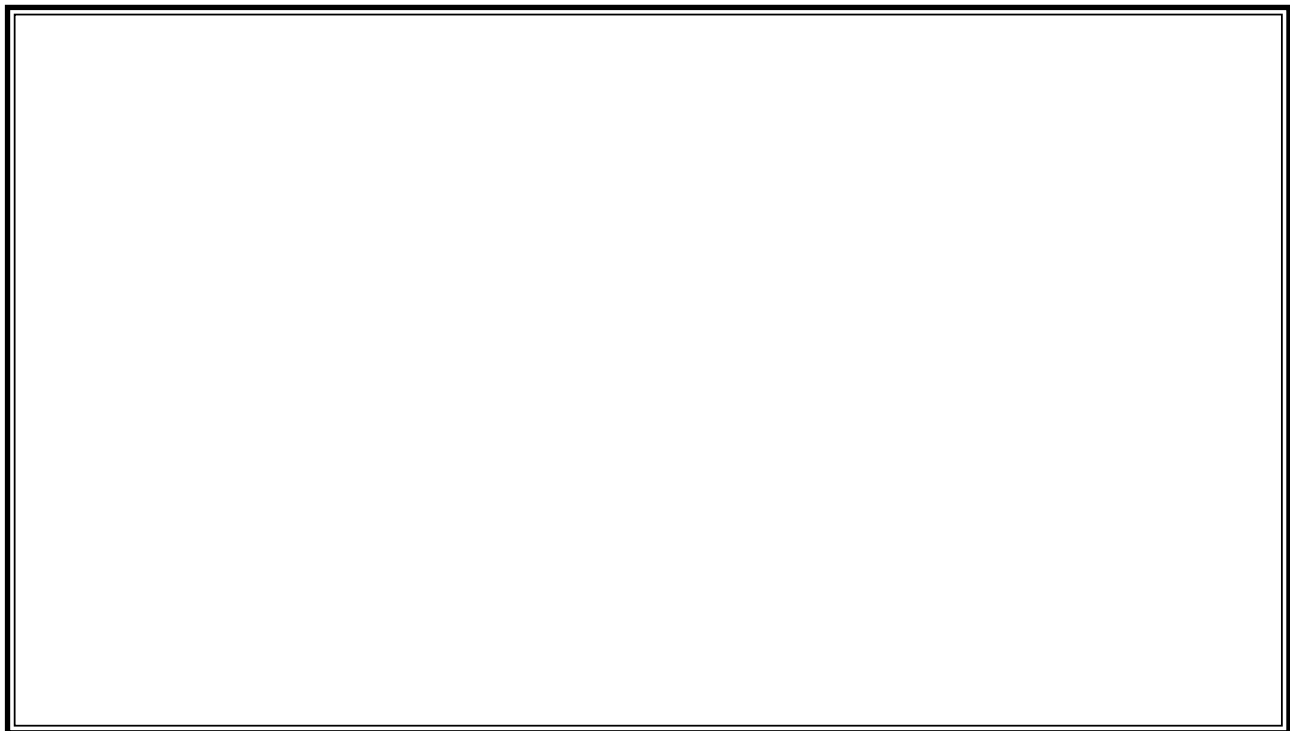




**PRESIDENT:**  
**VICE PRESIDENT: Eric Montague**  
**CHAIR: Keith Penny**

**BULLETIN No. 192**

**DECEMBER 2014**



*Cyril Maidment has brought to our attention this early watercolour of Christ Church Colliers Wood by William Sleath RA c.1895 courtesy of Christ Church*

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## PROGRAMME DECEMBER 2014 – MARCH 2015

**Saturday 13 December 2.30pm**                      **Christ Church Hall, Colliers Wood**  
**‘Traps, Tradition and Transformations: the curious history of Pantomime’**  
Illustrated talk by **Dr Chris Abbott**, researcher of performing arts (puppets, circus etc)

**Saturday 10 January 2.30pm**                      **Christ Church Hall, Colliers Wood**  
**‘Recent Researches’**  
Short talks by several MHS members

**Saturday 14 February 2.30pm**                      **Christ Church Hall, Colliers Wood**  
**‘Seven Streets, Two Markets and a Wedding’**  
Ten archive films for discussion, with **Ben Benson**, The Touring Local Cinema

**Thursday 26 February 12 noon**                      **Taste Restaurant, London Road, Morden**  
**Annual Lunch** – booking form enclosed

**Saturday 14 March 2.30pm**                      **Christ Church Hall, Colliers Wood**  
**‘Past and Present: How Merton, Morden and Mitcham have changed’**  
Presentation by **David Roe, Keith Penny** and **Mick Taylor** of the MHS Photographic Project

*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.**

## VISCOUNTESS HANWORTH

We are saddened to learn that the distinguished archaeologist Lady (Rosamond) Hanworth died recently. For a number of years she was President of this Society. An obituary will appear in our next issue.

## WILLIAM JOHN (‘BILL’) RUDD

We have learnt with sadness of the death in hospital on 30 October of Bill Rudd, a stalwart of our Society, and one of its vice-presidents. The funeral took place on 13 November, and a number of MHS members were able to attend. There will be an obituary in the next issue.

## FROM THE EDITOR

This is the 73<sup>rd</sup> *Bulletin* I have edited. And it will be the last. The editor’s chair, I am happy to say, is passing to David Haunton, who will do an excellent job.

I am immensely grateful to all my contributors – volunteers or conscripts. Such a publication is only as good as its contents, and it has been a joy to receive the range and high quality of material offered. Thank you all.

Special gratitude is owed to Peter Hopkins. The tiny legend *Printed by Peter Hopkins* at the foot of page 16 does not do justice to the skill and tact with which he moulds an unwieldy pile of text and pictures into a coherent and elegant publication. Peter deserves the warmest praise from the *Bulletin*’s readers.

**Judith Goodman**

## WHERE ARE THEY NOW ?

We would like to contact the authors (or representatives) of three of our Local History Notes. If you know the whereabouts of Michael Read (LHN 16 *Growing up in Mitcham(1939-1963)*), Pamela Starling (LHN 23 *A Mitcham Childhood Remembered 1926-45*) or Kathleen Watts (LHN 25 *A Child’s Eye View of Mitcham*) could you kindly inform Peter Hopkins or the Editor.

## VISIT TO TOLLSWORTH MANOR

On a brilliant sunny day we were welcomed to Tollsworth Manor, one of the granges of Merton priory, by Carol and Gordon Gillett, the current owners of this historic house, situated in the little village of Chaldon, Surrey.

Before taking us on a tour of the house and gardens, Gordon gave us an illustrated talk on their history, the various owners and the odd things found during restoration. The chimney yielded a circular stone with a dial scratched on its surface (a sundial ?) of *c.*1650, one child's shoe of similar date and a heavy work shoe of *c.*1660. A witch's bottle of *c.*1670 was found in a wall, its odd contents originally sprinkled with urine, while a woman's single day overshoe of *c.*1750 was found in the roof. (Gordon occasionally asked us questions of history, which luckily we could mostly answer.)

Merton priory was already a landowner here by 1201/2 when one William Hansard granted it 'certain lands in Tullsworth lying next to the grange of the prior'. We do not know when the original house was built: it would have been a simple timber-framed open hall house, to which a two-bay solar (**1** *on the plan*) containing private rooms was added in 1326-58 (dated by dendrochronology). It seems that the original hall was then taken down, and replaced by the existing hall (**2-2**) in 1433-36 (another dendro-date), giving the most unusual situation of a solar being older than its hall.

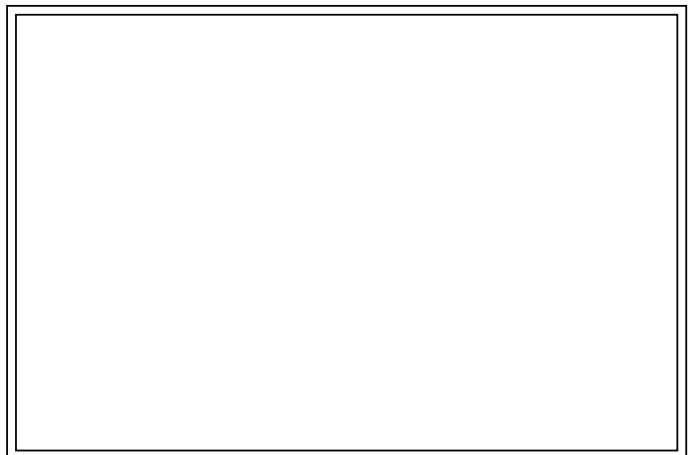
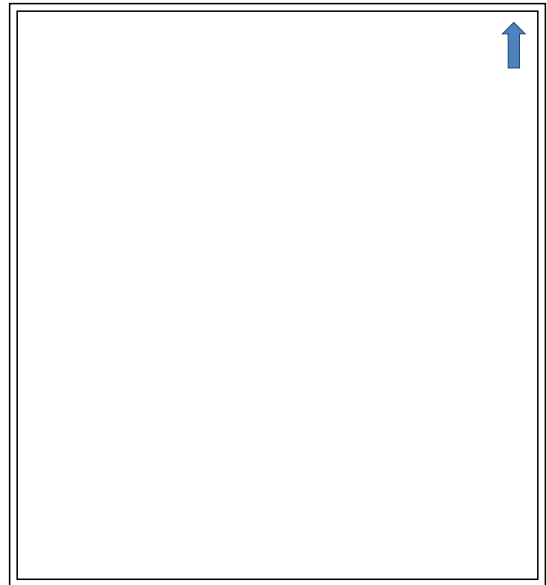
In 1542, after the Dissolution, the property was leased to Richard Aynescombe, but ownership passed to Sir William Roche and others in 1544 [together with the priory's Spital estate in Morden]. The 'dairy' (**3**), of uncertain original use, was added *c.*1550; it is unclear whether the staircase (**1/3**) was installed at this date, or earlier, with the solar. However, it is probable that the solar was extended by a third bay (**4**) by 1604 (dated by an inscribed stone).

Shortly after 1607 (another inscribed stone), Gabriel Aynescombe installed the inglenook fireplace and chimney and clad the outer walls of the original timber-framework in local Merstham stone. These quarries have two strata, one harder than the other, and it was the softer (cheaper ?) stone that was used at the grange, and at the nearby church. The Aynescombes were people of considerable wealth – the Surrey Hearth Tax records nine tenant farmers in 1664.

The 18th-century Window Tax resulted in the bricking up of two windows in the loft, which was apparently used as living space. However, the 'bakehouse' extension (**5**) dates from the early 18th century and features an enormous domed baking oven, with an internal diameter of perhaps four feet (1.3m). The Jolliffe family (Lord Hylton) bought the estate in 1788, and it underwent various vicissitudes, mostly a tale of damage and neglect. In the First World War the farm was being run entirely by women, but in 1917 Lord Hylton evicted Mrs White, the tenant, when her stock included 70 head of cattle and 11 shire-horses. Eventually, in 1936, the house, but not the surrounding farmland, was sold to the Youth Hostels Association, in a derelict state. The ground plan was eventually completed by the YHA (**6**, *see PS. overleaf*).

The Gilletts bought the house in 1983; the enormous garden, which was a combination of building-rubble tip and neglected forest when they moved in, is now beautifully laid out with lawns and borders. There is enough room for a paddock, housing an amiable elderly pony, and a duck-pond. Because of foxes, the ducks are only allowed onto the pond under supervision (often supplied by the dogs of the household), but from which they are summoned home by Carol with sharp handclaps – and they come!

We were richly entertained to tea and lots of home-made cakes, while one of our number, fresh from marshalling at the 24-hour races at Le Mans, was delighted to recognise, in a photo on the wall, his younger self on the 'Jaguar pits balcony' at Le Mans back in 1953! We thanked our hosts for an enormously enjoyable afternoon, particularly so on learning that our visit fees benefit their local charity, a hospice.



**PS.** In his forthcoming book, *Abbey Roads*, Bill Rudd recalled that the YHA relied on volunteers in order to reduce running costs. The Wimbledon Group he belonged to, together with two skilled members of the Kingston Group, were largely responsible for the building of an extension to the rear of the Chaldon hostel, the partly medieval Tollsworth Manor. It was in 1950 that Bill had been one of the members of ‘a long run of weekend working parties’ at Chaldon.

**David Haunton**

*Plan and photo reproduced from Janette Henderson's new book In Search of Merton Priory's Granges*

## VISIT TO THE CINEMA MUSEUM

19 September 2014

Kennington has many corners of interest to the curious wanderer, and The Cinema Museum turned out to be one of those museums whose buildings, as well as the contents, deserve attention. It occupies the Master's House of the Lambeth Workhouse, a vaguely Moorish building begun in 1871, which visitors approach between two contemporary lodges, one each for the day and night porters. The buildings were erected after an outcry following the exposure by a journalist, James Greenwood, of the hideous conditions in the previous workhouse, an outcry that also led to the suicide in 1877 of the sometime Master. Among the 800 or more inmates in 1898 were Charlie Chaplin and his mother and brother, a cinematic connection with the building's present use.



*photograph: Judith Goodman*

The workhouse lasted until 1922, when the buildings were absorbed into the adjacent hospital. After that closed during the 1970s, the buildings decayed until most were demolished for new housing, although the Master's House was retained for offices, which allowed the Cinema Museum to move there 17 years ago.

All this was explained by Ronald, our guide, as we sat in a small cinema with the usual tip-up seats. He introduced five short documentary films: a remarkably clear and steady silent depiction of the great flood in Paris in 1910; a wartime Ministry of Information film about the dangers of spreading rumours; an ‘advanced’ advertising feature from 1935 by the GPO film unit, produced by painting coloured shapes on the celluloid of the film; *The Elephant Will Never Forget*, an elegiac record of the last days in 1952 of London's double-deck trams (its director made it against the orders of his superior and was duly dismissed); a Rank colour film about London coffee bars in the 1960s. All, apart from the GPO film, recorded eras distant in culture, if not so much in time.

Notable in the films was the near-universal smoking of cigarettes, and this practice related to one of the exhibits seen during Ronald's tour. ‘Florodol’, a fragrance both disinfectant and antiseptic, was sprayed inside cinemas to combat the smell of smoke and odours from cinemagoers who did not have the ready access to baths or showers that we now enjoy. It also addressed concerns about public health. The white screen of the cinema needed regular cleaning and repainting, because of the yellowing effect of nicotine.

Ronald explained the cut-in system of showing films that ran as a continuous programme, apart from breaks for the purchase of refreshments, so that people might well arrive during the middle of one film, watch the second one and then catch up with the part of the first film that they had missed. Usherettes (female, because they were cheaper to hire), looked out for vacant seats, and the cinema advertised outside if only single ones were available, so that those who wanted to sit as a couple would know to wait till later.

The tour took us through a mixture of studio photographs, equipment (lots of projectors), uniforms and items of cinema décor, much of which came from Ronald's native Aberdeen, rescued by him from a store in which the contents of ten closed cinemas awaited disposal. Afterwards we took tea in the cavernous first-floor former chapel. Ronald described the museum as an eccentric sort of place, a judgement it would be hard to contest, but it certainly does take the visitor back into the days of ‘going to the pictures’.

**Keith Penny**

The Cinema Museum, The Master's House, 2 Dugard Way (off Renfrew Road), London SW11 4TH.  
Website: [www.cinemamuseum.org.uk](http://www.cinemamuseum.org.uk).

## ‘HOUSEWIVES AND HEROINES: WOMEN OF IMPORTANCE IN MERTON’

On 11 October a large audience was treated to a virtuoso account by Sarah Gould, Merton’s Heritage Officer, of women from many walks in life who have had connections with our area.

She began with royals. **Eleanor of Provence** (c.1225-1291), consort to Henry III, stayed at Merton priory, with her husband in 1236. **Catherine Parr** (1512-1548), sixth wife of Henry VIII, in 1544 was granted the manor of Wimbledon, and is thought to have visited in the following year. **Elizabeth I** (right) visited Mitcham several times in the 1590s, and her household treasurer Gregory Lovell lived at Merton Abbey. Queen **Henrietta Maria**, wife to Charles I, for 11 years from 1638 owned Wimbledon manor house. Queen **Victoria** launched the first competition of the National Rifle Association on Wimbledon Common in 1868. Her daughter-in-law Queen **Alexandra** supported local charities, including Queen Alexandra’s Court, for widows and orphans of servicemen.



Wimbledon’s *Alexandra* pub, and Road are named after her. Queen **Mary**, with George V, visited the area during the First World War, and she also dropped into Pascall’s sweet factory in Mitcham later on.

Some notable women followed. Lively and sharp-tongued **Sarah Churchill** (1660-1744), Duchess of Marlborough and chatelaine of Blenheim Palace, in 1723 bought the manor of Wimbledon and built a new house, which passed to the Spencers on her death. Beautiful and clever Lady **Georgiana Spencer** (1767-1806), born in Wimbledon Park House, loved parties, gambling and politics, but later succumbed to debt and disease. Such was her fame that her death in her Piccadilly house drew huge crowds. Vivacious heiress **Sophia Johnstone** (the fortune came from pins) married a handsome Sicilian, who became Duke of Cannizzaro. In 1817 the couple leased Warren House, Wimbledon, as their country retreat, and entertained lavishly there. Sophia supported musicians and collected important manuscript and printed music. Her name survives in that of Cannizzaro (dropping one ‘z’) Park.

**Lady (Emma) Hamilton** (?1765-1815), born Emy Lyon, the daughter of a Cheshire blacksmith, was able to use her extraordinary beauty to rise in the world. Mistress to Sir Harry Featherstonehaugh of Uppark, and then to Charles Greville, a son of the Earl of Warwick, in 1784 she was passed by the latter to his uncle Sir William Hamilton, our envoy in Naples. They married seven years later, and Emma’s talents for singing and languages, her good humour, and her energy, enabled her to grace the role of diplomat’s wife. Later her liaison with Nelson, and the *ménage à trois* with Hamilton, formed one of the scandals of the age. Merton Place (long demolished) was their retreat from prying eyes.

By contrast, a pair of working women. ‘**Widow Bignall**’, aged 88, was photographed in Mitcham c.1894 by Tom Francis. She supported herself by making baskets from osiers (young willow shoots). And **Nelly Sparrowhawk**, of Romany descent, was well-known in Mitcham, hawking lavender in the local streets.

Some stars of stage and screen: **Florence Gough**, in Wimbledon c.1913, was a Tiller Girl. This famous troupe featured up to 32 dancers, all the same height and weight, doing tap and high-kicking routines. Polish-born **Rula Lenska**, of *Rock Follies*, *Minder* and West End roles, was in Gladstone Road, Wimbledon 1979-83. **Kate O’Mara**, of *Triangle* and *Dynasty* fame, lived for a time in Merton Hall Road and Lansdowne Road. **Doris Hare** (1905-2000) had a nearly 90-year career in radio, stage and television in everything from Shakespeare to *On The Buses*, and was made MBE for wartime services to the Merchant Navy. She lived in Burghley Road for many years. **Sylvia Peters**, famous BBC voice from 1947, and later TV presenter, lived for a time at two Wimbledon addresses. Edinburgh-born (1934) **Annette Crosbie** has lived in Manor Gardens, Merton Park, for many years. She made her name as Catherine of Aragon in *The Six Wives of Henry VIII* (1970) and has had a busy career since. She is best known now as the long-suffering wife in *One Foot in the Grave*. She was made OBE in 1999. Theatre and film actress **Jane Baxter** (1909-1996) was in Belvedere Road in the 1980s. **Barbara Lott** (1920-2002), best known perhaps for *Sorry*, with Ronnie Corbett, lived in Church Road, Wimbledon. Much-loved comedy actress **June Whitfield** OBE (b.1925) has lived in Wimbledon for many years. **Kathleen Harrison** (1892-1995) of *Here Come the Huggetts* fame was in Wimbledon for the last 40 years of her life. Even **Joanna Lumley** (b.1946) lived in Wimbledon for a year. Ballet dancer, teacher and choreographer **Laetitia Browne** lived in Ridgway Place.

And then there were the literary ‘heroines’. Scottish-born **Margaret Oliphant** (1828-1897), author of the *Chronicles of Carlingford* series and other books, lived near Wimbledon Common at the end of her life. Anne Thackeray Ritchie (1837-1919), daughter of *Vanity Fair* author W M Thackeray, was herself a writer and novelist, and made Wimbledon her home. **Georgette Heyer** (1902-1974) was best known for her witty and well-researched Regency novels, but also as a respected crime writer. She was born and raised in Wimbledon.

**Ethel Mannin** (1900-1984) is perhaps best remembered for *Confessions and Impressions* (1930). Children's author **Elizabeth Beresford** (1926-2010) is famous as the creator of *The Wombles of Wimbledon Common*. Another children's writer was **Dorothy Sheppard** (1917-?), who lived in Denmark Road. More novelists with local connections include **Mollie Chappell** (1914-?), **Jean Stubbs** (1926-2012), **Mavis Cheek**, **Michelle Paver**, 'chick lit' author **Madeleine Wickham** (b.1969) and **Edna O'Brien** (b.1930), who wrote her *Country Girls* trilogy while living in Cannon Hill Lane, Merton.

An array of charitable souls: **Elizabeth Gardiner** (d.1719) of Morden left £300 for the education of poor children of the parish. A hundred years ago and more, **Ethel Crickmay** of High Street, Wimbledon, raised funds to buy and care for a succession of shire horses, all known as 'Jack the trace horse', to help haul loads up the hill to the village. **Vera Corner Halligan**, of Grand Drive, Raynes Park, was made MBE in 2002 for her lifetime of work with the Sea Rangers. **Mary Smith** MBE of Vineyard Hill Road was honoured in 1966 for her work in housing. **Agnes Maynard** of Woodside was a pioneer in the Girl Guide movement before the first World War. **Annie Collin** (1852-1957) of Grosvenor Hill founded and ran Friends of the Poor, which supported a range of charitable projects. Evangelical **Charlotte Marryat** (mother of the novelist) raised funds for Wimbledon's almshouses, and in Mitcham **Mary Tate** financed the almshouses that are now known as Mary Tate Cottages. Shopkeeper's wife **Priscilla Pitt** (1828-1899) of Mitcham was a Quaker, active campaigner for pacifism and temperance, and supporter of what became the NSPCC. **Keziah Peache** (1820-1899) of Wimbledon supported many charities and financed housing for poor families 'of good character', such as Bertram Cottages between Hartfield and Gladstone Roads.

In the realm of art: Distinguished artist **Angelica Kaufmann** (1741-1807) is thought to have painted decorative schemes at Cannizaro and Lauriston House. **Margaret ('May') Morris** (1862-1938) was William Morris's younger daughter and a skilled designer and needlewoman. She was briefly part of the design team at the Morris works at Merton Abbey. **Joyce Bidder** and **Daisy Borne**, notable 20<sup>th</sup>-century sculptors, shared a Wimbledon studio. **Nancy Kominski** (b.1915), familiar as a TV artist ('Paint Along with Nancy'), lived in Wimbledon, as does well-known portrait-painter **June Mendoza**.

**Gertrude Jekyll** (1843-1932) created gardens in Wimbledon and Merton Park.

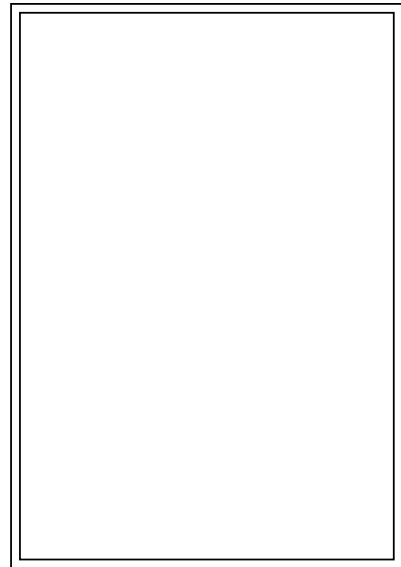
Courageous campaigner for social and political reform, **Josephine Butler** (1828-1906), lived in Wimbledon. Another brave activist – first with the Cyclists' Touring Club, and then with the Suffragettes, was **Rose Lamartine Yates** (1875-1954) of Merton Park. **Margaret Roney** (1873-1957) was Wimbledon's only female mayor.

Women MPs have included Conservative **Janet Fookes** and **Angela Rumbold**. **Siobhain McDonagh** is the Labour MP for Mitcham & Morden, having previously been a Merton councillor. The present Home Secretary, Conservative **Theresa May**, was also a Merton councillor.

Second World War heroine **Violette Szabo** (1921-1945), who was awarded a posthumous George Cross, had worked briefly in a Morden factory, making aircraft switchgear.

And some sportswomen: Mitcham Athletic Club had a great reputation and produced fine athletes. The best known is probably high-jumper **Dorothy Tyler**, née Odam, who competed in 38 international events – including four Olympic Games (1936-1956), in which she won two silver medals. Dorothy died in September 2014. Finally Sarah spoke about **Virginia Wade** (b.1945), whose education included time at Wimbledon County School. She was ranked in the world top ten women tennis players for 13 years, and famously she won Wimbledon in 1977, the Queen's Silver Jubilee year.

Sarah was warmly thanked and applauded for this impressive and fascinating account of notable women.



*photo of Edna O'Brien  
by Van Paliser 1969 for Penguin*

### **'FIELDS UNSOWN' EXHIBITION**

This thought-provoking little exhibition displays some of the source material for Attic Theatre Company's play *Fields Unsown*, performed in Morden Hall Park in September. It includes some family items kindly made available by Madeline Healey. If you missed it in the Morden Hall Stable Yard in October, and in Mitcham Library (home of Attic Theatre) in November, it will be on view at Merton Heritage and Local Studies Centre in Morden Library throughout January.

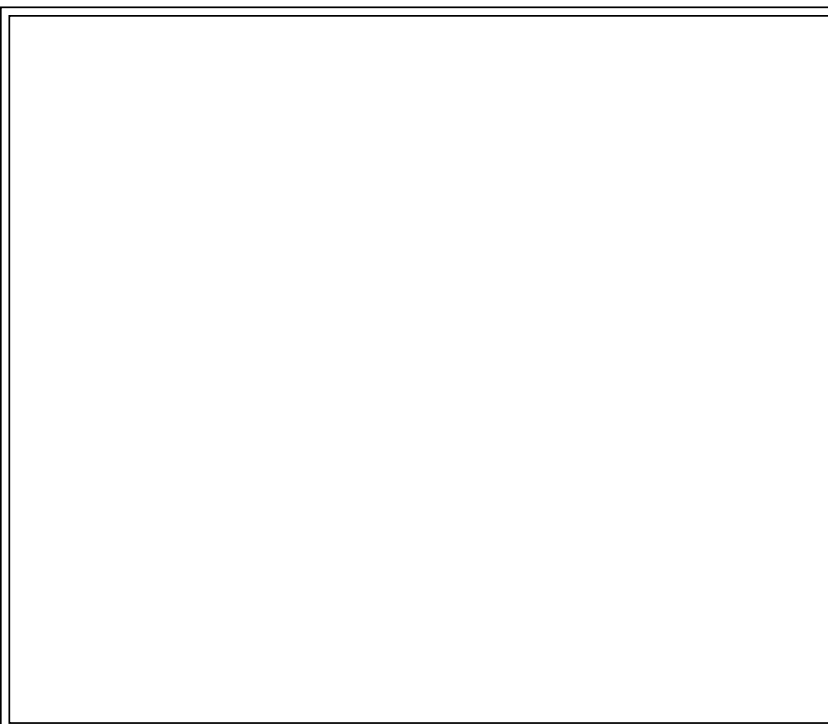


## LOCAL HISTORY WORKSHOP

**Friday 8 August 2014 – six present – Peter Hopkins in the chair**

- ◆ **Keith Penny** had discovered the architect H P Burke Downing (see June 2014, p.7) had married a 25-year-old lady in 1937, when he was about 70. He lived in Colliers Wood for about 40 years.

Keith had a slight error in his article on Lonesome (see June 2014, p.9). There were actually two 'iron mission huts', and the locations were not stated accurately. The first – the Streatham Baptist hut, built in 1887, with a match-boarded interior capable of holding 100 people – was in Leonard Road; the second one was the Anglican Good Shepherd Mission Room off Lilian Road and south of Marian Road (plot 6726 on the 1910 Valuation map, TNA IR 121/8/3) This was a corrugated iron rectangle with bellcote, built in 1906, run by the Church Army and later financed by Sales of Work yielding as much as £200 a year. The Army left in the mid-



1930s as the parish was reorganised. The site was originally bought from the Gas Mantle Manufacturing Co. (*alias* Dura Incandescent Co.), and was sold in 1936 to a Mr Marchant, with a restrictive covenant forbidding its future use as club or billiards rooms, or for the sale of alcohol. The shape of the plot can still be distinguished on a Google Earth view of 1985, containing substantial housing.

- ◆ **Madeline Healey** mentioned that a house was being built where there was previously a sports-related building in Morden Park. She noted that this land, behind Hillcross Avenue and near the railway, was not restricted to be only for sports.
- ◆ **Sheila Harris** has recently visited (on a coach trip) Abinger Church, and the nearby 'Goddards', the house designed by Edwin Lutyens, with gardens by Gertrude Jekyll. This is owned by the Landmark Trust, and part is open to guided tours on Wednesday afternoons, Easter to October. Sheila thoroughly recommends visits to both.
- ◆ **David Luff** reported on the Priory wall (see September 2014, p.10), and two lines of large holes that he has discovered close to the wall. One line lies north-south, the other at right angles; one example that David cleared of its filling of car tyres and bricks proved to be 24 inches (0.6m) deep. Dave Saxby could not offer an explanation. David suggests these are holes for substantial posts and may represent a medieval building just outside the Priory wall.
- ◆ **Peter Hopkins** has been pursuing traces of Anthony Toto, an Italian Tudor artist. He held two cottages and 12 acres in Mitcham, and in 1542 was given a 40-year lease of the Manor of Ravensbury in Mitcham and Morden. Within only four years he succeeded in upsetting many local people to the extent that court cases were brought. He was a serjeant-painter to Henry VIII, Edward VI and Mary, ornamenting royal palaces (including Hampton Court), temporary banqueting houses (one in Hyde Park), and flags and streamers for the royal ships. Peter is preparing a long article on this interesting man for future publication.

Peter had accepted on behalf of the Society the gift from Mrs Pat Brown of a clear glass jug from *The Albion* pub, surprisingly of 1 litre (1.75 pints) capacity. It is engraved WITH / COMPLIMENTS / FROM / M.JONES. / "THE ALBION" / MERTON ABBEY S.W. / XMAS. 1923 in rather square-cut letters. If you can supply any information about the item, the occasion or Mr Jones, please contact the Editor.

**David Haunton**

**Dates of next Workshops: Fridays 19 December, 30 January, 13 March at 2.30pm**

**At Wandle Industrial Museum. All are welcome.**

**TONY SCOTT offers**

## **SOME THOUGHTS ON MITCHAM AND THE GREAT WAR**

Mitcham has two public war memorials. The obvious one is in Lower Green West very close to the fire station at the Cricket Green and the other is in Mitcham parish cemetery in Church Road. This latter is the simple, but very effective 'Cross of Sacrifice' memorial, composed of a metal cross inset in a stone cross, on a hexagonal plinth with a two-tiered base. It is similar to many around the country and overseas and is to a design of Sir Reginald Blomfield. There are no individual names on the monument and it bears the inscription:

‘This Cross of Sacrifice is one in design  
and intention with those which have  
been set up in France and Belgium and  
other places throughout the world  
where the dead of the  
Great War are laid to rest.’

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission has identified 52 First World War graves scattered through the cemetery, each having the standard format Portland stone headstone.

The memorial in Lower Green West bears the inscription on the front face:

‘Their name liveth for evermore  
To the men of Mitcham who falling, conquered,  
in the Great War. 1914-1919.’

There then follows on the front face 123 names in alphabetical order, surname and initials, with no rank, regiment, decorations or date of death. There are similarly 156 names in each side and 153 on the rear face, making a total of 588 names. The date range of 1914-1919 is not a mistake, for although the Armistice took effect on 11 November 1918, by common consent any serviceman who died during 1919 as a result of the war was considered as one of the war dead.

The memorial was unveiled on 21<sup>st</sup> November 1920 by Lieutenant General Sir Herbert Edward Watts, KCMG. In more recent years an additional rectangular stone plaque was fixed to the steps below the front face. This reads ‘and to the memory of the men, women and children who lost their lives in the Second World War. 1939-1945’. There is a smaller rectangular stone plaque fixed below this, which reads

‘and those killed in other conflicts’.



*The War Memorial,  
Lower Green West*



I would imagine that virtually all of the names on the memorial were soldiers with perhaps a few from the newly formed Royal Flying Corps. I would not expect any sailors from Mitcham. Most of the men would initially have been in the East Surrey Regiment, because ever since the Cardwell reforms of the army in 1871/2 when numbered Regiments of Foot were combined into County Regiments, 'local recruitment' was the army policy. It was only after the tremendous losses of the Battle of the Somme in July and August 1916 that a serious drawback to local recruitment was realised. When a regiment 'went over the top' and suffered very serious losses, it was possible that virtually all of the men from a specific village who were of military age were killed on the same day. Dispersion of soldiers into any regiment that had suffered losses or needed expanding was the new policy from late-1916.

Returning to the list of the fallen. They were all Mitcham young men, many of whom drank in the pubs that remain today, probably attended schools that are still there today (at least in name although most have been re-built) and worked in the fields where subsequently many of our houses have been built.

At least two of the Mitcham men whose names are on the war memorial had locally distinguished parents:

Douglas Walter **Drewett**, born 1883, died 30<sup>th</sup> October 1918 aged 35.

He was the second son of James Douglas Drewett JP who lived with his wife Bridget in a large house called Ravensbury facing the Fair Green near the clocktower. This was demolished to build the Majestic Cinema and on this site now is the red brick two-storey block on the corner of Majestic Way. J D Drewett was at various times Chairman of Mitcham Parish Council and Vice-Chairman of Surrey County Council.

Lieut. William Herbert Mostyn **Simpson** of the East Surrey Regiment, born 1893, died of wounds in Belgium on 19<sup>th</sup> December 1914, aged 21.

Herbert Simpson, as he was known, was the eldest son of William Francis Joseph Simpson, the lord of the manor of Mitcham Canons, and his wife Winifred. They lived in Park Place, Commonsides West. Herbert Simpson was the great grandson of William Simpson who married Emily Cranmer in 1818 and who in due course inherited the lordship of the manor from the Cranmer family. Herbert Simpson was expected to inherit the lordship of the manor from his father.

As it was British Government policy until at least after the Second World War not to repatriate the bodies of those who died in conflict, who were those military personnel who are buried in Mitcham parish cemetery? The answer may lie in the local military hospital/convalescent wards.

At least one of the male dormitories of the Holborn Union Workhouse in Western Road, Mitcham was used as a military convalescent home, so also was the Catherine Gladstone Home in Bishopsford Road, just outside the parish. Locally, but not within Mitcham parish, Edward Gilliat Hatfield offered Morden Hall to the War Office in 1915 for use as a military hospital and between 1915 and 1919 nurses looked after wounded soldiers of below officer rank at Morden Hall. I am not suggesting that only Mitcham men occupied these beds, but there were similar hospitals/convalescent homes around the country. The 52 gravestones in Mitcham cemetery represent the men returned injured to the UK, only to die in this country, probably in the immediate Home Counties. Most would have been Mitcham men but some may well have been men from further afield whose remains, for some reason, were not returned to their home area. Some must have died from infection following wounds, some from the long-term effects of gas and some, I am sure, died of influenza which was a great killer at that time.

This little explanation and collection of thoughts may stir some ideas and thoughts in the reader. It may in a small way bring home the shock, horror and sadness that hit many families in Mitcham, rich and poor, during those fateful war years when the news of the loss of their son, brother or father was received in the War Office telegram.

### ***'BIGGER PICTURE' PROJECT***

The Bigger Picture Project of Film London, in conjunction with Merton Heritage and Local Studies Centre, is looking for old film or video that was shot in Merton. Home movies are welcome: families at home, parties in the park, works outings or well-known events. If you think you may have some home-produced film of potential local interest, or know someone who has, please consider offering it to the Project: get in touch with Sarah Gould at Morden Library or with any member of the Merton Historical Society Committee. Film London's website is [www.filmlondon.org.uk/lsa](http://www.filmlondon.org.uk/lsa). The Project's 'KinoVan', a travelling cinema-in-a-van, will be showing films outside the Civic Centre at the Lighting Up Morden event in early December.

**Keith Penny**

**PETER HOPKINS has been uncovering the secrets of  
MERTON'S MEDIEVAL REBELS**

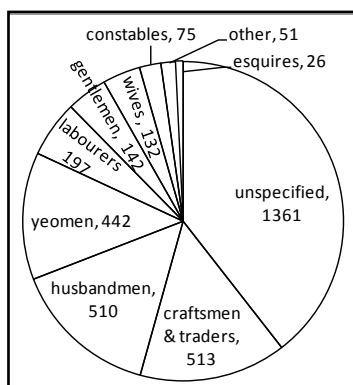
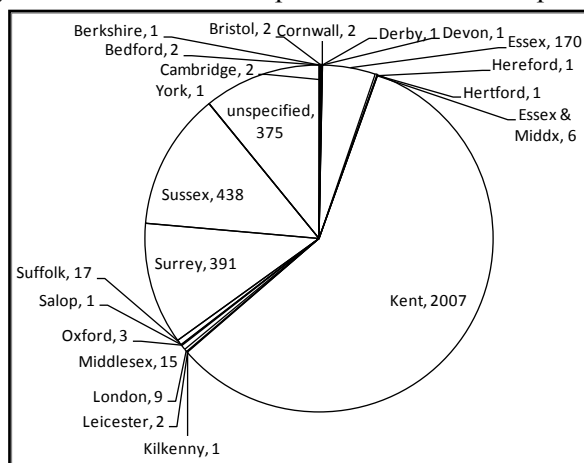
While checking an entry in the published *Calendar of Patent Rolls of Henry VI*, I glanced through the index to see whether there were any other local references. I was surprised to discover several inhabitants of Merton and Mitcham, and one from Morden, included among a list of 3449 named individuals granted a royal pardon in July 1450 for their involvement in Jack Cade's rebellion.<sup>1</sup>

Cade, who also used the pseudonym John Mortimer, was the leader of a contingent of Kentish protesters who marched on London to petition the king about the corrupt and oppressive activities of the royal advisors and their agents. Henry was a weak, though stubborn, king who mismanaged affairs at home and abroad. The Hundred Years War between England and France was coming to an ignominious end, with most of Normandy having fallen to the French by the spring of 1450. At home there were complaints about high taxation to pay for the unsuccessful war, especially as poorly-provisioned English soldiers travelling to the Channel ports had become accustomed to helping themselves to whatever food they could find. This was a period of slow recovery from further outbreaks of plague and poor harvests, and of collapsing international trade, especially in wool and cloth. But the main outcry was against the king's advisors and their agents who abused their powers through the use of extortion, bribery and oppression.

In January 1450 the House of Commons impeached the king's most influential advisor, William de la Pole, duke of Suffolk – and incidentally lord of the manor of Ravensbury by right of his wife. To protect him from his enemies, the king sentenced the duke to 5 years banishment, but he was intercepted on his voyage to the Low Countries and killed. His body was washed up on Dover Sands and a rumour spread throughout Kent that the king intended to blame the whole county for the deed – the community was always held responsible for a murder if no perpetrator could be identified.

Meanwhile an order went out to muster the local militia forces – the medieval equivalent of the Home Guard – to resist threatened invasions from France. In every community across Kent men were paraded with their weapons and encouraged to defend the realm against its enemies. As one writer puts it, 'The government had enemies across the Channel in mind, but the militiamen knew that the kingdom's true enemies lay nearer at hand, just across the Thames'.<sup>2</sup>

The immediate cause of the rebellion is not known, but in May 1450 the Kentish rebels began to march on London, and by early June more than 5000 had assembled at Blackheath, 12 miles south-east of the capital, having been joined by supporters from Sussex, Surrey, Essex, and further afield. Of those who sought pardons, 58% were from Kent, 13% from Sussex, 11% from Surrey and 5% from Essex, while the origins of 10% were unspecified.



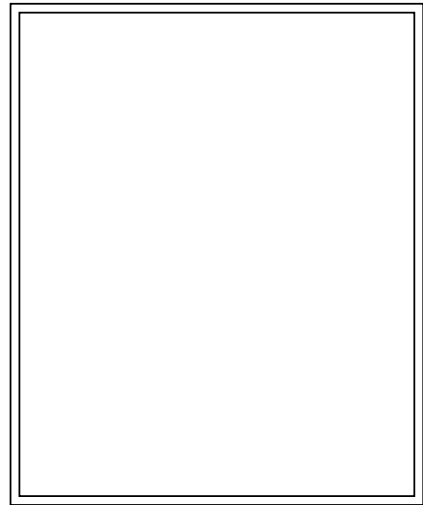
15% were craftsmen and traders – bakers, brewers, butchers, carpenters – but also merchants, goldsmiths, grocers and mercers, 15% were 'husbandmen' – tenant farmers – 13% 'yeomen' – small freeholders – and 6% 'labourers' – though unfortunately no description was given for 39%. 4% were identified as the 'constables' of the various hundreds – the administrative subdivisions of the counties – and it is significant that it was the elected constables of the hundreds who were responsible for mustering the local militia. 4% were wives, mostly accompanying their husbands though a few were widows. But another 4% of those seeking pardons were described as 'gentlemen' and three individuals were knights and 26 'esquires', while 13 were clerks, parsons or heads of monastic houses.

The king sent heralds to order the protesters to withdraw, but they refused, declaring that they were not rebels but loyal petitioners seeking redress of their grievances. In response Henry moved his army to within sight of Blackheath and the protesters, unwilling to fight the king – which would have been treason – dispersed under cover of darkness. Henry then ordered a contingent of his army to pursue the retreating rebels, but the soldiers were defeated by the mob and several of the army commanders were killed. The king fled to Kenilworth castle while the rebels returned to Blackheath, where they were joined by many mutinous soldiers, and then entered Southwark. On 3 July they crossed London bridge and entered the City, but initial support soon faded after a



Thomas Carleton, John Semer, John Palmer, Ralph Carleton, John Carleton, together with John Salyng and John Bacheler, who had been in the previous group and can therefore probably be identified as the chief tithingmen of Merton. The Salyng family held freehold and copyhold properties in Merton later in the 15th century, and a William Salyng became prior of Merton in 1502, while another John Salyng was one of the last canons. Many of these names are familiar from the Merton court rolls which survive from the 1480s, while Malard, atte Wode, Lyghtfoot, Dyssher and Bele also held copyhold properties in Morden.

Perhaps the most intriguing Merton inhabitant to obtain a pardon was another gentleman, William Lovelace, who also had substantial property interests in Morden and in Mitcham and adjoining parishes. He was a citizen of London, and originated from Bethersden in Kent, where his memorial brass of 1459 can still be seen. He seems to have been the eldest of three brothers, each of whom obtained their pardon, Richard (no.189), William (571) and the youngest, Robert (2140). Among the famous *Paston Letters* is one describing the events of 1450 from a servant of the Pastons' patron, Sir John Fastolf, one of the hated officials.<sup>5</sup> Fastolf sent his servant to Blackheath to obtain a copy of the petition that Cade had produced, but the man was recognised and nearly killed, before finding support from leading rebels, one of whom later married a Paston. He was taken to the rebel headquarters at the *White Hart* in Southwark, where Cade commanded a certain Lovelace to relieve the prisoner of his possessions. It seems likely that this leading rebel was one of the three Lovelace brothers, probably the youngest, though some have suggested it was Richard's son, who during the Wars of the Roses was to acquire 'the reputation of being the most expert in warfare in England' but, as he was only aged about 10 in 1450, that seems improbable!<sup>6</sup> Robert and Richard were involved in a land purchase in Bethersden as early as 1414 while William was granting land there in 1417, so none of them were young men in 1450.<sup>7</sup> In 1433 Richard, described as a citizen and mercer of London, and William, described as 'of Merton, gentleman', were appointed executors to Beatrice Hayton of Merton, widow of Thomas Hayton who held the sub-manor of Batailles in Ewell, and William was involved in litigation over her sheep, and also over his own wool exports, into the early 1440s.<sup>8</sup>



William Lovelace's brass at Bethersden. Photo downloaded from [www.geograph.org.uk/photo/2943848](http://www.geograph.org.uk/photo/2943848). Image Copyright Julian P Guffogg, licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 Generic Licence.

So, as well as being a hotbed of social and political unrest, mid-15th-century Merton seems to have been a magnet for wealthy individuals. William Lovelace died without issue, and his Kent estates passed to his brother Richard, but he left enough personal wealth to fund a chantry chapel for himself and his parents at Bethersden.<sup>9</sup> Beatrice Hayton, who was buried with her husband at Merton priory, left legacies totalling in excess of £35, her husband's estates having already passed to their daughter. Thomas Codyngton, who is described in Morden records as a goldsmith, may have had financial problems as in 1430 he was leasing to a London grocer a messuage and 100 acres arable in Cuddington, perhaps his manor house and demesne lands, plus pasture rights in Sparrowfeld common for 60 cattle and horses plus 100 sheep, for the annual payment of a pair of spurs worth a mere 6 shillings, which might indicate that he was indebted to the grocer.<sup>10</sup> And in 1452 and 1454 we find mention of a 'William Banyerd *alias* Banyard of Merton gentelman'.<sup>11</sup> But where did they all live? Church House was the only substantial freehold property, and the copyhold properties seem to have been quite small, but there were leasehold houses near the priory gate at the time the priory was dissolved,<sup>12</sup> and I suppose it is possible that West Barnes was already a leasehold estate before it is noted as such in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Perhaps one day another chance discovery will provide further answers!

- 1 *Calendar of Patent Rolls Henry VI 5* (1909) pp.338-374, accessed September 2014 from <https://familysearch.org>. My Excel spreadsheet of all entries is available at <http://www.mertonhistoricalsociety.org.uk/index.php?cat=morden&sec=!rebels>
- 2 Montgomery Bohna 'Armed Force and Civic Legitimacy in Jack Cade's Revolt 1450' in *The English Historical Review* 118.477 (2003) p.574; Bertram Wolffe *Henry VI* (1981) p.233
- 3 Mavis Mate 'The Economic and Social Roots of Medieval Popular Rebellion: Sussex in 1450-1451' in *The Economic History Review* n.s.45.4 (1992) pp.668, 670; R A Griffiths *The Reign of Henry VI: The exercise of royal authority 1422-1466* (1981) pp.620-622
- 4 I M W Harvey *Jack Cade's Rebellion of 1450* (1991) p.196
- 5 James Gairdner *The Paston Letters 1422-1509AD I* (1910) letter 99 pp.131-5
- 6 Montgomery Bohna 'Armed Force and Civic Legitimacy in Jack Cade's Revolt 1450' in *The English Historical Review* 118.477 (2003) p.579 citing Waurin *Croniques* (Rolls Series 1891) 5 pp.327, 334; J Hall Pleasants 'The Lovelace Family and Its Connections (I)' in *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 27.3/4 (1919) p.398
- 7 A J Pearman 'The Kentish Family of Lovelace' in *Archaeologia Cantiana* X (1876) pp.185-7
- 8 The National Archives PROB 11/3/347; C 1/11/125; C 1/43/50; *Calendar of Patent Rolls Henry VI 4* (1908) p.18
- 9 A J Pearman 'The Kentish Family of Lovelace' in *Archaeologia Cantiana* X (1876) pp.187-8
- 10 Westminster Abbey Muniment Room 27374, 27376 and 27377; Thomas Madox *Formulare Anglicanum* (1702) 485 pp.285-6
- 11 *Calendar of Patent Rolls Henry VI 5* (1909) p.491; 6 (1901) p.133
- 12 The National Archives LR 2/190

Following Keith Penny's contribution about Lonesome in our June issue JOHN W BROWN relates  
**MORE ABOUT LONELY LONESOME AND BLAKE'S FOLLIES**



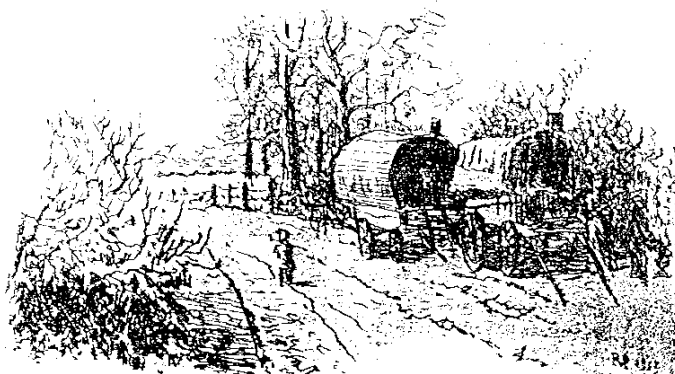
*Longthornton Road Blakes Follies  
 Morning Leader 22 July 1901*

I read Keith Penny's fascinating article 'Down Lonesome Way' in the June *Bulletin*, as 'Blake's Follies' have always fascinated me, and I have researched their history.

These dilapidated and deserted old houses were well known to my father, who, as a young boy, played among the ruins with his brothers and friends, despite the widespread local assertion that they were haunted!

The name 'Lonesome' aptly described the then isolation of the area. This outpost of Mitcham parish, abutting a distant and oft forgotten corner of Streatham, was a notorious haunt of Gypsies who, prior to the building of the houses in Leonard, Lilian and Marian Roads, were the chief residents of the area.

My maternal grandfather William Charles Brown (aka William Charles Young) used to visit Lonesome to enjoy a pipe and a drink with the Gypsies, and would treat any of their horses and ponies that were sick. He was raised in Upham, Hampshire, and had a way with horses. I remember discovering reference to him as being an 'ostler', and wondering what mysterious trade that could be, only to discover that it meant a stableman. Despite his frequent socialising with the Gypsies at Lonesome he would always tell his children never to go there, and never to play with the Gypsy children.



*Lonesome Lane-Streatham Vale 1912 by R Paton*



*Lonesome Lane-Streatham Vale 1910  
 by R Paton*

Muggings and robberies were not the only dangers the lonely traveller faced in this remote and chiefly uninhabited area. That part of Greyhound Lane leading westward across the fields from Streatham Common station was in poor repair and pitted with potholes, and accidents were commonplace, particularly to horse and cart.

As referred to by Keith, the remoteness of the spot had encouraged it to be selected as the location for the chemical works which had been built c. 1853 on the site of Lonesome Farm. The works are thought to have been built by Thomas Forster, following the sale of his Streatham factory to P B Cow. It probably started life as a rubber works. Forster seems to have operated the business in partnership with a Mr Gregory, as directories list the works as Forster & Gregory Chemical Works. Forster lived in Streatham and is buried in the crypt of St Leonard's church.

By all accounts the process undertaken at his works was a dirty one, and contemporary reports refer to a foul smell coming from the plant. This would have mingled nicely with the fragrance emanating from the local slaughterhouse, and both would have helped to ensure the continued loneliness of Lonesome!

The heavy clay soil forming the land thereabouts was always boggy, especially in wet weather, and was overgrown with weeds and brambles. Occasionally tramps and Gypsies would camp in the dilapidated old houses, seeking shelter from the ravages of the winter weather.

As Keith mentions, in the early 1900s a number of journalists 'discovered' Lonesome and wrote about the area, with their articles appearing from time to time in the national press. In 1906 a reporter from the *Daily Chronicle* ventured into this wildness, and his report on his experiences in trying to find this elusive spot was published in the issue of 6 October, and is reproduced below. It paints a wonderful picture of the area at that time. He begins his journey at Mitcham Junction station and the 'Beehive' mentioned in the text is the Mitcham pub of that name and not the old Beehive coffee tavern by the entrance to Sainsbury's supermarket at Streatham Common.





*Longthornton Road Blakes Follies  
Morning Leader 22 July 1901*

***The Daily Chronicle***

**6 October 1906**

### DESERTED VILLAGE

Lonesome in Name and in Character

### GEOGRAPHICAL PUZZLE

“Lonesome? Lonesome? Never heard of it sir.” And the ancient rustic rubbed his chin thoughtfully, and gazed at me out of suspicious eyes. I had been dropped by a leisurely train (writes a correspondent) on the edge of an English common, and I was in search the village with the fascinating name, which my rustic friend had never heard of. Before the search was over I had overcome my surprise at his ignorance. Neither gazetteer, railway time table, Post Office guide nor map had yielded the secret of Lonesome’s position in spite of diligent search. Even in the immediate neighbourhood, I was sent off on many false trails and headed backwards and forwards by turnings to the right and to the left, and I had lost all sense of locality. Yet Lonesome was there all the time, huddled and hidden away in a beautiful bit of English countryside, with green fields about it and a sheltering wood and its own way of living from one year to the other. It was an intelligent carrier who first put me on the right trail.

“See that white board?” he said, pointing with his whip straight along the dusty road. “Well, go on till you reach that, cross the railway bridge, turn to the left past the Beehive inn and then follow the footpath.”

The directions were precise, if somewhat lengthy, and I proceeded to follow them to the best of my ability. The white board humped up against the sky was a most conspicuous landmark, but it was far away and distant, and the immediate surroundings were too attractive to allow of a divided attention. The air was heavy with the beguiling odour of many flowers, for here flowers are cultivated just as cereals are on farms elsewhere. Roses, in their season, are grown for the making of rosewater, and herbs for the great druggists, perfumes, and distillers of London. It was not these things however, which gave the place its charm – although they helped – but the old-world appearance of many of its cottages and their air of complete detachment from the bustling world outside.

### AN ELIZABETHAN RELIC

Through open doors women could be seen preparing the midday meal in kitchens where men might have sat and supped in the days when Sir Walter Raleigh rode daily past with a neighbourly salute. Even the close proximity of quite modern brick cottages could not destroy the illusion that this was a bit of Elizabethan England which had somehow survived intact when it might reasonably be supposed to have perished. Still, this was not Lonesome, and it was not until the Beehive was reached that I encountered the first promising clue.

On a board fixed to the end of a house was this inscription : “Footpath to Eastfields and Lonesome”. The footpath lay between the gables of two houses, and was so narrow that two persons of only moderate corpulence could not have passed without occasioning each other some discomfort. It ended in a road full of ruts, with fields on either side covered with huge glass frames wherein flowers were being forced. It was moreover, a deceptive footpath, for, instead of leading straight into Lonesome, as might have been supposed from the announcement on the sign-post, it ended at a railway crossing and signal box.

A slatternly young woman, dallying by the side of the path with an uncouth lad, has never heard of the elusive village I was in search of, and I began to wonder if it was not like the strange “Half Town” of Celtic romance, which mortal eyes have never looked upon. It was here that an end was put to all my difficulties, and I got at last on the straight road to “Lonesome”. A cycling police sergeant was my ultimate guide. “After the ghost?” he asked, laughingly, when he had given me full and complete directions. I had not heard of the ghost, but at once a wraith of some sort seemed to be the necessary equipment for a village with such a name.

I threw out this hint to the sergeant, but he was boisterously sceptical. “Don’t you bother about it,” he said, “it’s only a big swan.” No doubt the matter-of-fact sergeant was right, but it was with a keen feeling of disappointment that I accepted his explanation. Lonesome without a ghost seemed incomplete and unsatisfactory; it was not living up to its name or fulfilling its destiny in the world.

## COLLAPSED HOUSES

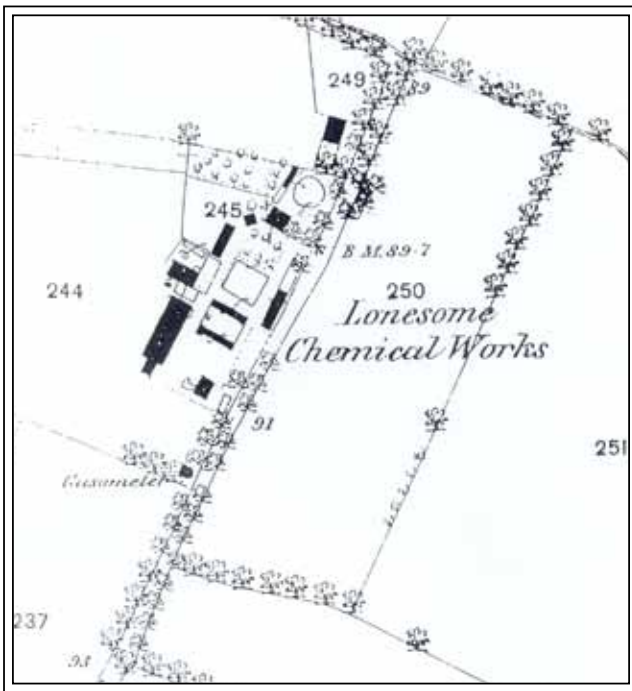
It is not a deserted village in the fullest sense of the term, yet it has an aspect which readily accounts for its name and explains its ghost. Right on the edge of Lonesome Wood is a double row of big houses, upon whose hearths a fire has never been lit, and over whose thresholds no footstep has ever passed. They are approached by a weed-strewn, deeply-rutted road, from which they are fenced off with a dilapidated iron railing. The broad roadway which separates the two rows is covered with high grass and weeds. Each house looks as if it required only a vigorous push to send it to the ground. One roof, indeed, has already fallen in. Intending occupants cannot be numerous and the following inelegantly-worded notice is presumably intended for tramps who might be disposed to seek a night's shelter in one of the houses.

### CAUTION

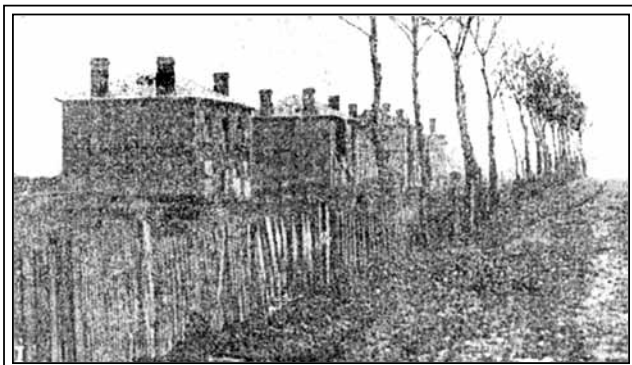
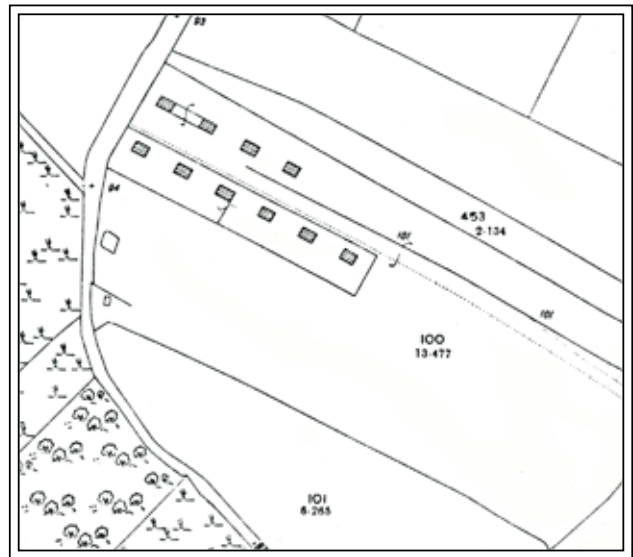
Any person trespassing on these premises do so at their own risk, as these buildings are dangerous, and any person trespassing will be prosecuted by the police.

A more melancholic example of the risks of speculative building could not be conceived. As for the rest of the village, its character may be imagined when I say that there is one butcher's shop, where meat is sold only in the form of sausages. All other kinds have to be brought in. For the rest it is less like a typical English village than a suburban offshoot from a big town which has somehow got stranded in an out-of-the-way corner of its county.

There is an easier but a less interesting way of reaching the village of Lonesome than the one I have endeavoured to describe. It is not so remote from London as the wildness of the common round about it would suggest. I have not yet given away the geographical secret, but when I say that a thirty minute journey from Mitcham Junction brought me back to London Bridge, many guesses should not be necessary to find it on an Ordnance map, the only kind of map on which it is given a place.



*left: Longthornton Road map 1867 Ordnance Survey  
below: Longthornton Road Map 1893-4 Ordnance Survey*



*Longthornton Road Blakes Follies  
Daily Mirror 28 November 1913 detail*



*Longthornton Road Blakes Follies  
Daily Sketch 20 November 1905*

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