



PRESIDENT:

VICE PRESIDENTS: Eric Montague, Judith Goodman

CHAIR: Keith Penny

BULLETIN No. 197

MARCH 2016



120 Kingston Road, Merton – March 2014, photographed by David Roe (see page 11)

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PROGRAMME MARCH – AUGUST 2016

Saturday 12 March 2.30pm

Christ Church Hall, Colliers Wood

‘The Syon Abbey Herbal AD 1517 – the last Monastic Herbal in England’

Illustrated talk by **John Adams**, one of the editors

Saturday 9 April 2.30pm

Christ Church Hall, Colliers Wood

‘The Wanborough Hoard’

Illustrated talk by Detective Inspector **Alan Bridgman**

There is NO visit planned for May.

Thursday 16 June 11.00am

David Rymill conducts A Walk in Old Malden

Meet at St John’s Church, off Church Road, Old Malden, KT4 7RY (Some parking in church lane)

Train: From Malden Manor on the Wimbledon–Chessington line, turn left under the railway bridge to Manor Drive North, walk uphill 200 yards to small roundabout; turn right into Church Road; after 100 yards turn right again into the narrow unsurfaced (but signposted) church lane.

Bus: 213 from New Malden or North Cheam. Alight at *The Plough*, walk down Church Road (opposite the shops); after 400 yards continue straight ahead at the small roundabout. Then as above.

Wednesday 13 July 11.00am

Visit to Fulham Palace and Garden

Meet at entrance in Bishop’s Ave, London SW6 6EA (Turn left from Fulham Palace Road)

Either District Line from Wimbledon or 93 bus from Morden/Wimbledon, both to Putney Bridge.

Thursday 4 August 10.30am

F W Paine, Funeral Directors,

24 Old London Road, Kingston

Tea followed by a talk on the history of the company and a tour of their museum.

From Kingston Station walk down Clarence Road: Old London Road is a turning near the Bus Station

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.

CHAIRMAN’S REPORT FOR 2014-2015

There has been plenty to occupy your new chairman during his first year in office. Fortunately, I have been loyally and ably supported by our committee, who individually and collectively have the answers to most of the questions that events have put before us.

The year has had its sadness: in August Desmond Bazley, a committee member for some years, died. A talented man in several fields of activity, his contributions to committee meetings were not frequent, but they were to the point, a combination of virtues that is not always found, here or in other societies.

Our Membership Secretary, Audrey King, gave long notice that she intended to relinquish her post, and Rosemary Turner has now combined that role with that of the Society’s Secretary. Audrey has kept an exact watch over our membership records since 2009, an essential contribution in any voluntary society. She also fields all the emails that the internet tips into the Society’s inbox, removing the dross and passing the rest on for attention. She will continue to do this and doubtless will also remain the rebuker of any slapdash chairman or committee member who forgets to respond to what she has passed on.

Judith Goodman accepted the position of Vice President. All the right things were said at a meeting here earlier this year, and I would not wish to embarrass her by repeating them. We are fortunate that Dave Haunton has succeeded Judith as Editor and has carried on where she left off.

Although it was disappointing that no one outside the present committee felt able to volunteer for the work of Membership Secretary, it has been encouraging that Janet Holdsworth, a Society member, offered to examine the Society's accounts, and the *Bulletin* editor has been cheered by the number of articles offered to him. But we do need new people to take a part in the running of the Society and to refresh the make-up of the committee, many members of which are of long standing. Our meetings are not, I think, too arduous: they are good-humoured—almost always—and refreshments are provided. Please think about it.

Bea Oliver has delivered a varied and interesting programme of talks and visits during the year, all of which are described in our *Bulletin*. However, attendance at the summer visits averaged around ten, usually the same people, and it may be that we have to consider how much energy should go into this part of our Society's life.

The Society has long been proud of its publications, and this year sees the emergence of Bill Rudd's *Abbey Roads*, patiently coaxed into literary form by Judith Goodman. Part travelogue, part collection of snippets of history, part autobiography, it defies categorising. Not least, it recalls a Britain of open roads and making the most of limited funds and holiday opportunities. Buy it and see.

David Roe has now delivered another instalment of contributions to our photographic project to the Surrey History Centre. Many of you came last March to a presentation on past and present Merton and have seen samples of what has been produced. The project will continue, but those involved will take a breather and review how best to proceed.

The Society has continued to respond to inquiries about Merton, usually related to family histories, and is currently recommending an archaeological examination of a site in Lower Morden that is about to go before the Borough planning committee. Individuals have given talks to groups small and large, for which purpose new display and projection equipment was purchased. Our display at the Surrey Local History Symposium at Ashted last May was well received and gained the Society first prize.

Increasingly the Society is being asked to support or participate in schemes or projects set in motion by other societies or grant-funded bodies that have their own objectives. These requests can be time-consuming, but they do offer a path towards greater publicity for us and what we are.

The event that caused us most work this year was the sudden demand by Merton Borough Council that we should vacate the premises in Morden Park in which our archives and artefacts were stored. The Council found a small store-room at Gap Road Cemetery, and provided labour and transport to facilitate the move. Nevertheless, it was a trying period, and I am grateful to those who were able to assist in the process of moving. This experience obliged the committee to think about the Society's holdings that have accumulated over the years. There is no permanence for voluntary societies who have artefacts to conserve (indeed, even the professionals get moved around by the higher powers of local government). We heard not long ago that Surrey Archaeological Society had been asked to leave its premises in Guildford. The Committee agreed that some items in the store would have to go: a postal sorting frame went to the Royal Mail collection; items from a church are being returned there; relevant items and papers have been passed to the Wimbledon Society; local archaeological finds have been reserved for the London Archaeological Archive Research Centre, whilst some railway items have been put up for auction. Some items, neither rare nor of local significance, mostly building materials, were indeed discarded. Some ruthlessness was and will be necessary: the Society has now received a substantial quantity of documents from Eric Montague, and a collection of papers and slides from the late Bill Rudd that nearly fills a garden shed. All this material will need examination and decision-taking—and we must remember that our local collection in Morden library is also desperately short of space. Because of our increased awareness of what the Society owns, the Committee has begun thinking about how our archives can be made available to researchers; there is no point in acquisition if nothing is accessible, but we are very much in the early days of discussing this issue.

And so we head into 2016. There is a lot of interesting local history activity on offer in this part of London and North Surrey, so we have set up an email information service so that we can pass on to you the programmes of other societies and institutions, if you so wish. Just send an email to info@mertonhistoricalsociety.org.uk. There is full information in the most recent *Bulletin*. We hope to carry on providing a good programme of talks, visits and publications, but please feel willing to make requests or suggestions for the sort of thing you would like to be put on. Sheila Harris is even now arranging our annual Lunch, which takes place on Thursday 25 February: come along and enjoy a meal served by some of the young people in education in our Borough. By now you will be pleased to know that there are no speeches on that occasion, besides the thank-you ones; for now, thank you for your attendance and attention.

Keith Penny

‘THE FLICKERING SCREEN’

After our AGM on Saturday 11 November, Sarah Gould of Merton Local Studies Centre, gave us a swift history of local film studios and picture houses. Making films for public audiences began remarkably early in Merton. George Cricks and Henry Sharp set up a film studio in Mitcham in 1901, only five years after the first public film show, one of their first efforts being a sequence of Queen Victoria’s funeral train steaming through Mitcham. In 1904 they became independent as Cricks & Sharp, film producers. In 1908 the firm became Cricks and Martin, with John Martin, making comic shorts such as *The Curate’s Dilemma* (1906) and *For Baby’s Sake* (1908). Their first full-length 1000-ft film was *The Mighty Atom* (1911). All films at this time were of course silent, and usually monochrome, but occasionally a blue or pink flush was applied. Films had been made using open air stages, but after the firm moved to Waddon Road in Croydon in 1911, they were able to use a new, specially-built, glass-roofed studio. However, the firm closed shortly after Martin left in 1913.

He did so in order to set up Merton Park Studios, with film stages at 2-4 Quintin Avenue. Actor A E Coleby was now the producer. Their first major series was on *War’s Grim Reality*, first produced in 1914 and continuing until 1917. The company moved to Long Lodge, on Kingston Road, in 1930, with the film stages behind the Lodge. Some feature films were made in the 1930s, often using local locations (*right*), but output was mainly advertising, information and training films, forming a useful basis for propaganda films in the Second World War. Post-war output concentrated on B-films such as the Edgar Lustgarten police series. More notable were the Children’s Film Foundation’s *The Secret Tunnel* (1947) and Joan Littlewood’s *Sparrows Can’t Sing* (1963). Eventually the Studios became a services niche, performing sound recording and editing, and post production work.

From 1896, films were shown in music halls, at Wimbledon Theatre and Mitcham Vestry Hall, and mobile Bioscopes at Mitcham Fair. The new idea caught on quickly – before 1914 there were five dedicated cinemas in the LBMerton area, mostly gas-lit, with a small orchestra and fewer than 500 seats. These were the Electric Theatre, Worple Road (1909), the Kings Palace Theatre, Wimbledon Broadway (1911), and the Apollo Cinema, Merton Road, while the Nelson Hall Picture Palace (1910) and Merton Picture Palace, were both in Merton High Street, only 400 yards apart.

Premises grew larger – the Elite, Wimbledon Broadway (1921) had more than 1000 seats – and cinema chains spread, especially after the start of the talkies in 1928. Raynes Park Cinema (1921) became the Rialto in 1933, and was the only local cinema to remain independent, closing in 1954. The Broadway Cinema Palace, Tooting (1922) was soon followed by the Granada, Tooting Broadway, later the first cinema listed as Grade I. The grand interior was designed by the noted Theodore Komisarzhovsky, who insisted on a stage area and appearances by film stars. Morden Cinema (1932) had an organ and 1700 seats, becoming an Odeon in 1937. Mitcham had to wait until 1933 for its first cinema, the Majestic on Fair Green (*above*), with 1500

seats and an organ. The Regal, Wimbledon Broadway (1933), with its Art Deco interior, opened with fully reported formal speeches. The last great Odeon, at Shannon Corner (1938) was deliberately luxurious (*left*), but competition from TV meant that cinemas started closing from the late 1950s onwards, their buildings being adapted to other uses, or changing to become multi-screens. The great ‘Cinema Experience’ in grand surroundings, with its posters, manager (male) and usherettes (female), tubs of ice cream, and the National Anthem, just faded away.

DH

Photos: Merton Memories, copyright London Borough of Merton

‘A RIVER’S TALE : PERSEVERING WITH FATHER THAMES’

On Saturday 12 December, Bob Wells, a retired Metropolitan policeman (who did not mention he holds the Queen’s Police Medal), took us on a journey through time, illustrated by some of the objects he has found in 40 years of mud-larking. His ‘beat’ has been along the foreshore of the Thames between Putney and Teddington. He has mostly found objects on the river bends, deposited on the inner shore or eroded out of the outer banks, or near the many minor springs leaking into the Thames.

From the Mesolithic he has flint ‘Thames picks’ (7000-4500 BC), while from the Neolithic (4500-2000 BC) he has found a beautiful polished stone axe (from Mounts Bay in Cornwall – how did it reach London?) and ‘linear objects’ such as needles of bone or antler (easy to spot on gravel, where the stones are mainly round). Bronze Age items include socketed axes and part of a tiny double gold ring, cut in half, perhaps for a trade. The most interesting Iron Age items were tin coins, cast in strips and snapped off one by one to pay for things (or services?), dating between 50 BC and 50 AD.



Roman times produce Samian pottery, of course, buckles, and various brooches, with and without their pins, often ornamented with a multiplicity of ‘ring and dot’ motifs. Bob’s prize find here was part of a lead votive plaque, lettering clearly visible. Astonishingly, four years later he found a smaller, joining, piece only a few yards from the original find. From the Saxon era he had found a *seax* (large iron knife blade) at the mouth of the Wandle, and several *sceatta* coins, including one marked ‘Lell’ (anything to do with Laleham, not far away?), while Viking times yielded silver pennies (for Danegeld?) and some tiny silver pendants in the shape of Mjölnir, Thor’s hammer.

Bob’s later medieval finds include many pins and pilgrim badges, and a splendid gold quarter-ryal (five shillings) coin of Edward IV of 1461-1470, identified by the Museum of London with an ‘Oh, another one’. The most frequent Tudor finds are bale seals, to identify the owners of merchandise. The 17th century features many clay pipes and clay wig curlers, and traders’ tokens (for use as small change), which delightfully have to include the name of the trader and often their place of business.



As a finale, Bob showed us an item that he had originally taken to be a metal boat washer – a very common find, the last remains of numerous small boats – but when he turned it over he saw chip carved patterns. Was this Saxon? No! It was identified as an eighth-century Irish gilded mount, most probably from a house-shaped portable shrine or reliquary. How did it end up in London River?

One must get a mud-larking licence from the Port of London Authority (£72), who administer the Thames foreshore on behalf of the Crown, and are entitled to half the value of any treasure discovered. Bob had brought along several trays of his finds, and during the interval was much occupied in discussing them with fascinated Society members. At the end of the day he was most enthusiastically thanked and applauded. His fee goes to the Friends of the Royal Marsden Hospital.

DH

‘RECENT RESEARCHES: PART 1’

On Saturday 16 January, **Keith Penny** introduced us to **Industry in Mitcham**, illustrated with photos from Eric Montague’s collection. The talk was based on one Keith had given to another group, asking if anyone remembered or had worked in these places, which had produced some useful information.

Keith began with part of the 1867 OS Map of the Western Road area, which showed a leather factory, two varnish factories and a ‘varnish and japan’ works (varnish is a transparent coat, japan a black enamel one). Latham’s Varnish works (*right*) was built c.1851, and generated much road traffic – there were many carmen (cart drivers) in Mitcham at the time. This was a concentration of smelly industry, but it represents the start of an enduring association with the paint and varnish industry – there were no fewer than 15 such factories in Mitcham in 1965. Smells were again in evidence from the Gas Works, built in 1849 in Western Road. Not far away lay the distinctive Tandem smelting works (*below*), with its own atmospheric contribution.



After 1929 the Holborn Union workhouse premises were reused for warehousing and an ‘ever-changing medley’ of light industry. Pain’s Fireworks was housed in several small buildings, suitably far apart to isolate any fire hazard, and surrounded by waste ground. An exotic touch was imparted by the ‘Foochow’ splashed on one of the chimneys of the paint factory of Donald Macpherson & Co, to advertise one of their brands (*below*). Their subsidiary The Foochow Paints Agency was set up in Kuwait. The premises were formerly the Cock Chimney Works (named from the weathervane on top of the chimney).

More variety is offered by Rototherm (who made thermometers), Merton Board Mills (paper, cardboard, recycling), Connolly’s Mill (leather furnishings for expensive cars, and the Houses of Parliament) (*below*), the Southern Industrial Rubber Co, the modern VGI Meters Ltd and Microplas Ltd, and various structural engineers such as T W Palmer and Wm Harland & Son. Belaco produced vehicle components (such as brake pads), while Locomotors in London Road made electric commercial vehicles. The traditional mills along the Wandle included Whitely’s (snuff) Mill in Morden Road, and the Grove (flour) Mill by Mitcham bridge, later used by Lyxhayr for making artificial fibre for mattresses.



Finally, a question: what did W H Armfield Ltd (*below*) make in their factory in Morden Road ?



Tony Scott spoke on the **British Switch to the Gregorian Calendar**. In 45BC Julius Caesar reformed the rather vague Roman calendar. He began the year on 1 January and introduced the idea of making every fourth year a 'leap' year. This Julian calendar was formally adopted for the Christian world by the Council of Nicaea in 325AD. However, the Council officially fixed the birth of Christ as having occurred on 25 December, and thus, logically, His germination as nine months earlier, on 25 March (the Feast of the Annunciation, or Lady Day), which they adopted as the start of the Christian year. Confusingly, they kept the year numbering, so, for example, the year 1066 started on 25 March 1066 and ended a year later on 24 March 1066. The next day was 25 March 1067.

The Julian year is a little too long, each year incurring a small error that builds up. In 1582 Pope Gregory XIII promulgated a new calendar to correct this error, achieving this by making every century year not a leap year (even though it is divisible by four), but making an exception for those century years divisible by 400. By 1582, the accumulated error since 325 was 10 days, so the calendar had to 'lose' 10 days, by jumping forward that amount. This was immediately accepted by most Roman Catholic countries, but not by Protestant or Orthodox ones.

Eventually the date discrepancy caused problems with international trade, so for Britain and her colonies the *Calendar (New Style) Act* of 1750 was enacted. This decided that (a) the year 1752 was to begin as usual on 25 March but end at 31 December and (b) the date was to be corrected by losing 11 days (the amount of error accumulated by then). Thus Wednesday 2 September 1752 was immediately to be followed by Thursday 14 September 1752, and thus that 'year' would contain only 271 days. The Treasury refused to change the financial year and kept it at 365 days, so that particular financial year ran from 25 March 1752 to 5 April 1753. The next financial year started on 6 April and ran to the following 5 April: financial years have done so ever since.

The complications for genealogists are amusingly shown by George Washington's birthday. He was born on 11 February 1731 (ie. before the calendar change of 1752), which would be written nowadays as 11 February 1731/2. Today, we must reckon his birth date as 22 February 1732, in consideration of the new calendar, but in the USA his birthday is a Public Holiday, celebrated on the first Monday after 11 February.

(Part 2 of this report will follow in the next issue of the Bulletin.)

DH

***ABBEY ROADS: A Modern Pilgrimage* by W J Rudd**

This book describes Bill Rudd's Project to visit and photograph (the remains of) all the religious houses commemorated in the road names of the St Helier Estate in Morden and Carshalton.

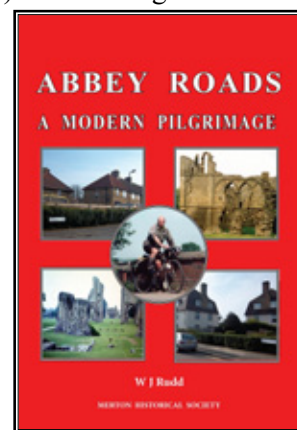
We follow the slow genesis of the Project; Bill's adventures on the way to realising it without spending too much money – broadly by Youth Hostelling on his bicycle; and his eventual success in finishing it by public transport. Essentially it is a diary of how he spent most of his holidays 1951-1969, but includes travel diversions from the UK to the Low Countries and Norway, his growing interest in fairground organs, and discussions of his tools (bicycle and camera, designs and costs and problems). We must admire Bill's determination and persistence in completing his project over 19 years, to the extent of re-visiting quite a number of sites when photographs from previous visits proved to be unsatisfactory after developing and printing.

The Ministry of Transport road numbers are cited as they were at the time. Many have changed number since Bill rode their tarmac – indeed not a few are now speedy dual carriageways, only cycled by the intrepid. I was impressed by the degree to which he used lanes and minor roads and avoided the main roads of the time. Bill was keen on recording the counties he traversed, and as with the roads, county boundaries and names have changed since he visited. Following his journeys on a map makes one aware of how much England has changed in the last forty or fifty years.

As readers of our *Bulletin* know well, Bill took a mean photograph. All (bar one) of the 176 splendid photographs in this publication are his, reminding us that they are now the property of Merton Historical Society. Bill had a sometimes idiosyncratic approach to the English language (not every sentence has a verb) but I like this touch as nicely conveying his need to make the maximum use of his limited time. We owe a considerable debt of gratitude to Judy Goodman, for carefully transcribing every word into typescript. Sadly, Bill did not live long enough to see the publication of his masterpiece.

With 200 A4 pages, it is a bargain at £10 (£8 members) – available at meetings or from Publications Secretary

Dave Haunton



LOCAL HISTORY WORKSHOPS

Friday 6 November 2015. Seven present, Peter Hopkins in the chair

- ◆ **David Haunton** gave a short early version of his talk on ‘The Surveyor’s Chain’, receiving several useful comments and queries (*a full report will be included in the next Bulletin*).
- ◆ **Judith Goodman** had seen much of interest in a visit to 120 Kingston Road, Merton, the so-called ‘Manor House’, currently undergoing restoration from offices to living quarters. The front is 18th-century, the rear is 17th or possibly earlier, as the decoration uncovered includes an elaborate Tudor rose. David Roe has taken record photographs (see p.11).
- ◆ **Madeline Healey** spoke of a rusty pole in Burlington Road with cables hanging down, which had been pointed out to her as ‘the last trolley-bus pole in south London’ (*right*).
- ◆ **Rosemary Turner** had found a couple of articles from the *Merton Messenger* in the early 1990s, including one written by Bill Rudd about the history of Morden and its well known past occupants.

Amongst Bill’s papers was a folder marked ‘The Lodge’. Rosemary had been researching this building. Disappointingly there was nothing in the folder relating to the building. Indeed, a list of names was of occupants of Morden Lodge, adjoining Morden Hall. Rosemary had found street directories were unreliable as they often confused the two buildings. Similarly, a name that Rosemary had noted from the 1871 census on ancestry.co.uk as Richard Pugh living at the Lodge turned out to be Richard Hughes, living at Morden Lodge. Richard Garth, the Lord of the Manor and his family plus many servants were living at the Lodge.

Rosemary recently discovered that there is a copy of Herbert Ellis’ map at the Wandle Museum and she hopes to go and see it. It is still not known where the original is held.



- ◆ **Keith Penny** During the last year he had continued to transcribe newspaper reports of the Mitcham Military Tribunal (see *Bulletin* 193). The original records of most tribunals were destroyed by Government order in 1921–2. He showed a list of the twenty-five or more men who served on the Tribunal, most of whom were members of the Urban District Council. There was no obvious representative of organised labour, as required by the Military Service Act; no one seems to have objected to this omission, though there was a dispute over the composition of the tribunal in neighbouring Wimbledon. The occupations of those who went before the tribunal were varied, and while labourers predominated, some, though not professional, were certainly skilled in engineering and chemical manufacture.

From 1917 came a report of a significant moment in local history: the National Trust had accepted sections of the Merton Priory wall bought by the Wandle Open Spaces Committee. The writer of the article thought it was a happy thing that the Committee had carried on despite the war; preservation of the walls was ‘highly necessary’. Though enthusiastic about the wall, the article had no sentimental illusions about the location: ‘There is perhaps no district on the outskirts of London more squalid than parts of Merton and Mitcham, yet this very district can boast of an unusual proportion of ancient and picturesque survivals, most ancient of which is the abbey wall on the banks of the once shining stream—the Wandle.’

- ◆ **Peter Hopkins** had been asked by Nicholas Hart to check his transcription of a 1664/5 Act of Parliament for the purpose of improving the navigation of several named rivers in south-east England, including ‘those watercourses running from Wallington Bridge to London’. The proposers of the Act included Sir Humphrey Bennett, knight, and William Swann and Nicholas Oudart, gentlemen. Bennett’s daughter later married George Garth II of Morden. Nicholas Hart has dubbed it the ‘Wandle Navigation Act’ (though the Wandle is not named specifically), and he wonders (a) if this included straightening the Wandle near Abbey Mills and (b) if it was a result of a court case of c.1620, the details of which he has lost and is trying to rediscover.

DH

Friday 22 January 2016. Eight present, David Haunton in the chair

- ◆ **Des and Gillian Bellew** had seen the picture in *Bulletin* 196 of a Thunder and Little brewery cart and realised that they had the same photograph, because the man in the picture was Des's grandfather Michael Bellew. Des produced some fascinating family photographs, including ones that showed formal groups of boys at the Lower Mitcham Board School (now Benedict School) around 1905. Des's father had been the sales manager for Rototherm of Merton Abbey, and he produced two samples of the company's thermometers. Rototherm had unfortunately fallen behind when the technology of measurement advanced. Des also showed us a metal and cedar-wood cigar box, engraved on the lid with an elaborate 'carpet' design and inside with the name of "Hadfield's", the paint manufacturer, in capital letters, with no other text. Can anyone tell us why or when? Gillian had traced her family (Bentley) in Merton back as far as an 18th-century husbandman, while another ancestor had been a cowkeeper resident at The Rush.
- ◆ **Judith Goodman** brought along several ephemera: a Triang Christmas leaflet (complete with Cindy); an advertisement for Rototherm; a Liberty Yuletide Gifts catalogue of 1929–30; another Liberty's catalogue of 1936; two Coronation souvenir booklets, one from 1937 and one from 1953; *Carter's Gardener's Companion* of 1916; a Renshaw's Marzipan Brochure, undated but from somewhere in the period 1930s to 1950s, extolling "purity, quality and reliability".

Photos by James Russell & Sons (Photographers) Ltd, Worple Road, Wimbledon

These all provoked interested conversation, but the most provocative item was a souvenir of the move of Pelham Girls' School to the vacated former Rutlish site in 1959 (*above*), in which one of the photographs showed girls as "housewives in the making" (*left*). Des recalled the school building in Pelham Road (by Burke Downing, according to Judith) in 1945–6, when some grammar school boys were also accommodated there – on a separate floor from the girls.

- ◆ **Peter Hopkins** provided extracts of the 1808 Manning and Bray map of Surrey which placed Morden's Spital Farm in Sutton.

He had received news of the latest acquisitions at Surrey History Centre, which include records of the Mitcham District of the Independent Order of Oddfellows from 1867 to 1905 (ref: 9287).

He apologised for an error in a 2004 *Bulletin* article, where he had described John Mantell, vicar of Morden and curate of Merton, as one of the last canons of Merton priory. Further research suggests that John Mantell was aged 68 in 1591 and that the identification of him with canon John Cuddington was therefore unreliable. A puzzling further record showed John Mantell being ordained in 1560, when he was already in holy orders.

- ◆ **Keith Penny** mentioned three internet resources that he had recently used: visionofbritain.org.uk contained statistical information from the national censuses; ancestry.co.uk now had access to admission registers of Freemasons up to 1922; the Pearce Register of conscientious objectors could be accessed, free after registration, on the Imperial War Museum website.

He had recently helped an inquirer to locate The Rowans, a house in Wandle Road, at the junction with Morton Road. It had been built between the 1910 Valuation Survey and the 1915–6 *Kelly's Directory* by Charles Sayers, a builder with premises in London Road, Mitcham, who appeared several times in the 1910 Valuation, with sites in and around Wandle Road. Mr Sayers has not previously been noted as a local builder.

A friend had recently recorded interviews with a relative who had grown up in Phipps Bridge during the Second World War, and there were, on first listening, plenty of interesting reminiscences, not least of teenage employment in industries that were not very conscious of health and safety.

In an obituary for George Farewell Jones (d.1926), sometime Chairman of Mitcham UDC, Keith had seen that Mr Jones was Lord of the Manor of Biggin and Tamworth, and that he had bought the title from a country solicitor. The last date given for a holder of this title in *Mitcham Histories* was 1851.

- ◆ **David Luff** showed photographs of a house in Dorset Road next to a footpath, where recent works had revealed the Southern Railway concrete fencing.

Following the promise by the National Trust to repair a section of the Merton priory wall, a survey had been conducted in December. The western side of the wall was in a very poor state, because of the backfilling over previous years.

David had attended a consultation meeting concerning Crossrail 2. Sites for access shafts had been defined, and it was clear that an alarming amount of demolition would be required in Wimbledon town centre around the railway, and indeed further afield.

- ◆ **Rosemary Turner** had been interviewed as part of a project on the subject of excavations at Merton priory, and the groups and individuals who had taken part. She had managed to make plenty of mentions of MHS. Having seen the topics proposed for the next Surrey History Symposium, she had taken the hint and looked into two possible iron chapels in Morden, with a view to mounting an MHS stand at the Symposium. Some discussion ensued of other iron chapels in our area of interest.

- ◆ **David Haunton** had read with no enjoyment *The London Year*, a compilation of short diary entries (pub. Frances Lincoln, 2015), which had little of local interest, apart from an 1859 remark by George Eliot that 'Streatham Common and Tooting Common ... were more like parks than commons'.

Following the previous Workshop, when Madeline Healey mentioned a pole in Burlington Road that had survived from the trolleybus network, he had been to photograph it, now looking rather woebegone and minus the ball that would have been on its top (*see page 8*), and a world away from the colour photograph of a smart trolleybus that he also provided. Apparently the pole is the last survival of the 605 trolley bus route which, with route 604, was one of the last two such routes in London, closing in May 1962.

Keith Penny

**Dates of next Workshops: Fridays 4 March, 15 April, 27 May, 8 July
2.30pm at Wandle Industrial Museum. All are welcome.**

NOTICES

Appeal for Memories of The Canons, Mitcham: Several interested groups are working together to produce an application for a second Heritage Lottery Fund grant for the conservation of the house and grounds at The Canons. They would welcome any memories of events and activities that took place there, as well as any recollections of the athletics ground next to what is now Park Place. If you can help, contact Keith Penny by email: chair@mertonhistoricalsociety.org.uk

Merton Heritage Discovery Day will be held at Morden Library from 12.30 to 4.30pm on Saturday 28 May, a Bank Holiday weekend. Our Society will participate. One of the featured stands will have an update on Merton's *Carved in Stone* project about local memories of the First World War.

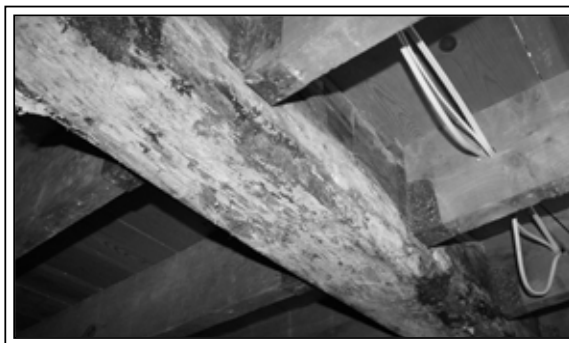
Merton Talking Newspaper is sent monthly to about 170 people with visual impairment. They recorded (with permission) the complete text of Irene Bain's *Local History Note 7* about childhood memories of wartime Mitcham, and published it in two parts in September and October 2015.

**JUDITH GOODMAN and DAVID ROE pay a visit to
120 KINGSTON ROAD, MERTON (NOT THE MANOR HOUSE)**

Last September the Society was kindly invited by the owners to visit the property at 120 Kingston Road which they refer to as the 'Manor House'. The owners are (or are associated with) a company who have a business interest in property development and whose offices are in Long Lodge, Kingston Road. They were then in the process of converting the Grade II listed building at 120 Kingston Road from its existing Commercial Offices status to its original (residential dwelling) use. The photo on the front cover shows the building in March 2014, with weather-boarded gable end. It incorporates a late 17th-century farmhouse, Merton Farm, within a later red-brick exterior. It was acquired by John and James Innes in the late 19th century, but was never a Manor House: this name is historically incorrect. The building was subject to interior changes when converted to offices in the 20th century.

Arrangements were made for a visit on October 20, 2015 by ourselves (Judith has a particular interest in and knowledge of the history of Merton Park, and David has an interest in taking photographs for the Society's photographic record project). We were kindly received and escorted around the building by Robert Hindle, manager of the conversion project on behalf of the contractors 33 Design and Build Ltd. Scaffolding had been erected around the exterior, covered by protective plastic sheeting, with a corrugated plastic roof over the building. At the time some of the phase 1 (17th-century) and phase 2 (18th-century) interior fabric of the building was exposed. The owners intended to commission a professional archaeological survey, so no attempt was made during this visit to undertake a survey – the emphasis was on viewing parts of the interior and taking photographs.

Several sections of the original 17th-century timber could be seen, such as a large oak beam on the first floor (*right*), helping to support the second floor and roof, and parts of the wooden walls that were later encased in brickwork.



Of particular interest was a section on the first floor of the decorative wall covering that had been exposed (*left*), believed to date from the 17th century. Subsequent information has indicated that it is later than the Tudor period, although it has similarities in style.

There were some old fireplaces, including an attractive one (*right*), reported to be 18th-century, but possibly later.

At the centre of the front of the house is an ogee window (*below right*), incorporated into the brick exterior (probably 18th-century) at second floor level.



This brief account of the visit relies for historical accuracy to a large extent on Peter Hopkins' private extracts from manorial court rolls 'COPYHOLDS OF MERTON – 120 Kingston Road'. He kindly agreed to this document being passed to the owners of the property. He has also passed a copy to local archaeologist Dave Saxby who, with his colleagues from Museum of London Archaeology, has visited and surveyed the building on behalf of the owners.



NORMA COX MRPharmS traces the varied histories of FIVE MERTON PHARMACIES

From Shopping Malls and Retail Parks to the Internet, our shopping trends are changing and so are our high streets. I wondered how pharmacies had fared, for I had worked as a locum pharmacist, for a number of employers, for many years. I worked in Merton in the 1980s and 1990s and I have studied five Merton pharmacies, to see how they have stood the test of time.

The first pharmacy is D E Davies, an independent pharmacy in High Street, Wimbledon, where I worked in 1981. The premises were at 76 High Street and were then run by Mr F Middlehurst. This business is shown as D E Davies in the first published register of pharmacy premises¹ in 1937; Kelly's Street Directories show 'David Evans Davies MPS' was first established in the High Street in 1922. In the register for 1941 it is named as J L Bownes but by 1946 it is registered as D E Davies again, as a business name. This speaks volumes for the high reputation of Mr Davies. He had qualified as a pharmacist in 1894 and retired in 1938, but died in 1944 'after prolonged ill-health'.² In 1983 it was run by a different pharmacist and in 1992 the shop moved to 80 High Street, Wimbledon. The pharmacy business still trades as D E Davies today at 80 High Street, Wimbledon, in a parade of shops (*above*). The former premises are now a clothes shop.



The second pharmacy, also independent, was the Watson Pharmacy at 23 High Street, Wimbledon, where I worked in 1981 and in 1982. It was the end shop of the parade, on the opposite side of the road. It was first registered in 1941 as the Watson Pharmacy. My employer ran the business from 1975-1984. Watson pharmacy continued trading up until 1992. Since 1992 it has been a party shop and later a clothes shop.



The third pharmacy was Helierchem at 43 St Helier Avenue, Morden, an independent pharmacy where I worked from 1981-1983. It was a small shop in the middle of a 1930s parade of shops. The premises were first registered in 1979. In 1986 the premises were renamed Karson's and in 1997 became Jeskap Ltd. Today it is registered and trading as Rowlands Pharmacy, part of a chain (*left*).

The fourth pharmacy was Richmond Pharmacy at 129-131 Green Lane, Morden, an independent pharmacy where I worked in 1981. It was run by my employer from 1972. It was a large shop at the end of a 1930s parade of shops. The premises were in the first register in 1937 under the name of J W Stone. This was John William Stone, who qualified in 1926. He was the first

occupant of the address in 1933³, and presumably opened his pharmacy the same year, in the newly-built premises, as the first chemist in the St Helier area. He left Morden in 1969, presumably retiring after more than 40 years of professional service, like Mr Davies. The business was registered as Richmond Pharmacy from 1972 until 1986 and then became Ballmere PLC. From 1991 to the present day, it is registered as Day-Lewis, part of another chain. In 2004 the pharmacy moved to 64 Middleton Road, this is part of a health centre.⁴(right) The former premises are now a Londis convenience store.



The fifth pharmacy was Cross and Herbert Chemist at the Savacentre, Priory Park, Merton High Street, where I worked in 1993. It was a chain pharmacy concession, in a line of other business concessions, situated behind the check-outs, inside the Sainsbury's superstore. The superstore was built on the site of Merton priory and first opened on 28 February 1989.⁵ This was a very small pharmacy with a long counter at the front. The register of premises shows the first pharmacy in the Sainsbury's Savacentre was in 1991 and was registered as Sharps Chemist Ltd. By 1993 it was owned by Cross and Herbert. They were then bought out by Lloyds Chemist in 1995. In the 2001 register the premises are listed as Sainsbury's. Today the concession shops within the store are gone and the pharmacy occupies one of the aisles in the Sainsbury's store. Sainsbury's now shares the site with Marks and Spencers.

Of the five pharmacies I have studied, one has ceased trading, this is the Watson Pharmacy which traded for 51 years. Only one business (D E Davies) is still trading as an independent. Interestingly there was a chemist at 76 High Street in 1899 named T E Kirkman.⁶ He was succeeded in 1907 by Rex Blanchford MPS, who stayed until 1921, showing that a pharmacy has traded at this location for at least 116 years. Two of the independent businesses have been acquired by pharmacy chains. Helierchem is now called Rowlands Pharmacy while Richmond Pharmacy is now called Day-Lewis. The pharmacy now owned by Rowlands has traded for 36 years and the pharmacy now owned by Day-Lewis for 82 years. The Day-Lewis pharmacy moved into a nearby health centre, a trend which is continuing today. The fifth pharmacy still remains inside the Sainsbury's store. In the early 1990s, it was a new concept for an in-store pharmacy. It is interesting that Sainsbury's has recently sold its pharmacies to Celesio,⁷ the new owner of Lloyds Pharmacy, which was previously known as Lloyd's Chemist. The Savacentre pharmacy has been trading for 24 years.

There is a trend for independent pharmacies to become chain pharmacies. This results in a loss of individuality. The appearance of the chain pharmacies, each with their corporate logo, is the same on every high street, detracting from the historical variation of the original pharmacies. That only one of the five Merton pharmacies has stopped trading is encouraging and suggests that the pharmacy business is still profitable. There is also a trend for pharmacies to move into health centres, away from the shopping parades. This too can have a detrimental effect on the high street. The redundant pharmacy shop will become a different business, thus losing pharmaceutical and local history. These trends will affect the appearance of our high streets.

[NB. The Queen agreed that the title "Royal" should be granted to the Pharmaceutical Society in 1988.]

Photographs by DJH

1 *Annual Register of Pharmaceutical Chemists. List of Bodies Corporate and their Superintendents. Register of Premises* Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, London (1937-2009)

2 *Chemist and Druggist* (Vol.141, 19 February 1944) p.191

3 *Register of Electors, Parliamentary Borough of Wimbledon 1933*

4 www.faccinihouse.com.

5 Personal communication from Sarah Gould, Heritage Officer, Merton Local Studies Library, Civic Centre, Merton

6 *Trimms Wimbledon and Merton Almanack, Directory and Trade Advertiser 1899*. Vol XX Edwin Trimm The Wimbledon Printing Works, Homefield Road

7 www.theguardian.com/business/2015/Jul/29/Sainsburys-sells-pharmacy-business-celesio-125m

President of the Friends of Mitcham Common JANET MORRIS asks

WHO WAS GEORGE PARKER BIDDER?

In August this year, a bottle was washed up on the shore of Amrum – a German island in the North Sea. It had been floating in the sea for at least 110 years and the message inside asked the finder to contact George Parker Bidder at the Marine Biological Station in Plymouth. I was doubly amazed not only for the time lapse but also because George Parker Bidder is an unusual name and one that I have come across several times before.

As a child in Moretonhampstead, in Devon, I passed a house on my way to school that bore a plaque commemorating a famous ‘calculating boy’ called George Parker Bidder (1806-1878). Self taught, he dazzled the country at the beginning of the 19th century with amazing skills of mental arithmetic involving incredibly large numbers. He performed at fairs and private houses and even before Queen Charlotte.

Decades later I was surprised to meet the name again in connection with the protection of Mitcham Common. The calculating boy had been fortunate to have been given a mathematical education at Edinburgh University and became a renowned engineer of the same calibre as Brunel. Now a wealthy man, he owned the Ravensbury Estate near Mitcham. He played a leading part in local affairs and led a campaign for the return of the land that had been taken from the common to build a workhouse, now that the workhouse was no longer used.

His first son, also called George Parker Bidder (1836-1896), had much of his father’s brilliance and read mathematics at Cambridge. He became a QC, specialising in Parliamentary work. He was active in local affairs at a time when people were increasingly alarmed at the abuse of Mitcham Common by gravel digging and the threat



George Parker Bidder I in 1856 (from Wikipedia)



of even more railway lines. He was instrumental in passing the *Metropolitan Commons (Mitcham) Supplementary Act* of 1891 which safeguards the common for the use of local people even today. A memorial stone (*left*) was erected on the Common to commemorate his work.

It was his son, also called George Parker Bidder (1863-1954), who worked at the Marine Biological station in Plymouth, mentioned above. In an experiment to test deep-sea currents he had released over 1,020 of these bottles into the sea between 1904 and 1906. They were specially designed to float just above the seabed and with the data they provided, Bidder was able to prove for the first time that the deep sea current flowed from east to west in the North Sea. This George Parker Bidder was an eminent marine biologist and an authority on sponges. He established and later became President of the Marine Biological Association of the UK.

[This is a revised version of an article that appeared in Issue 91, Winter 2015, of *The Magpie*, the magazine of the Friends of Mitcham Common.]

Photo: Janet Morris: Bidder memorial on Mitcham Common. It can be seen from Croydon Road near the Ravensbury pub.

JUDITH GOODMAN delves into our Anglo-Saxon past to meet EALDORMAN ÆLFHEAH

In AD967 King Edgar granted Merton to a man called Ælfheah and his wife Ælfswyth.¹ The original charter recording this gift has not survived, but there are two copies of it that were made in the 14th century. One of these is in the Bodleian Library, and one is in the Marquess of Bath's library at Longleat.²

The name appears as grantee in 14 other land charters between 931 and 984, frequently as a witness, and as testator in a will with date limits of c.968-971. Clearly, from the range of dates and the variety of titles, it is not the same man referred to in every case. In the same era there was a bishop of Wells and a bishop of Winchester with the name (there was also the 11th-century martyred Archbishop Ælfheah, who is better known to us as Saint Alphege). However 'our' Ælfheah has been identified as one of the four sons, probably the eldest, of Ealhelm, who was an ealdorman, or governor, of Mercia (probably the part that centred on Worcester) from 940 to 951.

Ælfheah was probably the *minister* (equivalent to 'thegn' at this period) who received a grant of eight *cassati* (hides) at Compton Beauchamp (Oxfordshire) from king Eadred in 955. His first certain appearance as a witness is thought to be later in the same year, to a charter of Eadwig's (this was the year in which Eadwig became king of England), with his brother Ælfhere. He was probably the Ælfheah who, still as a *minister*, witnessed other charters of Eadwig in 956-7. With his wife Ælfswyth he received generous grants from Eadwig, and it may be significant that when the kingdom was divided in 957 he remained in Wessex with Eadwig, while his brother Ælfhere supported Edgar, in Mercia. Moreover, it is thought that Ælfheah had been made royal seneschal or steward, itself a powerful position, and it is possible that this was a reason that it was his younger brother Ælfhere, rather than he, who in 956 received their father's Mercian ealdordom. Ælfhere has been described by Williams as 'one of the most powerful men in the political life of the day'.

*King Edgar offering the New Minster Charter to Christ,
BL Cotton MS Vespasian A. viii (f.2b)
from Janet Backhouse, D H Turner, Leslie Webster (eds)
The Golden Age of Anglo-Saxon Art 966-1066 (British
Museum Publications Ltd, 1984) Plate IV Photo by
Photographic Services of the British Library*

From c.959 to his death in c.971, under kings Eadwig and Edgar, Ælfheah was ealdorman of central Wessex, that is of Hampshire, with probably Berkshire, Wiltshire and Dorset as well. Kings Eadred, Eadwig and Edgar all gave him grants of land, and, significantly, all used the term *propinquus* (kinsman) in referring to him. There are similar references to two of his brothers. Ælfheah's wife Ælfswyth, named jointly with him in the Merton charter (and others), held in her own name, and bequeathed, other estates. She is thought to have ended her days (she died in 975) as a nun. Such a retirement was quite usual for widowed, and rich, noblewomen.

In the Merton charter, Ælfheah was described as *comes*. This Latin word was equivalent to the Anglo-Saxon *gesith* or 'companion', and denoted someone belonging to the king's inner circle. The word later came to be used for 'count' or 'earl' (from the Scandinavian *jarl*). 'Ealdormen' similarly evolved into 'earls'. The Latin *dux* ('duke') was also sometimes used for men of this rank.

Ælfheah's will³ mentions several estates, but without naming them. No doubt he had a fluctuating portfolio. For instance, some time between 950 and 968 there was a dispute relating to estates at Send, Surrey, and Sunbury, Middlesex. They were finally purchased by Archbishop Dunstan, and the vendor was Ælfheah – 90 pounds for Send and 200 marks for Sunbury. Ælfheah must have had absolute title to them, not just a life interest.⁴

The bishop of Winchester, Ælfheah's seat of authority in Wessex, was Ælfsige, who seems to have been an old friend, for in his will,⁵ drawn up in the late 950s, Ælfsige described Ælfheah as *minnan leofan freond* ('my beloved friend'), and not only left him an estate, but made him protector of his will and guardian of his kinsmen. These included a 'kinswoman' and a 'young kinsman', who were in fact Ælfsige's wife and son, for he was not a monk, but a married clerk. This trust must be seen as a real tribute to Ælfheah; a man of the bishop's rank

would normally appoint the king as protector. Historians have not been kind to Ælfsige, but nevertheless he was appointed archbishop in succession to Oda. His was a short tenure however, for in the winter of 958-9 he froze to death in the Alps when journeying to Rome to receive the *pallium* of office. Presumably he had made his will in preparation for this journey, and Ælfheah's duties as protector and guardian began sooner than he might have expected.

When Ælfheah himself died in c.971, he was buried at Glastonbury Abbey. In his will, probably drawn up in the late 960s, he left to his 'lord', King Edgar, estates in Wiltshire, Berkshire and Buckinghamshire (but not Surrey), 300 mancuses of gold (1 gold mancus = 30 silver pence), a dish, a cup, an ornamental sword with gold scabbard, six more swords, six horses with trappings, spears and shields. Such a lavish bequest probably represented payment of heriot, as well as a tribute to kinship.

To his wife Ælfswith he left several estates, possibly including Merton, using the phrase 'the confidence I have in her'. He directed her to leave a Somerset estate to their younger son Ælfweard on her death, with it, if Ælfweard and Ælfheah's brothers predecease her, going to Glastonbury 'for the sake of our father and of our mother and of us all'. Glastonbury was important to this family (both Ælfswith and Ælfhere were buried there too), and the Merton charter survived in the Glastonbury Cartulary. He left other estates to Ælfweard and to his older son Godwine. Another bequest was to Ælfthryth, king Edgar's second wife, whom the will describes as his *gefædere*, which word signifies, if not a blood relationship, a close acquaintanceship, such as between godparents of the same child.

Ælfheah's nephew Ælfwine, born to Ealhelm's daughter (possibly named Æthelflæd), died at the battle of Maldon in 991. Although this battle was only a minor one among the many against the Danes, it inspired one of the finest Early English poems. The anonymous author of *The Battle of Maldon* knew the leaders of the Anglo-Saxon force, and may even have been one of the combatants. Lines 211-224 have been translated as follows:

'... Ælfwine called out:

' "Remember the speeches spoken over mead,
battle-vows on the bench, the boasts we vaunted,
heroes in hall, against the harsh war-trial!
Now shall be proven the prowess of the man.

' " I would that you all hear my high descendance;
know that in Mercia I am of mighty kin,
that my grandfather was the great Ealhelm,
wise Earl, world-blessed man.
Shall the princes of that people reproach Ælfwine
that he broke from the banded bulwark of the Angles
to seek his own land, with his lord lying
felled on the field? Fiercest of griefs!
Beside that he was my lord he was allied to me in blood.'"⁶

It is interesting that Ælfwine here claims kinship with his 'lord', that is Byrhtnoth, ealdorman of Essex, the commander of the English force at Maldon, who fell in the field. One is again reminded of the complex web of kinship that connected the families of the ruling class.

1 A charter of 949 in which king Eadred granted 'Mertone' to a *miles* called Wulfic may be the earliest known reference to our Merton.

2 Most of the material in this article is taken from:

(i) S E Kelly (ed.) *Anglo-Saxon Charters 15: Charters of Glastonbury Abbey* (2012) OUP

(ii) A Williams 'Principes Merciorum gentis: the family, career and connections of Ælfhere, ealdorman of Mercia, 956-83' *Anglo-Saxon England* 10 (1982) CUP

3 D Whitelock *Anglo-Saxon Wills* (1930) Cambridge pp.22-25

4 R Briggs 'Pyrford, Send and a tenth-century origin for the "Surrey Fens causeways"', a discussion document circulated to Surrey Archaeology Society Medieval Forum October 2010. My thanks to Peter Hopkins for this reference.

5 Whitelock *op. cit.* pp.121-125

6 M Alexander (trans. and ed.) *The Earliest English Poems* (1986, 1st ed. 1966) Penguin, Harmondsworth p.120

Letters and contributions for the *Bulletin* should be sent to the Hon. Editor, by email to editor@mertonhistoricalsociety.org.uk. 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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