

REMINISCENCES OF OLD MERTON

BY

W. H. CHAMBERLAIN.

Illustrations from original drawings

BY

CYRIL WRIGHT

AND

L. B. TEMPLE.

LONDON:

MITCHELL HUGHES AND CLARKE,

11 AND 13 BREAM'S BUILDINGS, CHANCERY LANE.

1925.



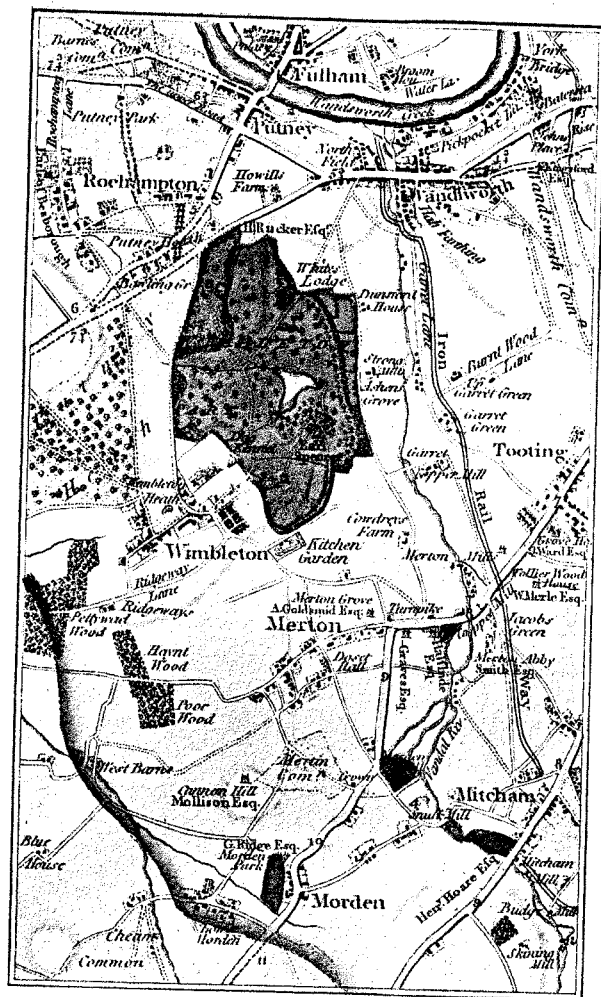
"House Hunting!"

Do not let your House Hunting be a vain expedition. You are sure to see the house you want. Secure it!

In these days it may be impossible to rent it. — Then buy it. "What about the money?" This is easily obtainable, and you will find that the repayments are really less than paying rent.

Write for booklet—"How to become a Home Owner" to

**The COOPERATIVE
PERMANENT
BUILDING SOCIETY**
22 RED LION SQUARE, W.C.1



MAP OF THE DISTRICT. 1817

From Cary's Maps

INTRODUCTION.

THE AUTHOR has done me the honour of asking whether these Reminiscences are worthy of publication, and, if so, to write a few words of introduction.

Without hesitation I have recommended that they should be put into a permanent form, because not only do they throw a light on the life in Merton during the last hundred years, but they also contain valuable information relating to many houses having historical associations that have now disappeared, by which their exact sites can be fixed for the use of future historians of Merton.

The opinion seems to be gaining ground that a knowledge of local history leads to the formation of a greater interest in local affairs, more especially in the direction of the preservation of existing beauties and historical associations.

The great developments now taking place in the neighbourhood make it important that residents should devote attention to these subjects by encouraging every effort of the Local Government Authority to use foresight in providing for the future needs of the parish. A suburb is easily spoiled but not so easily restored. It should be remembered that each generation owes a debt to posterity. The reference in this work to the enclosure of the Common Lands of Merton may serve as an example upon which to express the hope that the present attempt to secure Cannon Hill Park for the public will meet with the success it deserves. There is no doubt that future generations, when Merton has reached its full development, would appreciate its acquisition.

Without pretending to any literary style, it will be recognized that Mr. Chamberlain possesses what may be called the historical sense and is a lover of all things that appertain to the past of Merton.

He, himself, comes of an old business family settled here since the eighteenth century, as entries relating to his great-grandfather Aaron Chamberlain in the Wimbledon Parish Register testify. The earlier generations of the family appear to have been connected with the silk printing industry, an industry that held an important place in the village during the greater part of the nineteenth century, but to-day is solely represented by Messrs. Liberty's.

Mr. Chamberlain is to be congratulated on his enterprise in recording these Recollections, which so few trouble to do, but are so valuable when done.

A. W. HUGHES CLARKE.

REMINISCENCES

OF

OLD MERTON.

APPROACHING Merton village from London one would pass Waterfall House, Tooting. Before the railway was made in 1868 a carriage-drive led to the house and grounds, with paddocks and a large orchard at rear, and at the side of the coach-house and stables a waterfall was to be seen, and the Graveney Brook coming from the direction of Tooting and Streatham. The brook from there followed the high road for a considerable distance, and crossed the road by the side of Bygrove House (belonging to Merton College) to the River Wandle. Very little of it can be seen to-day, as it has been arched over and is now known as High Street, Collier's Wood. Formerly, during the rainy season, this brook became a raging torrent, flooding the High Road and village.

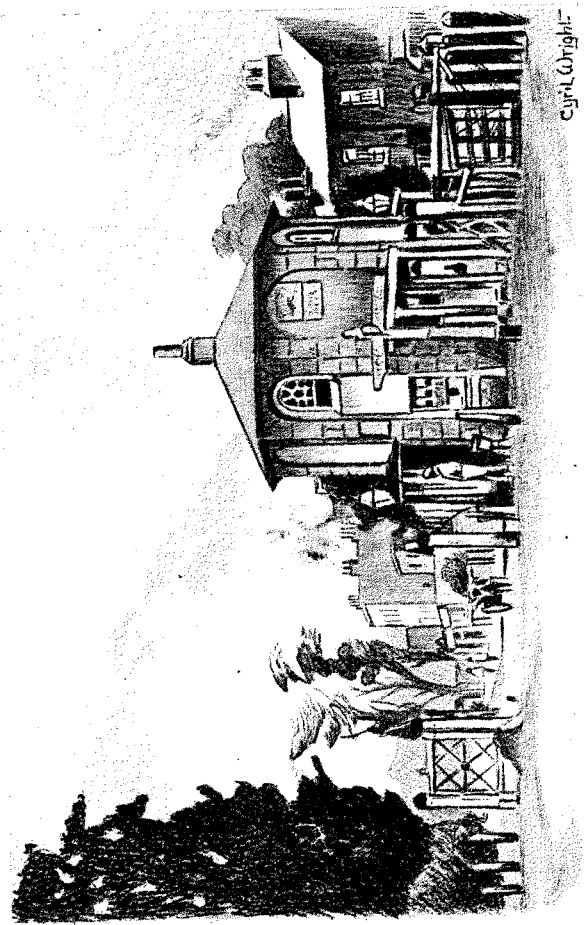
At the entrance to the village one had to pass the "Single Gate" Toll, which was situated at the junction of Western Road and the High Street.

Before reaching this Toll Gate the Iron Road had to be crossed, which was constructed before 1817, and was the only one in England.* It consisted of narrow-gauge rails on stone sleepers running from the Thames-side wharves at Wandsworth to Mitcham, Croydon, and Merstham. Many of these stone sleepers can still be seen to-day at Mitcham, stacked

* See Map for site.

up in piles. The freight was coal on the outward journey and chalk, sand and fuller's earth from the Surrey Hills on the return. The rolling-stock consisted of trucks drawn by horses and mules. Near the road the company built stables, and dwellings for the drivers and workmen. These were painted blue, and were known as the "Blue Houses," and some of them can still be seen at Garrett, Mitcham, and Croydon. At Single Gate, where the line crossed the road, a stone cottage still remains. It was the residence of the gatekeeper. Near the Toll Gate there were several cottages and a few shops. A stream ran under the road hereabouts to "Millers Mead," a white cottage, by the side of which was a charming waterfall, and a spring from which the villagers drew their water supplies for a small fee. Prior to the occupation of the cottage by old Mr. Legg it was said to have been the stables and quarters of Bow Street Runners, whose duty it was (before the passing of the Police Act) to track the highwaymen and footpads infesting the high-roads at this time. Jerry Abershaw was a terror on Wimbledon and Putney Heath; one of his favourite haunts was the "Baldfaced Stag," Kingston Vale, and another was the "Old Plough Inn," Malden. When part of the latter was pulled down in 1924 and rebuilt, a secret door was discovered leading to the roof. Here highwaymen could hide and sleep in safety, and there were seats under the chimney where Jerry and his pals could rest and drink.

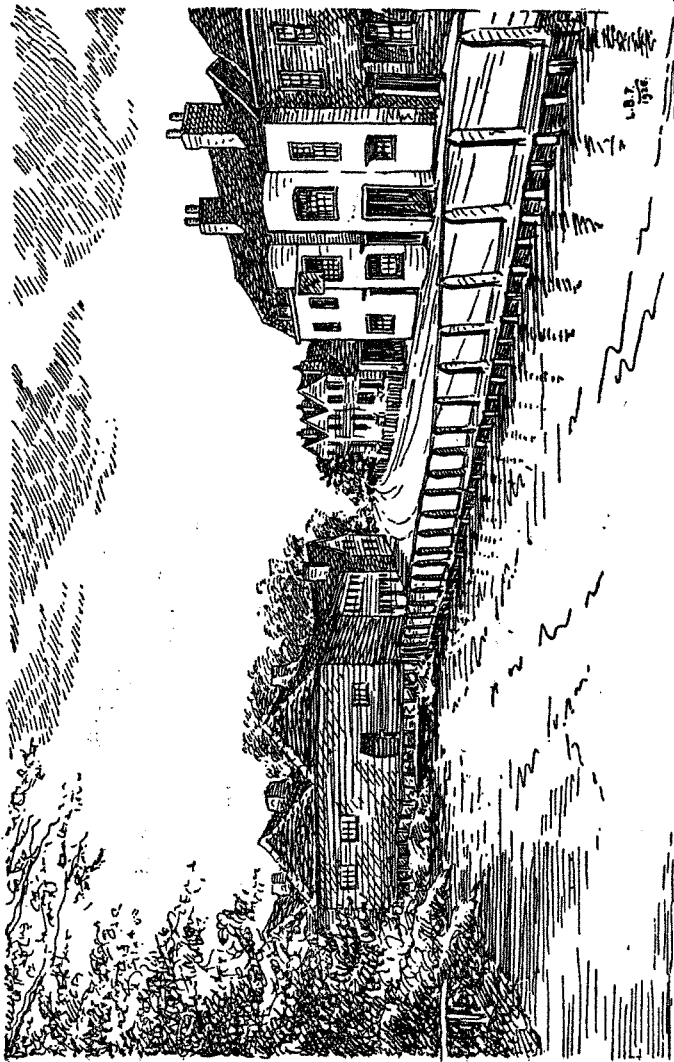
The "Six Bells," now the "Royal Six Bells," the prefix "Royal" having been obtained when King Edward VII., as Prince of Wales, used to halt and change horses here on his way to the Epsom races, was the meeting-place for the local and district carriers; loads were exchanged and other business conducted, as buying and selling goods and small livestock at a nominal fee for the outlying folk who found it inconvenient to go into town. These forerunners of the large motor-haulage firms of to-day came into Merton from Guildford, Sutton, Leatherhead and other distant villages.



THE DOUBLE GATES, MERTON

Looking towards Colney Wood (S.E.)

& Wiv & Merton Annual 1903 p. 15



COPPER MILLS AND "KING'S HEAD," MERTON.

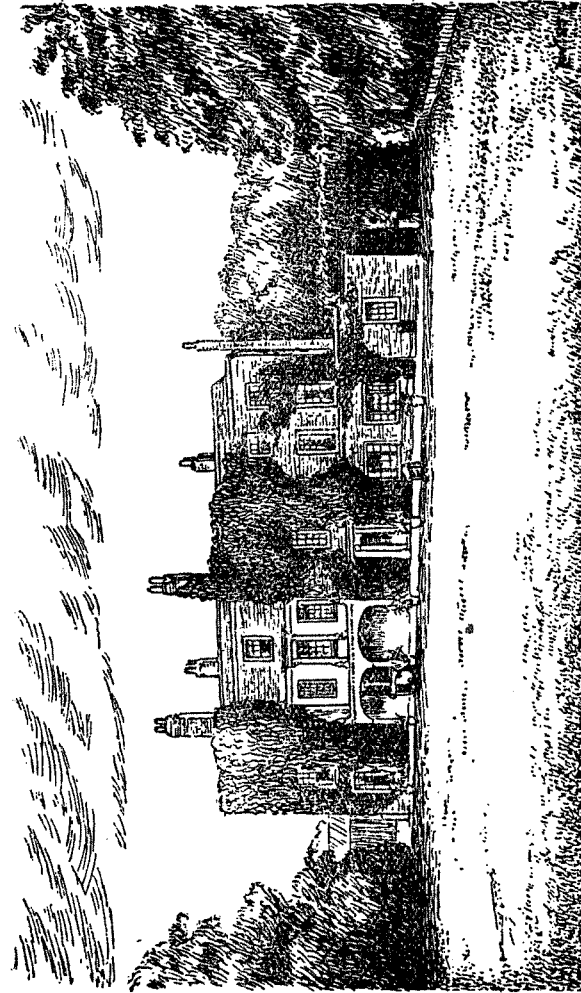
Opposite this inn was a butcher's shop owned by Mr. Coomers, and as at that period all purveyors of meat did their own slaughtering, a slaughter-house stood at the side of the shop. The cattle were bought at Kingston Market, and kept in a paddock in rear of the shop until required. Mr. Coomers supplied Morden, Cheam, Sutton, Malden and Wimbledon Hill village, which would be considered a good round even now, when motors and cycles are in such general use. In the old days the orders were obtained and the meat delivered by boys on horseback or fast trotting cobs in carts. Because of the poor state of the roads, especially when inundated with floods, it was not always possible for the carts to travel, and it is to be feared that the meat sometimes failed to reach its destination, despite the energy of the boys.

On the corner of the Pickle Path stood the village news-agent's shop and the cobbler, Mr. Laming, who supplied the inhabitants with handsewn and pegged boots. Adjoining were some old wooden houses, similar to those which can still be seen at Phipps Bridge. The Pickle Path led to Mitcham village and the fair-field, where, by a charter granted by Queen Elizabeth, a three days' fair has been held annually on August 12, 13 and 14 up to the present time. In the early days a Horse and Oyster Fair was held, good oysters being sold at fourpence per dozen, and the fair-ground presented an animated scene with its dancing booths, gingerbread and sweet stalls, merry-go-rounds, etc., which were always well patronized by the villagers, who regarded it as a general holiday.

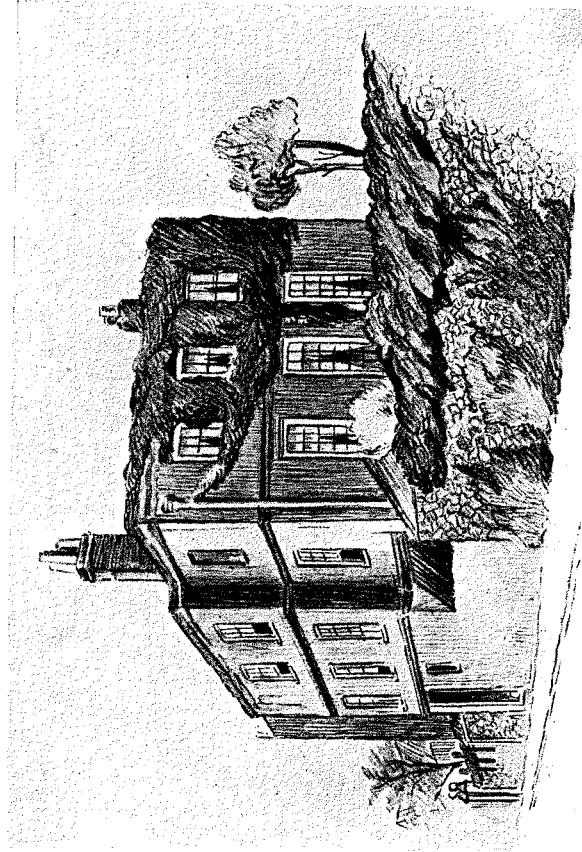
The present Wandle Bridge in the past was known as Terriers Bridge, so called because of its being a meeting-place for the villagers fond of enjoying sport with their dogs for the purpose of rat and otter hunting. At that time this bridge consisted of a single span brick-built structure, with only sufficient width to permit one vehicle to cross at one time, having on one side a footbridge for pedestrians, which

had a wooden floor and iron railings. There was a considerable amount of traffic across this bridge, which was sufficiently strong to stand the weight of any conveyance. The centre of the bridge marked the boundaries of Mitcham, Wimbledon, and Merton, and the part of the village already described was in Mitcham parish, but known as "Single Gate," Merton. The village itself was built in a straggling fashion, and extended from Terriers Bridge to the foot of Coombe Hill, where Beverley Brook passes under the road at the boundary of Merton and Coombe. The view from the Wandle Bridge down river was very picturesque, with trees drooping to the water's edge, a rustic bridge crossing from Wandle Bank to Wandle Bank House, and the old flour mill in the background. Wandle Bank House was the residence of Mr. Perry, editor and proprietor of the "Morning Chronicle." Lord Nelson, who was a personal friend, was occasionally seen there fishing. The house was very large and surrounded by water, upon which many species of water-fowl, including swans, were to be seen. The grounds were beautifully laid out, and peacocks strutted along the terraces. Mr. Ashby, an artist, also resided here for a considerable period. The Wimbledon Borough Council has now purchased the house and grounds, the latter being open to the public and known as Wandle Park.

On the corner of Wandle Bank stood the village stores. A post office was established here about 1840. At this time the Royal Mail arrived by road by horse and cart, the driver wearing a uniform with gold braid and a top hat. Merton Bridge Post Office was responsible for the distribution of mails over a very large, though sparsely populated, area. Facing the river is the "King's Head," which was established in 1496, and is still flourishing. It was a coaching inn where one could obtain a change of horses or a chaise and postillion at short notice. A daily service of coaches started from here for London. The coach was driven by George Hoath, a relative of the writer, whilst among the passengers who



GATE HOUSE.
Garden Side.



GATE HOUSE

Front view

From a pencil drawing by Cyril Wright

travelled from the village were Mr. Richard Thornton and Sir Richard Hotham. The smithy adjoined the inn, and was kept by Mr. Baylis, who, like most of his kind at that period, could undertake any job where iron or other metals were used, in addition to acting as a veterinary surgeon. The smith's neighbour was the village barber, who displayed the usual symbol of his profession, consisting of an elaborate striped pole, and he also embraced chiropody and bleeding, the latter being the most profitable. There was also a cooper, who supplied tubs, barrels, wooden pails and yokes for carrying water from the springs which formed the village supply. By the bridge the River Wandle forks into three streams, the one from Mitcham forming part of the Abbey moat, of which more anon, the second flowed through the meadows from the direction of Phipps Bridge and Morden Hall, while the third provides the power for the Copper Mills. In Lord Nelson's time the river was alive with trout, and traces of artificial trout streams can still be seen. Along the river were silk printing, varnish, copperplate engraving, and tannery works, also printing block factories and workmen's cottages, most of which were situated between Terriers and Phipps Bridges.

In the old days, when the Bourne burst in the Surrey hills, the water running down the valleys, the River Wandle would overflow its banks, the floods crossing the Abbey meadows and the Pickle Path, and the water rushing through the houses at Single Gate along the main road up the Wandle Bank and Bygrove roads, following the river to the Thames. This would occur about every five or six years. The Copper Mills were large buildings of tarred wood, with red tiled roofs and a number of furnaces and chimneys, which formed quite a favourite subject for many artists.

A mill has existed on this spot since 1114, as an entry in a book of that period testified, recording the rent as from 60s., and is now known as the Merton Board Mills, Ltd. Within the mill enclosure was a large hammer worked by

a waterwheel, which could be heard for a considerable distance, more especially in the stillness of the night. The employees used to wear a peculiar shaped paper hat fashioned by the men, and it is extremely doubtful if anyone now living possesses the secret of their manufacture. Adjoining the Copper Mills were the calico and silk printing, weaving, and embossing works, which were formerly in the occupation of a Mr. Elchin, and are at present used by Messrs. William Morris, Ltd. The water of the Wandle contains certain qualities which make it specially suitable for chintz and madder dyeing. There were other silk works on the river, one at Garrett and one at Mitcham, but now the only one of importance is Liberty's, Ltd., in the Priory grounds near Merton Abbey Station. A few years ago this firm took over the very old-established business of silk printing from the Littler family. The old factories have since been demolished and substituted by more modern works, and some of the Priory ground has been utilized as a sports ground for their employees. The old method of dyeing is still employed, and here are produced the oldest and newest art colours in the world, while hand-weaving looms are still to be seen. Between these works and the main turnpike stands a house in which those well-known designers and artists, William Morris and his friend Burne-Jones, worked together designing patterns for carpets, stained glass windows for churches, and art tiles. It was here that Burne-Jones painted some famous studies in oils. Opposite this house was a lodge gate and drive leading to the house of Dr. Tracey, Dental Surgeon to Queen Victoria. This house laid well back from the road, with extensive grounds with paddocks on each side and at the rear. At the corner of Haydon's Lane were the coachman's cottage and stables belonging to Lord Nelson. In the rear of these stood Hotham House, the residence of Sir Richard Hotham.



BRIDGE IN GROUNDS OF GATE HOUSE.

Perhaps the greatest error made by the public in regard to local history is the popular belief that Gate House, which was situated where the Abbey Picture Palace and the "Palais de Dance" now stand, was Nelson's home. This is incorrect.

Gate House was one of the most historical in Merton because of its association with many famous people. It is believed to have been used originally as the Guest House of the Priory, for visitors who were not permitted to be accommodated within the Priory. It was built close to the road, but has now been demolished. At the entrance was a mounting stone for the benefit of short-legged riders of tall horses. The grounds were extensive, containing a large fishpond and servants' cottages. At one side of the house was a huge courtyard, while on the other side was a covered tennis court, the whole being surrounded by a high wall.

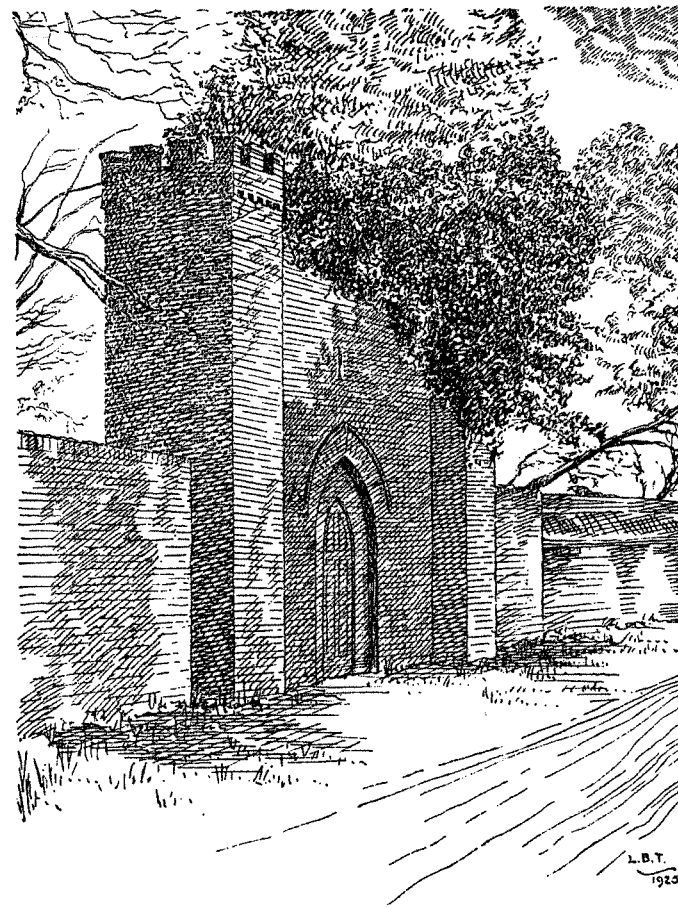
At the time of Nelson's residence in Merton, Rear-Admiral Isaac Smith was occupying Gate House. Admiral Smith entered the Navy about the year 1766, and served for a time aboard the "Grenville," a brig commanded by Captain Cook, the famous navigator, whom he accompanied later in the "Endeavour" to the South Seas in 1768—71.

Arthur Kitson, in his "Life of Captain Cook" (p. 171), says: "Sir Walter Besant relates that Isaac Smith, Mrs. Cook's cousin, was the first to set foot on Australasian soil, leaping out of the boat in response to an order from the Captain of 'Jump out, Isaac!'" There is no official record of the name of the first to land, but Canon Bennett says that it is a family tradition that the event as related by Sir Walter Besant is correct, and it is by no means improbable that Canon Bennett received the news from Isaac Smith himself. The widow of Captain Cook lived at Abbey House for several years. Rear-Admiral Isaac Smith died on 2 July 1831, and is buried in a vault at the end of the chancel in the parish church, close to the family vault of the Wyatts. In later years a Captain Barber (who was very

charitable to the villagers) lived in Gate House, followed by Colonel Wellesley, a descendant of the "Iron Duke," and subsequently by Kate Vaughau, the celebrated actress. In recent years it was occupied by Charles Stephens, the war correspondent, who died in the Boer War. His widow afterwards kept up the establishment, and turned it into a convalescent hospital for soldiers.

At the end of Abbey Road stood six cottages with gardens in front, and walled in with an extra high red-brick barrier. These were called the "Hole in the Wall," because there was only one entrance. Following this wall towards the river was to be found a gateway to the grounds of Gate House, having two large towers with battlements and embrasures. Close to this gateway the ornamental water finished. It ran from the lawn to the end of the grounds, having a row of elm trees on either side. On the lawn facing the water were two old naval cannons, which are now to be seen in Nelson's Gardens. A curious old bridge with a carved head in the centre can be seen crossing the river from Gate House grounds to the meadows opposite Merton Abbey Station. These meadows are the site of the old Priory Church and its burial-ground. There is no record as to when this bridge was built, but it is believed to have been in existence in the time of Gregory Lovell.

Opposite to the above gateway is one of the gateways to the Priory. This still exists, and inside stood an old mansion recently demolished. At the beginning of the nineteenth century it stood unoccupied for several years, and had the reputation of being haunted because of the weird noises heard there at night time, and the villagers were afraid to pass it after dark. About 1820 Messrs. Bradshaw and Wagland, the silk printers, together with several others, decided to visit it at nightfall armed with sticks and candles. In due course the ghostly noises commenced up and down the stairs, and, making a sudden dash, they discovered that swarms of water rats were in possession.



ENTRANCE GATEWAY TO GATE HOUSE OPPOSITE
PRIORY GATEWAY.



Old Gateway
Merton Abbey

Cyril Wright
1923



Messrs. Bradshaw and Wagland decided to take over the old house, which they obtained at a low rental, and, after repairing it, lived there for several years. Mr. Littler, who took over the silk-printing business from them, also lived here with his family. When it came into the possession of Messrs. Liberty it was pulled down, but in course of the demolition a fine Norman carved stone arch was discovered. This has been preserved and supported by brickwork. It was probably an entrance to one of the buildings of the Priory.

MERTON PRIORY.

Any account of Merton without some reference to its celebrated Priory would obviously be incomplete. The following particulars have been compiled from Heales, *Records of Merton Priory*.

The manor of Merton was in the possession of Henry I. and in 1114 he gave it to William le Norman, who immediately proceeded to found a Priory there dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary. The original buildings of timber were situated near the present Church, but two years later a new site was chosen near the Wandle, upon which permanent buildings of stone and flint were erected.

The first prior was Robert Bayle, the sub-prior of a monastic house of Augustine Canons at Huntingdon. The founder brought many prelates and nobles to see the place, and recommended the institution to their patronage. Among others, Queen Matilda showed a great interest in its welfare, and often visited the Priory and brought her son Prince William, but the death by drowning of the latter in 1120 and of Queen Matilda in 1117 was a great loss to the Priory. It was not, however, until 1121 that the Priory received the charter of Royal Foundation, which was granted "absolutely free from all earthly power, exaction, vexation and inquietude."

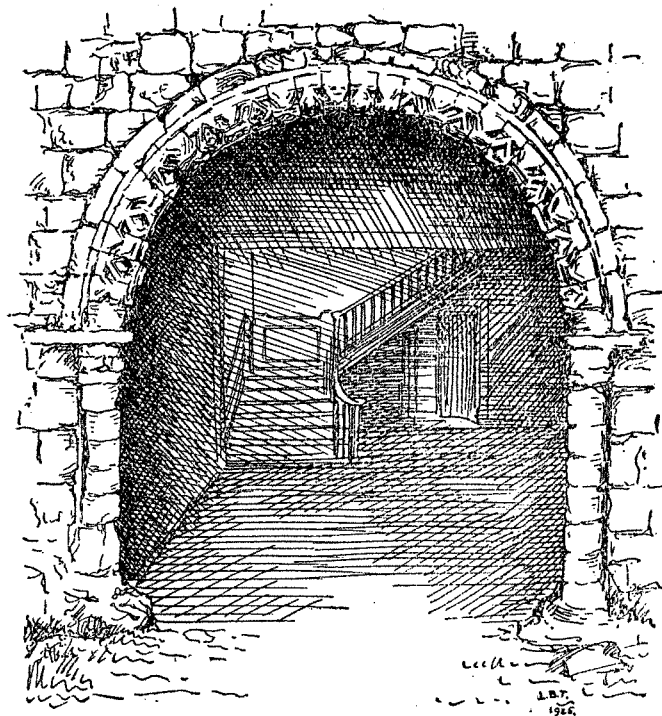
The Priory continued to receive numerous and ample benefactions and the support of the reigning house, each successive monarch confirming its charters down to Henry VIII. It is impossible to give here a complete list of the benefices, lands, rights and privileges belonging to the Priory, but it became one of the richest in the kingdom.

The ordinations for its proper government were drawn up by William of Wykeham, Bishop of Winchester. These, together with the Chronicles of the Priory, are now in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, and are said to form the most complete of any such records existing in England. It is interesting to note that one of the statutes prohibited the canons from hunting or keeping dogs for that sport within the walls of the Priory on pain of being restricted to a diet of bread and ale during six holidays.

Among the many great names associated with the Priory mention may be made of Thomas à Becket, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, who was educated there; Walter de Merton, Bishop of Rochester and Chancellor of England in 1277 and founder of Merton College, Oxford, was born and bred there. In 1232 Hubert de Burgh, Chief Justiciary, one of the most eminent men of the time, incurred the King's displeasure, fled to Merton Priory and claimed the right of sanctuary. The King issued a precept to the Mayor of London to go to Merton and bring him back dead or alive, but afterwards withdrew the order.

In 1236 a Parliament sat at the Priory, when the Statutes of Merton were passed. Edmund Rich, Archbishop of Canterbury, who led a very ascetic life, passed much time at Merton, where he went in and out as one of the canons themselves and delighted them with his holy conversation. Archbishop Peckham died there in 1292. King Henry VI. was crowned there on All Saints' Day 1437.

In all there were thirty-three Priors, the last, John Bowley, who, believing discretion to be the better part of valour, in 1538-39 consented to the demand of Henry VIII. for its



NORMAN ARCHWAY.

(See p. 21.)

surrender, the Prior receiving a pension of £200 per annum.

Henry VIII. had the principal part of the buildings levelled to the ground, and used the stones in the building of his palace of Nonsuch at Ewell. So complete was the destruction of the Priory buildings that, with the exception of the low boundary-walls and a gabled building of fourteenth-century date, little remained above ground at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Recent excavations opposite Merton Abbey Station have disclosed the foundations of the Priory church, which show that it was of a considerable size.

In 1924 some boys playing on one boundary wall caused it to fall away and disclosed a number of parchments inserted therein, and not realizing their value used them to belabour one another and so destroyed them. Attempts to trace any portions of these afterwards were unsuccessful. It is regrettable, because these records might have been of great historical value.

The following copy of a letters patent under Queen Elizabeth's order granted a lease of Merton Priory in 1586-7:—

“All that house and site of the late Priory of Merton, ‘alias Marten alias Marton’ in the county of Surrey, there dissolved, and all houses, edifices, barnes, stables, dovecotes, garden grounds, orchards, gardens, mills, land and soil within this site and precinct of the said late dissolved priory unto Gregory Lovell, Esq., Cofferer of the Household, to hold to the said Gregory Lovell for twenty-one years from Michaelmas then last past.”

During the Civil Wars the Priory grounds were used as a garrison, as in 1648 the Derby House Committee was ordered by Parliament to make Farnham Castle indefensible and secure Merton Priory and other places of strength in Surrey. Armour and breastplates of the Cromwellian period have been dug up in the grounds of the Priory.

MERTON PLACE.

In July 1801, when Nelson arrived from the Baltic for a short stay in London, he commissioned Lady Hamilton and Sir William to find a house near London for his use. They selected Merton Place as the most suitable, and Lord Nelson approved their choice, as it was near the Admiralty and on the main coach road to Portsmouth. He paid the deposit and completed the purchase in the same year of Mr. Graves for £9000.

Merton Place was the real home of the Hamiltons and Lord Nelson. Two years after Nelson purchased Merton Place Sir William Hamilton died, both Dame Emma and Nelson being present at his death. The house lay some distance from the road, in rear of where Brooker's oil-shop now stands. It was built in rambling style and stood in 70 acres of land, the entrance to the carriage drive being at that spot where "The Nelson" public house now stands. A moat nearly surrounded it, which was fed by the Wandle. A single-span iron bridge crossed the water, giving it a delightful touch of an ideal old English home. Nelson's little daughter Horatia used to call the water "the Nile" to commemorate that battle. The gardens and grounds were kept in good order by the head gardener, Francis Crib, who had the assistance of about twenty workmen, receiving their orders from Lady Hamilton and Nelson.

The park fence and groves of trees skirted the High Street as far as Morden Road and thence to Goldschmit's Walk (now High Path) and on to Abbey Road. Proceeding along Goldschmit's Walk, on the left lay a pool of water known as the "Dipping Hole"; this, as well as the ditch or moat bordering the Abbey meadow in the direction of Mitcham, were fed from a stream from the Wandle running inside the wall. The water from the "Dipping Hole" passed under the roadway to the fishponds on Lord Nelson's estate, and then on to the moat surrounding Merton Place.

At the side of the fishponds are two cottages known as Mulberry Tree Cottages, which were built for Lord Nelson's gardeners in 1802. It was here that the genial old friend and informant of the writer, Mr. Hudson, lived. In my youth I spent many evenings conversing with him on a theme which was of mutual interest to us both, viz., the old village and its celebrities in the early days of the last century. Mr. Hudson was born in 1793 and was apprenticed to my great-grandfather Aaron Chamberlain as an engraver of copperplate. Mr. Hudson married Emma, daughter of Mr. Crib, Nelson's gardener, at Newington Church on 23 September 1816. Old Hudson, as he was familiarly known to the villagers, often mentioned that he, in company of other lads, saw Nelson drive post-haste from Merton Place on the evening of 13 September 1805 to the Admiralty to receive his sailing orders for his fatal but victorious voyage. Mr. Hudson also remembered the coloured nurse of Lord Nelson's little daughter. This nurse was baptized at Merton Church by the name of Fatima Nelson, Dame Emma Hamilton and Nelson being the sponsors. The following has been copied from the church register:—

"Hamilton Fatima Emma Charlotte Nelson from Egypt, a negress about 20 years of age under the protection of the Right Hon. Lady Hamilton, was baptized April 26th 1802." (After two or three years was sent to Bear Lane Workhouse.)

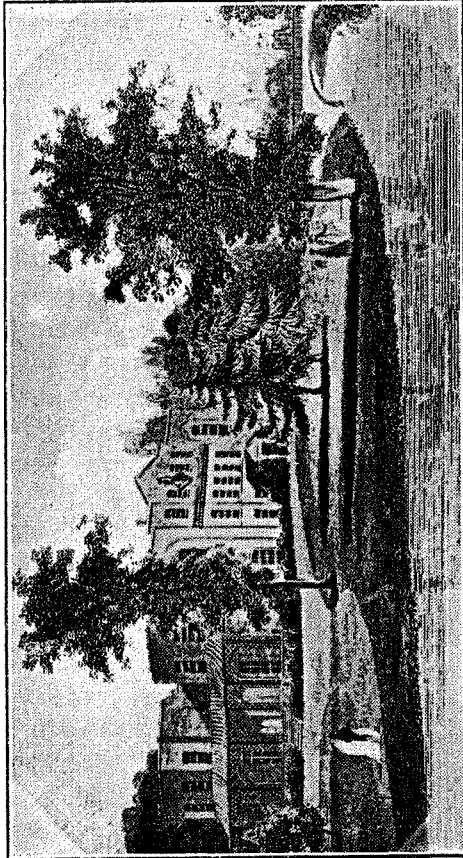
Mr. Hudson had many relics of Nelson, which were given to him by his father-in-law. One very interesting relic was the articles of a seaman, who had signed on for a voyage in the "Victory" at a Mediterranean port to serve during the wars. The signatories to this document were Captain Hardy, a seaman (by his mark), the ship's surgeon, and below these the scrawled words "Nelson Bronte." Mr. Hudson passed away, beloved by all the villagers, on 6 January 1889.

Near Mr. Lee's drapery stores a tunnel ran under the road, connecting the estate with a grove of trees, paddock, and kitchen garden. The grove of trees bordered Haydon's

Lane as far as Quicks Bridle Path (now Quicks Road) ; the meadow was parallel with the grove of trees (Trafalgar, Victory, Nelson, and Hardy Roads are now built upon it).

In the corner where Wimbledon Lane joined Quicks Bridle Path was a large mound of earth, which local traditions say is one of the Roman Tumuli. Lord Nelson and Lady Hamilton often were seen sitting on a seat on top of this mound surveying the open country after a stroll in the summer evenings. After the death of Nelson in 1805 Lady Emma Hamilton was unable to keep the estate going, having fallen into the clutches of moneylenders, who sold her up, having first mortgaged the estate and then foreclosing. During the sale of the furniture and other effects, which attracted people from far and wide, many souvenirs of Nelson passed into the hands of the village folk, and some of them are still to be found in Merton. After the breaking up of the Nelson estate, Lady Emma accepted the invitation of Isaac Smith and stayed for a while at Gate House, and a room, afterwards called the "Hamilton Chamber," situated on the top floor facing west, was set aside for her personal use.

Lady Hamilton died in a Calais garret in poverty January 1815, her daughter Horatia being present at the death bed. Horatia afterwards married a clergyman, living to a ripe age and dying in 1881. At this time part of the estate had been sold by private treaty, and the house was demolished about 1840, and that part which remained on the Merton side passed into the hands of the British Land Company and was sold in building plots by auction under the hammer. The materials from the house were used by enterprising villagers for building shops and cottages. The two shops next to Mr. Gardiner's were built of these. The old toll-house stood in the centre of the cross-roads. The view from here was one of great beauty. Looking either way one saw groves of trees bordering the road ; practically every specie of trees peculiar to England were to be seen.



MERTON PLACE

Old Merton was well watered and wooded. The picturesque lakes and river reaches have now disappeared, giving place to factories, shops and workmen's dwellings. This was "Dear Old Merton," as Lord Nelson called it in his last letter to Lady Hamilton. Her last letter to Nelson, which, however, he never received, contained most affectionate references to Horatia and reports of her progress; following were these words: "Oh! Nelson, how I love thee, but how I do idolise you—the dearest husband of my heart, you are all in this world to your Emma. May God send you victory and home to your Emma, Horatia and paradise "Merton," for then, when you are there, it will be Paradise. My own Nelson, may God preserve you for the sake of your affectionate Emma."

.

From 1840 to 1870 the derelict Nelson estate, on the Merton side of the main road, now the High Street, had become the shopping centre for Merton, Wimbledon and adjoining districts. There were to be found shops of all kinds—many of the tradesmen carried on several trades. Mr. Streatfield was a special constable, postman, market gardener and milkman. Mr. Gardener, tailor, also sold boots, leather, snuff and tobacco. Joseph Cork, butcher, established in 1840, was a builder and horse dealer. At Chamberlain's shop, established in 1854, you could buy oil, candles, stationery, newspapers, and in the yard a stock of tubs and barrels were for sale. Mr. Chamberlain was the first to introduce paraffin lamps in Merton and Wimbledon. Young's patent paraffin oil was sold here at 5*d.* a pint, rushlights 5*d.* a pound, dips 6*d.* a pound. Mr. Knox was a grocer, butcher, builder and undertaker. Mr. Holland was a noted boot and shoe maker, established in 1845. On Saturday mornings ladies in their carriages and farmers with their wives in pony chaises would be seen giving their orders and buying goods from the shopkeepers. It was like a market in those days.

In 1830 the Police Act was passed and a police station established in the High Street, opposite Haydon's Lane. The prisoners were taken to Wandsworth Police Court to be tried. The Peelers wore black shiny top-hats, high collars and bobtailed coats, and in summer time white trousers. Mr. Batt, one of the old Wimbledon Volunteers, kept the "Nelson Arms." In the large room at the side was the silk printers' clubroom. Old Pincott, the carrier, lived in the lane which led to Bunce's farm, now Pincott Road.

The old "Dog and Partridge" beer-house stood back from the road. The landlord, Jimmy Evans, was very popular in Merton. The large taproom was used by the villagers as a club, where friendly games of cards and dominoes were played. On the wall of the room was a painting in oils of a battle at sea, which had been painted by an old sailor in honour of Lord Nelson living in Merton. On Sunday mornings the potman would go round with two cans of ale and porter, and at dinner-time you would hear the cry "beer oh" 4d. a pot, porter 3d. He would quickly sell out and return for more. Bottled beer was unknown in those good old days. At Christmas every customer would receive a large plate of boiled beef and carrots, and any left over was given to the poor. Between this house and Mr. Knox's shop were several plots of waste ground fronting the High Street, running back to Grove Road. This site had been left for the purpose of building a church for this part of Merton, but as no one troubled to claim it, a Mr. Richard Way, butcher, sowed it every year with rye for his sheep. At this time there were many plots of ground without any owner. Mrs. Druce was the governess at the old schoolhouse in Abbey Road.

The village pump stood on waste ground opposite to Streatfield's shop in the High Street; also the spring well, a square dipping hole with iron railings round it, from which the villagers obtained their water supply.

Many old village characters were to be found here during

the evening. Poor old Ike Isaac, with black curly hair, large head and forehead, was the spelling bee of Merton. He could spell correctly any word, and was never known to fail. He could recite from memory verses to be found on tombstones in Surrey churchyards which he had visited on his travels, and could tell you the parish where they were to be found. The arrival of Dan Riley with tub and barrow was the cause of much amusement to the boys of the neighbourhood because of his stuttering, and their attempt to make him talk caused him to get wild with them. He would be followed by Toddy Barnes, the village dwarf, who was deaf and dumb and dressed in a bobtailed coat down to his heels, a top-hat and large boots. He had come for a drink at the spring. He was an expert eel-catcher. Next comes the man who could not stop a pig in the alley, a tall man with long bandy legs. Then the fun commenced, to see the small boys dodge through his legs when he tried to catch them. There were no picture palaces in those days, but we had plenty of amusement.

The toll-gates, known as Double Gates, was a central white building, with black and white gates crossing the Kingston, London, Morden and Wimbledon roads. The tolls levied were: for horse and vehicle 1½d., for cattle 10d. for twenty. A blue ticket was given in exchange for the payment, which allowed free passage through the next gate. These toll-gates were abolished in 1870. Mr. Moon was the last man to drive a dog-cart through the toll-gates in Merton. He used to travel the country with a pair of fine dogs, Ned and Nigger, and they used to come home through the village like a pair of racehorses.

A little way down the High Street was the entrance to "Hamilton House," the home of the Du Cros family. The house was small, but stood in very extensive grounds. The strip of land between the carriage drive and the street was one mass of decorative trees, and was one of the sights of the district.

Opposite, Mr. Deacon lived in the old farmhouse. He was a hay farmer, wood dealer and dairyman, and also sold beer. In the Morden Road were the Grove Hotel, Gurdler's chemist shop, and John Guile, builder. In one of the cottages lived the old chartist Mr. Hudson, preserver of birds and animals, and in his window many rare specimens of these could be seen. He was also an engraver of printing blocks. On each side of the road were villas with large gardens. Mr. Spofford lived here; he was overseer, churchwarden, and trustee of the Rutlish Charity. A Congregational church was built and Mr. White of Morden Hall was lay-reader, and his family, as well as the boarding-school boys, attended the services.

The "Nag's Head" beer-house was partly built from materials from Merton Place. The Mausell family lived here for many years. About a mile along the road on the bend was Morden Hall Farm. Opposite was Morden Hall, the residence of Sir Robert Burnett, the founder of Vauxhall distillery. The house was surrounded by a well-wooded park extending to Ravensbury, Mitcham, and the river Wandle provided the irrigation. Sir Robert died here in 1816, and after his death it became a boarding school for sons of gentlemen. The Principal was a Mr. White, who carried on the school for many years. Afterwards, on the estate becoming vacant, Mr. G. Hatfield, who resided close by, bought it and added it to his own lands, and on the Merton side, reclaiming many acres of marsh land, made a large deer park, which is still in the possession of the family.

Epsom race week was a lively time for the village folk. Merton High Street and Morden Road to Epsom Downs crowds of people and every kind of vehicle were to be seen on the road. Refreshment booths, stalls, acrobats, nigger troupes and hawkers of toys would be met with on the way, as well as running and walking men, trotting donkeys and ponies, coster barrows, plenty of four-horse coaches, landaus with four horses and two postillions in velvet caps and

coloured jackets, the colours of the jockeys riding in the races, plenty of hansom cabs, old carts and pony chaises, and made a Londoner's holiday. John Bennett, with his flowing locks of hair, got a cheer as he rode by on horseback. About one o'clock came the Prince of Wales (afterwards Edward VII.), with the royal postillions and four grey horses—there was always a large crowd to give him a cheer as he passed.

On the corner, where we now have Barclay's Bank, were the lodge and gates of Grove House, the residence of Mr. Justice Parke. A. Goldsmid, Esq., lived here in 1817. The grounds of this house, like its neighbour, were interlaced with groves of trees; a ditch and fence skirted the Wimbledon Lane and Kingston Road.

Wimbledon Lane ran from the Grove to the village at the top of the hill. Between these two points there were no houses. For nearly two miles was farm land, on the north side belonging to Cowdery Farm, which stood near Cowdery Road and Haydon's Road, and on the south were the meadows of the Elms estate. The railway was constructed in 1838, consisting of one up and one down line. Bradford was the stationmaster at Wimbledon Station, and Charles Hatcher one of the porters. The original station and part of its platform can still be seen in rear of Hawes estate office.

KINGSTON ROAD.

On the left was a row of small cottages and the "Anchor" beer-house, which is now a painter and decorator's shop. Two red brick houses (still standing), with sheds at the side, were the residence of the Taylors, father and son, who were dairymen and cowkeepers. They kept a herd of about 100 cows, the finest in the county, which grazed on the Elms estate. At the side and rear of Taylor's stood Francis Crib's cottage in a large orchard which extended from a footpath in Morden Road to Merton School and Church. What is left of this to-day is known as Crib's Alley.

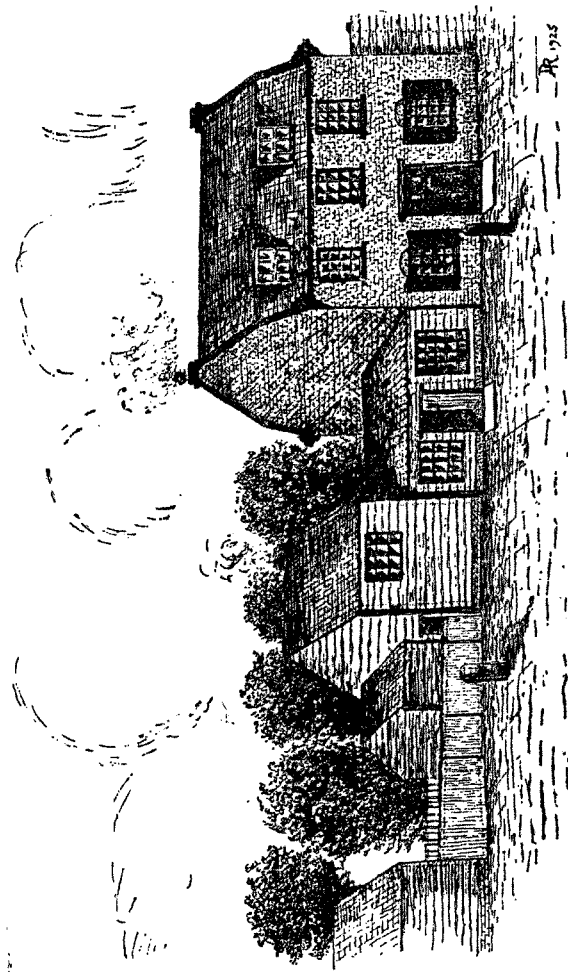
Near the Manor Club stood six almshouses, left by a Mr. Smaldon. The income of this charity has, I believe, since been lost. Close by was the village pound for stray cattle, having on one side a well. On the green, from the almshouses to the Manor Farm, was the lock-up or cage. This was a brick building with an iron-bound door. For many years the old lock-up was used during the winter as a soup kitchen for the local poor. Near to this was the stocks, and the last man to be put in them was Radical Spong, an old sailor, who was generally to be found in them every Sunday morning by the villagers on their way to church. He had been there since the previous evening, as it was a custom of his to get drunk every Saturday. He was the handy man and butt of the villagers, could sing a good song, was a bit of an acrobat and used to amuse the children, receiving enough coppers to pay his fine and have his usual Saturday carousal.

Mr. Wells, farmer and maltster, lived at the old Manor Farm House. He was churchwarden and trustee of Rutlish Charity. He took a great interest in the affairs of the parish.

Near the "White Hart" Hotel were about twenty cottages, the village blacksmith, Hudson's grocery stores, Skilton's bakery and post office. Smith, the postman, went with letters to Tooting once a day to meet the royal mail. On the road he would collect more letters, for which he would receive one penny each.

In front of the "White Hart" was the Hart Field, which was used as a sports ground, where the villagers played cricket and quoits. A footpath led through the field to Wimbledon village, and is now part of Hartfield Road.

Merton had its village fair, which was held in the grounds at the side of the "White Hart." When the Croydon railway line was made in 1858, the fair was transferred to the yard of the "Nag's Head" in Morden Road. As usual at country fairs the greasy pole was a great source of attraction, with its prize of a leg of mutton to him who



FIRST POST OFFICE AT MERTON RUSH.

The present site of the Rutlish Schools.

From a drawing in possession of Mr. James Harrod.

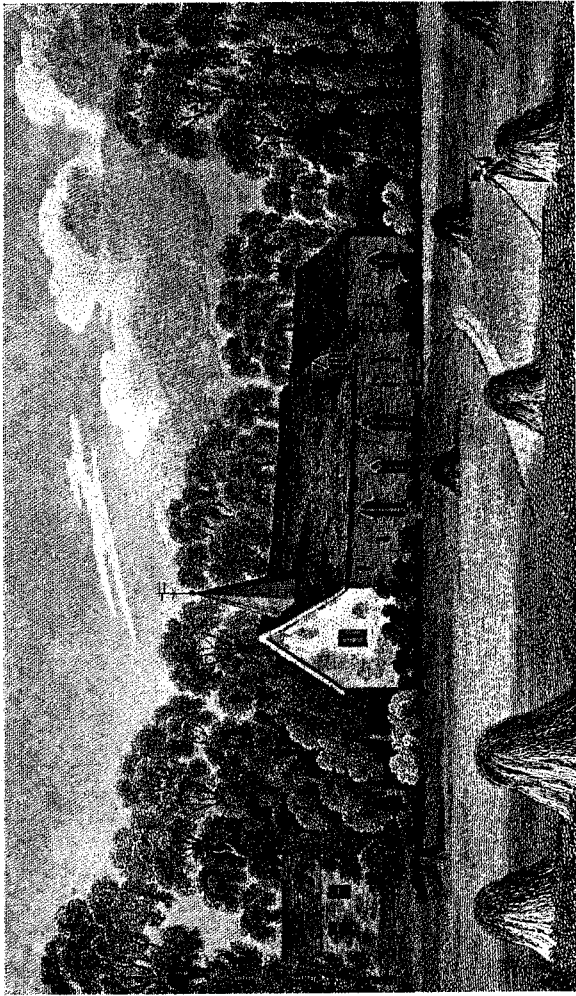
succeeded in climbing the pole and bringing down a flag from the top.

Opposite the cottages stood Holm Elms, a mansion with the usual stabling and servants' quarters. The estate was noted for its fine elm trees and well-wooded meadows. When the Elms estate was built on, the roads were named after the statesmen of the period, viz., Palmerston, Russell, Pelham, and Gladstone.

Dorset Hall, Dorset Lodge, Ann Beckett's cottage, and Spring House, opposite Church Lane, were the only houses in this part of Kingston Road. In a recess in a wall in front of Spring House was a well, the water of which was supposed to have some curative properties, and was much sought after by the people in the surrounding districts. The recess in the wall can still be seen through the shrubs. A footpath from the well led to the Roman Road, the Ridgway, Wimbledon.

At the end of Church Lane were the schools, church and vicarage. In front of the church was the house in which Sheridan, the playwright, lived, which at one time was used as a workhouse, and Bowen, the master, is buried in a vault in the churchyard. It was afterwards de Chastelaine's boarding school for sons of gentlemen for a number of years. This house was commonly known as Church House, and has only recently been demolished. In the earlier half of the eighteenth century it was in the occupation of a Mr. Justice Meriton, who seems to have been somewhat of a martinet in connection with the government of the parish.

The old village school stood in the lane facing the green in front of the church. This was covered with ivy, having an entrance for boys at one end and another for girls at the other, the schoolmaster being accommodated with apartments above the school. Near the vicarage are the old houses which were built many centuries ago, and are the oldest houses in the parish at the present day. At the end of a high wall opposite there is an enclosed piece of ground



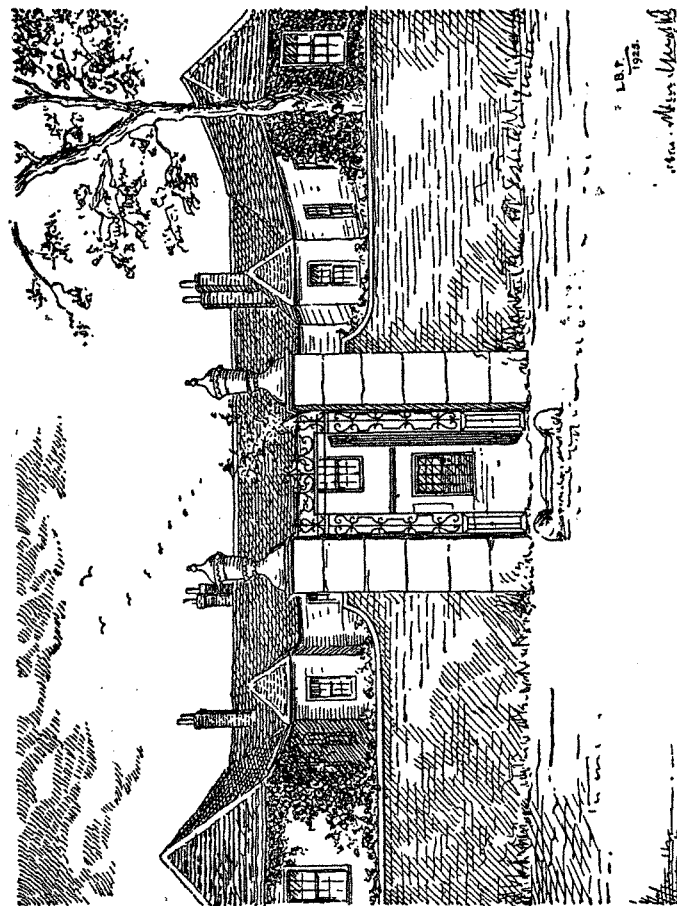
MERTON CHURCH
Showing the nine-acre field in foreground
From an old print dated 1806

and several derelict cottages built against the wall. These were inhabited by the poorer class of the villagers, and are specimens of the cottages which existed in Nelson's day. Mostly one would find the cottages clustered round the larger houses, where they served the purpose of housing the servants. From the wall, near the cottages, a spring flowed into a basin. It originated in Sheridan's garden, and was the recognized water supply for this part of the village. In a cottage at the end of the lane lived the old sexton, Joe Smith. Mr. Hart was the last parish beadle. In the year 1882 Mr. Harding, while digging in the garden in rear of these cottages, unearthed some ancient spearheads, Saxon coins, and what appeared to be human remains. These he found at a depth of four feet. Dr. Bates acquired the spearheads and the author the coins. It is believed that a battle was fought near here between the Saxons and the Danes.

OLD MERTON CHURCH.*

Old Merton Church, dedicated to St. Mary the Virgin, was built by Gilbert the Norman in the year A.D. 1115. The exterior walls were built of soft Surrey stone and faced with lime plaster, but in the nineteenth century the plaster was removed and flint substituted. It still has its Norman north doorway with its coeval door, although the doorway was somewhat clumsily put together when it was rebuilt into its present position. Outside this doorway is the beautiful open-traceried fourteenth-century porch of oak. In the roof there was a dormer window over the porch and another at the south-east end of the nave. In the belfry were three bells. The tenor bell bears the following inscription: "Bryan Eldridge made me in 1601." It weighs 7 cwt. 1 qr.

* For the information contained in this description I am indebted to the "Historical Notes on Merton Church," by the Rev. J. E. Jagger.



CHURCH HOUSE.

From a water-colour drawing in the possession of Mrs. Holloway.

16 lbs. The fourth bell: "Sancta Margareta, Ora Pro Nobis." Weight, 7 cwt. 0 qr. 9 lbs. The third bell: "Thomas Mears of London, Fecit." 1803. Weight, 5 cwt. 0 qr. 4 lbs. The number of the bells was increased to a peal of five by the late John Innes, Esq.

A gallery was built at the west end of the church at the expense of William Rayne in 1703, which was removed in 1897. The aisles were added in 1856—66.

Against the south wall of the chancel is an alabaster monument erected to the memory of Gregory Lovell and his family. The helmet which hangs above the monument is said to have belonged to Gregory.

On the east wall of the north aisle is a carved marble monument to the Smith and Wyatt families. This was erected by Mrs. Elizabeth Cook, wife of Captain James Cook, the circumnavigator of the world.

R. J. Wyatt, the sculptor, who carved that striking piece of work to the memory of Princess Charlotte in Windsor Chapel, was responsible for the Smith and Wyatt's memorial on behalf of Mrs. Cook. The pathetic kneeling figure represents his sister, who died in 1823. The Smith and Wyatt tombs are together behind the vestry.

Inside the church there are six hatchments beside the royal arms of the Restoration period. Lord Nelson's is on the north side near the pulpit, and is hung over the place where he used to sit in his square-shaped pew, which is now preserved in the vestry. His family arms are in the centre, a sable cross on a golden field, with a red band surrounded by the motto of the Knights of the Bath, *Tria Juncta in Uno*. The supporters, denoting baron's rank, are the quaint figure of a sailor, armed with cutlass and pistols, having in his right hand a commodore's flag and in the left a palm branch; on the other side a lion with broken flagstaffs in his mouth, one bearing a Spanish and the other a French flag, while in the right paw is a palm branch. The motto, *Palmam qui meruit ferat* (let him who merits bear the palm away), runs

beneath. The various medals and decorations, all accurately depicted, set forth the many honours Nelson won.

This memorial was first placed over his residence, Merton Place, for a year, and was then deposited in the church by Lady Hamilton. The other five hatchments are those of Sir William Hamilton, Admiral Isaac Smith, two members of the Burnett family, and one unknown.

Lord Nelson, when at Merton, was a regular attendant at church. In the Easter offering book there is an entry of five guineas, signed by Lord Nelson, and two guineas, signed by Dame Emma Hamilton.

Outside the church, on the little green, is Lord Nelson's mounting stone. In front of the church is the altar-tomb of William Rutlish, embroiderer to King Charles II. At his death on 4 March 1687 he bequeathed several tenements in the parish to the value of £400 for the purpose of providing funds for apprenticing poor children born in the parish of Merton.

Mr. Francis Nixon, who perfected copperplate calico printing, lived in Merton and died there in 1763. His tomb is near that of William Rutlish. There are many other strangely expressed memorials in the old part of the churchyard, and some with quaint carving upon them. A finely-carved cross, extending the whole length of the stone, having floriated ends, lies on the south of the church. It has no other mark, symbol, or lettering upon it, and it is shaped like the lid or covering of a stone coffin. The oldest dated stone now remaining is probably one against the vicarage garden wall to Thomas Sawyer, aged 6 years, who died September 1673 or 1675.

In addition to the Manor of Merton, which Gilbert gave to the Priory, he also endowed it with the rectorial tithes and revenues of the parish church without any reserve, except that the church should be served by one of their body, or a secular clerk of their appointing, who, as to the cure of souls was responsible to the bishop, but as to the revenues

was accountable to the prior. This arrangement may not have led to neglect and trouble at Merton, as in other parishes, because the clerk who served the parish church would reside usually at the Priory. There are no formal records of presentations to the cure while the Priory existed. And yet there is abundant evidence to show that the church services were regularly held, and that the church was fully equipped and furnished with all the necessary vessels, ornaments, vestments and accessories that belonged to the religious worship and rites of the time. "The Inventory of Church Goods, Edward VI., 1547," still exists, and notes that the church possessed a chalice of silver, vestments (3), albs (3), altar cloths (3), candlesticks (3), chests (4), a holy water stoup of latten, a service book, a psalter, a bible, a canopie of dornix, and other things. Other "goods" are said to have been "stolen out of the church by night," a copper-gilt cross, a pyx, a canopie, seven altar cloths, three copes, etc.

At the dissolution of the Priory in 1538 the church endowments devolved on the Crown. In 1552-3 Edward VI., by letters patent, "in consideration of the sum of £359 granted unto Thomas Locke and Mary his wife and to their heirs and assigns for ever, the Rectory of the Church of Merton, with the appurtenances, late parcel of the dissolved Priory of Merton, to be holden of the King, his heirs and successors."

The Lockes thus became Lay Rectors, and had the right to nominate a perpetual curate to serve the parish church, to whom the lesser tithes, £14, were assigned. In the earliest parish register there is this record: "Michael Wigmore was first Curate of Merton under Thos. Locke Esquire." The advowson remained in the hands of the successive land proprietors and owners of the rectorial tithes until the Bond family sold it to the Rev. Wm. Edelman in 1846. From him the presentation passed to his wife, who left it to the Rev. G. W. Robinson, Vicar of Walmley, in whose family it still remains.

MERTON COMMON LANDS.

Merton was not so fortunate as Wimbledon in preserving its Common Lands for the use of the public. The situation of these lands can be seen in the old Map at the beginning of this work. Their loss at the present time may not be noticeable, but when Merton follows its inevitable development the loss of these 90 acres will be looked back upon with sadness and regret.

The enclosure was carried out in 1817 under the authority of an Act of Parliament which received the Royal Assent on the 28th March 1816. The following is an extract from the said Act:—

“Whereas there is in the Parish of Merton, in the County of Surrey, a certain piece or parcel of Land called Merton Common, containing in the whole 90 Acres, or thereabouts, which Land is divided into 93 Farrens, or Beast Pastures and whereas John Hilbert, Esquire, is Lord of the Manor of Merton, and as such is entitled to the soil of the said piece or parcel of Land and whereas the said John Hilbert and Essex Henry Bond, Esquires, are owners or proprietors of the said Farrens or Beast Pastures and whereas the said Merton Common is in its present State incapable of any considerable Improvements, but if the same were divided and allotted unto and amongst several proprietors thereof, and persons interested therein, according to their several Rights and Interests, and such Allotments enclosed, the same might be greatly improved”

The officials appointed under the Act were: Thomas James Tatham of Bedford Place as Commissioner, and Richard Raine of Gray's Inn as Surveyor; the solicitor was William Luttley of Wandsworth.

.

Merton has been specially fortunate in the number of its local benefactors. Mention has been made elsewhere to the



BARN OF MERTON HALL FARM.

The "Old Leather Bottle" is seen on the right.

From a water-colour drawing by Mrs. G. C. Druce, in the possession of the John Evelyn Club of Wimbledon.

gifts for educational purposes by William Rutlish and Richard Thornton, and the gift of a Recreation Ground by Sir Joseph Hood. Another name will always stand out in the annals of Merton, namely, that of John Innes. His bequest of the Manor Gardens and the John Innes Recreation Ground will always remain a monument to his memory. In addition to these, there are the public buildings connected with his name—the Rutlish Schools, Boys' Club, Men's Club and Masonic Hall, and lastly there is his great benefaction of the John Innes Horticultural Institution for the practice of scientific horticulture and botanical research, comprising a house and several acres of land.

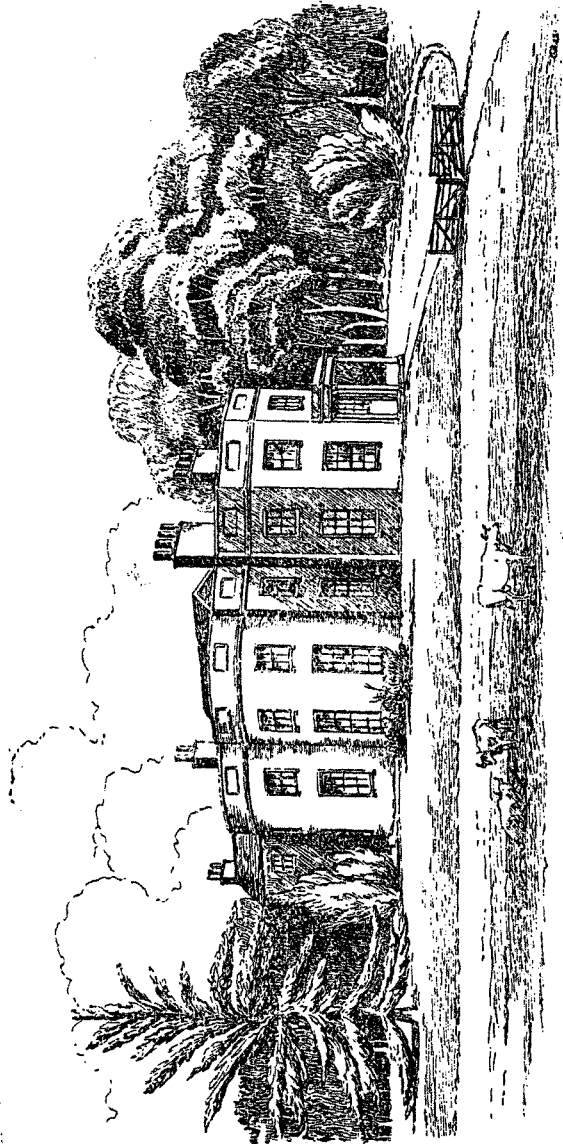
John Innes has also left a strong mark on Merton by his plan of development and the planting of trees. His own house, which he built and called the Manor House, was originally a small farmhouse, which he transformed into a residence of fair size. The original manor house was situated in the Kingston Road, part of which still exists—the building now in the occupation of Messrs. Wood and Sons.

Some fifty years ago, opposite where the Nelson Hospital now stands, was situated the old Grange Farm and Farmhouse. Mr. Fletcher, farmer, lived here in 1870. The barns and farm buildings ran from Kingston Road down the drive (now called Merton Hall Road) to a footpath and ditch. This drive led to Mr. Souter's house and stables, which lay well back in the fields, but in Wimbledon parish. The house was styled "Merton Hall." Mr. Souter was saddle maker to the Royal Family, and was noted for his hunters, of which he kept several in his stables. In a field near by the stag hounds, under the mastership of Squire Blake of Motspur Park, Malden, used to meet. All the local farmers were members of the hunt, whilst many villagers used to follow. A deer would be brought to the rendezvous in a cart, and when required was turned loose. The writer has

seen the pack in full cry crossing the Wimbledon Lane, going in the direction of Cowdery Farm and Wandsworth.

As usual in those early-Victorian days, most families rode saddle back. Young ladies and gentlemen in the district were trained at Cook's Riding School, Church Street, Wimbledon. It was a pleasant sight to see Mr. Cook with his young riders cantering and galloping across Wimbledon Common, then returning home through the village.

The "Old Leather Bottle," which is now being used as a greengrocer's, was kept several years by Mr. Walker, son of an old Merton schoolmaster. The present "Leather Bottle" stands on what was the paddock in Mr. Souter's time. Adjoining the "Old Leather Bottle" was Long Lodge (now standing). In 1826 Long Lodge was occupied by a Mrs. Ann Blakiston, who died in 1827. Mr. Grey occupied it in 1870. From 1896 until his death on 26 February 1911 Frederic Shields lived there, and he called it "Morayfield." In a specially built studio in the garden he painted most of the pictures that line the walls of the Chapel of the Ascension, Marble Arch. Opposite Long Lodge, at one corner of Watery Lane, stood Verandah Villa (now shops), so named owing to a verandah running round the front and one side, and in the grounds of which stood a splendid collection of life-size statuary, which belonged to the tenant and owner, Miss Sutton. At the other corner of Watery Lane was the "Plough" beer-house, now used as a provision store. In a road which forms part of a triangle are some old cottages and a village stores. In the village stores lived David Lee, who was the Parish Clerk, and apparently his duties were not very strenuous, as the ratepayers were only about ninety. It is believed that Cromwell's troops were billeted here at the time when they were having a skirmish with the Royalists at Cannon Hill. In one of the old cottages a well-known character named Froggy Stilwell lived, who was water carrier and launderer. He was often "between the devil and the deep sea," in other words, the "Leather Bottle" and the



CANNON HILL HOUSE.

*From a water-colour drawing by G. Yates, in the possession of the
John Evelyn Club of Wimbledon.*

“Plough,” and his condition often warranted his being wheeled home in his own barrow. One of his near neighbours named Snobby Lee, the cobbler, champion snuff taker and authority on Irish politics, was a well-known character. In addition there were three B’s—Brockwell, Blythen, and Budden, very old Merton families, and no doubt some of them are still to be found to-day.

Proceeding down Watery Lane we reached Merton Cottage, where resided Captain Baffee, adjoining which stood Prestidge’s old house in a garden and orchard, which was removed by the late John Innes. It was at that time one of the oldest houses in Merton. A large chestnut tree, now standing in the Mostyn Road, directly faced the old house. Here a footpath led to the church and Morden. Going towards Cannon Hill stood an old farm and twelve one-storey cottages in the lane. The farm was occupied at one time by a Mr. Page and a Mr. Wells, and was eventually purchased, together with other land and farms, by the late John Innes, the spot now being occupied by the recreation ground, gardens, and park associated with his name.

In Cannon Hill Lane were several cottages, and in this neighbourhood were to be found Cherry Wood, Poors Wood, and Merton Common, and at the end was a lodge and gates, the entrance to Cannon Hill Park, the residence of T. Sherwood in 1827. In 1854 the owner, Moses Sherwood, went to the Crimean War, from which he never returned. His horse was turned out in the Park and was seen there for many years. Mr. and Mrs. Vincent, living at Lower Morden, who celebrated their golden wedding December 1924, can remember the steeplechase races taking place here. The course started from Rayne’s farmhouse up to a field at the side of Cannon Hill lake, then back down (now Blenheim Road) to the winning post at the side of the farm. The ponds on the golf links denote the course and water jumps. Gentlemen and farmers in this part of Surrey took part in the racing, among which were Messrs. Sherwood, Wells,

Fletcher, Barker, Wedbourne, Rayne, Garth, Dover, Souter, Blake, Bird, Bowery, Aspen, Comber, and Samson of Mitcham.

Richard Thornton, a London banker, whose father was one of the first directors and founders of Lloyd's Bank, purchased Cannon Hill House and Park. He took a great interest in all branches of the village life, especially in the day and Sunday schools. He was often to be seen driving his white cob and chaise, and would give the villagers a lift if they happened to be going his way.

On Christmas Eve those who lived in this part of Merton were regaled with a mug of ale, a mincepie, and two-and-sixpence, and children a shilling and a mincepie.

In the park was a fine herd of black bullocks, some of which were sold to butchers for Christmas beef. A prime baron of beef was always selected for Richard Thornton's own table. At the edge of the park and running its entire width was a long stretch of water, which in those days was full of fish. On his death in 1865 he left personal estate sworn at £2,800,000. In addition to leaving £58,000 to various charitable institutions he gave £10,000 in trust for schools at Merton for educating poor children. After his death his sister and housekeeper lived here for a few years. The estate then passed to a nephew, who had the old house pulled down, and used the park and woods adjoining for shooting, as there were plenty of pheasants, partridges, hares, and rabbits.

At the corner of Cannon Hill Lane and Kingston Road stands Broadwater House and farm. In 1870 Mr. Barker, dairy farmer, occupied it. In the field opposite the farm was a large pond and a wide ditch on each side of the road up to the bend. Rough bushes bordered the fields, and one side of the pond adjoined the road. In the pond and ditches were reeds and rushes, which made good cover for waterfowl. In the winter the roadway was flooded for a considerable distance. From here to Coombe Lane it became a broad



WEST BARNES FARM.

Now demolished.

From a water-colour drawing in the possession of Mrs. Lavender.

sheet of water, flooding part of Whatney Estate, Bushey Mead, and Rayne's land. Every year wild ducks would visit these waters, making good shooting for the sporting farmers. Rayne's lands were mostly used for sheep farming and grazing. Bushey Mead and what is now known as Raynes Park is built on part of his land, also the golf links, which extend from the Railway Station to Cannon Hill Park. In the spring, at the end of Grand Drive, shepherds and their assistants can still be seen sheep shearing. The only inhabitants in this part were those living at the "Junction Tavern" and the eleven cottages adjoining, and the farms at West Barnes. The main line of the South-Western Railway was made in 1837, and a station was built here in 1869. The stationmaster was Mr. Norwood. Mr. Rayne, the land-owner, gave land and also paid part of cost of the station, and named the station Raynes Park.

West Barnes Lane, before the advent of the trams, was a quiet narrow lane lined on each side with trees, the archway under the railway line only permitting the passing of one vehicle at a time. The lane at that time went as far as the level crossing, which it crossed and proceeded on its winding way to Malden. Burlington Road, the present continuation, was made by the Tramway Company.

The lands of the Raynes and Bains families and Merton College extended to the Blagdons (*Saxon*, Blackhills), the Pilbrook, Beverly (*Saxon*, Beaverfield), and Malden. In West Barnes Lane were two farms. William Rayne lived in one of these farms. They were hay and cattle farms. The barns here were built of a great size; the hay was not stacked in ricks but put in the barns.

Blagdon was a stud and cattle farm kept by Mr. Keevil. The Gooch family, relatives of Squire Blake, lived at Blue House; at the present time Mr. Rich, trainer and owner of polo ponies. In this neighbourhood are the Motspur Park Polo Club playing grounds. It is very interesting and exciting to watch the players on their well-trained ponies following

the ball, the animals enjoying the sport as much as their riders. The Prince of Wales and the Duke of York have played on these grounds. Hurlingham Polo Club, Putney, have secured several acres here for their new ground, their old ground at Putney being wanted for building. Adjoining these are practice grounds of the Wimbledon Shooting School. This end of the parish is fast developing, the old farmhouses and lanes are disappearing and giving place to large factories; Carter's, of tested seed fame, and Bradbury's printing works have already been firmly established; trams, omnibuses and railways now run where once cattle grazed; the Greater London arterial road has been commenced and will, no doubt, be in use soon after these lines appear in print. This road touches the land of West Barnes, the Blagdens and Blue House. Motspur Park Station will be finished this year. Archbishop Tenison's School and King's College have secured several acres of land for sports grounds. Sir Joseph Hood has given a recreation ground near Cannon Hill for use of the public. Roads are being made, houses built, hedgerows uprooted, birds are leaving their haunts, the flocks of goldfinch and yellowhammers which flew up and down the lanes in winter will be seen no more, but in the evenings you can still hear the twit-twit of the owls, and when I take a walk at night up the lane or across the golf links, out of the darkness will come the cry from one of old Rayne's barn owls: "Who are you-oo?—who are you-oo?—who are you-oo, ooh?"

FOR LARGEST SELECTION AND BEST VALUE

IN

MEN'S AND BOYS'

**READY-TO-WEAR CLOTHING,
HATS, HOSIERY, AND BOOTS, ETC.**

TRY

CHARLIE HOW

Complete Outfitter,

FACING STATION WIMBLEDON

Telephone: Wimbledon 11.

Established 1883.

S. MORETON THOMAS, M.P.S.

Dispensing and Photographic Chemist

150 MERTON HALL ROAD

MERTON PARK

Prescriptions
Drugs
Medicines
Patent Medicines
Rexall Products
Oxygen

KODAKS
Kodak Films
Developing
Printing
Enlarging

TOILET Requisites
Infants' Foods
Wincarnis
Hall's Wine
All Medicated and
Tonic Wines

BEST QUALITY - QUICK SERVICE

COURTEOUS ATTENTION

Everything that an Up-to-date Chemist sells

Telephone: Wimbledon 3202

ESTABLISHED OVER 70 YEARS

Phone: Wimbledon 217

W. W. LAMPERT

WHOLESALE IRONMONGER AND
TOOL MERCHANT

Warehouse for Iron, Steel and Tubes
of all kinds

THE ORIGINAL MERTON IRONMONGER

113 High Street, Merton

ESTABLISHED 1854.

Brooker's Domestic Stores

THE NOTED HOUSE FOR ALL REQUISITES

BROOMS, BRUSHES, CHINA AND GLASS,
SAFE-BURNING OILS FOR STOVES AND LAMPS
TRADE SUPPLIED WITH OILS, COLOURS, VARNISHES,
AND PAPER HANGINGS

Deliveries daily to all parts of the District

NOTE the Addresses—

49—51 HIGH STREET, MERTON
246 MERTON ROAD, WIMBLEDON
2 BURLINGTON ROAD, NEW MALDEN

PHONE: 3193 WIMBLEDON

REEVES

ESTABLISHED 1880

BUILDERS, DECORATORS, AND
SIGN WRITERS

Sanitary Work a Speciality

LARGE SELECTION OF WALLPAPERS
Kept in Stock

117 High St., Merton, S.W. 19

Phone: Wimbledon, 910.

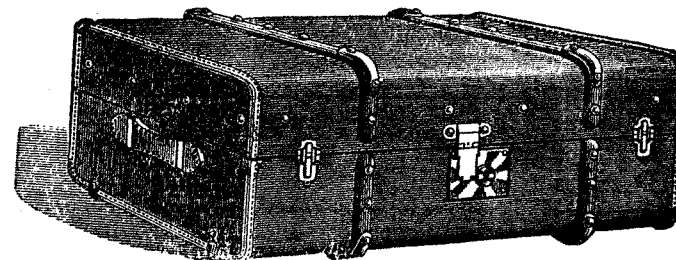
Established 1875.

Estimates Given.

W. & G. HALES

SADDLERS AND SPORTS STORES

29 Kingston Road, Wimbledon, Surrey



Trunks, Bags, Portmanteaus, Dress Baskets, Fancy, Athletic & Leather Goods
of Every Description, New & Second-hand, kept in stock, made & repaired

ENGRAVING OF EVERY DESCRIPTION

Fishing Tackle and Baits in Great Variety Orders by post receive prompt attention