



CHAIR: Christine Pittman

BULLETIN No. 233

MARCH 2025



*This photograph was taken by David Luff recently, depicting two unusual buses in Haydons Road Depot. They have no number plates or identifying paintwork, but they do feature large windows, perhaps implying a tourist function.*

*David Luff would be interested in any information.*

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PETER HOPKINS gives more details of

## CERAMIC FINDS FROM ST LAWRENCE'S

[This note adds to my report on the 2 August 2024 Workshop in *Bulletin* 232 p.11]

In the summer of 2024 the Rector of Morden sent me a photo of possible medieval tiles and other items discovered during renovation work to the church tower and west window at St Lawrence. When the window was removed for conservation work the wooden sill below the window was lifted. Instead of the expected solid wall beneath, a void was discovered, into which odd bits of rubble had been deposited. A cursory search among these disclosed an almost complete floor-tile patterned in blue and white (*right*), which from memory I would say was about 6in square and at least an inch thick, together with a piece from an identical tile (but not broken from it).



The Rector used Google Visual Search and discovered a tile of a similar design, now in the V&A, though smaller than the St Lawrence tile, and red rather than blue – <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O281672/tile-unknown/>. The online catalogue describes it as: 'Red earthenware tile 4¾in square with stamped decoration inlaid with white slip. Diagonal patterns of alternating geometrical bands. Design resembling an heraldic gyrony of eight. 15th-century of French origin.' I have since searched through the V&A and British Museum online catalogues and found other examples, of English manufacture and from the 14th century – the time that we know the medieval church was being rebuilt, in the 1350s.

A smaller tile of a different pattern was also discovered in the void – a 6-petal flower design (*right*), familiar from my schooldays as formed by intersecting arcs drawn with compasses. Again, there are several examples at the two museums, of English manufacture and of similar date. Some curved roof tiles were also found, as well as a small bottle, a clay pipe and some glass. It is likely that further finds would be discovered were the void to be completely cleared. It is behind a plaque commemorating previous repairs to the tower in the 1880s.



Over the years, Bill Rudd also discovered oddments of broken pottery on various spoil heaps in the churchyard, some of which he identified as 'possibly medieval'. Christine took them to the Surrey Archaeological Society Medieval Pottery Workshop and has had them identified. Seven sherds were Classification Q2, dated 1150-1325, another was Classification WW1, dated 1240-1550, while one sherd was Roman – much to Christine's delight!

Bill gave the location of some of these finds, referring to the adjoining grave plot numbers. Plot 239, where

two Q2 sherds were found, is in the far western corner of the churchyard, whereas plots 622 and 703, between which one Q2 and the single WW1 sherds were found, are in the eastern section, roughly half way between the lych gate and the present Rectory drive, just inside the original churchyard boundary along the London Road. The Roman sherd and one Q2 are only described as being in the north-eastern sector, while no location is given for the remaining three Q2 sherds.

The earliest known reference to the church is from 1157, and a document of 1331 states that the vicar 'will have a mansion house with a curtilage and garden, adjacent to the same church, which the priest of the parish was accustomed to live in from ancient times, freely pertaining to his vicarage forever ... or a more suitable one or at least one of equal value'. By 1416 the vicarage was in Central Road, so the medieval sherds found probably came from the former vicarage/priest's house, perhaps on the then boundary facing the road. The projected route of Stane Street runs some 90 yards to the north of the church, across Morden Park, reaching the present London Road near the entrance to the college and the adjoining entrance to the main car park for the Park.

Some 500 yards to the south-east of the church, in Green Lane between Glastonbury Road and St Helier station, Bill discovered numerous Romano-British pottery sherds. These are currently with Surrey Archaeological Society awaiting classification. Had settlement here, or its arable fields, extended as far as the later churchyard?

## PROGRAMME MARCH – APRIL 2025

### TALKS

**Saturday 8 March at 2.30pm**                      **‘Liberty of London’s time at Merton Abbey Mills’**  
a talk by **John Sheridan** of MHS and Wandle Industrial Museum

Please note change of speaker and topic because of illness of our advertised speaker

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

No meeting will be held in May

### VISITS

Details of our summer visits and events will be advertised in our June *Bulletin*

*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 14 March, 2 May, 13 June, 25 July, 5 September, 17 October 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.**

**Michael Norman-Smith has written a book on his...**

### 50 YEARS ON THE STAGE

*[Published privately via Charmschool of English, £10 from the author at [normansmit21@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:normansmit21@yahoo.co.uk), with proceeds to a charity for retired actors]*

Michael grew up in Wimbledon, 1950-1973. He then worked, mainly in education, successively in Sussex, Bristol and Barnet, returning in 1992. His great grandfather Henry Peck was a member of the British Empire Shakespeare Society who performed the role of Shylock at the age of 80. This partly inspired Michael’s attachment to the amateur stage, and thus this book, an autobiographical jaunt through his varied experiences, acting in theatres many and various. During the book launch, Michael was interviewed by local crime author Joy Kluver, whom he knew through her writing group at West Barnes library.

He first trod the boards at Wimbledon Library (now Merton Artspace) in Compton Road. His adult acting debut was in 1974. He has performed in about 100 shows; many times since 2004 with Carlton Dramatic Society at Wimbledon Studio Theatre and Merton Abbey Mills, as well as in libraries at Mitcham and West Barnes. Most recently, last May, he was in Merton Park Parish Players production of *When We Are Married* by J B Priestley. ‘It has been very therapeutic as a pastime’ he muses.

### WIMBLEDON CHASE CO-OP FRONTAGE

The plastic panels that covered this 1938 three-shop frontage have recently been removed and the original cleaned to show its pleasant jade green, black and white colouring. ‘Wimbledon Chase Branch’ appears at each end.



**BILL BAILEY** has been exploring the limited sources mentioning

## **THE LABOUR MOVEMENT AND THE 1919 LOCAL ELECTIONS IN MITCHAM**

My interest in the 1923 by-election in Mitcham led to a search for sources with information about any activity by the Labour Party and trades unions in Mitcham around that time. Chuter Ede, Labour Party candidate at the 1923 by-election, told the *Manchester Guardian* that, when he arrived in Mitcham, he discovered that the local Labour Party, founded in 1918, took the form of a secretary and what few trades unions there were in the division.<sup>1</sup> A search showed that the local Labour Party holds no records from that time. It seemed unlikely that a constituency which included parts of Colliers Wood and Tooting would *not* have seen some activity by the Labour movement. This made the local press an important source. However, the film for the *Mitcham Advertiser* for 1918 is missing at the Heritage and Local Studies Centre, so the *Mitcham and Tooting Mercury* is the only press source for that year.

The Labour Party in the years after WW1 was slowly becoming a national party with local branches, building up its individual and trade union membership and developing its electoral organisation. This growth was gradual and locally variable, meaning that in some places the party was battle-ready when an election was called, while in others it was not, or existed only minimally. Often the presence of a large industry or employer meant there were trades unions which could provide the people and funding to undertake a campaign. The £150 deposit required at the time was about what the head teacher of a big elementary school would receive as their annual salary.

Three recent and significant changes were affecting the administration and politics of Mitcham in 1918-19. Firstly, in the 1918 General Election, Mitcham was a new parliamentary constituency, having been separated from Wimbledon during the war. Secondly, it had been given the status of Urban District Council from 1915, meaning that its local government in 1918 was still run by the members of the parish council last elected in 1913. The population of Mitcham parish had doubled between 1901 and 1911, growth concentrated largely in the north. Thirdly, the electorate of the new constituency increased further in 1918 as a result of the Representation of the People Act (1918). The *Mitcham and Tooting Mercury* reported the victory in the 1918 General Election of Dr Cato Worsfold, the Unionist/Coupon candidate, with a turnout of 44% of the approximately 28,600 registered voters.<sup>2</sup>

During December 1918 the press carried no mention of any campaigning on the part of Labour-connected or any other groups. In fact, the *Advertiser* reported that there was a 'lack of interest' in the first election in the Mitcham Division, and that the campaign had been 'dull to the extreme' and 'not a patch' on what had been seen in some parish elections.<sup>3</sup> This verdict was supported by the *Mercury* which reported that: 'Polling at Mitcham was extremely quiet and dull and remarkable apathy was displayed throughout the day'.<sup>4</sup>

So far rather disappointing, but local elections were due to take place in April 1919 for places on what was now the 24-member Urban District Council (UDC) and here the *Advertiser* becomes a more helpful source.<sup>5</sup> First, it published a report which appears to have misled the local Labour Party and others. This report, based on a reliable source, stated that, as part of the transition to the UDC, all the members would stand down in 1919, and that in these circumstances there was 'the possibility of the Labour Party attempting a "flutter"'.<sup>6</sup> This was the first mention of the Party in my reading of the *Advertiser*. However, when it was learned that the Local Government Board in Whitehall had decided that only one third of the members would stand down, Labour was said to be 'up in arms' since they believed that the councillors could be seen to have outlived the mandate given them in 1913, an argument that could be seen to have some force.

Towards Monday 7 April 1919, the date of the UDC elections, there were reports in the *Advertiser* that trades unions had recently made 'great strides' locally in terms of the recruitment of members. This was probably a reference to the recent formation of a branch of the Workers Union at the Mitcham gas works, a large local employer.<sup>7</sup> In the years immediately before and after the end of WW1 the Workers Union had grown to become the largest general union in the UK (its membership was 500,000 and growing in 1920).<sup>8</sup> Its membership was miscellaneous in that it recruited skilled and unskilled workers in many areas of employment including agriculture, brickworks, power stations and gas works, and the civil service.

There is mention of no other union in Mitcham in the local press to support Ede's speaking of there being a few unions, but the Workers Union and the Labour party did make their presence felt on the result of the 1919 UDC election. During the weeks leading up to the UDC elections the *Mitcham Advertiser* carried no advertisements of



public meetings, while reporting ‘no great excitement’ on the ‘renewal of hostilities’ in the first post-War council election. It did, though, mention that there had been a keen contest in the West Ward where the supporters of the Workers Union worked hard in the campaign to get out the vote for their candidates.

The result, according to the *Tooting Mercury*, was ‘startling’. Members of the ‘old brigade’ lost their seats, and Workers Union/Labour candidates were returned. J R Chart, the ‘father of the Council’, lost his seat to Labour in the East, as did Dr Love in the South, while the North Ward returned two Labour Councillors. The *Advertiser* regretted the loss of the experienced members and, while welcoming the ‘sons of toil’ to the Council, undertook to follow closely the actions and words of the ‘new brooms’. It did, though, regret the small number of local citizens who had taken the trouble to vote.<sup>9</sup> While 44% of registered voters had voted in December in the General Election, only 15% voted in the UDC election in April 1919.

My initial survey has not found any reasons given at the time for this low turnout, but it appears that the Union and the Labour Party benefitted from the lower level of turnout by other groups and because of the campaign they sustained. This was notable in the West Ward where there was a ‘scramble’ to get out the vote, showing the success resulting from local organisation. It can also be suggested that, although the result showed at least one gain for Labour in each Ward, the turnout was especially strong in the North and West of the parish, especially in the new Links estate in Tooting and the working-class cottages around Colliers Wood. These were the new areas of Mitcham, where the residents were both new to the district and travelled to work, not in Mitcham, but in other parts of London. Their ‘new’ votes had helped to provide this ‘startling’ result in 1919, but this did not foreshadow a revolution in the Vestry Hall, as these new members would form a minority in the 24-member Council mainly elected in 1913.

1 *Manchester Guardian* 28/2/1923

2 *Mitcham & Tooting Mercury* 3/1/1919

3 *Mitcham Advertiser* 3/1/1919

4 *Mitcham & Tooting Mercury* 20/12/1918

5 *Mitcham Advertiser* 14/3/1919

6 *Mitcham Advertiser* 7/3/1919

7 *Mitcham Advertiser* 14/3/1919

8 R Hyman, *The Workers Union* (1971, Clarendon) pp.128-9

9 *Mitcham Advertiser* 11/4/1919

### Results of the 1919 Local Election in Mitcham

\* Workers Union/Labour candidates

\*\* ‘Old’ members losing seats

#### North Ward

\*Spackman, E W. 260

\*Flower, J G. 241

Turner J P. 215

Brewer J 173\*\*

Burt J 135

McCaul L R. 41

Total 1065

#### South Ward

\*A G Brown 306

J D Drewett. 240

H Love 233\*\*

W Carlton 74

Total 853

#### East Ward

\*Higgs C. 264

Jones G F 112

Chart J R 103\*\*

Total 476

#### West Ward

\*Chapman A G 290

\*Baker S. 289

Hurley A J 238

Woods C 219

Thomas H. 213

Bland W M 196\*\*

Total 1445

## IS ANYTHING KNOWN?

We present some photographic puzzles. If you know anything about any of the subjects, please write or email to the Editor. We were sent several photographs, which all came from the same set of glass negatives. They may have a Mitcham area background, and were almost certainly taken before the First World War. Does the same man / boy appear in each one?

### 1<sup>st</sup> Mitcham Scouts (right)

This is the only photo that is inscribed 'Mitcham'. Some of those Scouts look awfully young. Three are equipped with drums and two with cymbals, but none seems to have a bugle.



The thirteen players (sporting similar design variations) in the other picture are posed in the same location, but look a little older. Do we have Senior and Junior teams?

Note that the present-day Silverdale FC has been in existence for only about 40 years.



### Pub Outing (right)

Again, this is before WW1, both from the clothing and the classic char-a-banc. Two or three boaters indicate summer-time or at least warm weather. The public house, alas, is not yet identified, but Clive Whichelow, our resident expert, confirms that it is not in Merton. Rosemary Turner has found a St Thomas Road in Chiswick.



### Silverdale FC (left and below)

The photo with only nine players (and a mascot?) includes a plaque (?) labelled 'Silverdale FC 1911-1912', and shows interesting variations in shirt design – possibly they are home-made, rather than commercial productions.



### Family Party (left)

An unknown family of at least three generations, an unknown location and an unknown celebration, perhaps a first-birthday for the child in arms? Evidently this is in the back garden of a terrace house with a small scullery out-shut - but where? The clothing styles would date this before the First World War.



## ‘HISTORY OF DOGS OF LONDON’

The first Merton Historical Society meeting of the winter season took place on 12 October with a talk by Chris Burton (*right*), a London Tour Guide. She told us of dogs past and present with connections to London in many different contexts. Dogs depicted in advertisements and on coats of arms were covered, as were dogs in literature from Charles Dickens’ time onwards (notoriously, Bill



Sikes’ Bull’s-eye). Real dogs famous in their own right were mentioned, such as Nipper, the model for the HMV logo (*left*). (He was portrayed in an 1899 painting titled *His Master’s Voice*, adopted by the Gramophone Company as a trademark 1909, and the company name changed to HMV in 1921.)



Two other dogs which feature in portraits of their owners are William Hogarth’s pug Trump, and Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s spaniel Flush. A more modern London dog is Pickles, a collie, which in 1966 discovered the stolen Jules-Rimet World Cup wrapped in newspaper, beneath a hedge in South Norwood, and later starred in a film, *The Spy With The Cold Nose*.

We heard about the canine helpers in the Metropolitan Police and the London Fire Brigade and their origins. The subject would not have been complete without mention of Crufts Dog Show and Battersea Dogs and Cats Home. Finally, Chris told us about dogs in pet cemeteries and, in human cemeteries, the faithful friends depicted on their owners’ graves. It was altogether a very unusual, interesting and informative talk.

**Irene Burroughs**

## ‘WEST BARNES AND MOTSPUR PARK 1920 -1940’

A talk by Toby Ewin to Merton Historical Society on 14 December 2024

In 1825 there was a plan to build a canal to Portsmouth via West Barnes and Motspur Park but that did not happen. In 1839 the railway line was built through New Malden, with a crossing near Blue House Farm which eventually became the site of Motspur Park station, opened in 1925. Charles Blake leased land in Malden from Merton College and bought freehold land on the Merton side. In 1923 Sidney Parkes bought 120 acres in Malden from Merton College and also land from Charles Blake, which may have been left in his will. Parkes gave £1000 and some land to have the station built. The main line was electrified in 1915-16, while the Motspur Park line electrification followed in the 1920s. Sadly, on 6 November 1947 there was an accident on the Chessington line near Motspur Park station in which four people were killed and 100 injured.

The population of Merton and Morden was just 5,470 in 1901. The area had few houses until 1920, one of them being Ivy House, which was demolished in 1970. (It was near the station where Blossom House is now.) However, in 1921 Holy Cross Church was built, and the Kingston bypass from Robin Hood Gate to near Esher was built between 1923 and 1937, with the official opening in 1926. In 1925 the first houses were built in Phyllis Avenue, and in 1930 the gas holder was added.

In 1928 London University paid £18,000 for a sportsground in the area. The BBC also bought land for a sportsground nearby. On 28 August 1937 Sidney Wooderson broke the one-mile world record at the London University ground.

By the late 1920s, the Merton side was fairly developed but there was little on the New Malden side. The development on the New Malden side started when Parkes sold land to Wates, the builders. The Wates 1930s brochure featured houses and the recently built Beverley School. This was Beverley Boys school, now Coombe Boys, which opened in 1931. The TV personality Robert Robinson lived in West Barnes Lane and attended Raynes Park School.

[The Editor writes: In his covering note to us, Graham claims that this is not a complete report, as he mentions only items that interested him. I insist that a personal view is the essence of a report, as it is likely to draw members’ attention to points they may have missed. See the various and varied views expressed in this issue, which allow us to escape from ‘dull conformity’.]

**Graham Mills**



## VISIT TO ST BARTHOLOMEW'S CHURCHES AND HOSPITAL

Unusually, this report is a joint effort. On Friday 20 September 2024 the final visit of this year's MHS programme was to the St Bartholomew's complex at West Smithfield in the City of London. Our tour guide was Richard Smart (*right*) (who in 2023 spoke to MHS on 'The Salvation Army in Wimbledon'). Currently the church raises money for its upkeep partly by using it for film sets (which have included *Four Weddings and a Funeral*). And we had to make a hasty visit to the church as there was a wedding scheduled soon after. The four photos (*below*) of the interior of St Bartholomew the Great Church show some of its charming romanesque / Norman architecture. The tomb is that of the founder, Rahere, a jester to Henry I, who, the guide suggested, had been a Muslim before converting to Christianity in order to build the hospital, founded in 1123.







The 2.5 metre bronze sculpture entitled *Exquisite Pain*, covered in 'a blingy gold coating' (left), is by Damien Hirst. It depicts St Bartholomew having been flayed for his faith.

A modern grey stone plaque, by sculptor Emily Huffnung, commemorates the Peasants' Revolt of 1381, bearing a quote from John Ball (as reported by Froissart) 'Things cannot go on well in England ...' Narrow side panels contrast the likely weapons of the peasants (on the left) and of the authorities (on the right).

The church of St Bartholomew the Less, inside the hospital grounds, features modern stained glass windows with medical references, such as the staff of Aesculapius and Nightingale's traditional lamp. Finally, the fountain in the middle was built in a refurbishment, possibly in the eighteenth century (right).

**Janet Holdsworth** (who also took our selection of photos)

**Jenny Allen** adds her own memories:

Sixty-three years ago, the ancient church of St Bartholomew The Great played a memorable role in the life of myself and my husband Richard; it was there that we had the privilege of being married on 14 January 1961. The Rev Wallbank officiated, delivering a beautiful address to us after 'the knot had been tied'.

As I walked up the aisle, on my father's arm, to the accompaniment of Mendelssohn's *Wedding March* (corny, clichéd, but why not?!), I was overawed by the sense of antiquity and wonder, that thousands of worshippers throughout nearly a thousand years had knelt in prayer, been baptised, married, and mourned in that holy place. A temple which had served Christians not only as a place of worship, but as a community itself, treasured by Londoners over centuries. Looking back, I think it was the start of my lifelong love affair with London, not to mention my new husband of course! Our wedding breakfast was held in the historic Charterhouse - yet another privilege.

Many years later, something like fifty years or thereabouts, we revisited St Bartholomew's at a weekend. The church was busy with visitors; we noted the many initiatives that had taken place, and, whilst we were enjoying coffee in the cloisters, we started chatting to a gentleman dressed in a clerical gown who appeared to be there in some sort of semi-official capacity, perhaps as a verger. We mentioned that we had been married in the church in 1961, whereupon he enquired whether we had had a choir. 'Yes, we did ...': to our delight and amusement he told us that it was more than likely that he had sung at our service as a young chorister. A truly lovely coincidence. This gentleman has devoted years as a volunteer, travelling up from Sussex at weekends to give his services to his cherished church. It is such tiny moments like this which can have a disproportionately huge effect on our journeys through our lives. It was a golden moment for Richard and me! The church, with its wise old walls, has survived the Great Fire of 1666, the bombs of WW2, and who knows what else in the future? It is an inspiration.



TONY SCOTT gave a presentation at the AGM on

## THE BURN BULLOCK PUB, MITCHAM

The *Burn Bullock*, or to give it its earlier name, the *King's Head*, was clearly based upon a Tudor building, with the timber framed construction appearing to date from the late 16th or early 17th century. According to Eric Montague, much of the structural timber appears to have been re-used, since by Tudor times good structural hardwood was scarce and expensive. The 1975 photo of the rear of the building shows some of this timber framing (*right*).



There is a reference to a farmhouse on this site, in a lease dated 20 March 1604/5 relating to a neighbouring property. The rear wing with its gables, oriel window and massive chimneys indicates late Elizabethan rather than Jacobean origins. The *King's Head* was certainly one of the earliest meeting places of the Mitcham Vestry after the Restoration. The Surrey Quarter Sessions records of 1661 mention meetings at a very large alehouse in the village, which we conclude was the *King's Head*. In the mid-18th century, stage coach travel and the establishment of Turnpike Trusts produced the need for inns that were of sufficient size to be able to provide sustenance and facilities for stagecoach passengers. The opening of Westminster Bridge in 1755 encouraged this passing trade in Mitcham, so the front part of the *King's Head* was rebuilt in the symmetrical Georgian style.

On 20 January 1941 Burnett (Burn) Bullock and his wife Lily took over the licence of the *Kings Head*. They were local people and Burn was a reasonably distinguished Surrey cricketer. The pub became the home of Mitcham cricket and the locals identified the building as 'the Burn Bullock'. Burnett Bullock died in 1954 and the licence was continued by his wife, Lily. (Coincidentally, the building was Grade II Listed in that year.) In his honour and to accept its common name, the public house was officially re-named the *Burn Bullock* in 1975, soon after Lily Bullock retired as licensee. A 1975 photo of the front shows the *King's Head* sign (*above right*), while the side view, also 1975,



is of the renamed *Burn Bullock* (*below left*). This view clearly shows the two top (roof) windows that were blocked up to avoid paying window tax on them, a tax that was instituted in 1797.

The *Burn Bullock* finally closed in 2009, after which the building slowly deteriorated, probably aided by squatters who took up residence there. At one time the lead from the roof valleys was stolen, and English Heritage compelled the owner to replace it, as belonging to a Listed Building.

At about 7.30pm on Friday 17 April 2024 the alarm was raised that the building was on fire. A team of 80-strong fire crew fought for three hours to bring the fire under control. Four people were resident in the building, all of whom escaped safely, but their dog perished. The damage was very extensive, most obvious in the aerial view (*facing page*). The remains of the building are probably structurally unsafe and English Heritage has ordered that they need stabilising with scaffolding as well as a temporary roof needing to be put in place to protect what remains from further deterioration.

We are left with a number of unanswered questions and even after seven months they are still unanswered.

Do we know who raised the alarm of a fire in the building? Was it an occupant or was it a passer-by?

What was so flammable in the building that caused such a fast spread of flame and took three hours to extinguish?

Were flammable substances stored there? Was an accelerant used?

The photographs look as though there were multiple sources of fire. Does the forensic evidence agree with this assumption?





## AGM: A LAUNCH AND AN ADVERTISEMENT

After the formal business of the AGM, we gave a formal launch to Irene Burrough's *The Physic Gardens of Mitcham*. This included a short interview of Irene conducted by Peter Hopkins, and surprise boxes of chocolates to share among the assembled members.

Christine Pittman had googled 'Mitcham mint' and found there was a farm in Hampshire still growing it. She emailed them to ask what she should buy to cater for a meeting of 30 or so people, to give them a taste of Mitcham black peppermint. Their marketing manager said she loved the back story and would send a box of samples, free of charge, so we received a pack of three boxes of chocolates, two boxes of tea bags, some hand cream and hand wash (right). Christine sent them a copy of Irene's book and some photos from the day, with our thanks. So we hereby publicise [www.summerdown.com](http://www.summerdown.com) for all minty tastes.



PS Happily, the booklets have proved very popular and already more than 100 copies are in circulation.

## MAKING MERTON: MITCHAM

A free and friendly craft workshop to mark 60 years of Merton heritage, learning to block print fabric for a textile artwork. Aspects of local and personal histories will be used to create a distinctive artwork for display. No experience necessary. This session is aimed at adults and young people aged 14+.

8 March, 2 - 4pm. Canons House, Madeira Road, Mitcham.

Bookings: <https://merton.events.mylibrary.digital/event?id=206857>



**NORMA COX has been looking at the rather varied**

## **RUBBER INDUSTRIES OF MITCHAM 1845-1963**

In *Bulletin* 232 I wrote about the advertising products made by Hancock, Corfield and Waller, of Morden Road, Mitcham, under their brand name Hancor. One of the Hancor products was the Ram model which advertised Young's Ram Ales for the Wandsworth brewer. It was made of a rubber substance named Beritex; this was pink and looked like pottery, it was firm yet light, and may have been produced in Mitcham, as the town had eight rubber factories in the years 1845-1963. This article looks at the history of these Mitcham industries.

### **Rubber history in Mitcham**

I had discovered that there were five rubber factories and three chemical manufactories in Mitcham during the years specified, where the chemical factories produced the chemicals needed for the vulcanisation of rubber, as well as rubber. Pure rubber, the latex exudate from the bark of the rubber tree, has little strength and elasticity; it is hard in cold weather and sticky in hot weather. However, by the addition of certain chemicals to the latex and heating it in controlled conditions, the rubber is rendered elastic. Sulphur was one of the chemicals added to pure rubber for vulcanisation, while another method used Carbon Black. Synthetic rubber was a rubber substitute obtained from the petro-chemical industry.<sup>1</sup>

The earliest Mitcham rubber works had begun by the mid-nineteenth century at the Mitcham parish workhouse on Mitcham Common, after the workhouse became disused. It had been planned in the late eighteenth century, when the Lords of the Mitcham Manors of Ravensbury and Biggin and Tamworth were approached by the parish vestry officers, to seek consent to enclose part of Mitcham Common for a parish workhouse.<sup>2</sup> *Mitcham Histories* Vol.10 notes that the workhouse was built on Mitcham Common in 1782.<sup>3</sup> Rubber had not been used much in the early nineteenth century, until 1823, when a man named Charles Macintosh developed a means of waterproofing cloth by using a solution of rubber in naphtha.<sup>4</sup> Historian Eric Montague suggested that a chemical manufactory existed in the disused parish workhouse in 1855, but does not mention its name, and after 1855 the factory was taken over by Hooper and Fry.<sup>5</sup> However, according to *Graces Guide*, William Hooper (1817-1877) set up a factory in 1845 at the old Mitcham Workhouse, Mitcham Common.<sup>6</sup>

The firm of Hooper and Fry manufactured rubber groundsheets and waterproof clothing for troops in the Crimean War (October 1853 - February 1856). After the Crimean War ended, William Hooper (Fry had already left the partnership) expanded the works and established Hooper's Telegraph and India Rubber Company. His first products were rubber goods for the medical profession. He also carried out experiments for insulating electric cables using rubber and devised a continuous manufacturing process for this. Hooper's firm flourished on the site on Commonsides East for a further 30 years.<sup>7</sup> The factory was in sight of The Cedars, a large villa in Mitcham, home of Mr and Mrs G Hooper, who were related to William Hooper, the Managing Director of this India rubber factory. William Hooper came from Devonshire and he gained a reputation as a manufacturer of rubber water-beds for invalids in 1840.<sup>8</sup> *Graces Guide* gives details of William Hooper's career; his business later developed into a company with a world-wide reputation by producing vast quantities of submarine telephone cables. His first order was from the Indian Government in 1857, followed by another order for cable to link India and Ceylon. By 1860 the company was trading using his name. In 1870 he formed Hooper's Telegraph Works Ltd to undertake the manufacture and laying of submarine cables. The first order for the new company was from the Great Northern Telegraph Company for a cable connecting Vladivostok to Hong Kong. In 1873 Hooper's laid cable off the south coast of South America. In 1877 the company went into liquidation and Hooper died soon after. The company reformed in 1933 and continued until 1953, with the headquarters then listed at King William Street London in *Graces Guide*.<sup>9</sup> These factories are the first two in this study.

After 1877 the parish workhouse site then became the India rubber factory site of the Woodite firm (fig 1 right).<sup>10</sup> Part of the crenelated parish workhouse wall remained until it was demolished in 2017. The Woodite Company produced India rubber and steam packaging. This was the third factory of the study.

The fourth rubber factory was mentioned in *Bulletin* 197, where a report noted the Southern



Industrial Rubber Co of 1867, as seen on the O/S map of Western Road, but the author has not found any further details of this factory.<sup>11</sup>

The fifth rubber factory in Mitcham, named as Thomas Forster's India rubber and chemical works, was listed in the Post Office Directory for 1855, yet there was no similar entry in the 1862 edition. The name Forster had been incorrectly spelt as 'Foster' (see *Mitcham history notes*).<sup>12</sup> The Forster family had been experienced in manufacturing India rubber waterproofed goods since 1838.<sup>13</sup> The Forster's factory was established in the old silk mill on Streatham Common, but this site was not in Mitcham. The Forster family had set up another rubber and chemical factory and it developed in the second half of the nineteenth century. This factory was Thomas Forster's 1853 'new' factory, sited at Lonesome Farm,<sup>14</sup> and was mentioned in the vestry minutes of 1853. The Lonesome Chemical Works of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries lay west of Rowan Road and south of Greyhound Terrace today. It was actually part of Mitcham Urban District although the address was Streatham.<sup>15</sup> In 1857 Forster's Streatham Common rubber factory was purchased by Peter Brussey Cow (founder of P B Cow Ltd), who had manufactured India rubber goods in Cheapside for the previous nine years. Thomas Forster became manager of Cow's new Streatham factory and in 1868 Forster was taken into partnership.<sup>16</sup> However, Graces Guide says the year when Thomas Forster entered into partnership was 1863.<sup>17</sup>

Thomas Foster had lived at Sparrow Hall, Streatham, and died in 1880 aged 72 years. His youngest son, Emerson, who died in 1895 at Sparrow Hall, was associated with the Lonesome Chemical Works for 30 years. The eldest son of Thomas Forster, who was named William George Foster, was a manufacturing chemist and he had joined in partnership with Edwin Gregory in the business of Forster and Gregory, manufacturing chemists, at Lonesome in the 1850s.<sup>18</sup> A poster of Forster and Gregory from the *Chemist and Druggist* of 1883, from the Mitcham History website, is shown below.



The poster shows the date of 1852 when the business started.<sup>19</sup> Unfortunately Edwin Gregory of Lonesome Chemical Works died on 17 December 1878 aged 43, as reported in the *Croydon Advertiser & East Surrey Reporter* for Saturday 4 January 1879.<sup>20</sup> Graces Guide agrees this partnership was established in 1852, and further states that William George Foster was married in 1880 at Croydon to Jessy Jane Rosa Blake.<sup>21</sup> In the 1901 census they lived in Croydon along with their four children and William's sister Eliza. In the 1911 census they lived at Tankerton, Whitstable. Further details of this successful company are given in Graces Guide. It was also mentioned on the Graces Guide website that an Alfred Thomas Forster of Tooting (late of Lonesome Chemical Works) who died on 6 May and was mentioned in the *Norwood News* Friday 15 May 1942, was possibly a son of William George Foster. The Lonesome works was the fifth factory in this study of Mitcham rubber factories.

The sixth industry involved in the production of rubber in Mitcham was the rubber and chemical works of Typke and King, located at the Crown Chemical Works in meadows around Tamworth Lodge, between Commonsides East and Tamworth Lane on Mitcham Common. Today this site is near Marlowe Square, Johnson Close and Donne Place.<sup>22</sup> There is a slide by Eric Montague showing Marlowe Square in 1975 on the Merton Historical Society website; the caption mentions that Marlowe Square and Tamworth Lane were built in the 1950s on the site of the Crown Chemical Works of Typke and King.<sup>23</sup> The business of Typke and King was established in 1883 and supplied chemicals such as Antimony Sulphate used in the rubber industry.<sup>24</sup> Typke and King vulcanised pure rubber by mixing it with sulphur and heating the mixture under definite conditions. The factory used large Lancashire boilers, a smaller vertical type and several gas engines driven by gas produced on the spot. They specialised in a red compound which was used in the manufacture of inner tubes and football bladders, which gave a pleasing colour and prevented the rubber from perishing. Typke and King also used carbon black in the manufacture of tyres and rubber shoe-soles. The business also made Factice, a rubber substitute, which was a vulcanised vegetable oil. Its principal use was waterproofing and in Macintoshes, where

the concentration of rubber substitute could be 75%. The rubber substitute gave a smooth silky feel to the rubber, prevented rapid perishing and allowed the material to be added to the cloth with greater ease. The rubber substitute also acted as a lubricant for vulcanised rubber. Typke and King also had a research laboratory. One of their posters is shown here (*right*), courtesy mitchamhistorynotes.<sup>25</sup>

However the fumes produced by the Typke and King chemical industry became a nuisance in the 1930s when Mitcham was being developed, so by 1940 the business was taken over by the Newcastle Zinc Oxide Company Ltd of Birtley, County Durham, and the company relocated to Birtley.<sup>26</sup>

The seventh Mitcham rubber company was unoriginally named the Mitcham Rubber Company. It started in 1916 as a subsidiary of the Leyland and Birmingham Rubber Company with a rubber factory located on the south side of Morden Road, as seen on the 1953 O/S map shown on facing page. This site was very close to the Hancock, Corfield and Waller factory site. The Mitcham Rubber Company moved from Mitcham to Leyland in 1963 and their factory site today is a trading estate. Part of the firm produced latex products before the business was transferred. The business was 'a big local employer in the 1950s and it called workers back to work with an air-raid siren.' This information was reported in Mitcham History Notes.<sup>27</sup>

Finally the eighth factory in this study was the rubber business of North's Rubber Co, who produced bathing caps and surgical items in 1953. The business was located on James Factory Estate, Mitcham, and was part of the Holborn Workhouse on Western Way as recorded in *Mitcham History Notes*.<sup>28</sup> It is not clear if the rubber was produced on the premises or if it was purchased-in as sheets of rubber. A view of the James Industrial Estate is seen in a slide by Eric Montague on the website of Merton Historical Society.<sup>29</sup>

A smell of rubber emanating from nearby Mitcham rubber-factories was mentioned by Michael Reed in his memories of his Mitcham childhood *Growing up in Mitcham 1939-1963*. He was born in 1939 and lived above his grandparents shop at 114 Christchurch Road which is at the boundary with Colliers Wood. The documentation of his childhood memories gives historical evidence that rubber factories were in production in Mitcham during the period 1939-1963.<sup>30</sup>


## Conclusion

The historical evidence shows that the Mitcham rubber industry was well established by 1845 and continued until 1963. The local rubber industry had in fact started in 1838, seven years earlier, in the adjoining borough of Streatham. The Young's Ram model was made in the 1930s but there is no direct evidence of whether the rubber used to make the model came from a Mitcham factory. Yet manufacturers often used factories close to their premises for their supplies, as was seen in the business of lenses supplier Taylor Hobson of Leicester who supplied the lenses to the Reid's Camera factory in Braunstone, Leicestershire. (This information was recorded in the author's article about the Reid Camera in *Bulletin* 231 June 2024).<sup>31</sup> There were two factories producing rubber in 1930s Mitcham: Typke and King of the Crown Chemical Works, Mitcham Common, and the Mitcham Rubber Company, Morden Road. Typke and King specialised in a red compound which was used in the production of inner tubes and football bladders. Beritex the substance used to make the Young's Ram model was also red and it was also used in the production of football bladders. Another feature favouring Typke and King as the possible supplier of the Beritex rubber compound was the fact that Typke and King had a research laboratory which was a complete miniature rubber manufacturing plant and here they used various powders to modify the rubber. The actual powder used depended on the purpose for which the rubber was intended. Typke and King therefore made new rubber compounds in small amounts and this would be beneficial for the small purchaser.

GOLD MEDAL, LONDON, 1909


# TYPKE & KING, LTD.

ESTABLISHED 1883



TRADE MARK

Governing (P. G. W. TYPKE, F.I.C., F.C.S.)  
Directors (W. R. KING, J.P.)  
Directors (W. W. KING, J.A. P. KING)



TRADE MARK

Head Office and Works :

## CROWN CHEMICAL WORKS

MITCHAM COMMON, SURREY, ENGLAND

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*India-Rubber Chemists & Chemical Manufacturers*

INDIA-RUBBER SUBSTITUTES—WHITE and DARK  
GOLDEN and CRIMSON SULPHIDES OF ANTIMONY  
of many qualities

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### SULPHUR

SULPHUR LAC.      SULPHUR PRECIP. B.P.  
CADMIUM SULPHIDE, ZINC SULPHIDE, ARSENIC SULPHIDE  
and  
All other Chemicals used in the Rubber Industry

---

### HYPOPHOSPHITES

ACID HYPOPHOSPHORUS

Pulv. Antim. Nig.	Antim. Crudum
Pulv. Antim. Crocus	Strontia Carbonate Precip.
Strontia Sulphate	Copper Oxychloride

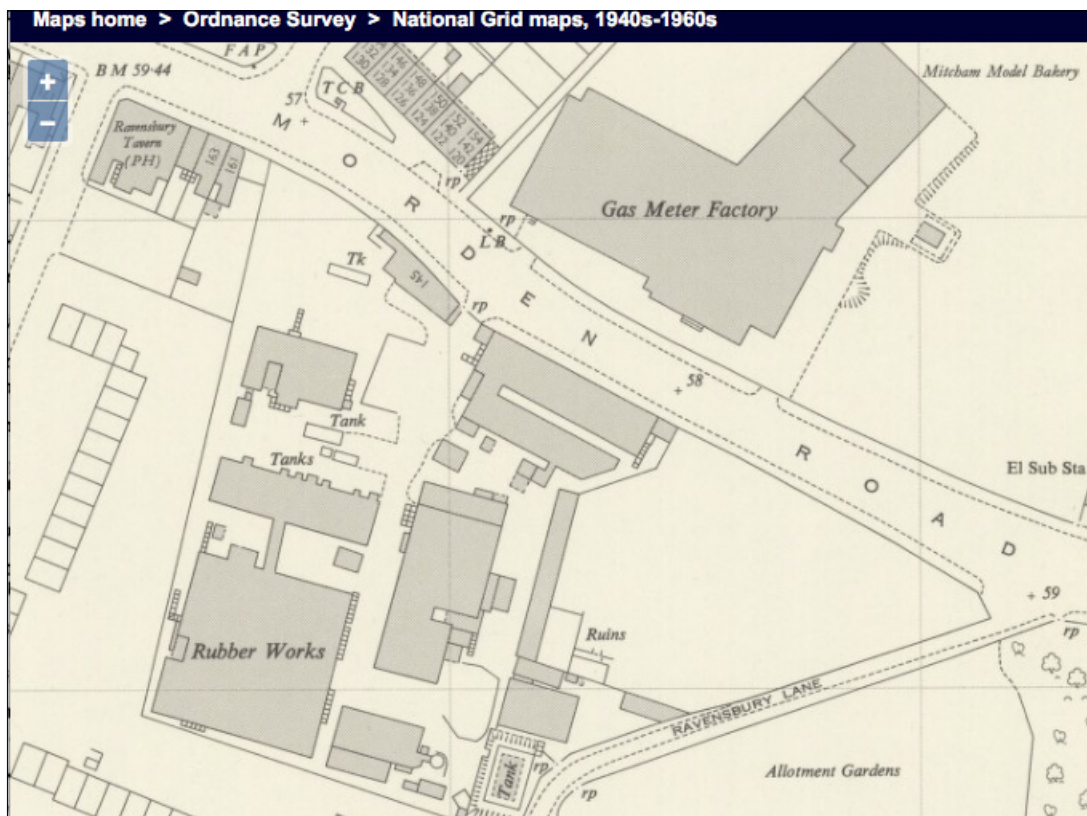
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Telegrams and Cables: "VALERIANIC, MITCHAM" (ENGLAND)

Codes: A.B.C. 5th Edition LIEBER'S

Telephones: MITCHAM 1555





## Acknowledgements

To Sarah Gould and London Borough of Merton for the use of Figure 1. To Graces Guide for information about the British rubber industry in Mitcham UK.

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- 3 Mitcham Common workhouse: Montague E N, *Mitcham Histories 10* (2013) p.119
- 4 Macintosh: Montague E N, *Mitcham Histories 3* (2002) p.20
- 5 See Note 4
- 6 [https://www.gracesguide.co.uk/William\\_Hooper](https://www.gracesguide.co.uk/William_Hooper) (1817-1877)
- 7 See Note 4
- 8 Macintosh: Montague E N, *Mitcham Histories 3* (2002) p.64
- 9 [https://www.gracesguide.co.uk/Hoopers\\_Telegraph\\_and\\_India-Rubber\\_Works](https://www.gracesguide.co.uk/Hoopers_Telegraph_and_India-Rubber_Works)
- 10 Woodite/workhouse wall: <https://www.mitchamhistorynotes.com/tag/woodite>. Also <https://photoarchive.merton.gov.uk/collections/buildings/workhouses/35339-the-workhouse-on-mitcham-common->
- 11 MHS *Bulletin* 197 (March 2016) page 6
- 12 <https://www.mitchamhistorynotes.com/tag/1894/page/9>
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- 14 See Note 4
- 15 <https://www.mitchamhistorynotes.com/2015/06/02/lonesome-chemical-works>
- 16 See Note 4
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- 18 Forster and Gregory: Montague E N, *Mitcham Histories 3* (2002) p.21
- 19 Chemist and Druggist poster: <https://www.mitchamhistorynotes.com/tag/1894/page/9>
- 20 Obituary of Edwin Gregory: See Note 19
- 21 (and the rest of this paragraph) [https://www.gracesguide.co.uk/William\\_George\\_Forster](https://www.gracesguide.co.uk/William_George_Forster)
- 22 Tamworth Lodge: Montague E N, *Mitcham Histories 3* (2002) p.70
- 23 Montague E N, SLIDE: <https://mertonhistoricalsociety.org.uk/pollards-hill-commonside-east-and-lonesome-e-n-montagues-slides/mhs-em-ph-l-56/>
- 24 [https://www.gracesguide.co.uk/Typke\\_and\\_King](https://www.gracesguide.co.uk/Typke_and_King)
- 25 <https://www.mitchamhistorynotes.com/tag/rubber>
- 26 Newcastle Zinc Oxide Company: See Note 26
- 27 Mitcham Rubber Morden Road <https://mitchamhistorynotes.com/tag/1918/>
- 28 North's Rubber Co: See Note 27
- 29 Montague E N, SLIDE: <https://mertonhistoricalsociety.org.uk/upper-mitcham-and-western-road-e-n-montagues-slides/>
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## MICHAEL NETHERSOLE

We regret to report the death of Michael Nethersole, who may not have been quite one of our founder members, but was one of our earliest, youngest, most enthusiastic and ubiquitous.

For example: he played the part of Diggory, servant to Mr Hardcastle, in the Merton and Morden Historical Society Players' production of *She Stoops to Conquer*, performed in the British Legion Hall, Kingston Road, on 3-6 November 1954. He joined groups of MHS members on summer rambles to such places as North Holmwood (2 June 1957, photo in *Bulletin* 162, June 2007). As noted recently, in May 1962 the Society decided to build a model of Merton Priory. Using data supplied by Miss E M Jowett and Mr Dennis Turner, this model was constructed by Mr J H Burchett of Morden Library and painted by Michael.

He painted in watercolour throughout his life, his subjects mainly depicting landscapes and sky studies (*right*). Most of the Society's excavations in the 1960s included Michael, as he had early developed an interest in archaeology.



*Painting in watercolour of a Landscape near 'Midgham, Berks' (Sulis Fine Art)*

We have a recollection of his about the Short Batsworth dig of 1966-68:

'The December 1966 part of the dig was cold and the trenches were damp. The finds were small and, as I had come back from a summer holiday in Greece and Crete, I had hoped to uncover jewels and gold – but no such luck! However, we were a cheerful bunch who worked well together as a group. Over lunchtime sandwiches we told tales of yore, about 'interesting' people such as Jeremy Bentham and Bess Throckmorton.'

Michael remained a member of our Society until he died in 2024. He even kindly remembered us in his will, from which the Society benefits to the tune of £220.

### EXHIBITION '*BLUEPRINTING HISTORY*'

Society member Cathy Corbishley Michel is having a one person retrospective exhibition of her Cyanotype Textiles and Prints in the Stableyard Exhibition Space at Morden Hall Park, from 1 March to 27 April.

Open daily 10.15am - 4pm. Entry is free.

The display will include large pieces from her Exploration series (Shackleton, Scott and Captain Cook), and the Green Man, Muybridge in Motion, the Lewis Chessmen, Nelson in Merton and Apollo 13 pieces.

Small pieces and cards will be for sale in the bookshop, with all proceeds going to the upkeep of the Park.

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***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.**

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*Printed by Peter Hopkins*