



CHAIR: Christine Pittman

BULLETIN No. 230

JUNE 2024



Annotated photo of the Wandle west of Merton Bridge by Board Mills, Merton High Street: E N Montague 1975 (see p.6)

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PROGRAMME JUNE – DECEMBER 2024

VISITS:

Please book with Bea beforehand: mhs@mertonhistoricalsociety.org.uk

30 June at 12noon

A Visit to Wandsworth Prison Museum

led by curator Stewart McLaughlin

(Members might also be able to be conducted around part of the prison itself,
depending on numbers, so book early!)

5 July at 10.30 for 11am

A Tour of St Peter & St Paul Church and church yard,
Church Road, Mitcham

PLEASE NOTE CHANGE OF DATE

9 August at 11 for 11.30am

A Visit to Merton Priory Chapter House

led by John Hawks

PLEASE NOTE CHANGE OF DATE

20 September at 2pm

(nearest station Central Line: St Pauls)

A Visit to St Bartholomew Church,

West Smithfield, EC1A 9DS, led by Richard Smart

TALKS:

Saturday 12 October at 2.30pm

'History of Dogs of London'

talk by Chris Burton

Saturday 9 November at 2.30pm

AGM followed by Members' Talks

Saturday 14 December at 2.30pm

'West Barnes and Motspur Park 1930/2-1940'

talk by Toby Ewin

*Meetings are held in St James's Church Hall in Martin Way, next to the church.
Buses 164 and 413 stop in Martin Way (in both directions) immediately outside.
Parking in adjacent streets is free.*

Local History Workshops: Fridays 28 June, 9 August, 27 September, 8 November 2024 from
2.30pm

at the Wandle Industrial Museum, next door to the Vestry Hall, Mitcham.

Do join us. You don't have to share any research unless you wish to.

Visitors are very welcome to attend any of our events.

ERRORS AND APOLOGIES

The Editor regrets that we made two errors in *Bulletin* 229 for which our apologies are tendered:

In paragraph 5 on page 3, the report on Alison Cousins' talk *The Wandle Portrayed*, should have stated that the painting of the Wandle by Cicely M. Barker is of **Waddon**, not Morden.

On page 1, the caption to David Luff's photo should have specified that the locomotive was a Class 70, rather than a Class 60. The information in the Workshop report on page 4 of *Bulletin* 228 is correct for a Class 60, while that in the report on page 15 of *Bulletin* 229 is correct for a Class 70 (even though it mentions Class 60). One of our (several) spotters / correctors claims that 'apparently the 70 was one of the ugliest locos ever produced'. Apologies to all, including the Class 60.

MODEL OF MERTON PRIORY

On 28 April 1961, the Committee of the Merton and Morden Historical Society voted to affiliate with the Merton & Morden Civic Society, at a cost of 10/6 [ie. half a guinea]. Civic and amenity societies were organisations, born from a movement in the mid-nineteenth century, which aimed to promote awareness of and foster pride in local areas. Some civic societies still exist today, while others fell by the wayside. Local organisations of this type which exist today are the Wimbledon Society and the John Innes Society.

Founded in 1903, the Wimbledon Society's founding principles were to safeguard the amenities of the district, to promote an interest in local history and wildlife, and to preserve objects of historical and natural interest. It is supported by the Village Hall Trust and the Wimbledon Village Club. In 1916, a museum was also established. The John Innes Society was set up in 1971 as a voluntary amenity society whose primary purpose was to preserve and enhance the special nature of the locality. It also sought to foster social and community values among the residents of Merton Park. The Civic Trust (1957–2009) united many civic societies under one banner. Although it no longer exists, there are still Civic Trust Awards for the built environment, Heritage Open Days run by local authorities and the National Trust, Green Flag Awards for environmental projects, Civic Voice, which monitors planning and promotes civic pride, and Groundwork UK.

From 19 to 26 May 1962, Merton and Morden Civic Society ran a Civic Week, which included a hobbies exhibition, a meeting held by the WEA on the Greater London Plan, a variety concert staged by local youth groups, handicraft exhibitions, a youth dance, a photographic exhibition and a British and Commonwealth cookery exhibition.

Merton and Morden Historical Society called for volunteers from the Society to help arrange an exhibition of historic photographs in the Central Library lecture hall, and also decided to build a model of Merton Priory. Using



data supplied by Miss EM Jowett and Mr Dennis Turner, this model was constructed by Mr JH Burchett of Morden Library, and painted by Mr Michael Nethersole, who is still today a member of Merton Historical Society. The elevation was partly conjectural, partly based on archaeological and other evidence. The ground plan, established by the 1921–22 excavations of Lt-Col HF Bidder, was adhered to. John Hawks of the Chapter House museum states that, though the model is inaccurate in some aspects, he thinks Bidder's plan is 'jolly good guesswork, considering the limitations he was working under, dodging oncoming trains and ferreting around among industrial buildings. Much of it was based on trial pits dug between the sleepers of a railway line that was still in regular use' (left).

A photo was published in *Merton & Morden News* on 1 June 1962, showing the Merton Priory model being admired by Mr JH Burchett of Morden Libraries, Miss Naomi Watts, chairman of Merton & Morden Council, Mr G Wooley-Baker, chairman of the Civic Society and Miss Benita Hornick, a librarian (right).

According to the newspaper report, it was estimated that over 2,000 people came to view the model on Saturday 26 May, and the exhibition was kept open for another week to allow school groups to visit.



The programme for the final day of Civic Week, which consisted of demonstrations by the Territorial Army and the Boy Scouts, a Sea Cadet display, a Civil Defence exercise, a first aid demonstration, a march led by Girl Guides, and a firework display, was scuppered by cancellations and a very small turnout, due to the cold rainy weather.

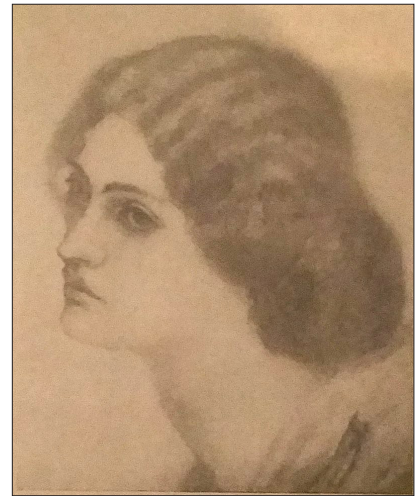
Subsequently, the Merton Priory model was exhibited at various heritage days, and then loaned to Wandle Industrial Museum in January 1995. There it stayed until January 2024. It will now be donated to the Merton Priory Trust, to be exhibited in the Chapter House, Watermill Way, Merton, alongside its 21st century equivalent, a Minecraft interactive virtual tour of the entire Merton Priory.

Christine Pittman

'JANE MORRIS – THE PRE-RAPHAELITE MUSE'

On 13 January 2024, some 30 members and guests assembled to hear John Hawks speak about Jane, the wife of William Morris, and to be introduced to a fine and extensive selection of Pre-Raphaelite portraits of beautiful young ladies.

William Morris, of course, is famous as an artist and designer, a man of strong convictions and drive, a rock of defence if you were his friend; if not then beware his short fuse. His great friend, the poet Dante Gabriel Rossetti, was a more romantic soul. Together they established the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in 1848, intending to 'refresh art', to which society they soon introduced the painter Edward Burne-Jones. In 1857 Rossetti and Burne-Jones were painting murals in Oxford, when one evening they noticed a young lady in a theatre audience. This was Jane Burden (b.1839) and the pair asked her to model for them, to which she agreed. She modelled mostly for Rossetti and later for Morris, who fell in love with her. After six months he proposed, and they were married within two years (1859), though she confessed much later that she had never actually loved him. (*Right, drawing by William of 18-year-old Jane.*)



Jane seems to have been trained in various artistic pursuits (painting, embroidery) while in Oxford (possibly in the house of Philip Webb, an architect who became a great friend of Morris), emerging as well-educated. As a model, Jane was usually depicted with red or auburn hair, but in fact her hair was a very dark brown, almost black. George Bernard Shaw was inspired by her poise and bearing to create the character of Eliza in *Pygmalion*, while the Morris household was also visited socially by Rossetti, Burne-Jones, Henry James and Ford Madox Ford.

Rossetti's wife, Lizzie, died in 1862. He became increasingly depressed, and when she was buried he interred the bulk of his unpublished poems with her, though he later had them dug up. Jane and William moved with their two daughters to London, where Jane and Rossetti grew closer; Morris was apparently in denial of the relationship, though in the 1880s he was hugely busy. Although Jane, her daughters Jenny (b.1861) and May (b.1862), and her sister Bessie (the embroiderer Elizabeth Burden) all supervised and embroidered for Morris & Co., credit for the designs were given to William Morris himself 'in the interests of commercial success'. It seems that Jane designed the famous *Honeysuckle*, much used for wallpapers and textiles.

Morris died in 1896, Jane in 1914. Like many Victorian women, her talents were under-appreciated at the time, possibly for the hints of a *menage a trois*, until a more recent re-evaluation. You may like to pursue Jane via Simon Schama's TV series on British portraiture *The Face of Britain*.

Dave Haunton

CHAPTER HOUSE CHANGES

All friends of the Chapter House are aware that the one vital thing we've been lacking since the renovation in 2018 has been the loos! The reason, of course, has been the practical difficulty and cost of drainage. So we were delighted in 2023 to have been awarded grants from the Merton Community Infrastructure Levy, not only for an internal pump and a drainage tank in the garden, but also for installation of stage lighting and sound equipment. It's a complicated site to drain, with permissions required not just for Planning but from Transport for London in respect of the bridge, from the National Grid re the pylon, and of course from Historic England because of the archaeology. The job will take around two months. We were hoping to start this in April, re-opening in July or August.

Alas, these problems are taking more time to solve than anticipated, so we've gone instead for a change of plan. The drain work will now be postponed till the winter, and we're delighted that after all the Chapter House will reopen to the public on Sunday 2 June 2024. This will mean not only that you will be able to visit us as usual on Sundays between 11am and 4pm until 27 October, but that it will give us the time we need to finalise plans for the drains through the summer, more time for the work to be done by next April, and more time to plan a programme of 2025 events. And if it means we have to do without loos for a few more months, well, there haven't been any there since 1538, and they were somewhat primitive before that, so what's new?

John Hawks

NB. Merton Historical Society's advertised visit to the Chapter House on Friday 5 July has been changed to **9 August** at 11.30am (see p.2). We are welcome to explore from 11am.

‘PAPER MAKING ALONG THE WANDLE’

On 10 February 2024, John Sheridan of the Wandle Industrial Museum introduced us into the mysteries of paper-making. The formal definition of paper is ‘random or felted sheet of isolated vegetable fibre produced by sieving the macerated vegetable fibre from a water slurry’ (Vol.24, *The Dictionary of Art*, 1996, Grove), so the main industrial requirement is an ample supply of water. The Wandle is suitable for paper manufacture in two respects – its speed, making water power available, and its clarity or cleanness: the clearer your water, the better your finished paper. Paper was used as the support for drawing, printing, watercolour painting, writing (including for some medieval manuscripts), decorating and packaging. Its use was much boosted by the introduction of the printing press in the fifteenth century.

First invented in China some 2000 or more years ago, the idea of manufacturing paper spread slowly westwards, eventually reaching Spain in the mid-eleventh century, but taking another 500 years to spread throughout Europe. The basic material was linen, cotton or hemp rags and ropes, beaten in a large amount of water to separate the fibres. These plants have long fibres, which essentially stick together without extra assistance when dried in a mass or sheet.

Originally this was a cottage industry, with the beating done by hand, but a water-powered stamping machine was soon invented. Once the fibres were thoroughly separated into a pulp in a ‘vat’, a rectangular wire grid in a wooden frame was dragged through the fibre and water slurry, collecting a layer of fibres to make a ‘mould’, which was then dried to produce a single sheet of paper. An improvement on the stamping machine for separating the fibres was the ‘Hollander’ beater. Invented by a Dutchman c.1680, this was a cylinder containing water and the raw materials, in which a central shaft fitted with knife blades was rotated.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, demand for rags so outstripped supply that wood pulp began to be used. This is not such a good material, as wood fibres are much shorter than those of linen, cotton or hemp, and require some form of ‘glue’. Paper from such a source slowly turns yellow once it is exposed to light. Various agents were tried to halt this process, the most effective being bleaching with chlorine, which eventually became the most favoured. The introduction of bleach increased the supply of rags, because coloured rags became available.

Wandle Paper Mills

The Wandle, as a relatively fast flowing river which did not dry up or freeze, was well suited for the early hand-made papermaking process. Mechanisation, which began early in the nineteenth century, meant that paper mills had to become more economical and competitive. Only three Wandle mills were able to transform themselves into major paper or board factories, by virtue of the capacity of their sites to expand, their ability to invest and modernise, and their management and marketing skills. All are now gone.

There is some speculation as to whether the **Priory mill** made parchment. This is possible as, though parchment is made from animal skins, its preparation uses water to ease the process of removing hair and flesh. There was a tank in the mill in which hides could have been soaked, but it might also have had other uses, such as brewing. The Priory would have used a great deal of parchment in its prolific transactions as a property dealer and litigant.

Carshalton paper mill produced traditional handmade paper despite mechanisation elsewhere – a ‘vat’ mill whose selling point was premium handmade niche paper. John Smeaton designed its waterwheel and machinery in 1789.

As part of trade union history, the Original Society of Papermakers was founded in 1800 as the trade union for workers in the hand-made paper business. This was a journeyman trade combination, with a regional division based at Carshalton. (In 1854 some members split away to found the United Brotherhood of Paper Makers, to represent beatermen, machinemen, and finishers, who were seen as the more skilled machine workers in the industry. Various splits and amalgamations eventually resulted in the formation of the National Union of Printing, Bookbinding and Paper Workers.) The Society survived various anti-combination laws but it declined as a result of mechanisation. The Carshalton mill closed in 1905.

Royal Paper Mills, Wandsworth used an industrialised process based on steam power and the Fourdrinier machine, which uses a moving woven [mesh](#) to create a continuous paper web by filtering out the fibres from a slurry and producing a continuously moving wet mat of fibre which is then dried in the machine. In 1854 the McMurray Bros took over the old Adkins mill, renaming it the Royal Paper mills. Lack of cotton in the 1860s resulted in the use of Esparto grass from



North Africa, which was imported via the ex-Surrey Iron Railway wharf. However, there was an extensive fire in 1903, resulting in the works' closure.

Summerstown works made 'Corruganza' corrugated cardboard boxes using wood pulp from about 1900. In 1908 one of the first strikes by women workers in trade union history achieved much publicity, but was eventually settled with both sides claiming victory (*below*). Bowaters eventually closed the works in 1989.



New Merton Board Mills (see *below*) began as an extension of an earlier paper mill. The growth of cardboard as a packaging material, replacing wooden crates, resulted in the expansion of the works onto Morris & Co's site. Wartime bomb damage and paper rationing stimulated a post-war global dash to expand with acquisitions and mergers, based on an integrated board mill. NMBM could not compete with the economies of scale achieved elsewhere, and closed in the early 1980s. There are memories of much foam in the Wandle, due to discharge of waste. Paper mill waste consists of the chemical residues from bleaching, sizing and coating, colouring agents and suspended matter such as fibres and china clay.

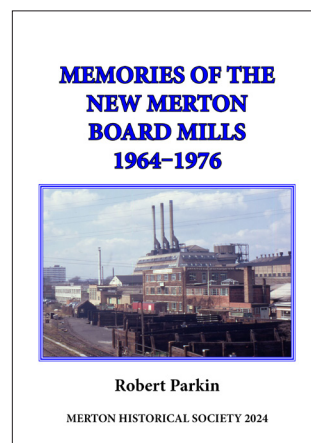
Conclusion This was one of the longer lasting Wandle industries, ranging from handmade processes to highly industrialised works in living memory. The industry is now dispersed to globalised integrated manufacturing centres close to timber sources and ports, a parallel with some of the other former water-powered industries which outgrew the Wandle.

Dave Haunton, expanded from John Sheridan's notes

HOT OFF THE PRESS!

MEMORIES OF THE NEW MERTON BOARD MILLS 1964-1976

Bob Parkin spent the first 12 years of his working life at the New Merton Board Mills, on the site of the present Sainsbury's building. Here he provides a unique personal insight into the processes and personalities of one of Merton's key industries. Within the 28 A5 pages of this booklet Bob has squeezed in 22 photos from his personal collection, never before published, plus two of Eric Montague's photographs, one carefully annotated (*see p.1*). Reduced extracts from the Ordnance Survey 1:1250 maps from the 1960s have also been annotated to show the locations of the various buildings and processes within the complex. On seeing the final draft of this booklet, Bob commented: *'With all these details, images and text we have brought back to life part of 'Old Merton'. Now gone forever, but maybe, within these pages, not forgotten'*.



If any reader has a photo of the DRG logo which dominated the structure, we would be grateful for a copy.

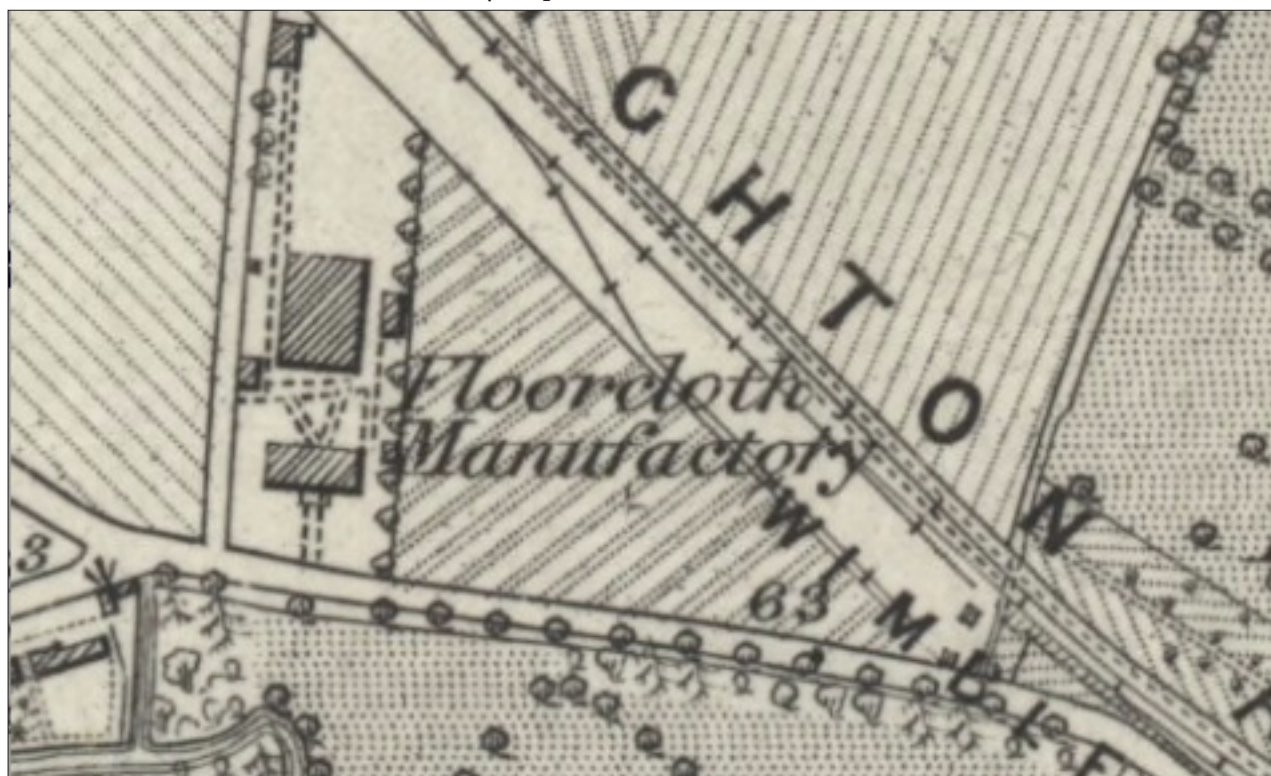
Price £2 (members £1.60) + £1 postage. Email publications@mertonhistoricalsociety.org.uk to order and pay by Bank Transfer.

NORMA COX has discovered a little-known specialist industry in

HARVEY AND KNIGHT

Floor-Cloth Manufacturers of Morden Road, Lower Mitcham

On 25 November 2023 I attended a Surrey Archaeological Society Zoom conference on *Pills, Potions and Poison*. The first lecture was on the subject of the 'nine herb charm', an old English charm for healing which used nine plants (Mugwort, Waybread/Broadleaf Plantain, Lamb's Cress, Betony, Magweed/Camomile, Nettle, Crab-Apple, Thyme and Fennel) and included two chanted poems. At question time afterwards I unexpectedly heard on-line the familiar voice of Rosemary Turner, fellow member of MHS. Rosemary said that the nine herbs of this charm all grew on Mitcham Common. Rosemary later told me that the information was from the *Bulletin* article 'Memories of Mitcham' by Benjamin Slater. His article was written in 1911 and had also been published in a book titled *Old Mitcham* by Lt-Col H F Bidder. I read Slater's article and discovered that Harvey and Knight's Floor-cloth Factory had been built on the Anglo-Saxon cemetery site and this immediately interested me. I had been looking for a Merton factory site to study and I was pleased to come across this name, for it was new to me. An Ordnance Survey map shows the site in 1871 (*below*).¹



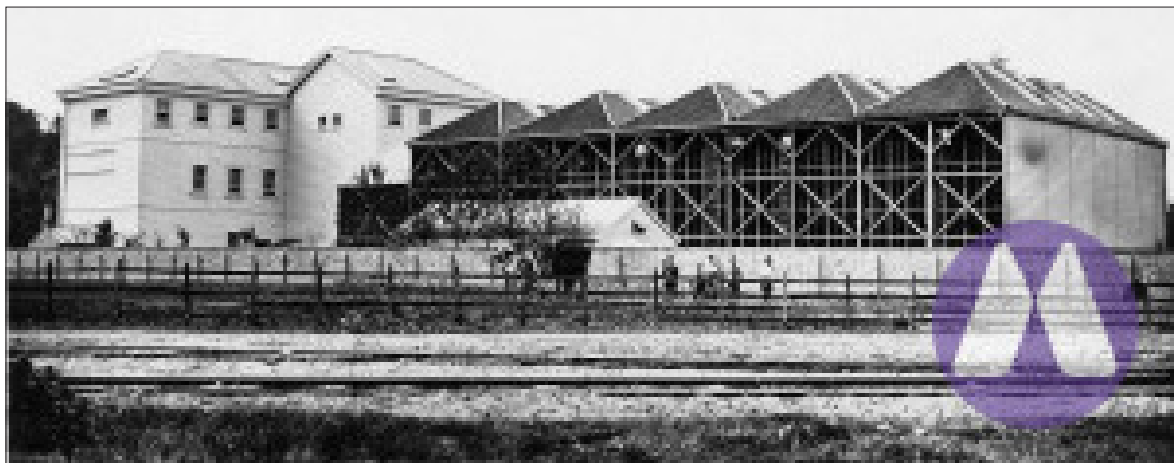
The firm had made floor-cloths which I took to mean the thick wool-like cloths used to wash floors but my interpretation was not correct. Searching the internet, I found that floor-cloths were artistically designed and had been in existence since the eighteenth century right up to the twentieth century.² They were household furnishings used for warmth or decoration or to protect expensive carpets, and were referred to as oil-cloths, wax cloths and painted canvas. Today in the twenty-first century they are still seen in American houses as artists view floor-cloths as canvases and now are applying classic American and European designs to them. These present-day floor-cloths are made of heavy weight cotton or canvas covered with five coats of special varnish which gives durability. The artist cuts and seals the edges and does not hem them to give a smoother finished product. The end product feels and acts a lot like leather.³

Another online site stated that floor-cloth, a durable floor covering made of heavy oiled and decorated canvas, originated, according to legend, in fifteenth century France. In Renaissance France or England people started to cover portions of their stone or wooden floors with sturdy cloth which withstood the tread of boots and shoes.⁴ In March 1763 Nathan Smith who was a painter-stainer of Fenchurch Street, London, patented the composition and machinery for making floor-cloths. The manufacturing process involved covering the canvas base with several coats of paint and then applying a printed pattern with wooden blocks. There is further evidence of early floor-cloth manufacture in the Trevor Square area of Knightsbridge. The factory was called Smith and Baber's (Baber was Smith's son-in law) and was built in the early 1820s for the manufacture of ornamental painted floor-cloths, an industry associated with London. By the late eighteenth century, the

process had become sophisticated, allowing production of very large elaborate patterns. However, there was a problem if the water-soluble size, which primed the canvas, got wet, as the paint would peel off. Smith's patent pressed designs into the cloth.⁵

Depending on a home-owner's status, floors were often lime washed in the servants' quarters and in poor homes. The use of painted floor-cloths which could copy the geometrical designs of expensive Italian ceramic floors, would improve the appearance of houses. These floor-cloths were seen in moderately well-off people's houses and in many great houses of England and Protestant America.⁶ The website of Beamish Museum in Durham mentions that the cheap floor-cloth also called oil-cloth was hard wearing and had many uses. If damaged, the oil-cloth could be repaired by repainting. The museum also mentions Congoleum, which was a floor-cloth with a felt base and a bitumen backing, named after the asphalt backing material which came from the Belgian Congo.⁷

The production of floor-cloth in Mitcham, as local historian Eric Montague pointed out, was an industry closely associated with varnish works. Montague noted that floor-cloths were mentioned in the Mitcham section of the Post Office directory for 1862. This was the first reference to their manufacture locally and soon the name of Harvey and Knight followed.⁸ Within four years there were other floor-cloth manufacturers such as William Henry Butler at Phipps Bridge, Hesea and Smyth, and John William Townsend, both of Church Road. The Mitcham floor-cloth and linoleum manufacturers used a lot of the 'foots' of matured varnish together with condensed 'gum fumes' and 'black oil'. 'Black oil' was a waste product which came from the vapours produced in the boiling of varnish to make black japan lacquer and the use of 'black oil' for floor-cloth manufacture was a good way to dispose of it. A small two-storied linoleum factory belonging to Henry Butler was established in the Harland's (Varnish makers) grounds in Grove Cottage, Mitcham, in the 1860s. The firm was recorded as 'floor cloth and linoleum manufacturers' in the Commercial section of Kelly's street directories up until 1910-11, but not in the 1912-13 edition or thereafter. It was also listed in Church Road, as 'trunk cloth manufacturers' in 1905-06, and as 'leather cloth manufacturer' in 1909-10 and 1910-11. Eric Montague mentioned that the works were destroyed by fire some time before WW1.⁹ Montague also noted that a linoleum building which survived until the early 1970s, was situated away from the family residence, close to the north-eastern boundary of the estate. Inside the floor-cloth building the floor was plain earth excavated to below ground level, in order to allow the maximum length of treated floor-cloth to hang from supports in the roof to dry. A c.1869 Thomas Francis photograph from *Merton Memories* shows Harvey and Knight's floor-cloth factory, taken from the north-east across the railway line (*below, with permission*).¹⁰



- 1 Map; National Library of Scotland. Surrey xiii. Surveyed 1866-67. Published 1871. <https://www.mitchamhistorynotes.com/tag/1869>
- 2 <https://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Floor-cloth>
- 3 <https://www.pamdesign.com>
- 4 https://www.thevictorianemporium.com/publications/history/article/flooring_and_carpets
- 5 <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/survey-london/vol45/pp105-106>
- 6 <https://www.buildingconservation.com/articles/floor-coverings/floor-coverings.htm>
- 7 <https://www.friendsofbeamish.co.uk/oilcloth>
- 8 E N Montague, *Mitcham Histories 8, Phipps Bridge*, 2006, Merton Historical Society p.80
- 9 E N Montague, *Mitcham Histories 12, Church Street and Whitford Lane*, 2012, MHS p.78
- 10 <https://www.photoarchive.merton.gov.uk/index.php/collections/work-and-industry/48810-harvey-knights-floorcloth-factory-mitcham>

LOCAL HISTORY WORKSHOPS

17 November 2023 5 present – Rosemary Turner in the Chair

- ♦ **Peter Hopkins** described the history of the discovery in Merton of some Anglo-Saxon objects. One such was a fifth century brooch (*right*, © British Museum) which G H Hadfield presented to the British Museum in 1923. Analysis of Hadfield's business activity of digging for sand and gravel, together with inspection of relevant maps, suggests that the brooch was found in the grounds of Long Lodge, Kingston Road.

W H Chamberlain's 1925 *Reminiscences of Old Merton* mentions other Saxon finds, made in 1882 by a Mr Harding. The 1881 Census places a Charles Harding at no.6 Church Row, Merton Park, which was separated from the brooch find by a large field which is now partly occupied by a playing field. David Bird, who drew these matters to Peter's attention, speculates that the finds might suggest a pagan burial site in the field.



(Read the book on the MHS website at <https://mertonhistoricalsociety.org.uk/merton-digital-classics-2/>)

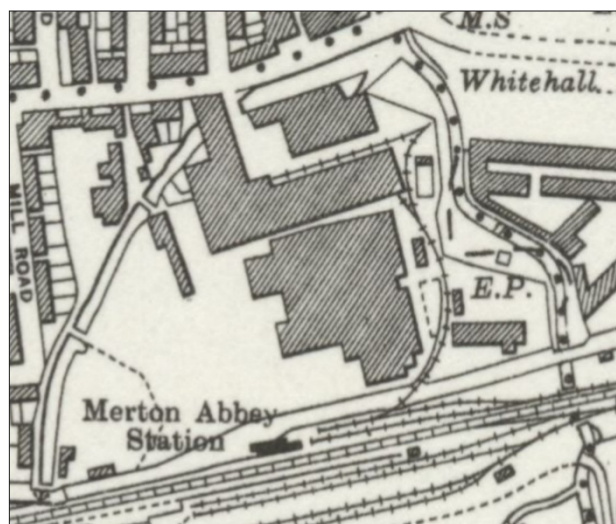
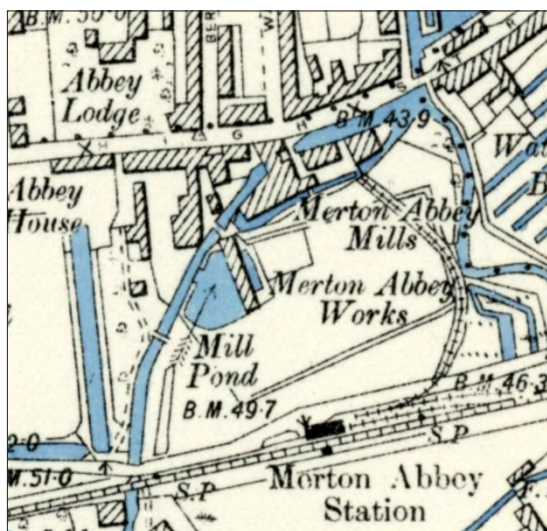
Other finds recorded in the 18th century, corroborated by MoLA, suggest that Merton Park was the site of a high status Anglo-Saxon settlement in the ninth or tenth centuries, which might explain why Merton Priory was founded there in 1114. These finds are not connected with the fifth-century brooch, although they suggest continuity of occupation of the area in the dark ages.

- ♦ **Christine Pittman** brought in a small knife, which Rosemary Turner identified as a feather curler. Christine inherited the item from her grandmother (1879-1966), who followed the feather curling occupation for a period in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when elaborate feathered ladies' hats were fashionable. Some hats even incorporated stuffed birds. Feathers could be twice the price of gold by weight. Unlike most other birds, ostriches could be farmed, and their white feathers were in demand for hats and their black feathers to adorn horses at funerals. The RSPB was founded in 1889 to fight the fashion for feathered hats, one of its founders being Etta Lemon of Croydon. The Plumage (Prohibition) Act was not passed until 1921, although the decline of the fashion had already been hastened by the advent of the motor car.
- ♦ **John Sheridan** gave an account of the shrinkage of the Morris & Co site in Merton in the decades prior to the firm's closure in 1940. Morris's 1881 lease was for a seven-acre site (*below*). According to the 'Lloyd George Domesday Survey', which took place in the years following legislation in 1910, the site then occupied about five and a half acres ('five acres, two roods, 11 poles'). Hugh Stevenson & Sons spent £300,000 rebuilding an old paper mill as the Merton Board Mills following their acquisition of its site in 1917; it is likely that they acquired part of the Morris & Co site in order to expand to the south. In 1926 they ran out of working capital and sold out to Inveresk, who remodelled the works to create the New Merton Board Mills, but they only spent £50,000 so it is unlikely that it was they who acquired the Morris & Co land.

The expansion of the works may be seen by comparison of the 1913/14 and 1933/34 OS maps (*overleaf*). Some time around 1920 John Corfield acquired most of the eastern side of the Morris & Co site to build his metal pressing works which opened in 1922. In 1936 British Rotherm built their bimetallic thermometer manufacturing works on a smaller site next door to Corfield's factory.



The original Morris & Co site. The area in dashed outline was reserved for William De Morgan, but he did not take it up. Reproduced with thanks to D Saxby and MoLAS.



Ordnance Survey maps, surveyed 1913/14 and 1933/34, showing the expansion and extension to the south of the New Merton Board Mills and the appearance of the Corfield works. In addition, the mill pond disappeared and the course of the Pickle Ditch was changed during the interval between the two maps. By permission of the National Library of Scotland (<https://maps.nls.uk/>).

William Morris produced printed textiles using vegetable dyes, wooden printing blocks and outdoor space to dry the finished product. The disposal of land was doubtless driven by a number of factors. First, Morris did not require the whole of the site for drying purposes; indeed he regarded part of the land as an amenity to be enjoyed by himself and his workforce, and he had been ready to sub-let part of the site to William De Morgan to establish a fine art pottery (De Morgan instead acquired a site on the corner of High Street Colliers Wood and Byegrove Road). Secondly, after Morris's death, the firm reduced its land use by placing more emphasis on other products, by adopting more modern methods, and by contracting out at least some of its textile printing. One such contractor was Stead McAlpin of Carlisle. John brought in a book entitled *Two Centuries of English Chintz 1750-1950, as Exemplified by the Productions of Stead McAlpin & Co*. This publication refers to Morris as one of the designers that Stead McAlpin used, but it does not give any details of which designs they printed before Morris & Co closed. (They also printed Morris textile designs after the closure.) A further factor might have been that Morris & Co needed the money from the disposal of their interest in the land. An aerial photograph on the Historic England website shows the site in 1929, with no visible sign of an area for textile drying.

Further avenues suggested for research into Morris & Co's outsourcing of textile printing could be the V&A Museum; Arthur Sanderson & Sons Ltd, who acquired the Morris & Co wallpaper designs and printing blocks but who also printed fabrics; and the Museum of Domestic Design and Architecture. The John Lewis Partnership, which owned Stead McAlpin between 1965 and 2007, has an incomplete Stead archive, but Stead McAlpin itself has not responded to a request for archival information.

- ◆ **Graham Mills** explained his role as a director of the Rutlish Charity, which had been set up to provide funding for the education of children of the parish of Merton. A book of the charity's accounts dating from 1740 to the early 19th century had come to light. The accounts were signed off annually by the vicar. Typical entries related to grants to employers for taking on apprentices. The Charity later helped support Rutlish School.

No historical work on the accounts had been undertaken as yet. Notwithstanding the challenge of reading the handwritten document, it was suggested that an ideal first step might be to catalogue and digitise it. A simple analysis of how the trades and businesses mentioned in the accounts rose and fell over time would be of interest. Another analytical possibility was to match individuals named in the accounts with census records. As the 1841 Census was the first to collect meaningful population data, it is likely that individuals recorded in the charity accounts as beneficiaries of apprenticeship grants would have been significantly older by the time of the census. Relevant information about the history of the charity might be available at the Surrey History Centre. Some other contextual information was contained in Colin Brock's *History of Rutlish School 1895-1995*, and in a plaque at the school naming staff and pupils who died in WW1.

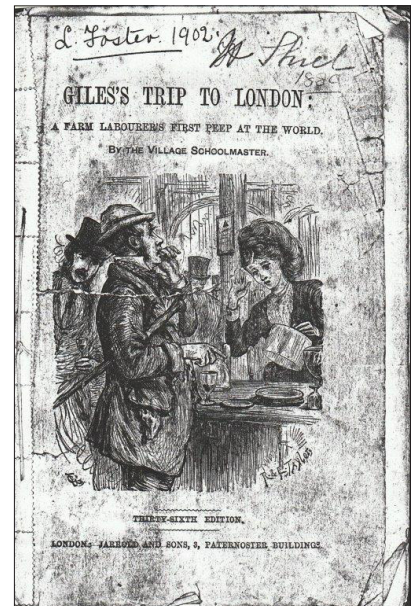
Graham referred to a six page document compiled by himself, from his father's account of his grandfather, Walter H Mills (1897-1953). This was in turn based on a document (now lost) written by WHM, giving autobiographical details. In 1901 Walter was living in Wandsworth with his father, Henry Augustus Mills.

Walter was orphaned at 10, had left school at 14, had served in WW1, and had risen to be deputy secretary of the British Railways Board. It was thought that ill health caused by war service had contributed to his early death. Graham asked about sources of information with which to supplement his own note. Suggested sources for further research were The National Archives military records, both general and medical, the MOD in relation to medals, and the various ancestry websites. *The Genealogist*, *Ancestry* and *Findmypast* all had strengths and weaknesses. It was not worth subscribing to all three, but they did offer free trials.

- ♦ **Rosemary Turner** brought in a photocopy of the cover of a book titled *Giles's Trip to London, A Farm Labourer's First Peep at the World*, published in 1878 (36th edition) (right). The book was one of a series of popular, whimsical, somewhat patronising, imagined tales for Victorian readers of the adventures of naive people taken out of their normal milieu.

Rosemary also brought in a large print of a pre-war photograph of the interior of the Haberdashers' Hall in the City of London, which had been destroyed by enemy action on 29 December 1940. The print was one of a number of copies which were distributed to members of the company. The archivist of the Worshipful Company of Haberdashers had accepted the print to add to their records.

Finally, Rosemary brought in several pages of a 1912 edition of the *Daily Sketch*, carrying news of the rescue by RMS *Carpathia* of people in lifeboats who had escaped from the sinking RMS *Titanic*. In all, the *Carpathia* rescued 705 people. The *Sketch* carried reports and personal histories, and many photographs, some taken from the deck of the *Carpathia* of lifeboats and of individuals being rescued.



John Sheridan

19 January 2024 7 present – John Sheridan in the Chair

- ♦ **David Luff** said the structure of the bridge over the Wandle at London Road/Bishopsford Road that was damaged in 2016 dates from the first World War, after the building of the current Phipps Bridge. He showed us the only (2023) photographic record of the channel change to the Pickle Ditch by Walsh's bleaching ground.
- ♦ **Peter Hopkins** has started experimenting with an interactive map of Saxon period sites on our website, to eventually include find spots, landscape and place-name clues and manuscript sources (<https://mertonhistoricalsociety.org.uk/anglo-saxon-sites-in-merton-test-page/>). He was delighted that Rob Briggs, speaking at a SyAS meeting, mentioned a Merovingian Frankish coin from the early 7th-century, discovered on the priory site in the 19th century (right). It had been framed and looped, presumably an heirloom worn as a brooch or other item of jewellery, so we have no idea of when it was lost in Merton. Peter is trying to identify and then incorporate into his map the boundary markers of the estate at Merton granted in 967 by King Edgar to Ælfheah. These start at the south-east corner at a boundary pool in the Wandle, and proceed clockwise westward along the boundary with Morden, past 'Bena's barrow' to meet the Beverley Brook and follow it north, among many indications of wet land and standing water, to the boundary with Wimbledon. This is followed eastward with no intermediate landmarks (following a track?) to the Wandle crossing at 'bradenford', presumably at Merton bridge, and then south along the Wandle. The possible locations of 'Bena's barrow' provoked much enjoyable discussion, ending with fairly general agreement that it may well have been at the only point where the 30m contour reaches the parish boundary, a little to the south-east of Cannon Hill Lane, between Morden Park and Cannon Hill.
- ♦ **Christine Pittman** was intrigued by William Giles, native of Mitcham, subject of an article by Eric Montague in *Bulletin* 118 (June 1996). In 1841 William was a manager for the South Australia Company, naming the settlement he managed as the City of Mitcham, now a suburb of Adelaide. Christine pursued him on ancestry.com and discovered that William was born in Great Stourton, Cambs., in 1791, left for Australia in 1836 (when Adelaide was founded), and sired no fewer than 12 children, some here in Mitcham, and some in Adelaide. A considerable progeny ensued and spread across southern Australia.
- ♦ **Rosemary Turner** had tried reading the *Giles's Trip to London* book mentioned at a previous workshop but it was written in Norfolk dialogue and was difficult to follow. Rosemary had contacted the publishers to find out when her version had been published but the company had changed hands and they had no records for the period.

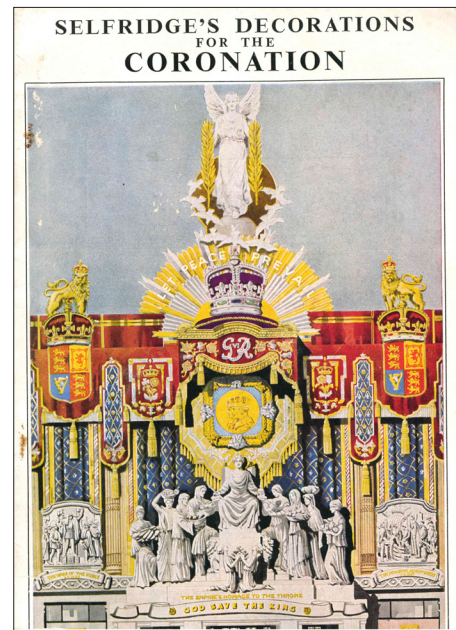


Rosemary brought along a booklet entitled *Selfridge's Decorations for the Coronation*, (the 1937 one) which needs its own article. (Front cover, right)

Member Jenny Harper emailed about the exercise book Rosemary brought to a previous workshop (*Bulletin* 228). She had found two similar notebooks in her late mother's effects, presumably from the time that her mother spent in the Ministry of Labour / the Factory Inspectorate in 1947-60. The cover has a printed Code 28-74-0 and crown GR. It was supplied by Public Service and was an index book 136, with a line of text at the bottom containing T91-8712 wt 6270/6756 52,000bks 11/51 MD & Co. Ltd. Jennifer agrees that the 52,000 bks probably refers to the print run. She points out that school exercise books usually had a local authority badge on them. (Rosemary's parents in law had both worked in the civil service.)

- ◆ **John Sheridan** gave us a short account of his extensive researches into the local efforts to commemorate Merton Priory, their partial success, and their ultimate fate. A full article will follow.

Dave Haunton



1 March 2024 12 in attendance – Dave Haunton in the Chair.

This was a wide-ranging meeting, as several people attended for their first or second time. We hope they decide to join us again.

- ◆ **Lorraine Marie** has been researching the history of her house, 27 Merton Hall Road. She discovered that it was once owned by Bertha Lorisignol, a founder member of the Wimbledon Suffragettes, who lived there for three years. It is not known if committee meetings were held there. Lorraine is liaising with Bertha's great-granddaughter to write a book about her. We hope Lorraine may write an article about her research.
- ◆ **Steve Parsons** has also been looking into the history of his (and his wife, Margaret's) home, a maisonette in Liberty Avenue (originally part of Phipps Bridge Road), and the area around it. He had looked at their Lease and old OS maps to find out about the alterations, and noted that the layout of maisonettes in Runnymede, constructed in 1937, was due to an electricity pylon which had later been moved. (David Luff mentioned that it had been moved in 1970, using a helicopter, while he was working at Liberty's.) Steve's lease indicated that the land between the Pickle and the Bennett's Mill Stream was sold to Liberty & Co in 1922 and then sold for the building of the maisonettes. Steve had found a photograph on the *Merton Memories* website of WW2 bomb damage to 75 and 77 Runnymede which showed the view from their property.
- ◆ **Christine Pittman** has been researching the Merton and Morden Historical Society Players in the 1950s. They may have grown out of a group who organised a float, depicting the coronation/marriage of Queen Eleanor and Henry III, for the 1953 Queen's Coronation carnival procession. It won first prize of ten guineas (£10 10s 0d) for the best float by a local society (right).



The Players staged *She stoops to Conquer* to raise funds, while *The Imaginary Invalid* was put on for charity. The name Oliver Reed appears in their programmes (left). Christine has not been able to find a definite link to the actor, who is known to have lived in Wimbledon and would have been a junior member at the time. He started his professional career in 1955, while these plays were being staged. David Luff said that people have tried before to prove that our man was the actor, without success. Bill Bailey said that his brother was a newspaper reporter and may be able to help. Lionel Green wrote a script for the Players to perform three scenes from Nelson's life which would have been performed outdoors during the October 1955 pageant to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar. This did not happen as a sponsor could not be found. Does any member have information or photographs relating to the Players or their events?



- ◆ **David Luff** showed photographs of the big seaplane building which had been moved from Southampton to south of the railway tracks west of Wimbledon Station.
- ◆ **Karen Ip** has been researching Mary Tate's Almshouses and is writing a book, but at a late stage has got sidetracked looking into one of Mary's half-brothers. Mary's mother was Bridget Moore and her father was

George Tate. William Moore, Mary's eldest half-brother from Bridget's first marriage, is strangely not mentioned in any family documents, and he died young and unmarried in 1808 in Bracknell. Karen read his very brief will at the workshop, and in it he mysteriously leaves everything to a woman called Elizabeth Hurne. Karen mentioned that TNA holds a probate lawsuit document relating to the will – Hurne v Moore – she will visit the Archives to investigate.

- ◆ **Bill Bailey** had been working with Sarah Gould, looking at newspapers for her *There's More to Morden* project. The Local Studies Centre had inquiries from children asking about what happened in Morden in WW2; he had prepared a chronology of the war incorporating things of interest including how much was done by volunteers, lots of whom were women. Sarah is thinking of using some of this for an exhibition on the 80th anniversary of D-Day or for Armistice Day. It will include photographs; one is of the Congregational Hall in South Wimbledon as a big British Restaurant.
- ◆ **Rosemary's daughter**, a teacher, has borrowed the parachute that Rosemary showed us in the 25 August 2023 workshop (*Bulletin* 228).
- ◆ **John Sheridan** has continued looking into the Merton Priory Stone and Commemorative Garden. He showed aerial photos and maps which indicated the exact site of the garden and of the stone within the garden. He would continue to investigate the conveyance of the site from Corfield Industries to Merton and Morden UDC in 1937, and its subsequent conveyance by LB Merton to Savacentre in 1986. The question at issue was the status of any condition that Gilliat Hatfield had imposed as an intermediary in 1937 that the site should be used in perpetuity to commemorate the priory.
- ◆ **Peter Hopkins** had been told by David Bird about two Saxon items relating to our area listed in the British Museum online catalogue. One was the fifth-century saucer brooch that Peter had mentioned in November. The other was a fragment from a seventh-century hanging bowl found in 'Morden, Surrey'. It is described as a copper alloy fragment – an escutcheon inlaid with white enamel in geometric border, pelta and kite-shaped motifs, diameter 48mm. The entry says it had been donated by Sir Augustus Wollaston Franks, the Museum's first Keeper of British & Medieval Antiquities & Ethnology. Peter had looked at Surrey Archaeological Society's library copy of the book by (Bea's uncle) Robert Bruce-Mitford, the expert on hanging bowls. The book includes the fragment from Morden (*right*, © British Museum). Peter wondered where it had been found and he had two candidates: Bena's barrow, near Cannon Hill, and Gilden Hill, off Green Lane near to St Helier station. He has not been able to find out if any archaeological investigations have been undertaken in those places. A full article is promised.



Peter is hoping for comments on his draft Anglo-Saxon sites webpage; and he is still trying to interpret the rooms in the plan of Goldsmid's house.

Rosemary Turner

Next Workshops Fridays 28 June, 9 August, 27 September, 8 November 2024
from 2.30pm at Wandle Industrial Museum. All welcome.

ARCHAEOLOGY IN MERTON 2022

Each note is a précis from: Dan Nesbitt and Bruce Watson *London Fieldwork and Publication Round-up 2022* published as *London Archaeologist* Volume 17, Supplement 1 (2023). There were no full archaeological digs in the London Borough of Merton, only a few watching briefs. Those showing anything in our area comprised:

19-21 Lyon Road, Colliers Wood, SW19: Natural sands and gravels sealed by alluvium from prolonged periods of flooding from the Wandle, cut by two large channels dating from the 16th to 19th centuries, possibly for the farming of oysters or mussels. Very conjecturally, these may have been originally cut for Merton priory, and maintained subsequently by local people.

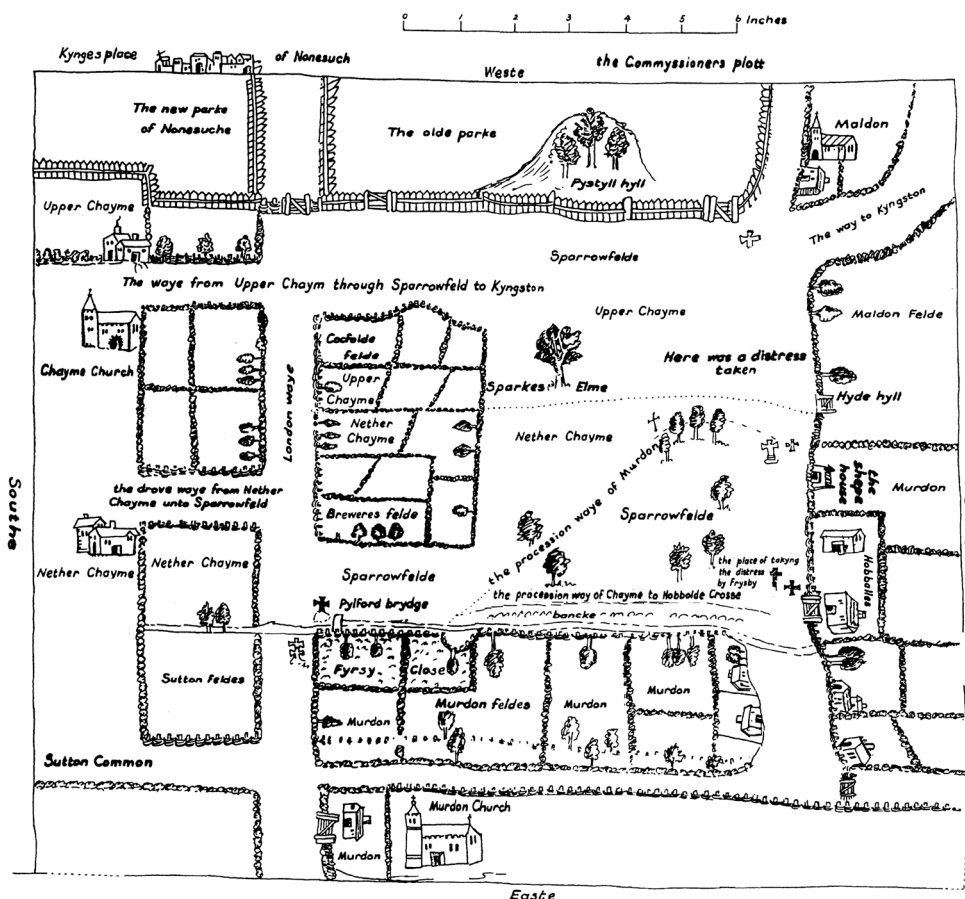
15 North View SW19: Nothing earlier than the 18th century. A stone-capped well and a ditch (filled in the mid-18th century) may be related to a laundry known to have been on the site at that time.

Brookfarm House, 1 Station Road, SW19: Natural sands and gravels under alluvial silts, which were deposited by regular flooding after the dissolution of Merton Priory, due to neglect of the local water management system. A wall and footings were found, interpreted as the western boundary of the 18th-century Abbey House Estate.

PYSTYLL HYLL AND THE CUDDINGTON/CHEAM PARISH BOUNDARY

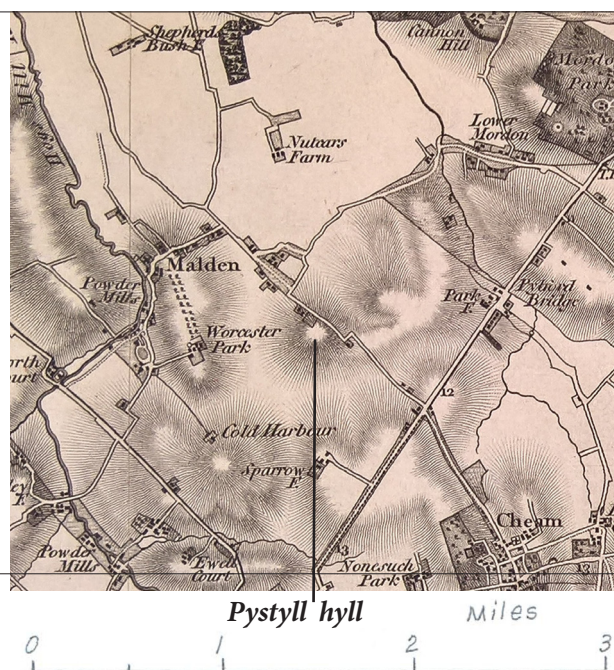
By the time the 1553 plott was drawn, Nonsuch Palace had been built and much of the parish of Cuddington had been imparked. The plott shows the pale of the Great Park running along the line of the Cuddington/Cheam parish boundary.

The old civil parish of Cuddington ceased to exist in 1933 when it was divided between the Borough of Epsom and Ewell and Cheam, but the earlier boundary ran in a straight line from a point on London Road opposite Hemingford Road to the junction of Balmoral Road with Central Road.



Pystyll hyll is shown on the 1553 plott just inside the park pale; it has steep sides and is crowned with three trees. The first edition of the 1 inch to 1 mile Ordnance Survey map (*right*) published in 1816 is hachured to depict the topography and Pystyll hyll is a prominent feature; its summit 127.5 ft above OD, is marked on later maps with a trigonometrical point, the site of the pillar being close to the junction of Kingsmead Avenue and Balmoral Road.

It is likely that Pystyll hyll is an old form of Epistle hill, referring, in this context, to the point on the Rogation procession where the priest read an Epistle from the New Testament. The known recorded forms of the name are: c.1240 Pistelegh, 13th. cent. Pistell, 1423/4 Pistelhill, 1427 Pistelhill, 1515 Pistill hill, 1553 Pystyll hyll, 1560 Pistelhill. (The 1553 form has been transcribed from the plott, the other forms are from secondary sources; those of c.1240 and 13th cent. in Kenneth N. Ross, *A History of Malden*, 1947, p.35.)



The suggestion that Pystyll may be an early form of Epistle is supported by Professor Richard Coates (pers. comm.) who says that “epistle could appear as Middle English pistel and the like well back into the early 13thC (maybe even pre-Conquest) so there’s no reason why it couldn’t appear in this name, for whatever reason [citing Aelfric’s homily in *Die Pentecostell* (Middle English version in Lambeth MS 497)]: ‘Hit is ireht on þes pistles redinge...’ ‘It is explained in reading the epistle...’ No other candidate etymology springs to mind.”

The Cuddington/Cheam boundary is not specifically identified on the 1553 plott as a procession way, but this need not surprise us as the purpose of the map was to serve as evidence in the Morden/Cheam boundary dispute, both contested routes being shown on the map. The evidence of the c.1240 reference to Pistel suggests that Rogationtide processions had begun by this date and probably earlier. The first processions took place in Gaul in the 5th century to bless the growing crops and at the English ecclesiastical council of *Clofesho*, convened by Archbishop Cuthbert in 747, they were given the name rogations and fixed for the Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday before Ascension Day. At some date during the 13th century the processions performed the additional function of beating the parish bounds (Ronald Hutton, *The Stations of the Sun*, Oxford, 1996, pp. 277-287).

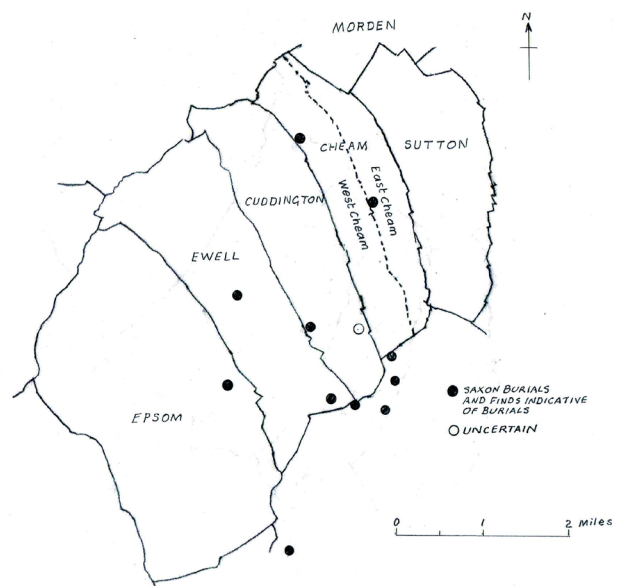
The Cuddington/Cheam parish boundary has the additional significance of marking the boundary between the hundreds of Copthorne and Wallington and as such probably pre-dates the parish boundary by some three centuries. John Blair is of the opinion that this particular boundary was a section of a ‘primary boundary’ that extended from the Thames at Mortlake to the Surrey/Sussex county boundary at Horley (*Early Medieval Surrey*, Alan Sutton/Surrey Archaeological Society, 1991, Ch.1). These suggested ‘primary boundaries’ divided Surrey into four *regiones*, each based on a royal vill and, according to Blair, were possibly of pre-Saxon origin. In any case, the Cuddington/Cheam boundary appears to be of considerable antiquity and the fact that this section is straight suggests that it was drawn across an open landscape with few suitable features to serve as natural boundary markers.

A survey of Nonsuch Great Park of 1608 records Pystyll hyll as ‘Brickhill’ (C.F. Titford, ‘The Great Park of Nonsuch’, *SyAC*, 64, 71-90) and the author notes a nearby brickfield on the 1867 OS map. The Greenwoods’ map of Surrey of 1823 has the name ‘St Andrews Hill’ at this point, but I can find no explanation for this or any further reference.

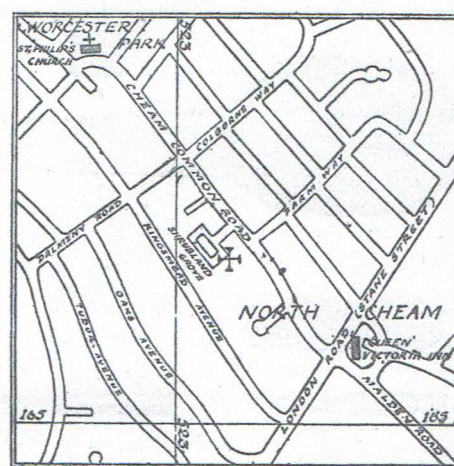
Although Pystyll hyll appears to be a likely location for a moot or hundred meeting-place (Aliki Pantos, “On the edge of things’: the boundary location of Anglo-Saxon assembly sites”, in David Griffiths, et al (eds), *Boundaries in Early Medieval Britain*, Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2003), there is no evidence for this, and in the reign of Edward I the Sheriff’s Tourn for Copthorne hundred was held at Lethe Croyse on the Fetcham/Great Bookham parish boundary (John H. Harvey, ‘The Hundred of Copthorne and Effingham’, *SyAC*, 50, 157-161).

It has been noticed for many years that Saxon burials often occur on or close to territorial boundaries, but until statistical methods were employed it could not be confidently stated that, of all the known burials in a given area, a statistically significant proportion of them were on or near boundaries. However, the questions of definition are complex and the reader is referred to Ann Goodier’s 1984 paper for details (‘The formation of boundaries in Anglo-Saxon England: a statistical study’, *Medieval Archaeology*, 28.1, (1984), 1-21). Suffice to say that a relationship was proven and, in view of its possible relevance to our present study of the Cuddington/Cheam boundary, it is worth following up here.

The map (right) shows a block of five parishes between Epsom and Sutton on which all the known Saxon burials, both cremation and inhumation, have been marked. Certain finds, including cemeteries, are indicated by solid circles and doubtful ones by open circles. The sites are plotted from the National Grid references provided by Audrey Meaney and John Morris and the map in Peter Harp and John Hines’ article on an Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Tadworth, (Meaney, *A Gazetteer of Early Anglo-Saxon Burial Sites*, London: Unwin, 1964, pp. 237-245; Morris, ‘Anglo-Saxon Surrey’, *SyAC*, 56, 132-158; Harp & Hines, ‘An Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Headley Drive, Tadworth, near Banstead’, *SyAC*, 90, fig. 1, p. 118).



It is not intended to described all these sites, but to focus on one, just one-third of a mile south-east of Pystyll hyll where, in 1941, a Saxon spearhead was found in the garden of No.3 Shrubland Grove at a depth of 3ft (*right*). No other finds were recorded, but as spearheads usually accompany burials Mr Carpenter, the area local secretary of Surrey Archaeological Society who reported the find, suggested that the actual burial had been ploughed out in the Middle Ages (SyAC, 51, 151-2). The date of the spearhead was believed to be Mid-Saxon rather than Early Saxon, the period to which most 'furnished graves' belong. Rob Poulton (*The Archaeology of Surrey to 1540*, Guildford: Surrey Archaeological Society, 1987) noted that in Surrey the practice of depositing grave-goods ceases c.700, while the date of the spearhead could be later than 650, allowing for the possibility that it was originally deposited in a grave. The fact that it was found only 65 yards or so from the parish boundary supports this view.



*MAP SHOWING SITE
of FIND*

*SCALE ~ TWELVE INCHES EQUAL ONE
MILE*



INCHES

Finally, I would draw attention to the site in the centre of Cheam (*see map on preceding page*) where, according to the Greater London Sites and Monuments Register a find of 'Saxon spearheads' was made in Sears Park (Museum of London, *The archaeology of Greater London*, MoLAS monograph, 2000, p. 205 & Map 9). Although this site is mid-way between the parish boundaries of Cuddington and Sutton it is only 60 yards from the equally important boundary between West (or Upper) Cheam and East (Nether) Cheam. The division probably occurred before the Norman Conquest, but the evidence is uncertain. By the 13th century West Cheam was in the possession of the prior of Christ Church, Canterbury and East Cheam belonged to the archbishop (*The Victoria History: Surrey*, 4, p. 196). The relevant pre-Conquest sources have been pronounced either spurious or inauthentic, so perhaps the spearheads are an archaeological clue as to the date of the division.

HELP WANTED: GAS LIGHTING IN MITCHAM

Patricia Hillsley writes from Western Australia: I lived at 319 Commonsides East, Mitcham from 1940 until 1959. I am writing an account of my life for my granddaughter and would like to check my memories. I am sure that as a girl we had only gas lights at this address and that **the street lamp outside the house was lit and put out by hand.** Can anyone confirm this?

[NB. In 1959 the *Mitcham News & Mercury* reported that the council had reached Stage 15 of its street lighting programme, and that 120 roads would soon have electric lighting in place of lamps lit by town gas. This town gas was made locally, at the gas works in Western Road. Coal was delivered by rail to Benedicts Wharf, where several sidings came off the railway line between Morden Road and Mitcham. Coal was then moved by road to the gas works.]

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