



CHAIR: Christine Pittman

BULLETIN No. 232

DECEMBER 2024



*Abbey Mills Waterwheel (see p.16.)*

## CONTENTS

<b>Heritage Discovery Day</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Your new committee</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Programme December 2024 – April 2025</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Commemorating Merton Priory 2: stone design, unveiling, fate – John Sheridan</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Merton Park Studios – Dave Haunton</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>‘The Grand Old Man of Mitcham’ James Thomas Pepper (1840-1927) – Susan Pepper</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>History as an escape from reality – Christine Pittman</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Local History Workshops:</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>2 August:</b> Surrey sources; priory wall; 1833 aqueduct; 1923 Mitcham by-election	
<b>27 September:</b> Wheelwright and chemist; medieval tiles; Wandle viewpoints; Colefax & Fowler; William Bailey; Alexander Gibbs; early Mitcham Labour	
<b>Hancor of Mitcham: makers of advertising products – Norma Cox</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Comments on <i>Bulletin</i> 231</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Hot off the press!</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Visit to Mitcham parish church, St Peter and St Paul – Christine Pittman</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Visit to the Chapter House and Abbey Mills – Christine Pittman</b>	<b>16</b>

## HERITAGE DISCOVERY DAY

No fewer than ten of us (not all at the same time) served our stall in Merton Civic Centre during our grand day out on 17 August for the tenth annual such Day. (This also marked the thirtieth year of Merton's Heritage Service.) Rosemary later said 'she had a brilliant day and was glad she did an extra shift as she got cake' (a special one decreed by Sarah Gould to mark the 30 years). The second floor held the usual exhibitions from local societies as well as a thought-provoking display of photos of Heritage Service events. Our three tables – publications and slide show (*right & below*) – and David Luff's colourful displays of Sindy dolls and small-scale models on the theme of 'Transport in Merton' (trains, buses, lorries, metal as well as plastic) (*at foot of page*) were sited in the atrium to the Council Chamber, which gave us the opportunity to interest the people queuing for the short talks held therein. Much chat ensued; Brenda Fraser, our Deputy Mayor, commented favourably on our slide-show. Our photos are by Rosemary Turner (*above*) and Irene Burroughs (*below and at foot*).



All but two of our free samples (Local History Notes and past *Bulletins*) were taken – which does not leave us much to give away next year. We offered four elderly 'rare' (non-MHS) books for sale with 'no reasonable offer refused', and all four were snapped up, for the surprising total of £25! Many MHS publications were sold (with, as usual, some unexpected ones sold out), for a further £47.75.

One new member was enrolled, two others have joined us subsequently, and another lady plans to attend our meetings.

Interesting conversations with visitors took place, including a lady with wartime memories of working at Lines Bros (mornings in the office, then doing war work in the welding department in the afternoons!), which we hope to record for publication. We made contact with people from Merton Community Hub and Pre-Construct Archaeology, and with Dr Jack Hogan of South East Rivers Trust, who is researching the changing course of the historic Wandle – and who wants to buy lots of our publications!



Dave Haunton

## PROGRAMME DECEMBER 2024 – APRIL 2025

**Saturday 14 December at 2.30pm**                      **‘West Barnes and Motpur Park 1920–1940’**  
a talk by **Toby Ewin**, local historian

**Saturday 11 January 2025 at 2.30pm**                      **‘Paper Conservancy’**  
a talk by **Joyce Brown**, practising volunteer conservator

**Saturday 8 February at 2.30pm**                      **‘Transport History in Merton Park’**  
a talk by **Bruce Robertson**, local historian

**Saturday 8 March at 2.30pm**                      **‘Morden Cricket Club and its History’**  
a talk by **Derek Ballard**, Club captain

**Saturday 12 April at 2.30pm**                      **‘Lost English Country Houses’**  
a talk by **Matthew Beckett**, amateur country house historian

*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 20 December 2024, 31 January and 14 March 2025 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.**

## YOUR NEW COMMITTEE

At our AGM on 9 November, the following were elected:

Chair: Christine Pittman

Vice Chair: Dave Haunton

Secretary: Rosemary Turner

Treasurer: Janet Holdsworth

Committee: Ian Aldridge, Irene Burroughs, Peter Hopkins, David Luff, Bea Oliver, Tony Scott and San Ward

## HAVE YOU PAID?

**Subscriptions for 2024–2025 are now overdue.** Please note that this will be the last issue to reach you if we do not receive your payment before the March *Bulletin*. A membership form was enclosed with the September *Bulletin*. Current rates are:

Individual member £12, Additional member in same household £5, Full-time Student £5.

If possible, please use online banking to pay your subscription, as banks charge us for cheques – details on the renewal form. But if that is not possible for you, cheques are payable to **Merton Historical Society** and should be sent with completed forms to our Membership Secretary at 27 Burley Close, LONDON SW16 4QQ.

## HAVE YOU READ?

The AGM Minutes, Treasurer’s Report and Chair’s Report are enclosed, on a separate sheet.

**JOHN SHERIDAN completes the long-drawn-out tale.**

## **COMMEMORATING MERTON PRIORY**

### **2 – Stone Design, Unveiling, Fate**

The history of the plaque may be traced through the proceedings of the UDC and the Merton and Morden Historical Society (MMHS) during the 1950s.<sup>1</sup> On 13 February 1953 MMHS committee minutes recorded the question being asked as to whether the priory site layout was complete and whether a plaque was ready. The question went unanswered. On 18 November 1955 the MMHS AGM noted that Gilliat Hatfeild had paid for the conveyancing and purchase of the site of the high altar of Merton Priory, and had hired a Cambridge architect to lay it out, but progress had been stopped by the war and Hatfeild had died in 1941. Progress on the commemorative plaque recommenced in July 1956.

At a MMHS meeting on 6 July, Harry May, Clerk to the UDC, asked the society's help in securing a plaque to be placed on the site owned by the UDC. He said that Merton College, Oxford, had subscribed £25 which would be available to MMHS. The society decided that the chairman and hon. secretary should visit the principal of Wimbledon School of Art for advice on the choice of medium, which could be a plaque of stone, bronze or plastic, and, if possible, on the execution of the work. On 17 July May reported to the UDC's general purposes committee that Merton College had made the grant of £25 to the UDC in 1952, and that Wimbledon School of Art had undertaken to engrave a stone of approximately 6ft by 3ft giving a plan of the priory. The UDC resolved to authorise payment of the £25 to cover the cost of the work, and to record their appreciation of the interest and assistance afforded by the Clerk in this matter. On 10 August the MMHS was informed that further to discussion with the Principal of Wimbledon School of Art, the work would cost £25 for the carving, £12.18.0 for the stone, with further costs to be met for transporting and erecting the stone.

At the MMHS AGM on 16 November 1956 the Hon. Chairman, Mr E W Warren, reminded members that the scheme for a plaque had been mooted at the last AGM, and reported that the £25 donated by Merton College had been handed over to the society by the UDC's District Treasurer; and a slab of Portland stone costing *circa* £25 had been ordered. In addition, there would be a sculptor's fee and the cost of erection on the priory site to be met. A proposal to donate £10 was carried *nem. con.* On 25 January 1957 the MMHS heard that the £25 had been used to purchase the stone, and that Miss Skinner, the Principal of Wimbledon School of Art, would supervise its carving by Mr Kenneth Blackwell. Plans and drawing had been prepared by the son-in-law of Mr Warren. Miss Gummow of the society would discuss informally with Mr May the problem of incidental costs including the sculptor's fee, carriage and erection of the stone.

On 13 August 1957 the MMHS Hon. Sec. reported that she was going to see Miss Skinner about the design for the base and the erection of the stone. The stone had cost £23.10.0 and the sculptor's fee was £20. It was resolved to offer the stone to the UDC, noting that the society had paid for it; ask them to erect it as part of their jubilee celebrations (the UDC came into existence in 1907); and ask them to defray the costs of carriage and erection of the stone and the design of the surrounding area. At the MMHS AGM on 8 November 1957 it was reported that the plaque had been completed. The cost was £16.10.0 in addition to the £25 and £10 the society and Merton College had already contributed. The society resolved to pay the additional £16.10.0, with thanks to an anonymous donor.

On 10 December 1957 the UDC's general purposes committee heard from Mr May that the stone had been completed. They resolved to contribute a sum not exceeding £200 for the transport and erection of the stone, and establish a sub-committee comprising the Chairman, Cllr Clarke JP and Cllr Gurney to deal with the detailed arrangements in consultation with the MMHS. The UDC's contribution was reported to the MMHS on 12 December as £300. The MMHS was also told that plans and drawings for the supports and surrounds would be prepared by Cllr Gurney, who was an architect. It was agreed to pay £28.8.0 to Mr May, with thanks for his help. It is not clear whether this sum was intended for the UDC, Gurney or to defray some personal expense incurred by May. The MMHS was notified formally on 6 February 1958 of the establishment of the UDC's sub-committee. That MMHS committee meeting also heard that Harry May had retired from his post at the UDC, and would henceforth be more free to take part in MMHS business. It was agreed that he should be one of the MMHS representatives charged with liaising with the UDC's sub-committee.

On 18 July 1958 the MMHS was informed that the stone had been erected and unveiling was imminent. The society approved a plan for ground markings prepared by Col Bidder, but it was noted that the UDC's agreement to that and an accompanying noticeboard would be required. The MMHS AGM on 14 November 1958 heard that the stone had been offered to and accepted by the UDC for erection at the priory site and that an official unveiling

was awaited. On 16 December 1958 the MMHS heard that the UDC had identified difficulties with the ground markings. It was agreed to defer the matter until after the unveiling. Harry May was now chairman of the MMHS.

On Saturday 25 July 1959 the UDC unveiled the commemorative plaque near the site of the high altar (*right*). A UDC document gave the running order and guest list for the day, stated that the UDC had acquired that site through the generosity of Mr Gilliat E Hatfeild of Morden Hall, and referenced the roles of Merton College and the MMHS.<sup>2</sup> The inscription, said to have been the work of Merton College, referring to the site of the high altar, would have been misleading as the plaque was erected to face to the south for visibility rather than accurate positioning. The land on which it was erected was between Station Road and the Corfield workers' canteen (the building in the background). The MMHS AGM on 6 November 1959 heard that the stone had been unveiled on 25 July 1959 in front of guests including Col Bidder, who made a speech. Harry May had paid tribute to the UDC for its role in designing and realising the layout of the site and erecting the stone.



The New Merton Board Mills closed in 1982, and Corfield Industries closed their Merton works in 1981. Sainsbury acquired both sites, together with some other plots, to complete their acquisition of the site of the present Sainsbury and M&S stores (they originally built a Savacentre hypermarket on the site, but later dropped that brand name). One of the plots acquired by Sainsbury was the commemorative garden. Ownership of the garden had transferred from the UDC to the London Borough of Merton in 1965, when London local government was reorganised.

Lionel Green wrote in *MHS Bulletin* 136 (December 2000) that Hatfeild had purchased the site of the high altar and had conveyed it to the UDC to preserve for all time, and Merton had ignored this injunction when they conveyed it to Sainsbury in 1986. However, Hatfeild had not acquired the site and had not therefore been able to place a restrictive covenant on it. All he seems to have done is donate the £210 for the UDC to acquire the site. Any condition attached to the donation would have carried less weight than a restrictive covenant. Likewise, the UDC's undertaking addressed to itself to use the site to commemorate the priory would have carried less weight than a restrictive covenant. An agent employed by Sainsbury to work on land transactions might have been involved in the conveyance of the land to Sainsbury, but as of February 2024, he had no recollection of this transaction, which was just one of many.<sup>3</sup> So we do not know whether Hatfeild's condition was even mentioned during the transaction.

The commemorative plaque was removed the short distance to the Chapter House in the late 1980s when the area was being prepared for the construction of the Savacentre hypermarket, and was accidentally broken (*right*). There was no question of the plaque being preserved as a condition of planning consent for the redevelopment: it is likely that site workers simply wanted it out of their way with as little effort as possible. Planning conditions relating to monuments were restricted to the priory itself, as a scheduled ancient monument. The plaque was not a scheduled ancient monument.



The priory site is now marked by the Merton Priory Chapter House Museum, adjacent to the subway under Merantun Way at the back of the Sainsbury car park. The permanent exposure of the Chapter House foundations by elevating Merantun Way was a planning condition. The foundations of the priory church and some other buildings were excavated and reburied; inhumations were removed and reinterred, and some artefacts were removed, recorded and put on display at the Museum of London and the Chapter House Museum. The broken pieces of the commemorative plaque are still in the Chapter House Museum, but are not on display. They are stored under a wooden floor at the eastern end of the Museum.

- 1 SHC 6546/1-7 - UDC minute books 1951-1958. (Records for 1937-50 and 1959, which might have been relevant, are missing.) 7695/1/Box 9, 3913/1-2 - Merton and Morden Historical Society AGMs and minutes 1951-1960s. Other Merton and Morden Historical Society records in 3913/4-8 and 7695/1/Box 3 contain nothing of relevance.
- 2 Merton Historical Society holds a copy of the document.
- 3 The agent was Mike Lepper. John Hawks asked him in February 2024 for his recollections.

## MERTON PARK STUDIOS

Talking Pictures Television (Channel 82 at present) usually run one or other of the old black and white film series produced at Merton Park Studios in the 1950s and 1960s. One of the charms of dipping into these occasionally is to recognise young faces of actors who later became familiar, and to note street scenes filmed in one's local area. One such recently showed a film editor's trick. In *The Rivals*, scene A, a car drove hurriedly from Circle Gardens into the south end of Poplar Road, scene B involved two minutes of tense dialogue inside the apparently speeding car, and in scene C the car proceeded – down the length of Poplar Road. The distance that the car actually travelled between scenes A and C would be about ten yards.

In *The Partner*, a 1963 episode in the Edgar Wallace series, set in a film studio, I was delighted to see some glimpses of the Merton Park Studios buildings themselves. The main formal entrance frontage (and admin block) faced Kingston Road, while the 'working' entrance was round the back in Henfield Road. (The entrance is still detectable, but leads only to a small residential car park.)

In the film, a car drives in the rear entrance past the authentic Merton Park Studios sign and a three-way signpost (*right*). The signpost gives an idea of the number and variety of skills, activities and specialised areas required to 'make a film'. On the visible arm we see directions to Stages, a Sound Theatre, Editing Rooms, and Dressing rooms, amusingly distinguishing 'Artists' from 'Crowd'. In a much blurred shot another arm directs us to staff and areas such as plasterers, carpenters, electricians, paint, 'mill'? and the all-important Car Park., while the third equally sizeable arm, hides its content from us, presumably holding directions to another five or six specialists.



Thereafter we see the rear of a typical 1950s-60s office block (*left*), the rear of film stages, with high solid walls, without any windows to let in unwanted light and sounds (*below left*), the small doors for people to enter Stages A and B (*below right*), and loud demands for Silence (*bottom*).



Of course there are props strewn around, such as the Christmas sleigh, and in transit, like the model Atmosphere Sounding Rocket carried by one chap (in real life that would weigh about two tons).

Dave Haunton

SUSAN PEPPER explores mission work and temperance

### 'THE GRAND OLD MAN OF MITCHAM' JAMES THOMAS PEPPER (1840-1927)

The life of John Robert Chart (1837-1924) is well documented, from his working life as a corn and seed seller and an undertaker, to his voluntary roles as a lay preacher, Bible teacher and prominent figure in the Band of Hope Temperance Movement. This article aims to shine a light on the as yet unrecognized contribution of John Chart's long time friend, James Thomas Pepper. For 50 years, James played a similar role in mission work and temperance in Mitcham and in a nod to the famous sobriquet applied to William Ewart Gladstone, he earned the epithet 'The Grand Old Man of Mitcham' in the many newspaper tributes following his death in February 1927. One of these obituaries actually drew a direct parallel between the two men, describing James Pepper as having brought more happiness to Mitcham residents than any other person or institution with the exception of the 'equally beloved' John R Chart.<sup>1</sup>

James Pepper's origins lay a hundred miles from Mitcham in East Suffolk; he was born and brought up in the village of Cretingham, near Framlingham, and previous generations of his family had come from the nearby villages of Monk Soham and Earl Soham. James was baptized on 26 July 1840 at St Peter's Church in Cretingham and he later sang in the church choir; this evidently provided the background in sacred music and choral singing that was to prove so important in his later life.

James' father, also called James, was a dealer and later became a beer-house keeper and later still a gardener, while James followed a different path in becoming a carpenter. He had served his apprenticeship and become a Journeyman Carpenter by the time of the 1861 Census: he came to Mitcham as an 'adventuring' carpenter sometime between his marriage to Eliza Hindes on 1 November 1861 and the birth of his eldest son, John, on 12 April 1863. This would have been a good time for a jobbing carpenter as the mid Victorian period saw a considerable amount of both industrial and residential development in Mitcham, with developers taking advantage of the lack of regulation to construct densely packed and often poor quality dwellings.<sup>2</sup> One of James' earlier projects, by 1866, was the carpentry work for a small row of houses called Rock Terrace, little knowing at the time that so much of his life would be spent with the residents there. He also, for 40 years, worked for George Pitt, a successful local draper, who gained a reputation for building less crowded and better constructed housing than other developers and who eventually owned over 300 cottages and shops in Mitcham. Before his death in 1908, George presented James with a silver watch for his long service, but James did not actually retire for another eight years, at the age of 76.



Map showing Rock Terrace (after it was extended and the road on which it stood named Belgrave Road) and the Rock Terrace Mission Room. At various times, James Pepper lived at addresses in Bath Road, Belgrave Road and Century Road and he was buried in Church Road Cemetery.

OS Surrey xiii.4 1913, Revised 1910. Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland.

We are fortunate to have a first-hand account of James' conversion to the teetotalism which influenced so much of his later life. When false rumours of his death emerged in February 1926, a reporter from the *Sutton and Epsom Advertiser* visited his home and was surprised to obtain an interview with the man himself. James explained that he had been fond of the 'wee drappie' until about 45 years before, when he had lost a job through alcohol. He had been building some houses in Sibthorp Road, when he went out drinking and on his return, found that the work had been assigned to someone else because he 'couldn't be trusted to work'. He commented that later on he built houses for the same employer and it may well be that this employer was George Pitt, who would have taken a dim view of such alcoholic excesses, since both he and his wife, Priscilla were Quakers, and Priscilla set up the Berkeley Teetotal Society.<sup>3</sup>

It was after this that James started a Sunday school in the Parish Church Mission Room in Rock Terrace, one of several mission halls built as part of an initiative by the Anglican Church to try to reach out to the poorer members of the community.<sup>4</sup> The Sunday school had the support of the vicar of Mitcham Parish Church, Canon Daniel Frederic Wilson, and its founding marked the beginning of a long collaboration between the two men in various aspects of mission work in the parish. The Sunday school was well attended and soon had over 200 pupils. As well as Bible classes, James organised excursions for the pupils by train and coach to places like Bushey Park and the Crystal Palace. These trips were not as ambitious as the outings organised by John Chart, which included an annual trip to the seaside at Brighton. Even so, they were evidently very popular and involved practically 'the whole of the inhabitants of Bath, Belgrave and Queen's Roads'. James continued to run the Sunday School until 1921, when his declining health finally forced him to give it up.

James' new found teetotalism also inspired him to set up a branch of the Band of Hope in Rock Terrace. The Band of Hope was one of many temperance movements with a Christian base formed in the nineteenth century, but it differed from other groups in that it was founded for children. Its origins lay in a group for under sixteens set up by the Revd Jabez Tunnicliff and Ann Jane Carlile in Leeds in 1847; its aims were to teach children about the dangers of alcohol and to encourage them to take part in healthy activities.<sup>5</sup> Rock Terrace would have been regarded as a place where the evils of drink were all too apparent, as it was a 'very rough area of Mitcham' with a reputation for crime and violence.<sup>6</sup> James regularly addressed the quarterly meetings of the Rock Terrace Band of Hope; for example, he gave one of the three evening speeches at the Christmas meeting in 1888.<sup>7</sup> He also made a significant contribution to the meetings as leader of the children's choir. In 1891, he led the choir in a performance at the Band of Hope's quarterly meeting in July and the choir sang sacred songs, like Lowery's 'Beautiful Land of Rest' at the monthly entertainment in September.<sup>8</sup> James' contribution to music at the society was recognised in October 1891 when Canon Wilson presented him and his wife with two bound volumes of *Sacred Songs and Solos* and *Christian Choir* at the Band of Hope Harvest Thanksgiving. The books had been bought with contributions from the vicar, superintendent, Sunday school teachers and other parish workers as a token of 'esteem and regard'.<sup>9</sup>



*Photograph of the Rock Terrace Church Class. (Sarah Gould, Merton Heritage and Local Studies, tentatively dates this as c.1885-1890, judging by the clothing, notably the sleeve style on the light-coloured dress worn by the lady in the foreground.) James Pepper is on the extreme right of the photograph and John R Chart may well be the second man on the left. Photograph by permission of the London Borough of Merton.*

James' involvement with choral music was not confined to Band of Hope Meetings. His mixed choir of Rock Terrace children, known as 'Pepper's Pilots', provided entertainment at other events in the Rock Terrace Mission Room and all over Mitcham. This included singing at the meat teas held in the Mission Room for unemployed men of the parish; at one such event in January 1891, the choir sang 'The Happy Homes of England' and 'Good Heart and Willing Hand' to 60 men and in January 1893, the choir entertained 50 unemployed men and their wives at a tea hosted by Canon Daniel Wilson.<sup>10</sup> In 1892, James directed his choir in a service of words and music, with readings from *Her Only Son* by Hesba Stretton and songs by John Burnham, at Mr Charlton's Mission Room on The Causeway.<sup>11</sup> Finally and most prominently, the choir sang at the services which James led at the major local event that was the annual Mitcham Fair.

In the interview that he gave in 1926, James said that he and Eliza had had 18 children, although only eight of these births are registered. Of these eight, just one, his daughter, Harriet Eliza, appears to have been involved with James' mission work and she regularly took part in recitations and dialogues at Band of Hope meetings and accompanied her father's choir on the harmonium. Harriet was also one of only two children to outlive her father and James, by then a widower, was living with her and her husband, Walter Beadle, at 1 Hawthorn Cottages in Mitcham at the time of his death on 19 February 1927.

On 24 February 1927, 'a large crowd' gathered for James' funeral at Mitcham Parish Church and beside the family grave at Church Road Cemetery.<sup>12</sup> The mourners reflected James' mission work in that they included residents of Rock Terrace, former Sunday school pupils and members of the Band of Hope. Although I have pinpointed the location of the grave, there is, sadly, no sign of the stone open Bible, erected in James' memory by friends and neighbours.

- 1 'Not Dead', *Sutton and Epsom Advertiser*, 11 February 1926
- 2 E.N. Montague, *Mitcham Histories 8, Phipps Bridge*, Merton Historical Society, 2006, pages 109 and 111
- 3 John Marsh Pitt, 'Memoir of Priscilla Pitt', *Local History Notes 33*, Merton Historical Society, 2012, pages 3 and 5
- 4 E.N. Montague, *Mitcham A Brief History*, Merton Historical Society, 1987, page 20
- 5 History of Hope UK (formerly the United Kingdom Band of Hope Union) <https://www.hopeuk.org/wp-content/uploads/History.pdf>
- 6 Michael Reed, 'Growing Up in Mitcham (1939-1963)', *Local History Notes 16*, Merton Historical Society, October 2000, page 3
- 7 'Rock Terrace Band of Hope Christmas Tree', *Wallington and Carshalton Herald*, 5 January 1889
- 8 'Parish Church Missions Room, Rock Terrace', *Croydon Advertiser and East Surrey Reporter*, 11 July 1891 'Band of Hope Entertainment', *Croydon Express*, 12 September 1891
- 9 'The Harvest Thanksgiving', *Croydon Express*, 10 October 1891
- 10 'Rock Terrace Mission Room', *Croydon Advertiser and East Surrey Reporter*, 31 January 1891; 'The Unemployed', *Croydon Express*, 14 January 1893
- 11 'A Pleasant Evening', *Wallington and Carshalton Herald*, 19 March 1892
- 12 'Funeral of Mr James Pepper', *Sutton and Epsom Advertiser*, 3 March 1927

## HISTORY AS AN ESCAPE FROM REALITY

I recently had a friend to stay with me for five weeks. She lives overseas, and still works part-time, dealing mostly with financial transactions and legal documentation. The request was for a holiday that provided an escape from reality, and as they are interested in history, here is what we did:

Within a few hours of arrival at Heathrow, we were walking around the ruins of the Chapter House at Merton Priory. Over the next five weeks, we visited three palaces, four castles, five houses, three galleries, three museums, five libraries, but only one cathedral and one abbey. We also enjoyed a session of Thames foreshore mudlarking, went down a Welsh coal mine, looked at old family photos with relatives, and spent the final day at Sutton Hoo Saxon burial site.

The step-counter measured 120 miles of walking. We escaped from our reality, exchanging it for other people's realities, in other times.

**Christine Pittman**

## LOCAL HISTORY WORKSHOPS

2 August 2024 – Five present, John Sheridan in the Chair

- ◆ **Rosemary Turner** had found a number of publications of the Surrey Record Society, including Surrey Quarter Sessions and a set of Churchwardens' Accounts for Lambeth, all published in the 1940s. There were also some *Surrey Archaeological Collections* which had several references to our area, including Dennis Turner's 1962–63 excavation at Merton Priory in an area which was then allotments. (right). Another issue mentions finds in a number of places in Morden including Romano-British pottery, medieval sherds in St Lawrence churchyard and items found in the 1976 trial excavations of Merton Priory Chapter House. The *Surrey Archaeological Collections* are now available online: <https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/library/browse/series.xhtml?recordId=1000233&recordType=Journal> and the Surrey Record Society volumes at <https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/library/browse/organisationDetails.xhtml?organisationId=1007450>.
- ◆ **Peter Hopkins** had discovered in *The Local Historian* a useful source for research in early modern England. This was the Documents from Medieval and Early Modern England. These documents, at the National Archives, have been digitised and are available on the website of the Anglo-American Legal Tradition [AALT] at the O'Quinn Law Library at the University of Houston Law Center. Peter had made use of the searchable indexes and had viewed a few documents, including a family dispute over Mitcham Grove property, and had formed a positive impression of the value of this website.
- ◆ **David Luff** had made further visits to examine the length of surviving priory wall in Station Road and had discovered that there were two modern buttresses that were larger and deeper than would be expected. These he thought would be interesting to investigate. David also showed the centre spread of the *Wimbledon Borough News*, 15 April 1983, which showed David's moment of fame – an interview recording his years working at the Liberty site, complete with photographs.
- ◆ **John Sheridan** spoke to a map showing a (covered) aqueduct planned by Thomas Telford in 1833 to bring water from Beddington to a reservoir on Clapham Common. Though proposals were published to introduce Parliamentary Bills in 1834–35 the scheme was not acted on, probably because of opposition from the millers on the River Wandle and the residents of Clapham. Further investigation could be made in the Parliamentary Record. John also discussed whether Morris and Liberty knew each other. He is planning an article for the Wandle Industrial Museum's Bulletin, setting out the evidence.
- ◆ **Bill Bailey** summarised some recent research on the 1923 Mitcham By-Election. The Conservative Party candidate for whom the sitting MP resigned the seat had already been rejected by seventeen other constituency parties and the Independent Conservative candidate who drew votes from the official one had attempted a similar tactic in an earlier by-election. The poor state of some working-class housing in the area of (then) Bath Road and Rock Terrace had been a key issue in the campaign.

Bill Bailey

27 September 2024 – Seven in attendance, Bill Bailey in the Chair.

- ◆ **Christine Pittman** Issues of the Bulletin in 1996 and 1997 mentioned Bill Rudd's investigation of the foundations of a wheelwright's workshop, which appeared in the churchyard of St Lawrence, in Morden, after the Great Storm of 1987. Peter Hopkins showed us photos of the finds, and a copy of the churchyard plan showing where the workshop and wheelwright's house had been. The finds included this partial lid of a ceramic black transferware jar of Rose Cold Cream (right). The word 'Pooley' is added for advertising purposes, along with his address – we can see part of the numbers '36'. MHS member Norma Cox has published two articles on Pooley's Chemist in Wimbledon, in *Pharmaceutical Historian* (2018) and in *Surrey History* (2023) (both online). Mr JDS Pooley had a chemist's shop at 36 High Street, Wimbledon, from 1888 until his retirement in 1901, with the business name of Pooley's Chemist living on in this location until 1960.



The excavation was carried out on the allotments on irregular strip of land covering less than half an acre which were situated between the site of the cellars range and the known position of some medieval buildings to the west.

Until the middle of 19th century a channel of the River Wandle followed the western boundary of the plot and a curving brick wall still delineates its western bank. To the east is the goods yard, to the south and west are factories and in the north the railway.

This is incorrectly marked 'Priory Wall' on the O.S. plan.

The first recorded use of the land by a wheelwright was in 1797, when Jeffrey Muggridge was granted licence to enclose 'a parcel of waste adjacent to the Churchyard and behind the Pound'. Further encroachments were licensed over the years. It is shown as plots 172-173 on the 1838 tithe map, and was surrendered to the lord of the manor in 1861. Sadly, the dates of the wheelwright and the chemist did not overlap, so we cannot propose that the rose cold cream benefitted the wheelwright. This was just another piece of discarded rubbish, but it does connect two pieces of research, by two respected MHS members.

- ◆ **Peter Hopkins** reported on medieval tiles and other items discovered during renovation work to the church tower and west window at St Lawrence. When the wooden sill below the window was lifted, a void was discovered, into which bits of rubble had been deposited, including one almost complete floor-tile, and a piece from another. The items were on display at the Heritage Open Days at the church. Bill Rudd had previously discovered oddments of broken pottery on various spoil heaps in the churchyard over the years, some of which he identified as 'possibly medieval'. Christine took them to the Surrey Archaeological Society Medieval Pottery Workshop, where eight were identified as medieval, and one as Roman. Peter's more detailed notes on all these items will appear in the next *Bulletin*.

Peter also read an email from a lady recalling visiting the former Bow Street Runners' cottage at 70 Christchurch Road, Colliers Wood, demolished in 1979 and rebuilt in replica. Eric Montague took photos, which are on our website at <https://mertonhistoricalsociety.org.uk/colliers-wood-e-n-montagues-slides/>. She also mentioned being shown some 'wooden remnants allegedly of Nelson's summer house'. Has anyone else heard that story?

- ◆ David Luff had brought in Vol II of his project on Merton Priory wall. He has spent many years photographing the wall and the surrounding area as well as inspecting and trying to protect it.
- ◆ **Joyce Bellamy** referred to a project that had been undertaken some years ago, locating view points along the river Wandle, both natural and manmade. One had been located at the top of St Marks multi-story car park, from where you could see the whole river valley. The car park is about to be demolished and a local group is trying to get whatever replaces it to be open to the public, so that there is access to the viewpoint.

On another point, there has been no study of hedgerows in Mitcham, so this would be a good subject for a suitable student looking for a suggestion for their thesis.

- ◆ **John Sheridan** In response to John's question, David Luff confirmed that to the best of his knowledge the Liberty Print Works had not printed any fabrics for Colefax and Fowler. The socialite Sibyl Colefax founded her high-end decorating business after the 1929 Wall Street crash, while John Fowler joined in 1938, so that is when it became Colefax and Fowler. She sold the business in 1944, but it continues to thrive and has a warehouse on a former mill site in Garratt Lane, Wandsworth. The firm diversified in 1970 to the design and retail of fabrics and wallpaper, contracting out the manufacture. Liberty's sold off their own dedicated fabric printworks at Merton Abbey Mills in 1972, doubtless with the same idea as Colefax and Fowler of spreading the manufacturing risk between a number of different contractors.

John had followed up a couple of items from our July visit to Mitcham Parish Church.

Firstly, high on the south wall of the sanctuary at the east end of the church there is a monument (not mentioned by Eric Montague) to William Bailey, iron merchant of Southwark who died on 22 November 1834, aged 57. *The Times* reported his death on Monday 24 November 1834: 'At his house, No. 239 Blackfriars-road, William Bailey Esq, iron merchant, Bankside, from the injuries he received by being thrown from his gig on Wednesday, the 19th inst., near Newington Church, Surrey, on his way to town. By this lamentable accident the poor have lost a most benevolent friend.' The parish register records that at the time of his death Bailey's abode was in Mitcham, so it seems that he had more than one residence. More work is required to uncover his work for the poor.

Secondly, the stained-glass window in the Baptistry at the west end of the church has a manufacturer's signature: Alexander Gibbs, Stained Glass Works, Bloomsbury. The window is known as the Watson Memorial Window, after Harry Watson who died in 1874, when William Morris was active as a stained-glass window maker, although he had not yet moved to Merton. There is no reference to Mitcham Parish Church in the index to Morris's collected letters, so it seems he was not considered for the work.

- ◆ **Bill Bailey** In 1923 the Parliamentary by-election for Mitcham was won by Mr Chuter Ede for the Labour Party, causing a media sensation. Bill's interest in this by-election led him to look at the Labour movement within Mitcham before 1923, finding a dearth of solid information, but many side considerations. His findings will appear as a full article in the next issue of the *Bulletin*.

**Rosemary Turner**

**Next Workshops Fridays 20 December 2024, 31 January and 14 March 2025  
from 2.30pm at Wandle Industrial Museum. All welcome.**

**NORMA COX has found another firm with unusual products:**

## **HANCOR OF MITCHAM MAKERS OF ADVERTISING PRODUCTS**

### **Introduction**

Because of my interest in the history of S W London local industries, on 1 February 2024 I was asked by Sarah Gould of the Local Studies Library Merton if I knew anything about Hancor, the name of a printing company in Mitcham. The name was visible on the base of a model of a ram which had been produced as an advertising emblem for Young's Brewery of Wandsworth. The model was said to have been made in the 1930s of a substance called Beritex. The model had been on loan to Wimbledon Museum during February 2024 and was owned by the Wimbledon Village Club, which shares the same building as the museum. I knew about Wandsworth's Ram Brewery and its emblem but not about the Beritex model, so I decided to find out more about the business of Hancor.

### **The model and the firm**

I went to see the model at Wimbledon Museum in February 2024, where it was kept in a locked wooden cabinet. This had a glass door so I could not photograph it then, as reflections occur when photographing through glass. The curator of Wimbledon Museum, Dr Pamela Greenwood, said the model ram was made of a Rubberite material called Beritex and cast in a mould. She mentioned that the model had three words on it – Hancor, Mitcham and Beritex – and the firm Hancock and Corfield made advertising materials for breweries and others. This firm was described as a printer by the Imperial War Museum.<sup>1</sup> Online I found that the name Hancor was connected with the local company of Hancock, Corfield and Waller who made brewing trade advertising items, such as metal trays depicting the name of a beer or whisky. Young's Brewery had registered a Dorset Horn ram as their emblem in the 1890s and their beers became known as the Ram Brand.<sup>2</sup>

Dr Greenwood exhibited the ram model at Wimbledon Museum, thus allowing the public to see an unknown item of a now-gone Wandsworth industry. Dave Haunton of MHS has mentioned that a Whitbread waiter's tray had the Hancor name on it.<sup>3</sup> The internet has many examples of Hancor products, such as jugs and trays (not made of Beritex) which had the company name of Hancor, together with the names of Hancock, Corfield and Waller. Another Hancor advertising product which can be seen online is the Hancor mannequin's head, produced for Christy's hat manufacturers (in business from 1773: by 1843 this was the largest hat- and cap-making factory in the world).<sup>4</sup>

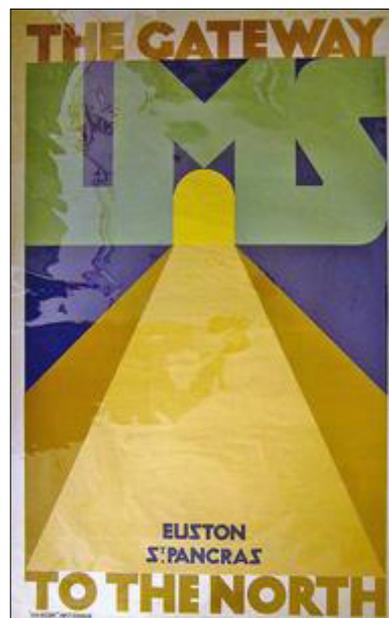
The Hancor firm was initially called Hancock & Corfield in 1900 and became Hancock, Corfield & Waller in 1919.<sup>5</sup> An article by John Sheridan about Corfield Industries in *Bulletin* 229, March 2024, showed that John Corfield was the driving force of Hancock, Corfield and Waller. An O/S map illustration in the article showed that the Corfield business was situated at the Imperial works, Morden Road, Mitcham, and mentioned 'Art Metal Printing'.<sup>6</sup> The article also stated that in 1923 Corfield made 'containers and pressings of every description for the rubber, chemical and allied trades'.<sup>7</sup>

In July 2024 Sonya Varouzian of the Wimbledon Village Hall Trust kindly supplied me with three photographs of the Ram model, one of them seen here (*right*). Sonya invited me to return to the museum building on 12 July 2024 to visit the Wimbledon Village Club, to view the model ram up close and to touch it and to approximately measure it. The model was 29.5cm long and 10cm wide and 25cm high. It felt light to pick up and had three words written on the base – Beritex, Hancor and Mitcham – and the base looked like brick-coloured pottery. The ram's long coat was very realistic and looked like bronze. The ram stood on a plinth which said 'Young's Ram Ales'. Regarding Beritex, Emma Anthony, the archivist at Wandsworth Heritage Service, found some advert information on the British Newspapers archive showing that Beritex was used in the manufacture of soccer football bladders and waterproof clothing in the years 1959, 1968 and 1977, confirming it was a rubber substance. Interestingly, there was also an advert for Beritex pyjamas.<sup>8</sup> In Mitcham in 1930 there were both a rubber and a chemical factory which supplied rubber and rubber substitutes; either may have supplied the rubber substance used by Hancor for the ram model.<sup>9,10</sup>



## Poster Art for Advertising by Hancor

Another example of Hancor's printing is found on the Science Museum Collections website, which has an artistic Art Deco poster by 'Hancor' with an assumed date of around 1930, made for the London Midland and Scottish Railway (LMS) and titled 'Gateway to the North'. The format was Double Royal, with dimensions of 1016mm x 635 mm. This poster is seen here (right), reproduced under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 licence.<sup>11</sup> An interesting feature about LMS railway posters involved the painter Norman Wilkinson and the Royal Academy (RA) in 1924. LMS had just taken over many smaller railway companies and had become one of the 'Big Four' railway companies, and Norman Wilkinson suggested that sixteen of his fellow alumni from the RA be commissioned by LMS to design railway posters to promote the company.<sup>12</sup> However there is no evidence that the 'Gateway to the North' poster was involved in the 1924 project but the poster did show the Hancor name. Dave Haunton of MHS pointed out that another Norman Wilkinson poster titled 'Inverness' also had the name Hancor on it written in very small writing.<sup>13</sup> Another internet reference said that classic railway posters were produced between the years 1923-1939.<sup>14</sup>



Two other examples of Hancor posters both of which are in the Imperial War Museum (IWM) are found on the Mitcham History website; these two posters are said to be of the First World War period.<sup>15</sup> The first poster is of an elderly man who is smiling as he takes a pint glass of Watney's beer to his lips and the text accompanying the poster stated: Watney's, Hancor Mitcham 750/F H ½. The related material for the poster was 'WW1 content. Creator unknown (undefined). Hancock and Corfield Ltd, Mitcham London, Printer. Watney's was the publisher and sponsor. Place made was UK. Materials used Support was paper medium lithograph. Dimensions were Support height 682mm width 488mm. Cat No ART.IWMPST 4651'.

The second poster showed a man in WW1 British Army uniform with two bicycle tyres and was titled 'DUNLOP CYCLE TYRES / Only me and Dunlops left'. Made by Hancock & Corfield Ltd Mitcham. The second poster also indicates that Hancock and Corfield had a 'rubber connection' with Dunlop. In a *Gracesguide* entry for 1914 *Who's Who in Surrey* and found on the Mitcham History website 'Hancock & Corfield Ltd established 23 years ago, (giving a date of 1891) to take over the patent rights from the Embossed Metal Tablet Company, Gray's Inn Road for printing and Embossing Metal for advertising purposes. In 1904 Hancock and Corfield acquired the business of Messrs Waller, Wills & Co, Colour Printers, and was Incorporated as a Private Limited Company'.<sup>16</sup>

## Summary

The company Hancock & Corfield of Mitcham used the brand name of Hancor to name their art products which were used to promote the brewing industry with printing and embossed metal tray adverts and posters. They were established from 1891. The business became Hancock, Corfield and Waller after 1919 but retained the Hancor advertising name. The model ram which has a suggested date of 1930 was made of Beritex which was a rubber compound and as there were two rubber industries in Mitcham in 1930 these factories may have been the source of the rubber for the ram model. The Hancor Beritex mannequin-head seen online was also dated as probably 1930. The Hancor Railway posters were probably made before 1930, with the LMS poster made possibly around 1923 or 1924. The IWM posters were of the WW1 period. Hancock and Corfield acquired poster making skills from the company Waller, Wills and Co in 1904. Hancock and Corfield were now clearly specialists in poster-advertising because in order to make the large classic railway posters, the printing business needed to have precision plants and expertise. Hancor art-work had become an excellent means of advertising.

## Acknowledgements

Thanks to Pamela Greenwood, curator of Wimbledon Museum, to Emma Anthony, archivist at Wandsworth Heritage Service, Battersea, and to Sonya Varouzian, Trust Administration, Wimbledon Village Hall Trust at 26 Lingfield Road Wimbledon. The photograph of the Young's Ram model is, of course, copyright of Sonya Varouzian.

1 Personal communication from Dr Pamela Greenwood February 2024

2 <https://www.youngs.co.uk/heritage>

3 Personal communication from Dave Haunton July 2024

4 <https://www.kraveantiques.co.uk/products/Christys-Male-Display-Head.html>

- 5 <https://brewerytrays.co.uk/cms/index.php/information/information-manufacturers-history/information-manufacturers-history-hancock-corfield-waller-ltd.html>
- 6 John Sheridan, Corfield Industries, MHS *Bulletin* 229, March 2024, pp.12-14
- 7 As Note 6
- 8 Personal communication from Emma Anthony, Wandsworth Heritage Centre 15 July 2024
- 9 <https://mitchamhistorynotes.com/2020/12/07/mitcham-rubber-company/>
- 10 <https://mitchamhistorynotes.com/tag/rubber/>
- 11 <https://collection.sciencemuseumgroup.org.uk/objects/co228613/the-gateway-to-the-north-poster>
- 12 <https://collection.sciencemuseumgroup.org.uk/people/cp2317/norman-wilkinson>
- 13 Personal communication from Dave Haunton 2024. Note 3
- 14 <https://www.posterhouse.org/blog/railway-posters-from-britain-1923-1939>
- 15 <https://mitchamhistorynotes.com/2015/03/23/hancock-corfield-and-waller/>
- 16 As Note 15

## COMMENTS ON *Bulletin* 231

### San Ward:

With reference to your report on ‘*Sport Along The Wandle*’, para 2 is a little misleading as the original Wimbledon FC never played at Wimbledon Stadium, which was purely dogs, speedway and stock cars. I was a season ticket holder at Plough Lane for many years and now follow AFC Wimbledon.

### Jeff Brooks:

In the September 2024 *Bulletin*, the article ‘*Sport Along The River Wandle*’ mentions, regarding Tooting & Mitcham United FC, ‘... after their Sandy Road, Tooting, ground was declared unsafe’. The old ground was actually in Sandy Lane, Mitcham.

### Ian Cole:

has sent the following link in response to the item on *Reid cameras* by Norma Cox in the September *Bulletin*. He thinks the Photographic Collectors Club of GB may be interested in her article: <https://pccgb.net/>

(No response as yet)

Thanks to all

Dave Haunton

## HOT OFF THE PRESS!

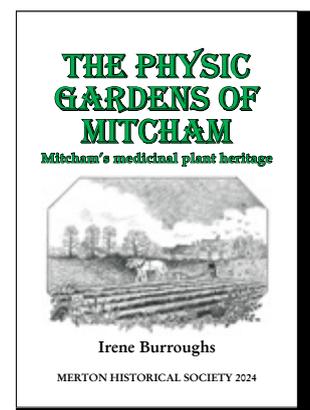
At our AGM we launched this very visual introduction to Mitcham’s past claim to fame. It is illustrated throughout (only two pages have no picture) with photographs from the Merton Memories collection, and drawings, a collage and atmospheric watercolours by Irene Burroughs.

Brief chapters touch on why herbs came to be grown in Mitcham, the herb growers themselves, the famous Potter and Moore firm, the work involved, and the workers employed. Details of cultivation and use are given for some of the major plants, and interesting lists showing how the range of plants changed over time (from 16 in 1805 to only seven in 1885). Though most plants were used for flavouring or minor medication (hence ‘physic’), a surprising number were actively poisonous, including savin juniper, aconite, henbane, and the dangerous-to-gather squirting cucumber.

The fields were built over, but some roads remain, and numerous modern reminders of the industry are noted: there is even a mention of sources for your further investigation.

A 48-page A5 colour booklet – full price £5, members £4. Available at our talks or for collection from Peter at 57 Templecombe Way, Morden SM4 4JF (phone 020 8543 8471 to arrange) or email: [publications@mertonhistoricalsociety.org.uk](mailto:publications@mertonhistoricalsociety.org.uk) to pay by bank transfer. Add £1 for postage.

CONGRATULATIONS to Peter Hopkins on the award of the 2024 LAMAS Book Prize for *Medieval Morden* Vol.3. A certificate goes to Peter, £100 to the Society.

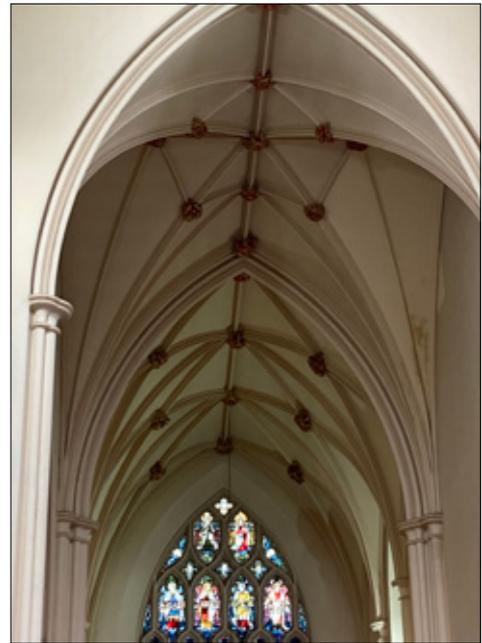


## VISIT TO MITCHAM PARISH CHURCH, ST PETER AND ST PAUL

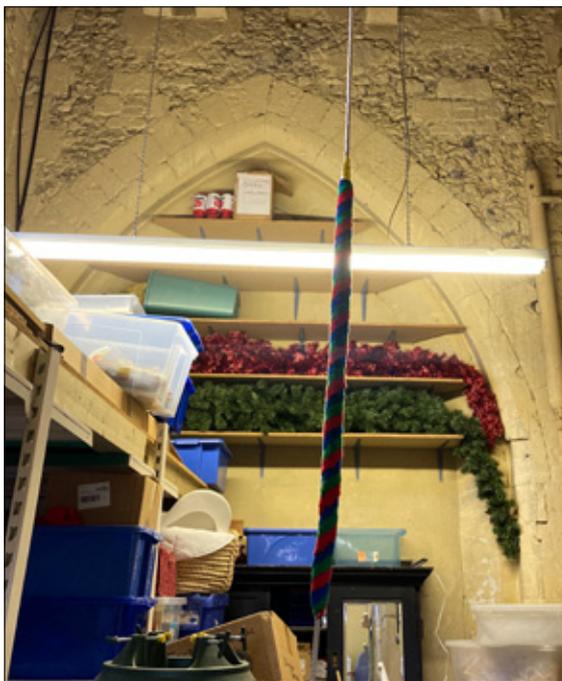
On a rather cold and wet July day, a party visited St Peter & St Paul. I had not been there before, and though unimpressed by the dour external appearance, I was astounded by the light, bright and spacious interior. Even without summer sunshine, with its stained-glass windows and cream walls soaring to the ceiling (IB *right*), this Grade 2\* listed church lifts the spirit. It was designed by architect George Smith in 'Gothic revival pure perpendicular' style in 1819 and redecorated by 'Ask Anneka' Rice in 1991.



Father David (CP *left*) gave us a potted history of the church, which was built on the footprint of a previous structure. Ancient burials, a record of vicars dating back to 1270, pre-1819 monuments, and a ringing room built of flint stone and incorporating late medieval features (IB *below*), with the bell room half way up the tower, reached by a spiral staircase (CP *bottom right*), and Georgian bricks above that, all attest to an earlier church on this site. There are eight bells, including some cast by the Whitechapel Foundry in 1983. Still to be explained is why the church is situated where it is, far from the centre of the settlement.



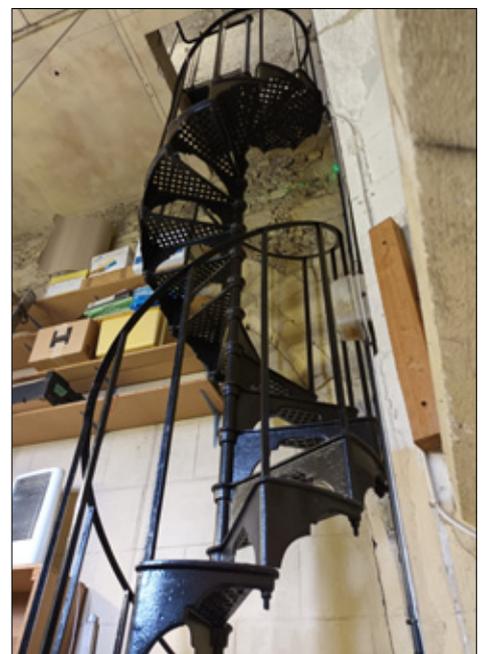
There used to be a cluster of buildings around the church – an old mortuary building and a non-conformist chapel, dating from when it was expanded in 1848 and 1882. It is now surrounded by a closed graveyard of 6.5 acres, with LB Merton responsible for cutting the grass.



The church now offers not just care to worshippers but help with community social issues such as housing and mental health. Music also plays a large part in church life.

**Christine Pittman**

Thanks to our dedicated photographers Christine Pittman (CP) and Irene Burroughs (IB).



## VISIT TO THE CHAPTER HOUSE AND ABBEY MILLS

Nineteen members of Merton Historical Society visited the Chapter House at Merton Priory on Friday 9 August. We had time to wander around the site, tucked away under Merantun Way, to look at new displays – there is always something ‘new’, though, strictly speaking, it’s mostly old, such as the array of ornamental tiles (*right*).

The conjectural model of the Priory, made for public display by J H Burchett of Morden Library and our young member Michael Nethersole, for Civic Week in 1962, sits in a corner, not far from its 21st-century equivalent, the Minecraft interactive virtual tour. There are also new information boards on the River Wandle environment. John Hawks entertained us with tales of recent developments (or lack of them) and anecdotes from the past, and then screened the virtual tour, created by a teenage friend of the family, explaining various aspects of the building, the scenery, and Minecraft magic. Toby, the Chapter House Dog, was unimpressed (*below*).



The site was open to the public on Sundays, 11am-4pm, up to 27 October, so we were privileged.

Photos by Christine Pittman. Thanks to Bea Oliver and John Hawks for arranging our visit.

**Christine Pittman**

Subsequently about half the members present accompanied David Luff as he gave a guided tour of the Abbey Mills area (*see p.1*), replete with memories of his time working there at Liberty’s print works, and a discussion of the items now on view in the Wheelhouse (*right*).



*Photo by Irene Burroughs, as is our frontispiece on page 1*

***MHS is bound by the UK General Data Protection Regulation.***

***Please see the MHS website regarding how this concerns your personal data.***

**Letters and contributions for the *Bulletin* should be sent to the Hon. Editor by email to [editor@mertonhistoricalsociety.org.uk](mailto:editor@mertonhistoricalsociety.org.uk).**

**The views expressed in this *Bulletin* are those of the contributors concerned and not necessarily those of the Society or its Officers.**

**website: [www.mertonhistoricalsociety.org.uk](http://www.mertonhistoricalsociety.org.uk)**

**email: [mhs@mertonhistoricalsociety.org.uk](mailto:mhs@mertonhistoricalsociety.org.uk)**

*Printed by Peter Hopkins*