

MERTON PUBLIC LIBRARIES



REFERENCE DEPARTMENT

This Book must not be taken  
out of the Reference Library

PL 41

Item reproduced by permission  
of Merton Heritage Service

A. E. CHAMPION.

*The profits accruing from the sale of these papers  
will go to the Mitcham Parish Church Centenary  
Fabric Fund.*

# Old Mitcham

*A Series of papers recording village  
life and history.*

*Published in connection with the Centenary of the  
rebuilding of Mitcham Parish Church.*

GENERAL EDITOR: LIEUT.-COL. H. F. BIDDER, D.S.O.

PART II.

MITCHAM :  
H. G. MATHER, LOWER GREEN. .  
1926.

PART II.

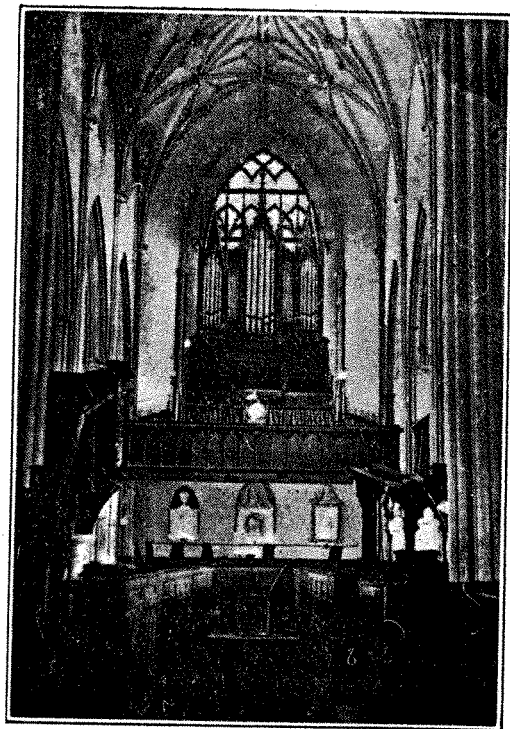
MEMORIES OF MITCHAM, by J. D. Drewett, J.P. ... ..	Page 1
VILLAGE ANECDOTES by the late J. R. Chart...	Page 14
MITCHAM PARISH RECORDS, by R. M. Chart, J.P. ... ..	Page 18
MISS BARTLEY, by B. D. ... ..	Page 29
RURAL MITCHAM, by the late Miss Bartley ...	Page 32
MEMORIES OF OUR VILLAGE, by Sir T. Cato Worsfold, Bart. ... ..	Page 37

MERTON DISTRICT LIBRARY

CRLC

L2(900) BID

11/91



MITCHAM CHURCH—LOOKING WEST.

*[From photo by J. R. Chart, 1861.]*

## MEMORIES OF MITCHAM.

*By J. D. DREWETT, J.P.*

How few are now left to record the memories of the last 65 years in the Parish of Mitcham. And although it may be said that the surrounding Parishes have advanced to a greater extent, yet, to us, very many are the changes here indeed. It must be so, for has not the population increased sevenfold? and where once the Parish Church catered for the whole area, four ecclesiastical districts are evolved, and the Parish Church, with its southward limits, is left to-day with a population far in excess of that of the whole Parish in 1859.

Peaceful and self-contained was the village life then. No railways crossed the Common (the line to Croydon was opened in 1856). Much more and finer gorse grew on it, and a nice country walk led to the Windmill. The gravel pits, alas, were always there—yearly increasing in size and depth. The Windmill keeper not only ground your corn, but would bake for you as well.

There were several ponds on the common lands—some since filled in—the Horse Pond, New Barns Pond, Cranmer Pond, Willow Pond, Chestnuts Pond, Hills

Pond, one opposite Holborn Union Gates, one at Graham Road entrance, one by Gorringe Park Avenue, and last, but not least, Three Kings' Pond. This pond in old deeds is called the Village Wash Way. Some were prettily situated; the Chestnut Pond has six fine trees surrounding it, now reduced to four, and some had water splashes. Many were the vicissitudes in connection with the collapse of the baker's cart and consequent floating of the loaves (at least a tribute to their lightness!). There was also a pond at Willow Lane entrance and two opposite Parkers' Cottages, Commonside East; one of the fine chestnut trees at the above pond was brought down by a gale of wind, and a passer-by killed.

The water supply of Mitcham was never in doubt until the construction of the Sewage Disposal Scheme, 1878-81, when many of the wells, ponds, and ditches were much depleted. Most residents were supplied from wells on their own premises. There was one on the Common opposite Cranmer Gates, one opposite the Roman Catholic Church, one in a shed near the Roman Catholic Church (the Pedlar was found in this one), one by the road at Commonside West, and one in the road on the Fair Green (this supplied the Town Pump for many years). The overflow from the well in Canons Garden flowed into an outside basin (built in the form of a dog kennel) opposite the Queen Victoria Inn; there was an overflow basin near the Bank Garden from a well in the 'bus yard, one in Church Lane from a well in Vicarage garden, one in Western Road outside Camwal Works (this gave their names to Fountain Road and Public House), one in Portland Road (this gave its

name to Fountain Place), and one at Fountain Cottage next Prince of Wales Inn (the basin is still to be seen in the cottage garden and the copper beech tree planted there to commemorate it). There were also artesian wells—in the factory cottage garden, in the Infants' School yard close by, and one formerly in the garden of the site of the present Bridge Post Office.

The open ditches were numerous and invariably (except in dry seasons) had a good supply of running water. Who would imagine Western Road in those days a narrow country lane, a deep ditch commencing from Gladstone Road and ending at its exit into the Wandle at Christchurch Road, with large elm trees on one side and open fields and meadows on the other; or Mitcham Lane to Streatham (now one of our finest roads), then a really beautiful lane with trees on each side, their branches meeting overhead, without a house of any kind up to the Parish boundary at Roe Bridge? There is an old memorial stone built into the wall of this bridge.

Mitcham Lavender and Peppermint Oils had, and have, a world-wide reputation—in season. Beautiful and fragrant were the various open agricultural fields, mainly used for the cultivation of lavender, peppermint, camomile, poppy, Provence roses, liquorice, cucumbers, and many medicinal herbs. Each had its own harvest, drying, and distilling time—the largest distillery was at Messrs. Bridgers—next to the Swan Inn—which practically remained in operation till the revolution in cultivation occurred in Mitcham. Smaller distilleries were operating at Tamworth Farm, at Bedding-

ton Corner, and Sutton. A hundred years ago other small distilleries were in use in addition to that of Messrs. Potter & Moore; one at the corner of Killicks Road, one at Commonsides West, next to Cold Blows, one each at Sherwood and New Barns Farms, and one where the Beehive now stands—but these have long since ceased to exist. The lavender bushes, after the third year of cultivation, were usually ploughed up, and were often used to thatch the sides and ends of sheds, and largely stored to provide (with furze from the common) material for the many bonfires usually to be seen alight on Guy Fawkes' nights. How beautiful were the fields of poppies, lavender, camomile, and Provence roses, when in full bloom! Then, indeed, Mitcham was well described as the Garden Village of Surrey. The camomiles were usually mature and ready for picking about fair time, and a large number of children were able to set aside a portion of their earnings for the fair pleasures. The scent from the distilleries at autumn time was a distinct feature too, and those passing through Mitcham were made aware of the presence of the famous herb growing village. Then, too, the farm and agricultural life was much more in evidence, for fine teams of horses going out to plough at 7 and returning at 12 and 5 o'clock with that regularity so incidental to village life, are not to be forgotten. The old Major's clock, set in the turret on the barn facing London Road, sounded the quarters and hours (this clock once started to strike and would not stop till the weights reached the ground, much to the amazement of the listeners). Here could be seen and heard all the various accompaniments incidental to

village farm life: the Blacksmith, the Carpenter, the Wheelwright and Repairing Shop, the Flail and Threshing Floor, the Pig Yard, the Barns, and Store Sheds, the huge distilling coppers and vats, and large drying stoves, the great horse-propelled wooden cogwheel to pump water into the big storage tank which supplied the distillery (this often was used in hot weather for a swimming bath).

The Manor House, occupied by Mr. Bridger, stood well back from the road, and was always redolent of peppermint and lavender essences emanating from the still-rooms actually inside this house. This Mitcham show place was not without its charm. It was the stopping place for coaches to Epsom Races, and horses were changed here.

Before the advent of water ballast and steamrollers, the gravel placed on the roads for repair was left to be ground in by ordinary traffic. The Tollgates were existing—one at Singlegate, one at Rose Hill, and one opposite the entrance to Swain's Lane. There could be no furious driving in those days! The toll had to be paid, the ticket given, before the village road was left behind. The old Tollkeeper might be seen late at night, coming out of his box with nightcap and lantern, to answer the summons of some belated, and, perhaps, incoherent, traveller, to pass the toll bar.

The Town Crier was an officer commanding the respect and awe of the villagers, with his bell, gold-laced coat and hat. Doors and windows were opened, all being eager and curious, on the warning ding-dong of his bell, to hear the message, usually ending with

"God save the Queen—and likewise the Town Crier." Billy Sams was the last of the Town Criers. I can remember the police then wore bob-tail coats, high silk hats, and white gloves.

The old cage, where the Vestry Hall stands, was partly used to store the village fire engine, and on the doors were written directions for obtaining the keys, and scale of pay for those assisting at a fire. It was not an easy matter to get the engine to a fire, and satisfactorily at work. Sometimes the fire was out before its arrival. The writer was told of a fire occurring at the Malt House adjoining Hall Place; soldiers happened to be billeted in the village, who, formed in line, were able to quench it by passing buckets of water from the pond opposite.

The Village Stocks were outside the engine house—the posts, etc., are now to be seen inside the Vestry Hall. There was an open road from the Vestry Hall Clock to Church Road.

Many old houses in Mitcham have disappeared—a row of old cottages stood behind the Goat Inn—only two remain. Of several old cottages on the farm lands of Messrs. Mizen, along Amoys Lane, one remains. Runbold's Farm—and many old cottages called the "Flat Tops"—also stood on this estate, and were demolished many years ago. The site of Tramway Terrace was an open garden with only one small cottage at the entrance to Amoys Lane. There was a small pond in front of the Flat Tops, and two wells in the gardens. The railway to Croydon crossed the road level,

and had a small cottage for the gatekeeper's use. Willow Lane led to Searle's Mill, an old flour mill reached by crossing the Wandle Watersplash. The old Red House in Willow Lane was once the scene of industrial activity—a large calico printing and bleaching factory stood there. The chimney shaft can still be seen in one of the meadows. The whole of this land is in the gravel diggers' hands, and will probably be left as a huge swamp.

The finest of Mitcham's old houses, "The Cranmers," still stands as an example of what such a place was in the old days. Just peep into the huge kitchen; the Barn, one of the largest in Surrey; the old garden; the old bell on the roof; note the decay and solitude of this old house.

The "White Hart" Inn was then a real old wayside inn and posting house. The whole of Church Road was then a small lane for access to the lands on each side, the only houses being Box Cottage and the Blue Houses. This road, formerly called the Iron Road, was used by the Surrey Iron Railroad, one of the first railways laid in England, a hundred years ago, for the carriage of coal from Wandsworth, passing through Mitcham to Croydon (where it met the Croydon and Rotherhithe Canal), with branches to Merstham and Carshalton. The track of this railway can be traced by the presence of the large stone blocks used for securing the iron rails in position, which are to be found in the ground wherever the line passed. It was, I believe, purchased by the late Mr. Bidder, of Ravensbury Park, who constructed the Wimbledon-Croydon railway partly on its site.

The old Cricketers' Inn was once kept by a Mr. Watts—called Doctor Watts, because of the medicine (beer) he sold. When this old house was pulled down many neatly tied packets of old copper pennies were found secreted above the upper ceiling joists. An old shop stood next kept by a man named Selwood, who sold sweets, eels, whelks, etc. It had a shutter to the window which was let down on legs, and used as a counter. Next stood three old cottages facing 'bus yard. In one lived Liddy Hillon, an old lady who kept chickens, each of which had a separate name. She slept in an old-fashioned four-post bedstead, and her chickens roosted on the top rails. A man named Vickers lived in one of these cottages. In 1819 it was suggested that the new Church should be built on this site.

A large house formerly stood on the site now occupied by Wesleyan Church, called "The Firs," once the residence of Mr. Marmaduke Langdale. This gave the names to Langdale Walk and Avenue. A very old Tudor house of brick and timber, stood at the corner of Killick's Lane (now St. Mark's Road). It was removed in 1854. Killick's Lane, a narrow road for access to the fields with a ditch and a row of elm trees, had a gate across to prevent cattle straying into the fields. This gate stood opposite a row of old cottages called South Place, long since removed. A large open meadow adjoined where many Sunday School treats were held. There were no houses in the East Fields before the advent of the railway, except a few at the end of Lock's Lane, Temple's Cottage, the horse slaughterers, and chemical works, and an old farmhouse at Lonesome;

and nearly the whole area was used for corn and herb production, mint, lavender, and camomile.

The "Buck's Head" and "King's Arms" have each replaced old structures, and although the main road at this point is none too wide, the old "Buck's Head" came four feet into the present road. The butcher's and wine shops also replaced old houses—a large set of wheelwright's and farriers' shops, etc., were situated where Buck's Head Parade now stands, and a similar set on the land of Elm Gardens, including the Village Smithy. One of the two chestnut trees is still standing in this once busy and old-fashioned part. Elm Hall, a large square brick built house, stood opposite the Eagle House. This house suffered severely from fire, and was finally pulled down in 1894.

A very old farm house, called Pound Farm, occupied by Mr. T. Weston, afterwards by Mr. J. Briggs, stood opposite the Holborn Union School gates. Here the Village Pound was placed, too. The large school buildings, then called "St. George's Schools," were built in 1856. Lock's Farm was near the entrance of Lock's Lane; the old farm house still stands. It was tenanted by Mr. Tilley. A red brick house stood at the corner of Bond's Road (Richard Bond, Woodgrinder, buried 27th November, 1746, said to have lived at Eagle House), and occupied by Mr. Goldham, a celebrated tulip grower.

The Swan Inn has been much altered. It had stone steps leading up to the entrance. Opposite was a long row of old wooden cottages, called Dixon's Cottages. These continued partly along Lock's Lane. At one of

these cottages the "Gardeners' Arms" beer house was first opened. It had a large sycamore tree in the front garden, and was kept by a Mr. Lewis. An old-fashioned builder's yard was near. At the corner of Lock's Lane was the remains of an old wayside inn, afterwards used as a cottage. At the entrance to Graham Road was a large house called "The Willows," occupied by Mr. Taylor. It had extensive stabling, farmery, meadows and gardens. This is now Graham, Elmfield, and Fernlea Roads, and Graham Avenue.

At the corner of Streatham Lane stood a house occupied by Mr. Hurst (Hurst & Blackett), with a fine garden and meadow. A real old farmhouse stood on the site of the present Tamworth Farm. Gorringe Park House was then Biggin Farm.

There were no houses at Tooting Junction and Gorringe Park except Crusoe and Swain's Farm, and the old Hall.

A pretty feature was the passing daily through Mitcham of Charrington's flour waggons, real old four-wheeled waggons with circular tilt, four fine Flemish horses to each one—and waggoners with smocks, broad brim hats and whips; also the Carrier's Cart daily to London.

The always popular Mitcham Fair heralded its approach by large encampments on the Common of showmen, etc., quite a week before due date, and on its conclusion for quite a week after. On the Sundays intervening, donkey and horse riding, cocoa-nut shies, etc., were freely carried on to a large community of people. There were long dancing booths at fair time,

shooting tubes, gingerbread stalls, etc. The first roundabout that ever came stood opposite the Conservative Club House, and was introduced by Jas. Wethered. Frederick's Show, the largest the Fair produced, was in fact a travelling theatre of that day. With what delight the children would peep through the holes in the canvas dressing room and watch the actors prepare for their part! Can you imagine an actor making up as a bird of gorgeous plumes, a long and trailing tail being hooked on behind (which the mischief-loving boys, ever peeping, with a stick promptly *unhooked*). The actor is called on and strutting across the stage to show his plumage, exclaims, "Why do I wear this gaudy train?" turns round to look at it, and finds it is not there. I fancy the owner of the franchise to hold the Fair was stronger in those days, for if a showman did not move when ordered, a team of horses and men were sent to pull them off the Fair ground. Frederick's Show would on occasions stay after the Fair was over, either on the Common or in some private field and continue their performances.

We always knew of the approach of Croydon Fair time—October 2nd. Large droves of all kinds of cattle, horses, geese, ducks, goats, ponies, passed through Mitcham to this, one of the largest Fairs in Surrey. Often a fine large drove of cows would halt on the Common to be milked, the milk being sold to the residents at 2d. a quart.

Races were frequent at one time on the Common, and also Trotting Matches.



The straight path across the Common was called the Workhouse Path, and led to the Parish Workhouse. This building was erected in 1782, and is said to have cost £1,200. The average number of poor in Mitcham then was 70.

On Sundays most of the residents from all parts of the Parish went to the Parish Church services, the population then being about four thousand. The pews were enclosed with high sides and a door, and a number of open free seats were at the back and an open single seat along the side walls. These were usually occupied by children from the St. George's Schools. The Private Boarding Schools for Boys from Morden Hall, Poplars, Elms, Mitcham Lodge, and the girls from The Chestnuts, usually walked in line to Church every Sunday. The Beadle, an imposing and awe-inspiring person in gold laced clothes and hat, insured a reverent behaviour, and together with the Clerk, Pew-opener, and Gallery Keepers, were able to check any indication of levity. There were special pews surrounded by red curtains for the Churchwardens and Overseers. A large square iron stove kept the Church warm in winter. The writer's first introduction to Mitcham Church was at the Font; the next, standing on a seat in the pew to look over the high sides (this happened to be close to a tablet on the wall which has on it a crest with three black crows or ravens—quite sufficient to attract a child's attention): and next in the Choir, sitting beside the Organist (Miss Hall). The Choir and organ were then in the gallery where the clock now is. This was enclosed by red curtains, which were drawn aside when the sermon

commenced. The Vicar then always changed into a black gown before preaching. The organ was moved to its present site in 1875.

## VILLAGE ANECDOTES.

*By the late J. R. CHART.*

The builder of the new Church was my grandfather, Mr. John Chart. He found the plaster work of the groined roof a very difficult job, his previous experience having been in the building of houses. Just before the roof was closed in, a man on one side of the Church wanted to fetch a tool from the other side. Instead of coming down the ladder and going up to fetch it, he balanced himself on a scaffold pole that lay across the vault, and crossed and got back safely.

The gallery on the North side reaches from end to end of the nave, and the timber upon which it rests is in one piece. This was too long for the saw-pit in the builder's yard, and they had to make a road, of brick rubbish, from the old Church. This road ran from the yard up the side of the meadow, and to a saw-pit dug on purpose at the back of the old Baptist Chapel in Clarendon Grove.

The fronts of the galleries were carved in solid oak.

The carving was done by Mr. Vernon, my grandfather's head carpenter, and took twelve months.

An incident in connection with the carving of the heads by the sides of the windows near the top of the Church was told me by my father. The gentleman who was carving these sculptured faces was annoyed for some days by an old lady living in one of the old houses opposite, who used to lean over the back of a chair at her open window and make uncalled-for remarks. He said, "I will have you for one of my portraits," and with that he chiseled out her face with a comic expression, leaning over a shield (in the place of a chair). It was considered an excellent likeness in caricature.

The carved work of the front of the galleries may be seen in a photograph I took in 1861 by the wet process (dry plates were only just coming in). A friend of mine came over from Croydon to take a photograph of the Church. He left his camera in the Church the whole day, coming back for it in the evening, but he only got a very imperfect picture.

When the Church was finished, they had no organ, but used a string band. Mr. Vernon, the head carpenter, was one of the violins of the orchestra, and a good player too. Later a second-hand organ was got, and among the organists of the Church at different times were Sir Joseph Barnby and James Coward, while Sir Arthur Sullivan has sung there.

I went to Church at the age of six years in 1843, and well remember being very pleased when my mother stood me up on the seat so that I might look over the top of the pew. There was my uncle, who was Parish Clerk,

in the desk on the left, and he looked across at me, and winked his eye. The high pews were not very comfortable, especially for children.

A short time after the new Church was finished and in use, an old Mitcham family who were engaged in the laundry business at Commonsides East took their baby girl one Sunday afternoon to the Church to be baptized. The Reverend Strensham Derbyshire Myers was then Vicar; he was aged, and rather deaf. The party could not make up their minds what the name of the baby should be, one relative wishing it one name, and one another. At last they went to the Church, saying perhaps the parson would read something in the service which would do. The lesson that afternoon was part of the 5th chapter of St. Mark, on the raising of Jairus's daughter, in which the words "Talitha Cumi" ("Daughter, I say unto thee, arise") occur. They at once thought that would do, so when the reverend gentleman said, "Name this child," the mother said, "Talitha Cumi." "Nonsense," said he, "say Henry," and proceeded, "Henry I baptize thee . . ." "Please sir," cried the mother, "it's a *girl*!" In the end the baby received the name of Emma.

The office of Churchwarden was highly respected in those days, and a special pew was reserved for them, and the Overseers under the West gallery, with red curtains in front and a staff of office at each end. A certain tradesman of Upper Mitcham was elected Warden, whose wife considered it a great honour, not only for her husband but for herself. On the following Sunday she went with him to Church, and it happened

that as they entered the congregation rose for the beginning of the service. "Pray, good people," said she, "do not rise, even for Mrs. Churchwarden K——."

The principal tombs in the Churchyard have already been noticed. There are two, however, of distinguished Bible scholars. Dr. Roberts, one of the authors of the Revised Version, is buried there, and Ferrar Fenton, who a few years ago translated the Bible into modern English. A noted passage (1 John iii. 1), as given by him, is considered beautifully rendered:—

"Just think what a wealth of love the Father has lavished upon us in order that we might be called children of God—and such we are."

## MITCHAM PARISH RECORDS.

By R. M. CHART, J.P.

### *Extracts from the Minute Books of the Vestry Meetings.*

It must be remembered that the Church was not only the central building for Ecclesiastical purposes, but also the centre of all public matters relating to the Parish, and that the Churchwardens were civil and well as ecclesiastical officers of the Parish.

The Parish minute books date from 1653, and from these I have noted a few incidents of interest.

The Churchwardens whose names first appear in the records are Thomas Smyth, Esquire, and Edward Westfold, who took upon themselves the office of Churchwardens in April, 1653. at the "Greyhound," Croydon.

The Churchwardens appear to have paid out of their pockets the expenses of the Church and to have been reimbursed at the end of the year by a rate being levied. The account for 1653 gives receipts, £1 19s. 6d.; disbursements, £9 18s. 1d.

Vestry Meeting was summoned by notice given out during Divine Service on Sunday morning, the meeting

being held after Morning Service the same day. Non-contentious business was then transacted, and for other business, the meeting was adjourned to a week day at one of the public houses—the "King's Head" being the earliest mentioned; later on "The Buck's Head"—and still later the "Three Kings." Later in the next century the "Bull" and "The King's Arms."

Parish relief was dispensed at the Vestry Room, the amount payable under this head in 1653 being £41.

1664.—One Cooper was paid for keeping the dogs out of the Church for one year the sum of £1 6s. od. A coffin for the poor cost from 6s. to 7s. Fees for a burial: 6s. 8d. for breaking the ground; for Vicar and Clerk, 3s.; and for bread and beer for those accompanying the funeral, 2s.

1670.—The Minister, Churchwardens and Overseers collected on a brief for the "Poor distressed and needy slaves in bondage in Turkey" the sum of £13 4s. 4d.

1678, October 19th.—"An account of the monies that has been collected of the inhabitants of Mitcham on the 14th to 19th day of October, 1678, by virtue of a brief granted for the rebuilding of the Cathedral Church of St. Paul's in the City of London." The contributors numbered 33, and the contributions ranged from 4d. to £1, the total being £3 6s. 8d.

1711, June 17th.—Ordered that Mr. Oldham, minister, be paid 5s. for every Sunday he shall officiate for Mr. John Payne.

1719.—Mr. Henry Hawkins appointed Vestry Clerk at salary of £3 per annum.

1735.—Ordered that John Marshall be appointed

Beadle. and be provided with proper "Cloathes" accordingly.

1738.—Ordered that the wall of the North "Isle" of the Church be taken down and "new raised" as high as the South "Isle" at cost of £151 9s. 8d., and ordered that a rate of 1s. in the £ be raised to defray the cost; further that the North "Isle" be extended 3ft. 8ins. to bring it into line with the Chancell or "Chapell" called Mr. Hoath's "Chancell."

1743, January 1st.—Ordered, that the Churchwardens and Overseers "do take care that they shall be most needful and condescend to save and preserve Wm. Smith (a boy bit by a mad dog) from falling into madness and that they have him forthwith dipt in the Salt Water."

1748.—Ordered, that the Vestry be repaired in a "necessary, convenient and decent manner."

1749.—Ordered, "That the next 3 pews under Mr. Woodcote's Pew be put with two pews in a handsome and decent manner."

1762.—Ordered, that William Chart, the Parish Clerk, be appointed Vestry Clerk at a Salary of £3 per annum; and that Six Guineas be accepted as a fine and as a satisfaction for not serving the Office of Churchwarden.

1766.—Ordered, that the erection of Gallery in the Church will be of public utility and the expense be defrayed by a pound rate.

1767.—Ordered, that 2 windows be put in the roof of the Middle Aisle to admit more light.

1778.—Ordered, that the Churchwardens do provide

2 new surplices, 1 table cloth, 3 napkins and a new velvet cloth for the Pulpit and to repair the locks, and other things broken or missing, and pay a reward of 20 guineas for the discovery of such person who broke into the Church and stole the said articles.

1778, March 29th.—Ordered, that a petition be drawn up and presented to H.M. Justices of the Peace to request them to empower those meeting in the Parish of Mitcham to form a Bench of Justices at some settled time to do the business of the said Parish as shall be brought before their Worships.

December 30th.—Vestry to consider erection of a Workhouse adjourned to 4th January.

1779, January 4th.—The Vestry met but nothing further ordered.

December 19th.—Vestry Meeting to consider erection of Workhouse adjourned to January 3rd.

1780, April 15th.—Ordered, that Churchwardens and Overseers apply to Alex. Wedderburn to desire his assistance in obtaining an Act of Parliament to enable the Parish to erect a proper Poor House.

August 20th.—The Vestry is unanimously of opinion that a Gallery would be of public utility, and should be erected along the South Aisle up to the Belfry.

August 27th.—Plans produced by W. Oxtoby and order given, and that the several workmen be desired to send in their estimate and that the Churchwardens apply for a faculty.

September 10th.—Ordered, that the expense of the erection of the said Gallery be defrayed by a pound rate.

October 8th.—Ordered, that the plan be carried out.

December 30th.—Ordered, that the Churchwardens and Overseers do apply to the Lords of the Manor for leave to enclose a piece of the waste land for the erection of a Poor House.

1781, July 8th.—Ordered, that Mr. Gregg make enquiry of the Lords of the Manor for a proper piece of ground, and that Mr. Oxtoby produce a plan for erection of the same.

July 29th.—Mr. Gregg reported that Mr. Manship has consented for the Parish to enclose about 3 acres for the erection of a new workhouse in consideration of 5s. p.a. for same.

1781, August 12th.—Ordered, that the plan produced be offered to the several workmen to prepare estimates.

1782.—The workhouse erected on Mitcham Common was completed, and James Hill was appointed for the maintenance and employment of the Poor from Michaelmas at 2s. 8d. per head per week. Ordered, that Samuel Killick be paid at the rate of 5 per cent. per annum on £700, being part of the money remaining due to him for building the new Workhouse.

The building is now used as a factory, and is known as Woodite Works.

1784.—Ordered, that the sum of Ten guineas per annum be allowed to the Singers to be paid by the Churchwardens and Overseers from Easter last.

Ordered, "That for peace and quietness sake 2 oz. of bread per week more than the present quantity be allowed each person in the workhouse."

1785.—Ordered, that the Steeple be repaired in a proper manner.

1789.—Vestry held to consider the taking down of the body of the Church, and an application to be made to Parliament to procure an Act to raise money by granting Annuities and by the sale of pews.

1792.—Mrs. Woodcock presented the Clock on the Sundays Schools, to be fixed in a plain but neat manner.

1805.—Vestry to take into consideration the inconvenience and disturbances which is experienced by those who attend the Church from the children of the Sunday School passing up and down the stairs which lead to the gallery and the erection of a staircase outside. Ordered, that Mr. John Chart, who has been appointed Parish Clerk by the Rev. S. D. Myers, be appointed Vestry Clerk at a Salary of £15.

1807.—Resolved, that in the opinion of the Vestry the front Gallery is sufficient to accommodate the Sunday School children, and ordered, that they sit in the front Gallery, and that the Gallery in the South Aisle be fitted up for the reception of such of the Parishioners paying to the Church rate who are now unaccommodated with seats.

1810.—A proposal was made by John Chart for erecting a good and handsome organ in the Church, and for playing the same, and it was Ordered, that John Chart be allowed to fix the same in the centre of the front Gallery.

1811.—The foregoing was rescinded by the Vestry.

## THE REBUILDING OF THE CHURCH.

After the vestry held in 1789 to consider the taking down of the body of the Church, the subject dropped for nearly 30 years. At length, in June, 1818, a vestry meeting held in the Church received a report from Mr. George Smith that £2,900 would be required "to place the Church and tower in a state of reparation consistent with the personal safety of the congregation."

The vestry thereupon resolved that any attempt to repair the Church would be injudicious, but that a new Church was required on another site. "It is the opinion of this meeting that the Church and tower are in a very deteriorated and even dangerous state; that the Church is very inadequate to contain the inhabitants, the population of the Parish being about treble the number of that at the period the Church was erected; and that it is highly proper that the Church should, if possible, be placed in a central part of the village, thereby affording a better opportunity for the inhabitants of attending Divine worship."

A few days later it was resolved that the new building should accommodate 1,400 persons, including 400 free sittings.

Presumably the price of a new Church frightened the congregation, for in August it was resolved that "it appears more expedient to enlarge and thoroughly repair the old Church and tower," and Mr. Smith was asked for plans.

Next year, in February, a committee was appointed to carry out their schemes, consisting of the Vicar (the Rev. S. D. Myers); the patron of the living (the Rev. R. Cranmer); Henry Hoare, Esq., of Mitcham Grove; Mr. James Moore and Mr. Potter, partners in the famous lavender business; Mr. Hemmings and Mr. Smith. This committee decided to proceed by Act of Parliament, and "to levy such proportionate rates on the proprietors and occupiers of estates within this Parish as may amount in the first instance to  $\frac{3}{5}$ ths and later to  $\frac{2}{5}$ ths" of the cost of the rebuilding.

The petitions to Parliament were accordingly presented in March, "signed by the Patron, Vicar and many of the principle inhabitants"; the Act was obtained, and operations commenced before the end of the year.

The old Church was closed, and services held in the Sunday School House. Thus a vestry was held in December "conformably with notices given in Beddington Church, and at the Sunday School House to consider the expediency of recasting a part or the whole of the Church bells and of rehanging them in the tower of the new Church." It was decided "after a full investigation of the present defective state of the bells" that the whole peal of 8 should be exchanged for a new peal of not less weight, and a contract made accordingly with Mr. Thomas Mears, Bell Founder, of Whitechapel.

The contract was as follows :—

To cast new and musical peal of eight Church bells, the tenor to weigh 15 cwt., the whole about

60 cwt., little more or less, at 17d. per lb. ...	£476
Eight new clappers ... ..	8
Eight new stacks, eight new wheels, recasting brakes, new gudgeon and iron work with nuts and screws, also making and putting up a substantial oak frame, and hanging the peal complete for ringing (the Parish finding the timber for the frame) ...	91

---

£575

Credit by allowance for eight old bells, complete to weigh 60 cwts., little more or less ... ..	336
---	-----

---

Nett ... .. £239

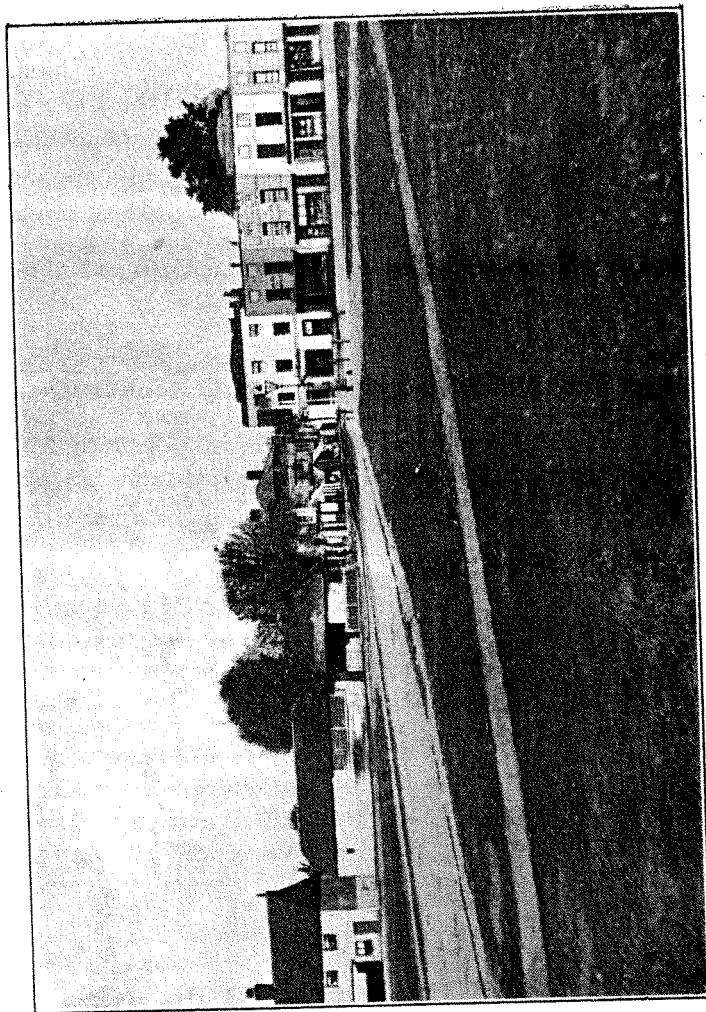
It was resolved to defray the cost "by a Church rate on the occupiers of land and tenements within this Parish, to be levied according to law." How simple Church finance was in those days!

The next August (1820), the vestry arrived at the novel and momentous decision "that this meeting are of opinion that the new Church should be warmed," and adopted the plan for a patent stove of a Mr. Silvester, "at a sum not exceeding £150, exclusive of the brick air flues." The stove may be seen in the photograph reproduced in this number.

In April, 1821, the work was far enough advanced for the vestry to assemble for the first time in the new Vestry Room, where they inspected the accounts of their Treasurer, Henry Hoare. A year later they were deter-

mining the upholstery and fittings of the Church (i.e., "a velvet cushion stuffed with down, with gold cords and two gold tassels" for the pulpit, and "cushion, and green curtains with brass rods" for the Churchwardens and overseers pew (also shown in the photograph), and on April 14th, 1822, the Church was opened for Divine worship. The Bishop of London drove down in state, behind four horses, to perform the ceremony.





FAIR GREEN—ABOUT 1860.

## MISS BARTLEY.

A MITCHAM PORTRAIT.

*By B. D.*

"Lord Nelson once remarked to my Father,"—that is not a sentence that is to be heard from the lips of many people now-a-days. And yet it is only a few years ago that there passed from our midst a lady from whom they fell most naturally in the course of ordinary conversation. All but the most recent inhabitants of South Mitcham will remember well the little figure in the dress of fifty years ago that might be seen daily, in all weathers, tripping across the green, daintily holding up the voluminous skirts belonging to a bygone age, and intent on works of kindness and mercy, for all Miss Bartley's thoughts and energies were given to the performance of "good works" in the sense to which those words were understood in the age to which she belonged.

She lived at the white house upon the cricket green (now called "Ramornie"), where her father, the doctor, had set up his practice 100 years ago. Seated in her ground-floor parlour opening into the garden, on a summer afternoon, with sunshine lighting up the little strip of green bordered with old-fashioned flowers, there

were moments when a sympathetic listener could lure the little lady away for a brief hour from the engrossing round of her present activities, and encourage her to live again among the memories of the past, which, when allowed to hold sway, were evidently as vivid and real to her as was the present. In a dreamy voice she would begin to discourse on some bygone event, and once the floodgates of memory were unloosed it needed very slight encouragement from her hearer to induce a continual gentle flow of reminiscences.

Very often these began with an account of the marriage of the heiress, Miss Cranmer, to Mr. Simpson—a great event in the village, marking the introduction into Mitcham of the Simpson family, subsequently so well known to us. Then there might come a mention of her friendship with the second wife (very much younger than her husband) of the Revd. Strensham Myers, who had been Vicar of Mitcham for over fifty years, and was born in the reign of George II. Of course, she was acquainted with the Revd. Richard Simpson, Rector of Mitcham, and officiating in this office until he turned Roman Catholic and relinquished the living to a Vicar. The coming of Canon Wilson, Vicar for nearly sixty years, was spoken of by Miss Bartley as a very recent event, connected in her mind with certain changes made by him in the Sunday School, of which she was very critical, regarding them as unnecessary and too modern.

Many of Miss Bartley's possessions had histories attached to them, which she delighted to unfold, and which she related with a most refreshing naiveté. The blind which could be let down before the large window

in the garden room was of rich Chinese silk, painted with Oriental designs. It had been given to her mother early in the nineteenth century by an uncle who was a sea-captain, and had brought it home on one of his voyages. Pulling it down to display it, she regarded its slightly frayed edge with anxious eyes, wondering "if it was going to wear well!"

The wood-work of the garden room was grained like oak and varnished. The durability of this also exercised her mind sometimes. "You see, my mother had it done by the firm who had just decorated the Pavilion at Brighton for the Prince Regent, and it seems to me as if it would soon need doing again."

Time and space do not allow of the quotation of more of these quaint echoes from the distant past; but there were also other unconscious revelations coming, perhaps, in those confidence-begetting moments when the long shadows of evening began to creep across the garden; or perhaps on a winter afternoon over the fire, before the lights were lit, when the flickerings on the walls may have shaped themselves for her into forms and scenes from her departed youth. Stray words, half-suggestions, breakings off, silences more eloquent than words would be followed by a sigh and a murmur, "After all, it was so very long ago." To the sympathetic listener it seemed as though the shadows were filling the old lady's mind with the fragrant memories of some long-dead romance.

Miss Bartley and her world are gone, but the memory of her gentle presence lives on in Mitcham, where her days were spent, "like sweet airs passing by."

## RURAL MITCHAM.

RECOLLECTIONS OF AN OLD RESIDENT.

*By the late Miss BARTLEY.*

When I first remember Mitcham it was quite a village, although so large, and its two chief industries were calico printing and the Physic Gardens, which gave employment to a number of people at that time.

The Common was quite flat, the railway bridge not being then built, and the only picturesque object was the Windmill, especially when the sails were set. Geese were almost always to be seen on the Common, and also on the Greens. The railway to Croydon had a level crossing near Tramway Path, and another level crossing near Beddington Lane. Shortly before this railway to Croydon was made, a small omnibus conveyed passengers from Mitcham to Croydon Station to meet some of the trains.

The water supply at this time was from wells. There were public wells in various parts of the village to supply the cottages near. I have stood watching the women come up with a long wooden pole, having an iron hook at the end, to lower the bucket into the well, and then

raising it full to carry away. A great many of the cottagers had water butts in their gardens to catch the rain water. The Almshouses had a courtyard in front, where was a large elm tree, and it was enclosed by a brick wall. Mr. Charles Hoare, grandson of Mr. Henry Hoare, of The Grove, came to live at The Canons, and persuaded the Trustees to have the brick wall removed, and an open railing to enclose the courtyard, which was then made into a garden that it might be more cheerful for the inmates.

On the ground where the Bank now stands was an old cottage, with a little shop, to enter which one descended two or three steps. The old "Cricketers' Inn" was of red brick on the same site as now, with a low cottage at the side where the omnibuses now end their journey, enclosed by a low cottage fence. In the garden was an elder tree, so pretty with its white blossoms in spring and the berries in autumn.

Pursuing the road towards London, called Whitford Lane—on the left-hand side was a low paling enclosing meadows; on the right, two or three wooden cottages; then high trees, with wooden fence and a brick wall further on, but all enclosing the grounds belonging to "The Firs," until the Upper Green was reached. On arriving at Figg's Marsh, on the left was a large wooden house, at that time a school for gentlemen's sons, and I believe the late Lord Radstock was at school there. On the Streatham Road side of the Marsh there was a large pond, which extended from where Pain's Firework Offices now are to Graham Avenue, and there was a boat on it, owned by one of the families who lived near.

Having passed Figg's Marsh towards Tooting, there was a wood from there to where the Tooting Railway now is.

An old man who in his younger days had been a postillion for many years in the days of posting before the railways, was living in the village at this time, and was a remarkable looking personage in the costume of his former occupation. His grandchildren are still living at Mitcham and are much respected.

The Common fields (now called East Fields) were a large open space where lavender, roses, peppermint, white poppies and other medicinal plants were cultivated; no buildings of any kind were to be seen except two or three detached low cottages towards Lonesome—a very appropriate name in those days. In the fields near Merton only green fields were visible between there and Wimbledon. The South-Western Railway Station at Wimbledon had only a little ticket office and a bench on the platform to hold three or four people.

Streatham Lane, from Figg's Marsh to the Parish Schools at Streatham, was one of the most lonely roads at or near Mitcham. In the middle of the Lane there was a beer shop, but no other house.

A great many old cottages were to be seen in every part of Mitcham. Most of them have been condemned as unsuitable and destroyed—a few even of these still remain—some in an alley on the Causeway, and some in Jennings' (now Samson's) Yard. The entrance to them is now private—not public as formerly—and they are used, I think, as store places. Some large families were brought up in these tiny cottages. I remember in one of these cottages, long since pulled down, a tall

man could not stand in the sitting-room down stairs, and in another the door leading to a bedroom was only 4ft. 9in. high. There is also an old building in Samson's Yard which dates from the reign of Queen Anne, or before.

One of the old residents who had a good deal of property in Mitcham was Peter Waldo, who lived at the Elms. He was the last lineal descendant of Peter Waldo, who befriended the Waldenses in the days of persecution on the Continent. After his death his widow went to live in Hampshire, but his property eventually descended to the Rev. Waldo Sibthorpe, who gave the land on which the School Church, now St. Mark's Parish Room, was built. Sibthorpe Road, in Upper Mitcham, bears his name.

Another well-known resident in those old days in the beginning of the last century was Mr. Swain, a medical practitioner. At night he rode on horseback, as was the universal custom at that time. One night he was stopped by highwaymen, who accosted him in their usual manner, "Your money or your life!" He begged they would not detain him, as he was only a doctor on his way to see a patient who was very seriously ill, and delay might be dangerous. Hearing this, they politely apologised, saying had they known he was a doctor they would not have interfered with him.

At this time, I believe Sir Walter Raleigh's house was standing, and also one which had been occupied by Dr. Donne, both in or near Whitford Lane.

Elder trees were in many cottage gardens, the women making elder wine, and sometimes elder flower

water, much used at that time for sunburnt faces. The many ponds, too, were picturesque, although it is not easy now, with new buildings in every direction, to picture Mitcham as rural.

## MEMORIES OF OUR VILLAGE.

*By Sir T. CATO WORSFOLD, Bart.*

My earliest recollection of old Mitcham is one that at the time was an alarming experience, for well I remember the thrill that ran down my infantile spine when on a fine summer day, with the blue sky and bright sunshine above, I saw four or five sheeted ghosts rising and bending in a field. To complete the unearthly illusion each spectre was armed with a flashing knife! I did not know then, and when I was told by my nurse, I did not believe, that these weird phantoms were men busily engaged in cutting squirting cucumbers, the raising of which at that time was one of the industries that had for centuries gained for Mitcham the title of "The Herb Garden of England," when almost everything in the vegetable kingdom that had a healing virtue in the medical world was produced in the village and its vicinity.

The squirting cucumber is so called because when severed from the stalk it ejects a spray of a most acrid nature, blistering the flesh on which it falls, and there-

fore of considerable danger should a drop enter the eye. For protection of their faces the men who cut them wore folds of white muslin swathed about their heads, and hence the spectral impression *that* was imparted to the mind of the infant Worsfold.

This healing virtue of plants extended, by tradition, at least, to the tree which still stands where the road from Cranmer Bridge to Mitcham Junction cuts that which passes from the latter to the Blue Houses. To walk round this tree three times three on a windy day was said to be a sure cure for children who had whooping cough, if, I presume, they survived the treatment.

It is curious that another experience of my early youth was allied to the uncanny, for I well remember the "creepy" feeling one had in the dusk or at night walking down the Morden Road by the side of Ravensbury Park, because it was known colloquially as "Dead Man's Lane." Nobody in my young days knew whence it acquired this gruesome title, which was only explained many years later when the excavations made by the late Mr. Bidder, Q.C., in his field adjoining the Morden Road, and amplified later by Colonel Bidder, established the fact that "Dead Man's Lane" was a path through a Saxon cemetery.

In the late 'seventies Streatham Lane acquired an unenviable notoriety from the exploits of a miscreant known as "Spring-heeled Jack," whose favourite diversion was to terrify women and children at night by springing out on them from over one of the dense hedges that ran each side of the very narrow lane that led from Figg's Marsh to Streatham, a lane that was gloomy on

a bright summer day, from the lofty elm trees which met overhead in a wonderful canopy.

According to the accepted report, the apparition was clad in a black cloak, which he would throw open showing a gleaming skull and cross bones on his breast, whilst he could easily leap six feet in the air and clear fourteen feet at one bound, because he had springs in his boots, whence he derived his name of "Spring-heeled Jack." He was also wont to approach a lonely person from behind and then to place icy cold coal black hands on his unfortunate victim's face. Further alarming details were added each time he appeared, and the result of all the embellishments was that no woman or child dared venture out when it was dark, especially after our local doctors had been called in to treat cases of shock induced by fright.

Determined efforts were made to trap him by some of the stout lads of our village, disguised as females, loitering about his favourite haunts, but unfortunately nothing transpired to earn him the thrashing he deserved, and I believe his activities, ultimately, were transferred to Roupell Park, Streatham Hill, then, like Mitcham, "real country."

The Mitcham fire engine was a very important, if ancient, appurtenance of our local government in by-gone days. It was worked by hand, and the fire brigade generally, if I remember rightly, was formed of school boys, under the superintendence of our village beadle, Mr. Hill, who, in his blue coat with three capes decked with gilt buttons, staff of office and tall hat, directed proceedings in a stately if somewhat leisured

fashion. There certainly was no undignified haste when our fire engine went into action, chiefly due to its being worn out; and at last debility in its internal organs led to its inability to send out water alone for extinguishing fires. Blended with a sufficiency of mud, however, a stream could be sent some little distance on to a conflagration, and fortunately this proved very efficacious when the Heywood oil-cloth works caught fire. Water alone would have extended the flames of the blazing oil, and so the peculiarity of our fire engine proved invaluable. With the end of the hose planted firmly in a ditch of particularly juicy mud, streams of a rich consistency were poured on the burning floors of the factory and the flaming oil was subdued.

This, I believe, was the last important appearance in public of what was termed irreverently "The Village Squirt."

Another remarkable article of public service was a venerable locomotive employed to draw the early morning train to Wimbledon. This was used by a considerable number of regular passengers who, after a time, were much annoyed by the failure of the engine to draw the train into Wimbledon Station, which meant getting out and walking along the line. It was the last hundred yards that proved too much for the poor old thing, worn out by years of faithful service. At length, on the representation of the aggrieved passengers, it was taken off, a substitute being supplied for what we called "The Old Tea Kettle," and there was much rejoicing one day when a beautiful locomotive, gorgeous in green and yellow paint, and bearing the name of

"Maud" in golden letters on its side, appeared at Mitcham Station to take us to Wimbledon. For a few days we caught our train for Waterloo punctually, and without mishap, and then one morning the old catastrophe recurred. The train had hardly left Morden Station when its speed decreased and finally, after much puffing and wheezing, it stopped. After an interval we were asked to descend and walk. When we came to the engine there were the usual signs of distress, steam and warm water descending from the locomotive in fitful showers, and on close examination, it was unanimously declared that "Maud," after all, was only "The Old Tea Kettle," rejuvenated with a little solder and two coats of paint!!!. The indignation aroused resulted in her final disappearance.

Just outside the Canons, where the obelisk stands, there stood for many years a very large dog kennel, as it seemed, of brick and stone. This, somebody told me as a child, was the spot where on special occasions bear baiting with dogs used to take place, the kennel to which it was chained being the place of refuge for the unfortunate bear when too hardly pressed by its enemies.

Now let me recall some of the celebrities of Mitcham as I knew them in the olden days.

One of my earliest friends was, I think, John Bowyer, who died in 1880 in his ninetieth year. His chief claim to respect in my early years was that he had seen and spoken to the great Lord Nelson. John was never tired of telling us how well he remembered the great Admiral coming over from Merton with beautiful Lady Hamilton to see the lads play cricket on the green on summer

evenings, and then giving them a shilling each to drink confusion to the French.

On a certain occasion John Bowyer was one of the team of professionals whose surnames began with "B" matched against the Rest of England, and he was very careful to tell me that they knew how to dress in those days. This, I think, was true. On the historic occasion of this match, John and the other members of the team were arrayed in top hats, blue swallow-tailed coats with brass buttons, and nankeen smalls, finishing with white silk stockings and pumps.

There are some among us yet with a memory of Mr. Fred Gale, who, under the nom-de-plume of "The Old Buffer," used to contribute most delightful sketches of country life and sport to "Bailey's Magazine" and other sporting journals. His particular hobby was cricket, of which he never ceased to write and speak during the many years I knew him. When John Bowyer passed over, he showed me an extremely neat sketch for the latter's tombstone, the chief features of which were the wicket with the middle stump down and the bails flying, with the epitaph underneath, "Here lies John Bowyer, bowled at last—by death." As, however, our worthy vicar did not see eye to eye with "The Old Buffer," as to the suitability of this marble memorial and the inscription, it never materialised, much to Mr. Gale's regret.

Another celebrity in my eyes was one Billy Rumsey. He was decidedly a big man, and always attended the Sunday morning service at the Church in tail coat and top hat. During the week, I believe, his occupation was

that of a jobbing gardener, and I think it was said of him that when he was asked how much he charged an hour, he showed you his two spades, one large and broad, and the other a small one, explaining that if he used the large one he expected a higher reward, whilst when using the small spade he asked for less remuneration. "Billy," however, was at his best on a hot Sunday morning, when, to my great delight, he used to come to Church wearing his well brushed, but somewhat ancient top hat, and walking in his shirt sleeves with his black coat over his arm.

In front of Preshaw Crescent there used to be a large and somewhat deep pond, in my young days, known as Hill's Pond, so called because of its proximity to the Beadle's house, and here I spent many a happy hour in my infancy catching "tiddlers," being more than once retrieved by my nurse from what might have been a watery grave.

On one occasion a certain worthy Mitchamite apparently had looked on the wine when it was red, for he was discovered in the small hours of the morning, standing well up to his middle in Hill's Pond. A belated villager, hearing cries for help, came up to the brink of the pond and asked who it was. On being given the name, he said, "But where are you?" and then from the middle of the pond came the answer, "I think I must be in Holland, there is so much water about."

Further up there still stands a mile stone by which I stood to see the Prince of Wales, afterwards King Edward VII., posting to the Derby, and I remember my father telling me how he in the past had been told to



take his hat off and bend his knee as the Prince Regent, afterwards King George IV., came past, in his carriage and four, escorted by a troop of Horse Guards in full uniform, on his way to Brighton.

In olden days the only place for a political meeting, that I ever remember, was the yard of the White Hart Hotel, and I well recall the then Members, Sir Henry Peek and Sir Trevor Lawrence, addressing the electorate from the top of the stone steps that led, I presume, into the hay loft, with three or four "gas flares," as they were called in those days, to illuminate the scene.

On one occasion the opposition had been making abusive remarks, reflecting grossly on the character of the Army, with the result that at the next meeting somebody equipped a number of small boys with substantial cones composed chiefly of sulphur and gunpowder, with instructions to kindle them if any more offensive remarks were uttered against the soldiers of the *Queen*. We (I must confess it) carried out these instructions faithfully. But the result, perhaps, went further than the inventor intended, for dense sulphur fumes not only emptied the yard of our opponents, but also our friends, the whole of the audience being compelled to clear out, and the meeting finished on the Cricket Green. Other times, other manners, fortunately prevail nowadays.

Some acrimony, from what I gleaned at the time, used to prevail at the meetings of the members of the Vestry, to whom the welfare of the district was then entrusted, and challenges "to fight it out" when the meeting was over, were not only offered, but if report

was to be believed, were accepted, and carried rigorously to a finish after other business had been concluded.

As one rides along Kennington Park by the "Horns," in tram, motor-bus, or, perchance, a car, to-day, it is difficult to realise that in the early part of the 19th century it was the haunt of highwaymen, one, Jerry Abershaw, making himself particularly notorious until the neighbourhood became so hot for him that he transferred the sphere of his activities to Wimbledon Common, where ultimately he was caught. He was hanged, I believe, in the vicinity of Kennington Common, now Kennington Park, and his body placed in a gibbet just where Wimbledon Common ends and Putney Heath begins.

On one occasion he and a friend played a grievous prank on my grandfather, who at the age of eighteen, conceived a tender passion for a London damsel about the same age. Thinking to propitiate her with a gift of a pet lamb which he had taught to follow him like a dog, he packed it one day in a saddle bag, mounted his horse, and set off from Mitcham to present it to his lady-love, who lived within the sound of Bow Bells. Unfortunately, the opulent appearance of the saddle bag led to the sudden appearance of Jerry Abershaw and a companion wearing their masks, at the Plough, Clapham, with a peremptory command to my grandfather that he should "Stand and deliver," whereupon, probably scared out of his life, he urged his horse to a gallop and went for all he was worth down Clapham Road until he came to Kennington Common, where the highwaymen overtook him. When, however, they discovered that the expansive

appearance of the saddle bag was only due to a live lamb and not fat money bags, their wrath was so great, that they cut the reins of his horse and spurred it so smartly behind with their swords, that the animal bolted with my luckless forbear clinging on to the mane until sheer fatigue brought the frightened animal to a standstill. What became of the unfortunate lamb at the end of this strenuous experience I do not know.

Here let me close with one or two of my more personal recollections.

My early home, the original Hall Place, was a delightful old house as I just remember it. Though the secret chamber at the back of the fireplace, in one of the rooms, is only to-day a very faint recollection, the low ceilings, oak beams, and mullioned windows are still in my memory.

Concerning the old Chapel, of which the entrance still exists, I think there is no doubt it was the one for permission to erect which the then owner of the house—Henry Strete—had to apply three times in 1348 to the authorities, the difficulty in the way being, I suppose, that the church was quite close, and therefore this chapel or oratory was not very necessary. However, leave at last was granted on the condition that the owner always kept in repair what is known now at the Major's or the de Boudrey Chapel on the North side. From this liability for repair, I suppose, we may attribute the fact that in 1813 the ownership of the chapel was vested in the freeholder of The Hall Place. In that year, however, my grandfather was called upon to repair the chapel,

and it was sold by him, with all outstanding liabilities, to Major Moore, from whom it passed to his daughter, Mrs. de Boudrey, whence it derives its present title.

In 1745 Mitcham was greatly alarmed by the report that the Pretender's troops, having defeated those of King George at Derby, were marching on to attack London, and that our village was marked for ravage en route by the wild Highlanders. How Mitcham would be in the way of the Pretender's victorious troops passing from Derby to London is by no means clear, but if the geography was weak, the alarm was very genuine, and an old-time Worsfold assembled his fellow villagers on the front lawn at The Hall Place, armed them with flails, scythes and bill hooks, gave them a patriotic address, and called on them to rise and fight for King and Country. Whether fear or the lack of oratory was the cause, I know not, but when my ancestor had finished his speech, not a single man responded to the call to action until he had supplied them with three barrels of his best October brew. Then only, when the last drop obtainable had been consumed, did their valour assert itself, and they demanded to be led out against the savage Scots. This was the tale told to me by an old lady forty-five years ago, who was then in her 90th year. Her family had been our tenants for well over a century, and as she had heard the tale from her mother, who had witnessed it as a young girl, so she repeated it to me. I listened to it many a time, always with the same attention, and always thrilled at the incident which apparently impressed itself most on the young girl, which was the very vigorous language my thrifty forbear used when

he found he had to stand so much ale to induce a proper patriotism.

1745—1926, 181 years ago, and only one life connecting me with what happened in those far-off days! Thus my little memories of Mitcham in the past come to an end. Small beer, I am sure, to “superior persons,” but for those who knew the village in olden days and love it now, I have tried to draw from the well of remembrance a pleasant if modest draught.

Eheu fugaces labuntur anni!

T. CATO WORSFOLD.