

## MERTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

LOCAL HISTORY NOTES - 3

### **Stane Street in Upper Morden**

**by W J Rudd**

Morden Park House is served by a driveway from London Road which is now utilised also for the Merton Technical College and the Swimming Baths. A Lodge Cottage stood on the south side of the entrance until it was demolished and replaced by the present 'plastic box'. In the autumn of 1963, construction works were carried out by Post Office Telephones for a new service chamber in the public pavement of London Road near the Lodge Cottage. The opportunity was taken by the writer, in the brief time available, to examine the excavation before construction commenced. The chamber, boxed in by a board screen for safety, measured approximately seven-foot by five-foot by seven-foot deep. It was possible to examine all four sections, and photographs were taken, but it was not possible to make detailed drawings. On the north, west and south elevations a particular feature was observed, a flint-chalk-flint layer. It extended some two-thirds across the north elevation and the whole

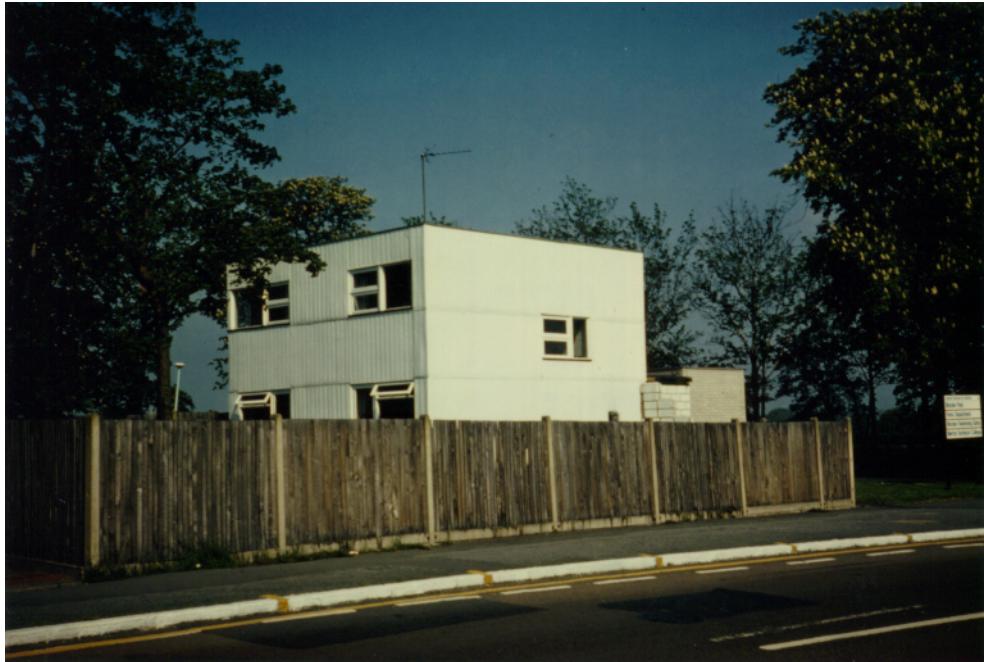
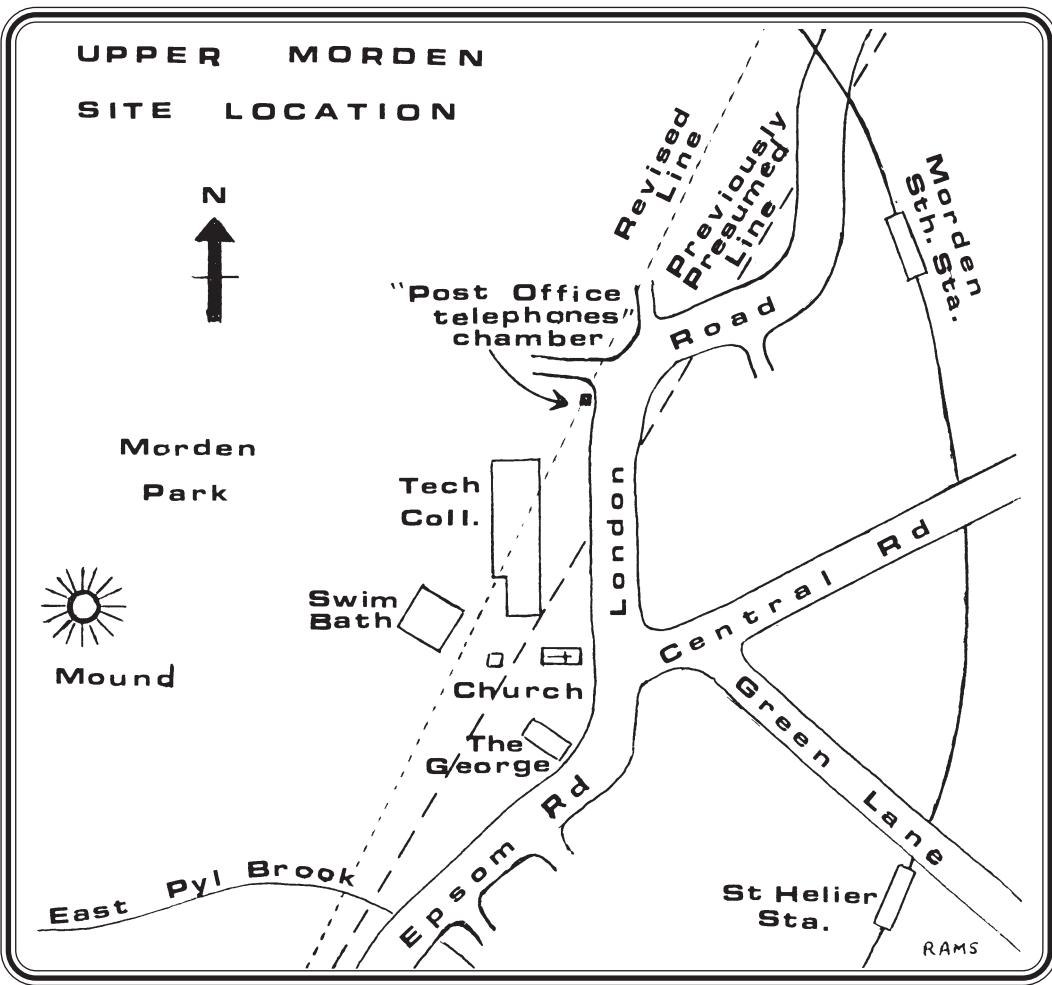
of the west and south elevations. It was at a maximum thickness of some two feet but was extremely variable, particularly the thin chalk layer. A selected part of the three elevations was measured from the surface level, and are approximate. The west and north are recorded on the plan.

Clearly, the feature is man-made, and forms a laid-down surface. More important, when plotted on a map it falls into line with the discoveries made by Dennis Turner in 1958/9 in his exploratory excavations for the Roman Road in Morden Park. It is at some depth from the pavement level and this would probably account for the fact that Dennis Turner failed to find it in the back garden of Lodge Cottage; though it did appear as a gravel layer between one and two feet in two trenches in the back gardens of Morden Park Cottages (now demolished). The Roman engineers would have used local available materials - gravels, flint and chalk - and the Road may have required some repair from time-to-time. In the centuries that followed it finally broke down but survived locally as part of the Parish Boundary over Stonecot Hill and Epsom Road.

W J Rudd February 1990



**The POST OFFICE TELEPHONES square access cover in the pavement outside Lodge Cottage in the Spring of 1964**



**London Road by Entrance to Merton Technical College - 1973**

West Face Elevation	Surface	Level	North Face Elevation
Several later path layers			Several later path layers
		1 ft	
	4 ins	5 ins?	
Hoggin ballast layer			Old granite Curb (kerb)
	2 ft		
Small pipe	4 ins		
Hoggin ballast layer			Brown stoney ballast layer
Medium pipe	3 ft		
Hoggin ballast layer	8 ins		
Small flints in soft grey clay	10 ins		
	4 ft		Grey clay flinty layer
	1 ins		
	3 ins	4 ins	Chalk layer (ends under line of curb)
Chalk layer	6 ins		
Larger flints in grey clay	5 ft		larger flints in grey clay
	9 ins		
Undisturbed London Clay	6 ft		Undisturbed London Clay
	7 ft		

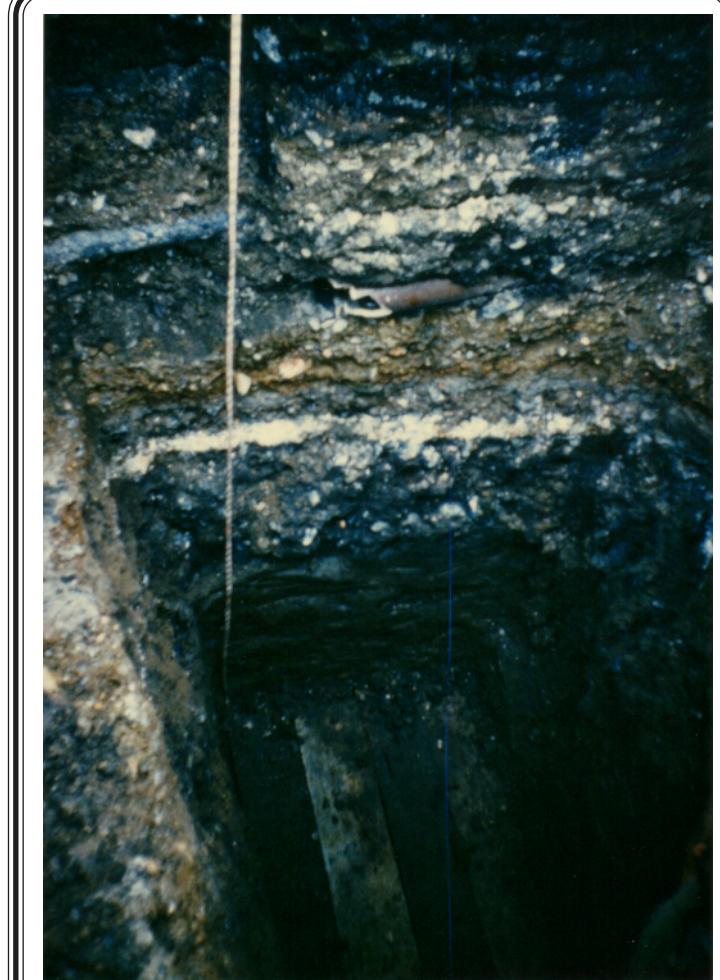
**Post Office Telephones - new chamber excavation - Autumn 1963.**



**West and North faces**



**West face**



**South face**

One point on the centre line of Stane Street seems almost certainly defined by the square access cover of the POST OFFICE TELEPHONES chamber in the west pavement of London Road about fifteen metres south of the driveway to the Technical College (TQ 25075 67665). This lies about twenty-five metres from the nearest point (TQ 25095 67650) on the alignment of Stane Street as presumed by S E Winbolt MA and by I D Margary MA and shown on the strip map in Margary's book "Roman Ways in the Weald".

As viewed and described, these layers in the excavation laid on undisturbed London Clay appear to be authentic remains of Stane Street, but absolute proof requires that the length of the section should be at least 6.7 metres - the usual width of carriageway - at right angles to the alignment of the road, which was not possible at that juncture. Furthermore no accredited person could be found to inspect and corroborate this feature during the short time available, and that explains the reluctance to publish, but no member of Merton Historical Society will doubt Mr Rudd's veracity.

Excavations during 1959 in Morden Park about 130 metres distant from here, reported in The London Naturalist No.39 p.130, were fraught with difficulties and were not entirely conclusive, whereas the excavations in Lower Morden in 1958 produced good evidence. All these archaeological vestiges are close to the direct bearing from Colliers Wood High Street to Stonecot Hill summit.

Any future research in this area undoubtedly will be greatly assisted and guided by the knowledge and information from this archaeological discovery.

C E Sole March 1990

#### REFERENCES:

- |                |  |                |
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Further information on Merton Historical Society can be obtained from  
Merton Library & Heritage Service, Merton Civic Centre, London Road, Morden, Surrey. SM4 5DX



