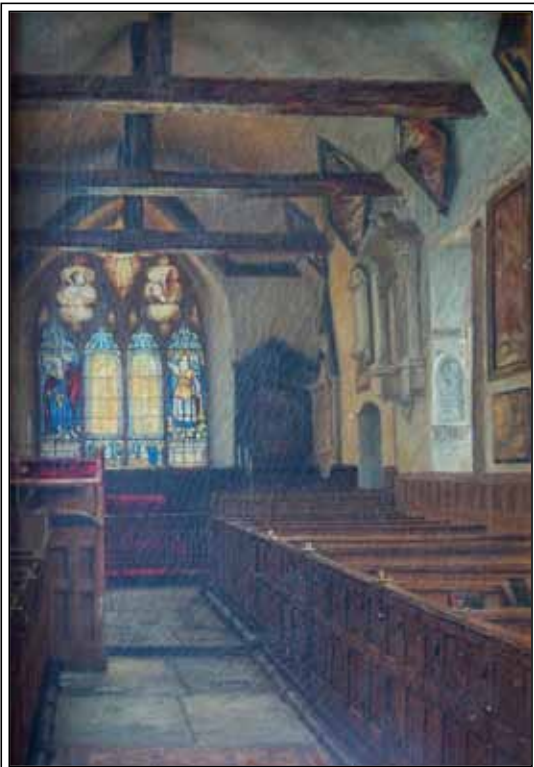
First, the dedication. St Lawrence the martyr or St Lawrence the archbishop? Canon Livermore had favoured the latter, but Peter had found in the manorial account roll for 1282/83 mention of the feast of St Lawrence being observed on 10 August. That St Lawrence is the martyr. So the debate is now settled.

Westminster Abbey held the estate of Morden by the time of the Conquest, and though no church is mentioned in Domesday Book, there may well have been a Saxon church here; not every one was recorded. The earliest known reference to a church in Morden is the confirmation in 1157 by Pope Adrian IV of the possession by the Abbey of 'the church of *Mordone* with its pertinents'. Following a fire at the Abbey in 1298, which necessitated expensive repairs, the abbey 'appropriated' Morden church, that is it took over the rectorial right to the tithes, and appointed vicars instead of rectors. As rector the Abbey became responsible for repairs to the chancel. The parish was responsible for the rest. After the Dissolution Morden had lay rectors until the tithes were transferred to Revd William Booth, who was instituted as rector in 1634.

The whole medieval structure was encased in brick in 1636. These brick walls are free-standing: the weight of the roof is still carried by the medieval walls within. Later work includes the vestry of 1805, the parish centre of 1983, late 19th-century work on the tower and the largely 20th-century rebuilt south porch. Peter pointed out what Bill Rudd had spotted: the south-east corner exhibits the then new Flemish bond in the lower courses, but reverts to the traditional English bond above.



from Illustrated London News 24 May 1851



The stone plinth also dates from the 17th century, as, it is thought, do the windows, though they are 14th-century in style. The lower part of the tower is of rammed chalk faced with brick, and the upper part of brick alone. There are three bells – from 1604, 1637 and 1717.

We entered at the west end, under the gallery installed in 1792 for the use of the children of the Sunday School, for which a hall was also built adjoining the old school house opposite the church. The gallery obscures a pointed arch in the west wall. The octagonal font is now in the porch. It was presented in 1843 and is by James Legrew, a pupil of Sir Francis Chantrey. In 1905 the present pews replaced early 19th-century box pews, which once were fitted with candles. These appear in old views of the interior, one of which shows the central stove, now replaced by heated water-pipes – a hazard each side of the aisle! Also in 1905 the lectern was removed from the triple-decker pulpit. It too was once fitted with candles. The pulpit was the gift in 1720 of Mrs Elizabeth Gardiner, daughter of George Garth II, lord of the manor. She

The first of a pair of oil paintings showing the church in 1905 before and after the box pews were replaced

also gave the desk, communion table, the 'Creed and Lord's Prayer in wainscote', and £300 for the education of young children 'according to the Church of England by law established'. There is a handsome monument to Mrs Gardiner nearby.

The fine display of 13 hatchments includes those of members of the Garth family, lords of the manor; the Hoares, bankers of The Lodge and Mitcham Grove; and the Ridges of Morden Park.

The mullions of the east window are 14th-century in style, but again likely to be 17th-century. It is thought that some of the glass, which is from the early 17th century, may be of the Flemish Van Linge school. It shows the Ten Commandments in rather quaint spelling and some disputed figures. In the tracery the original glass was replaced in 1828 by the images of a dove and two cherubs, designed by a parishioner and painted in Utrecht. The glass on the north and south sides of the nave is mainly late 19th- and early 20th-century.

Of the many monuments, some very handsome, the greatest number relate to the Garths and their connections.

The churchyard was cleared in 1970, but some striking tombs survive, including those of Mauvillains – calico printers at Ravensbury; Rutters – snuff manufacturers at Ravensbury Mill; Bazalgettes, though Sir Joseph is buried in Wimbledon; and Bishops – of Bishop's Move removals. An interesting grave is that of Augustus William Louis Schermuly, inventor of the pistol rocket life-saving apparatus. And I was pleased to see that of John Leach, calico-printer of Merton Abbey, whose letters reveal a delightful man.

Thank you, Peter, for an expert account of an unpretentious but fascinating small church. This was an enjoyable and enlightening visit.

Judith Goodman

LOCAL HISTORY WORKSHOPS

Friday 7 June 2013 – 6 present (and 1 correspondent) – Rosemary Turner in the chair

- ◆ **Anne Ramon's** personal interests lie mainly in family history (she is Chair of the East Surrey Family History Society), but she has recently been intrigued by a blog created by Amy Graham, archivist at Kingston Local History Room, at www.213bus.wordpress.com. This concentrates on the vehicles used and the variations in the 213 bus route over the years. Anne is contemplating starting a similar blog, but covering a complete journey along another bus route (perhaps the 235 through Mitcham) and noting some of the history and interesting persons associated with the houses along the way.

ESFHS are contemplating producing a booklet on each modern parish of East Surrey – a large undertaking. We believe MHS would be happy to collaborate and/or advise on any such publications relating to parishes within LBM.

- ◆ **Peter Hopkins** had nearly completed producing or updating no fewer than three brief leaflets for the Society – on St Lawrence's Church, on Morden Park (the house itself) and the area around Morden Park, and hopes shortly to have them available on our website.

While trawling the British Library online catalogue, Peter has discovered a huge file of Sir Julius Caesar's correspondence (including information on his family and details of Elizabeth I's visit to Mitcham) at reference **BL Add MS 12497**. The online catalogue has a full listing of the many items. This should be a valuable source for anyone researching their links with Mitcham.

- ◆ **Judy Goodman** has been much employed on the index to Volume 14 (the last!) of the Mitcham Histories by Eric Montague.

Out of interest, she has recently bought a set of Edgar Wallace films, now on DVD, because they were made in the early 1960s at Merton Park Studios, but she has not been impressed.

- ◆ **David Haunton** has been stimulated by the recent Society visit to the Whitechapel Bell Foundry to see if any bells in the local churches could be connected to the foundry. (see p.4)
- ◆ **Madeline Healey** has some photos of the Mitcham bells in the bell-chamber (see page 5), and told us that her great-grandfather, John Williams, butcher of Church Street, was for a long time one of the bell-ringers: he was presented with a gold watch when he retired as captain of the belfry. We also noted that the Angelus bell has recently been stolen.
- ◆ In her report of our 'Film London' talk, the Editor asked if anyone knew who made the film about Merton Auxiliary Fire Service. No sooner had the June *Bulletin* hit the streets than Our Man in Canada, **Eric Wrate**, emailed with the news that it was mostly filmed by his older brother Jim in 1940, and had been edited two or three years later by Eric himself, when he had reached the grand old age of 12 or 13. Eric followed this with some further details. We have sent this information to our speaker, Professor Ian Christie (see p.12).

- ◆ **Rosemary Turner** had suddenly remembered a song regularly sung at prize-giving during her school-days starting 'Let us now praise famous men' (*Songs of Praise* no.462). She tracked down the quote, using Wikipedia, to the book of Ecclesiasticus, 44 v.1 in the Apocrypha – and had not previously realised it was from the Bible. The song is an *Anthem for a commemoration service* by Thomas Wood (1926). Judy reminded us that the quote is also the first line of a poem by Rudyard Kipling, *A School Song*, published in *Stalky & Co* (1899).

Rosemary brought along a plan of London's historic riverside, showing the proposed new development of 'London Bridge City' on the south bank, and the remaining densely packed streets built in the 18th century, behind the old river-front that used to be known as 'London's Larder' from the ships bringing grain and other foodstuffs there.

David Haunton

Friday 26 July 2013 – six present – David Haunton in the chair

- ◆ **Cyril Maidment** brought along more photographs of the priory wall, both present day views and some from a century ago. The section of wall in Windsor Avenue has been added to the current list of Heritage at Risk, one of 11 entries for the borough.

Cyril also discussed MHS's contributions for next year's exhibition celebrating 900 years since the founding of Merton Priory.

- ◆ **Judith Goodman** whetted our appetites for a *Bulletin* article by Bruce Robertson on his family's pickle factory in Mitcham. This chunky article will be spread over several issues (see page 15). Bruce has also offered to write an article on Morden Hard Court Tennis Club, off The Drive.
- ◆ **David Luff** also brought photos of the priory wall, highlighting changes from the 1980s to the present day. The Society is grateful for the work that Cyril and David are doing to raise the profile of this neglected and overgrown piece of our heritage (see article in the last *Bulletin*).

One of David's photographs was of the priory site from the top of Colliers Wood's notorious tower. Others showed the 'rebuilding' of the Wandle in 1989/90 following the clearance of the Board Mills and the associated underwater structures.

David also mentioned a forthcoming book celebrating the centenary of A W Cycles shop in Merton High Street – *A Day in the Life of A W Cycles*.

- ◆ **Peter Hopkins** showed photos of a pair of watercolours in St Lawrence's vestry taken from an extra-illustrated edition of Lysons' *Environs of London*, first published in 1785. One shows a view of the north-east side of the church before the vestry was built in 1805. Outside the churchyard fence a sawyer is working in a saw-pit. Peter wondered whether this was on the site of the later wheelwright's workshop discovered in the extended churchyard by Bill Rudd after the 'Great Storm' of 1987. The first recorded grant of the land to a wheelwright was in 1797, when Jeffrey Muggridge was granted licence to enclose 'a parcel of waste adjacent to the Churchyard and behind the Pound'. Further encroachments were licensed over the years. It is shown as plots 172-173 on the tithe map of 1838, and was surrendered to the lord of the manor in 1861.
- ◆ **Rosemary Turner** reported on another successful dig on the site of the medieval Portioner's House in Beddington Park. Rosemary had discovered a one-inch high fragment of Reigate stone with a symbol inscribed on it – thought possibly to be a 'cross in glory' but further investigation is needed. Later, when fellow-diggers asked what she had found she picked up another odd bit of stone to demonstrate and discovered it was another fragment! Much better than Time Team!
- ◆ **David Haunton** had been given a copy of *A Soldier's Guide to Italy*, published in 1942.

He also reported on a recent newspaper article about the discovery of a 1797 letter from Nelson to the Duke of Queensberry in which he quoted from a poem written and sung by his crew in praise of himself – such modesty!

David also showed some stills from the film on the local Auxiliary Fire Service, and a cartoon drawn and filmed by members of the AFS – see page 12.

Peter Hopkins

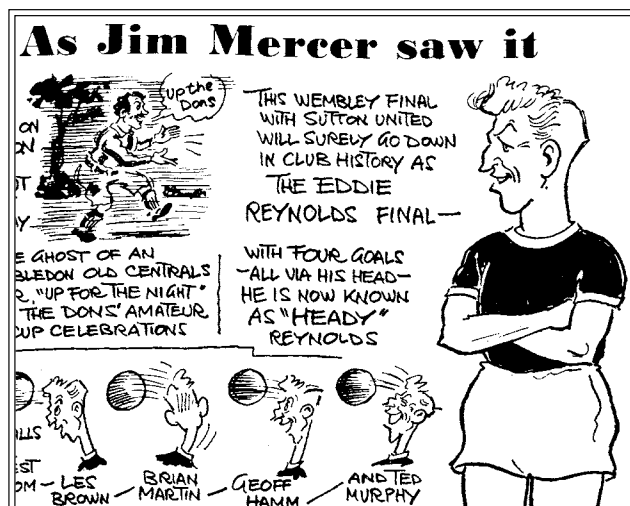
**Dates of next Workshops: Fridays 13 September, 25 October and 13 December at 2.30pm
At Wandle Industrial Museum. All are welcome.**

DAVID ROE looks back 50 years:

MERTON, MORDEN AND WIMBLEDON IN 1963

This article looks at life in Merton, Morden and Wimbledon 50 years ago, as it appears in the local press. In 1963 there were plans for reorganising local government, and there was pressure for social change. It was also the start of the end of an era in national politics. The Conservatives had been in power for 12 years, and an ill Harold Macmillan resigned as Prime Minister in October, and was replaced by Sir Alex Douglas-Home. A year later Harold Wilson's Labour government came into power.

The Big Freeze, and Football Success. January 1963 was the coldest month since 1814. Letters to the local paper complained that snow had not been cleared for a few weeks, and that rubbish was not being taken away (the dustmen had been diverted to gritting and snow clearance). There were fuel shortages, and a reader's letter said, 'The future lies in old-fashioned solid fuel, with a large backyard stocked before winter begins'. Schools remained open, though outside toilets were frozen up. Frozen sports pitches were unusable until the end of February. When football resumed, Wimbledon FC, then an amateur team and champions of the Isthmian League, made it to the final of the FA Amateur Cup, played on 10 May at Wembley, where they beat Sutton United 4-2, thanks to a record four headed goals by their star centre forward Eddie Reynolds (a Post Office engineer). Shown here is part of the Jim Mercer cartoon of the event. His distinctive cartoons featured on the sports pages of the local papers for many years.



Local Government and Local History. On 31 July the London Government Act came into force; it was to create Greater London, and, two years later, the London Boroughs as we know them today. Three of Surrey's districts in 1963 – the Municipal Boroughs of Wimbledon and Mitcham and the Urban District of Merton and Morden were together to form what was temporarily called 'Borough 22'. Government guidance said that the names of the new Boroughs should be short, related to their centre, and of historical significance. Representatives of Merton and Morden, and of Mitcham, agreed to propose 'Merton' as the name, because of its central location, the importance of Merton priory, and the Roman road through it. Other suggestions were 'Normandon' (after Gilbert 'the Norman' who founded the priory); and 'Maudon' (after Queen Matilda, or Maud, who funded the priory – presumably a sly suggestion from a Morden supporter). A compromise suggestion, 'Wimemomi' (combining the first two letters of each district) gained no support. Representatives of Wimbledon held out for 'Wimbledon', but they had to be disappointed, when the Government decided on 'Merton'.

The impression from the local papers was that local heritage was taken for granted then, and a much higher priority was building for the future. The new Morden Central Library in Morden Road (the building now houses Morden Hall Medical Centre) wanted to install a small museum for historical records and heritage objects above the library. A Raynes Park councillor called the idea 'comic cuts' and could think of half a dozen things more important than a 'half-baked museum'. In 1963 there was confusion in some minds about the boundary of Wimbledon (there still is). In February a Miss Wimbledon competition was held: all contestants had to live and/or work in Wimbledon. Winner and runner-up were announced and their pictures put in the local press. Later both were disqualified: the winner lived in Dorset Road, Merton Park, and the runner-up worked at BOC in Merton. The organisers had (wrongly) assumed that these addresses were in Wimbledon because they had the SW19 postcode.

The Swinging Sixties. In 1963 the pop culture of the 1960s reached the local area. For the first half of the year the adverts for Wimbledon Palais



billed only 'David Ede and the Rabin Band', a traditional dance band. Then they were relegated to small print, as pop groups started to appear – such as Gerry and the Pacemakers on 7 September. When the Beatles appeared at the Palais on 14 December 200 policemen had to restrain 3000 hysterical young girls, separated from the stage by a 6-foot steel mesh screen. The Twist dance had passed its peak, but in October 11 youth clubs held an Area Twist Competition at Merton Hall in Kingston Road. Teenagers were now setting fashion trends, and the RACS (Co-op) store in Morden (now the Sainsbury's site) held a well-attended 'Young Moderns' show in June, modelled by store assistants, one at least of whom appears to be neither modern nor young.

Sir Cyril Black, Defender of Public Morality. A prominent local figure was Sir Cyril Black (1902-1991), Conservative MP for Wimbledon, Chairman of Surrey County Council, company director, chairman or president of many local clubs and societies, prominent in the Baptist church, and a staunch defender of Christian values and public morality. In June, when the Profumo affair was headline news again, Sir Cyril was the first to call for a public enquiry, saying 'It is better to be governed by good men rather than clever men if a choice has to be made'. In the autumn, under the headline 'Free Love Shock', the Principal Medical Officer of the Ministry of Education was reported as saying it was not 'unchaste' for an engaged couple to have intercourse. Sir Cyril accused him of condoning fornication and warned of the perils of offending against the laws of God. The photo here was taken at the annual dinner of the Raynes Park Conservative and Unionist Club Angling Society on 11 May. On the left is Humphrey Atkins, MP for Merton and Morden, with his wife; on the right are Sir Cyril and his wife. Due to poor communication in the local fishing fraternity Sir Cyril and Lady Black had to leave early to attend the annual dinner of Wimbledon Piscatorial Society on the same evening.



Infrastructure Changes. In 1962 Crown House in Morden town centre was completed, with the demolition of the *Crown* inn. On its site a new Caters supermarket was opened on 18 October 1963. (The site is now the forecourt of the Civic Centre.) The first 50 in the queue were given a £1 shopping voucher. As well as standard items it offered a 'gourmet delicatessen' selling, for example, duck stuffed with truffles and Cointreau. Caters was a family chain of grocery stores and supermarkets. After going into a decline it was sold to Debenhams. The Morden store became a Presto, and was demolished in the 1980s.

Work started at the end of 1963 on the overpass at Shannon Corner. The high-rise flats off High Path, Merton, were about to be built. However, a proposed underpass at the Kingston Road level crossing in Merton Park did not happen.

Some Signs of the Times.

St Helier Hospital decided to continue its policy of 'discouraging smoking, without being offensive', saying 'a complete ban on smoking is impracticable'.

A 16-year-old youth stole a loaf of bread because he was hungry, but threw it away after one bite because it was brown, not white.

On 22 June 11,000 people attended the Rutlishian Fair and Carnival at Poplar Road, Merton Park (the Old Rutlishians' premises). Famous jazz saxophonist and Rutlish old boy Tubby Hayes played in the band.

Cinderella at Wimbledon Theatre starred Hughie Green as Buttons.

The Morden Afternoon Townswomen's Guild matchbox competition was won by a Mrs Gaylor, with 84 articles.

After the final of the Merton & Morden Youth Sports League netball tournament the judges voted for the most attractive team – and it was their photo, not the winners', that appeared in the press.



**Following on from ‘London Film’ in our last issue, ERIC WRATE and DAVID HAUNTON remember
MERTON & MORDEN’S AFS FILM AND ITS MAKERS**

Jim Wrate

The Wrate family moved from Stockwell into their new house at 5 Marham Gardens on the St Helier Estate shortly after it was built. Mr Wrate worked as a foreman in the Despatch department of Baird & Tatlock, scientific instrument makers, at 14-15 Cross Street (later Saint Cross Street), Hatton Garden, EC1, which was an easy commute from Morden station.

Young Jim Wrate started work at the firm straight from school in 1934, at a weekly wage of 15 shillings (equivalent to about £32 today) a week. Initially in the same department as his father, he moved after a year or so to the Exports department. He was entranced by film, and was able, even at his low wages, to purchase a film camera and projector. As an employee, he could buy it through the firm, at almost half price.

At the beginning of September 1939 he tried to join the RAF, but was rejected on the grounds that he was in a reserved occupation. He felt he must do something for the war effort – there was a lot of pressure on young men of his age (20) to be seen to join some service organisation – so on the same day he applied to join the Auxiliary Fire Service (AFS) without mentioning his occupation, and was taken on immediately. He thus left Baird & Tatlock at the end of one week, joined the AFS over the weekend, and never went back to his employers.

He spent the first year in the AFS ‘drilling and waiting’, with no fires to attend until the air raids on London started in August 1940 – ‘very tedious’. He served with Merton and Morden AFS throughout ‘what you call the Blitz, I prefer the “air raids”, because that is what they were’ until such raids ‘had died down a bit’. He was finally called up for the armed services in July 1941, with his occupation no longer reserved. He entered the RAF (his original choice) because, as he later disparagingly related, the civil servant who assessed him saw that his pre-war occupation had been with a scientific instrument maker, ‘saw the word “instrument”, and thought “What do they have on aircraft ? – Instruments !!”.’

The Films

The fire station was located at a school near St. Helier Station and Green Lane (probably in Canterbury Road). Eric Wrate believes that the Chief Fire Officer was a Mr Oliver – can anyone recognise him (*picture right*)?

To enliven the tedious days of waiting for something to happen, Jim Wrate took his camera to work and made the film we know today as ‘Merton A.F.S.’, to illustrate both their drills and the wait. He used his 9.5 mm Pathe Motocamera ‘H’, driven by clockwork, the motor being wound up by a built-in key on one side. He shot the film over several days, always out of doors, using natural light. This may account for some scenes being darker than others.



Evidently another fireman helped by filming occasionally, for Jim himself is seen in one shot (*see picture below left*). The middle brother of the Wrate family, Bert, served in the AFS in the same fire station, having joined at the age of 16 at the same time as Jim. He does not appear in the film, but we do have a photo of him in uniform as one of our youngest defenders (*below right*).



The date of the AFS scenes is uncertain: trees are in full leaf, so it may be early summer 1940, but Eric believes most of the film was shot at the end of 1939. Evidently some sky scenes, with aircraft and condensation trails, were taken during the 'Battle of Britain'. A couple of years later the film was edited (ie. put together as a coherent whole) by Eric, at the astonishingly early age of 12 or 13. He incorporated two or three pictures from an official booklet on the Battle of Britain (1941), as well as the titles and the shots of contemporary headlines. The original film has long gone: now there are just copies on tape and DVD.

Along with a fellow fireman, Jim Wrate made a very short cartoon movie. This is faux-grandly titled as 'Jim Wrate / presents' (new shot) 'Percy Porker / in' (new shot) 'The Fireman goes on Duty', which lasts 40 seconds, with appropriately pompous brass band music, and is best described as a sardonic comment on the lack of AFS action. The chap who assisted on this cartoon may also have helped on the AFS film. Eric comments on the result that 'it is pretty jumpy – but when you realize how long it took to make and the equipment used – it's pretty fantastic'.

*'Jim Wrate presents Percy Porker in
The Fireman goes on Duty'*

Eric Wrate

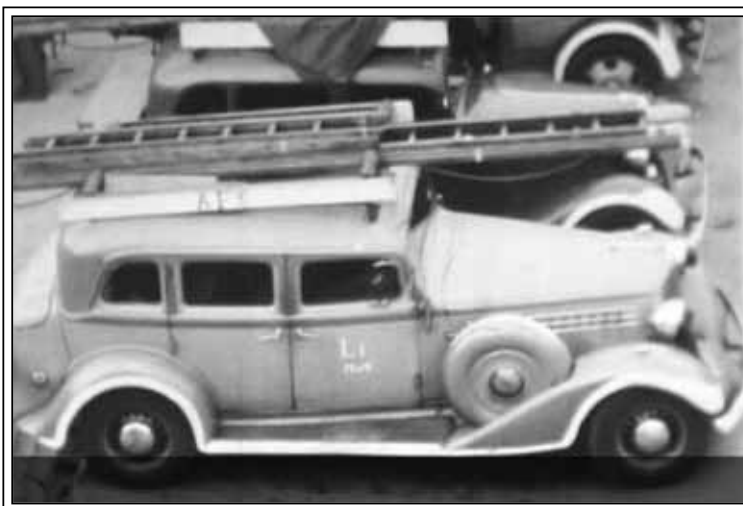
After his precocious start as an editor, Eric went on to forge a distinguished career in editing film, both sound and vision. He worked on films, firstly with Gainsborough Pictures in Islington, and then with ABPC Studios in Elstree, memorably with Alfred Hitchcock on *Stage Fright* (with Dietrich, Wyman, Wilding, Todd, Thorndike, Sim, Grenfell), not to mention *The Franchise Affair* (with Michael Denison and Dulcie Gray) and John Boulting's *The Magic Box* (with Robert Donat, Olivier, Redgrave, Portman, Attenborough, etc.). Eric left for Canada in 1960 and a long career in both film and TV. Several television series he worked on in Canada have been shown in Britain – including about 80 episodes of a series successively entitled *Kids of DeGrassi*, *DeGrassi Junior High* and *DeGrassi High*.

As the family left Morden for North Harrow in 1942, while he was still at school, he did not have the opportunity of working for Merton Park Studios, and also, curiously, never saw them filming on the streets. He has never done any acting. 'I was asked once, but that's not my thing' – and the actor of the same name is a completely different person.

Sources

This article is based on information from Eric Wrate, now 84 in Toronto, and on the Merton AFS film, the *Percy Porker* cartoon, and a filmed interview with Jim Wrate, speaking about his AFS experience, very kindly supplied by Eric. Copies of all three films are now held by Merton Historical Society, Merton Local Studies and Heritage Centre, and London Film.

*One of the AFS cars – can anyone tell us the make?
Photos: Jim Wrate,
reproduced courtesy of Eric Wrate.*



HELP WANTED

Your committee has agreed that we need to promote the Society more vigorously. Unfortunately, most of the current committee members are too busy to take on the extra role, so I am here appealing for a volunteer to undertake the task of Promotion Manager.

Our first ideas include organising an essay competition for schools, and producing a leaflet about the Society, for the widest possible distribution. If you have e-mail and would like to assist your Society, please ring me on 0208-542-7079.

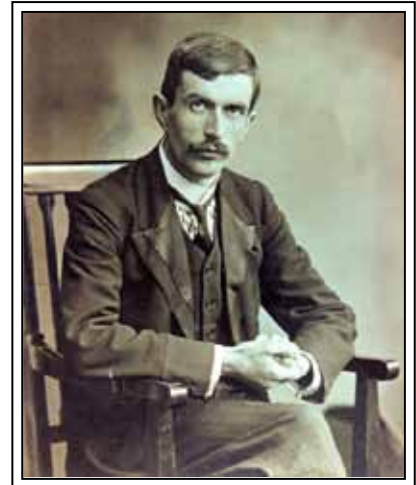
David Haunton

KEITH PENNY concludes his account of

‘THE MOST INTERESTING POLITICAL FIGHT OF RECENT YEARS’

Part 2

LABOUR WINS.
CONSERVATIVES LOSE MITCHAM ELECTION.
AN EXCITING CONTEST.
SCENES AT THE DECLARATION.
CÉLEBRATING THE VICTORY.



*James Chuter Ede
reproduced courtesy of
Bourne Hall Museum, Ewell*

When the result was declared at around 1pm Mr Ede had a majority for Labour of 833; the Independent won over 3000 votes, mostly at the expense of Sir Arthur, who afterwards denounced his ‘treachery’ from the balcony of the *White Hart*. *The Commoner* columnist condemned ‘some of the most rowdy meetings ever held in Mitcham’ and thought Sir Arthur was ‘the embodiment of misfortune both personally and politically.’¹ *The Times* remarked that he had ‘the reputation of being an unlucky politician’.²

Sir Arthur withdrew from politics and did much voluntary work for church organisations, especially in Wales, where he had been born. His post at the Ministry of Health was taken by Mr Neville Chamberlain, nowadays automatically ridiculed for his ‘piece of paper’ and his appeasement policies in European affairs, but arguably responsible too for most of the domestic achievements of Conservative governments between the wars.³ Nevertheless ‘his’ Housing Bill of 1923, ‘perhaps the most lasting monument of the period’,⁴ was substantially the Bill drafted by officials under Sir Arthur’s name in late February 1923,⁵ just before the Mitcham result.

After Parliament had removed some of the meaner features of the Bill, it became law on 31 July and enabled local Mitcham firms such as Fulfords and the Tamworth Park Construction Company to claim subsidies and build estates, whilst hundreds of first-time buyers took out 90% mortgages from Mitcham Urban District Council to buy their new terraced homes in Long Thornton Park and Manor Way (but two examples), so that the population of the East Ward of Mitcham nearly trebled between 1921 and 1931.

Sir Arthur predicted that the Conservatives would win next time, which they did. At the General Election on 6 December 1923 Mr Meller duly stood, regained the seat, and remained MP until his death in 1940, after being knighted in 1933 for his services to public life. Dr Worsfold meanwhile was made a baronet in March 1924, an award (or a reward) that his opponents had predicted. He died in 1936. Mr Ede soon re-entered Parliament; he assisted R A Butler to prepare the 1944 Education Act and became Home Secretary in the post-war Labour government.

To conclude: after recent scandal surrounding MPs’ expenses and second homes, we may note that Dr Worsfold described the times he had walked home to Mitcham from the tram terminus at Tooting at 1am or 2am after late sittings in the Commons, before working next day. The turnout of voters in 1923 was 66%, the same as for the 2010 General Election in Mitcham and Morden. It would be hard to find such a turnout in recent by-elections. Saturday seems to us an unusual day for polling, but those who worked in London had a fairer chance of recording their votes than they had had in 1922, when thick fog stopped many from getting to the polling stations before they closed at 9pm, and the turnout was 52%.

Less than five years after the end of the Great War, unemployment among ex-servicemen was a raw issue, and candidates’ war service was usually mentioned in the local press. Candidates’ wives spoke in support of their husbands, and election meetings especially for women were arranged: female suffrage was at this date restricted to women over 30, and only two women had so far entered the House of Commons.

Candidates’ meetings usually attracted hecklers as well as supporters. Their exchanges were reported and drew no comment in the press, but the organised disruption of Sir Arthur’s meetings by chanting youths, and the rough treatment of his wife, were seen at the time as neither right nor customary

The local press printed statements by candidates and reported their public meetings at a length we might now find surprising. Candidates and their supporters canvassed door-to-door (the Labour party was particularly well organised during this by-election). The national dailies showed interest, and for two weeks, 90 years ago, Mitcham was indeed in the news.

1. *Sutton Advertiser* 09/03/1923

2. *The Times* 03/03/1923

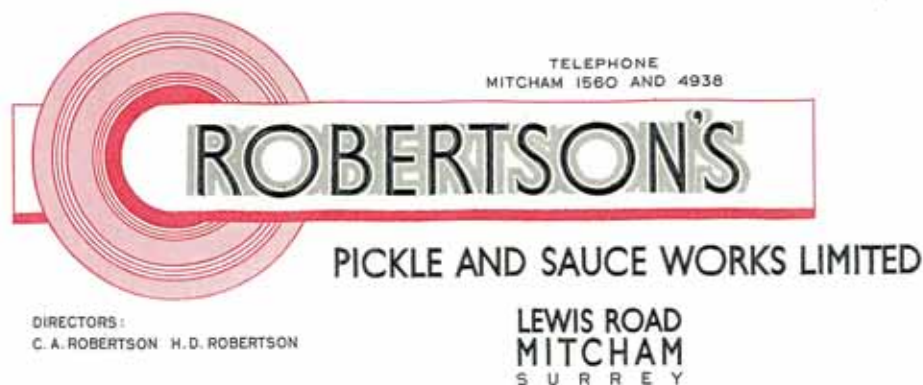
3. Taylor p266

4. Mowat p164

5. See *Cabinet Papers 1923* in The National Archive

BRUCE ROBERTSON looks back at

ROBERTSON'S PICKLE & SAUCE WORKS Ltd



These memories are based on working at the family's pickle factory at 22 Lewis Road, Mitcham, in the 1950s and 1960s during my school holidays, and finding further details about the firm's history among my father's papers. This was a family-run firm, with my father Cyril Alfred Robertson as managing director, and his younger brother Harold Dan Robertson as a co-director. From 1957 my mother Doris Robertson worked there three days a week as the office typist, and my auntie Gladys Robertson as the wage clerk.

History

According to a Certificate of Registration dated 19 April 1927 the firm was originally registered as P J Nash. This was then changed to Zalmo Pickle and Sauce Works in another Certificate of Registration, dated 16 August 1927. I believe my grandfather was going to go into partnership with Nash, but shortly afterwards bought him out. In 1925 my father, and in 1929 my uncle, joined their father to help run the factory.

Workforce

The workforce consisted of about eight women in the factory, and one or two drivers who delivered to shops in London and the home counties. My job in the holidays was to prepare and load the deliveries into the vans and then go with one of the drivers as a van-boy. I remember that the women were given overalls, and also 'clogs' that were leather-topped on wooden soles. To protect their hair they would tie scarves round their heads in the form of turbans. Among the papers is a salaries book for March 1961, which lists names, hours worked each week, and gross and net wages. An example: Mrs Betty Westlake worked 34 hours 15 minutes and



Some of the factory women having a tea break

was paid £4.12.2 (£4.61). After Income Tax of 2/- (10p) and National Insurance stamp 5d (2½p) were deducted her take-home pay was £4.9.9 (£4.48½). The employer's National Insurance contribution was 6s 9d (33½p).

Products

Pickles. These were bottled in clear glass jars with labels and metal lids. They were sold by the dozen in 6oz (ounce), 10oz, 16oz and quart sizes. Larger sizes were available singly as half gallon and gallon jars. The basic pickles were onions in 'non-brewed condiment' (cheap vinegar which was diluted acetic acid); onions in mustard sauce; clear mixed piccalilli; sweet mustard pickle; red cabbage; and gherkins (mixed). An up-market 'Choice' version of the above was also produced for the more discerning palate, which was packed in pure malt vinegar with caramel colouring. The onions or gherkins were also hand-packed or placed in the jars, which increased

the number and reduced the quantity of vinegar. The Choice brand also included silverskin onions, sweet pickle, chutney and walnuts. According to the labels the ingredients of 'Clear Mixed' pickles were cauliflower, onions, cucumber, salt, spices and caramel colour in non-brewed vinegar. 'Sweet Mustard Pickle' contained cauliflower, onions, gherkins, sugar, malt vinegar, wheat flour, mustard, cornflour, spices, acetic acid, salt, turmeric, colour and saccharin. 'Piccalilli' contained cauliflower, onions, cucumber, wheat flour, spices, gum trag(-acanth), salt, turmeric, saccharin and non-brewed vinegar, or malt vinegar if under the 'Choice' label. Pickled beetroot, either 'sliced' or 'whole baby', was also sold by the dozen in 12oz jars. Concentrated mint for making into mint sauce by adding vinegar was sold in 2½oz jars, the smallest provided.

Two unsolicited testimonials tucked away in my father's papers:

A letter from Feltham, Middlesex 25 June 1953:

Dear Sir,

May I write and congratulate you on your mustard pickle. I have not tasted such a good product since before the war and my friends and neighbours will all agree with me and my family. I think it should be more widely advertised so other people can enjoy it as we do. Yours faithfully'

Mrs D Pateman

PS You may use this letter in your advertisements if necessary.

A postcard from New Haw, Surrey 25 September 1968:

Dear Sirs,

I feel I must write and tell you how very much my family and I enjoy your pickled onions, they are simply delicious, above all they are so crisp (some brands are so soft when taken from the jar). My family insist I put yours on the shopping list regularly they enjoy them so much. One look at the jar and I can see how clean and fresh they are. I praise them to all my friends everywhere because they really and truly are deserving of the highest praise, value for money. Yours faithfully,

Mrs J Donaldson

Of course, letters of complaint were also received – usually people complaining that they had burnt their mouth by eating the red chilli added to the jar to intensify the flavour. My father didn't keep those letters.

Sauces. These were sold by the dozen in bottles with screw tops in 4½oz / 5oz / 8oz / 10oz / 20oz and 26oz sizes. One-gallon catering size jars were also available, sold singly. The range of sauces included 'Thick Sauce' (brown or fruit sauce), Tomato Sauce, Worcester Sauce, and 'Sportsman Sauce' (believed to be a cheaper version, with acetic acid instead of malt vinegar).

Vinegars. The range included 'Malt', 'Distilled' and 'Non-brewed Condiment'. These too were supplied in a variety of sizes and containers. The 5oz / 7oz / ½ pint / 1 pint and quart bottles were sold in dozens. Malt vinegar was also sold in 5½-gallon plastic drums, and both malt and non-brewed condiment could be purchased in 6- and 12-gallon wooden casks. Concentrated non-brewed condiment was also sold in either half-gallon jars, which would make six gallons when diluted, or one-gallon jars to make 12 gallons.

All containers sold singly had a deposit charge added to the price which was refundable when the jars came back. The charges ranged from 1/- (5p) for a half-gallon jar up to 15/- (75p) for a 12-gallon cask. Recycling was as much in vogue then as it is now. I remember I had trouble with barrels and casks. Once, when a kid, I was standing on top of a barrel, and the wooden lid collapsed. One leg went inside the barrel and the other outside, and I suddenly found I was sitting on the rim. You can imagine the pain! But there was no lasting damage, as my children and grandchildren can confirm. On another occasion I was van-boy on deliveries in hilly High Wycombe, and as the van reached the top of a particularly steep rise a full six-gallon cask toppled over, rolled to the back of the van and crashed through the doors. It continued down the rise, across the main road at the bottom, through the doorway of a shop, and was stopped by the counter. Fortunately it didn't hurt anybody or do any damage. I ran after it into the shop, apologised to the people there, hoped they didn't mind if we had our cask back, and ran quickly with it back to the van.

To be continued

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.

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