



CHAIR: Christine Pittman

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Florence Cresswell's Cordon Bleu Medal – See p.16

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EVENTS JUNE – AUGUST 2026

You are invited to join us at the following events:

William Morris Gallery – Friday 12 June, arrive to meet for lunch at 12.45 in the cafe, or meet at reception at 2pm for a self-guided tour of exhibition. Register your interest with mhs@mertonhistoricalsociety.org.uk

www.wmgallery.org.uk Underground: Victoria line to Walthamstow Central, then 10-15 minute walk or bus 34, 97, 215, 275 or 357 to Bell Corner

Local history workshop – Friday 3 July at 2.30pm, in Wandle Industrial Museum

Local history workshop – Friday 14 August at 2.30pm, in Wandle Industrial Museum

MHS 75th anniversary book launch – Saturday 15 August at 2.30pm, in the Chapter House of Merton Priory, Merantun Way. Book your place by emailing chair@mertonhistoricalsociety.org.uk

Visitors are very welcome to attend any of our events.

MHS 75TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

At our meeting on 14 February 2026, our ‘young researcher’, Carrie Lynott presented the results of her research on the story of Merton Historical Society, as part of its 75th anniversary celebrations.

Carrie had answered our call for a student with an interest in history, who would be interested in preparing a Powerpoint presentation for our February meeting, to be followed with the production of a publication in August.



Her illustrated lecture took us through the early years of the Merton and Morden Historical Society, starting with our founders in 1951, and a membership which numbered 70 people in the first year. Activities included lectures, coach trips and local visits, historical re-enactments, amateur dramatics, rambles and archaeological excavations, as the Society provided a social setting for adults and children with an interest in history.

The Bulletin began life as a typed sheet in April 1965, providing a way for keeping members informed and involved, and developed into a 16-page quarterly publication with photographs, including recent research by members, reports of events and items of concern while still maintaining its original intent, to provide members with the opportunity to stay involved.

The 50th anniversary of the Society was celebrated in The Canons in 2001, with displays of local history, archaeological artefacts, membership lists and publications.

Carrie provided lists, timelines, graphs and statistical analyses, based on her research, using archival records in the Surrey History Centre, *Bulletins*, publications, the vast collection of photos on our website and a questionnaire distributed to all members, asking them for happy memories of the past and for their concerns for the future of the local area. We congratulate her on an excellent contribution to local history, and look forward to the launch of the anniversary publication, which will take place in the Chapter House Museum, Merton Priory, on Saturday 15 August. All members are invited, of course to join us there, and all members will receive a copy of this publication.



Sir Patrick Kelly, 'Chief Wimbledon Air Warden' and his statue in Mumbai

A few weeks back it was a great pleasure to be asked to deliver a talk for Merton Historical Society on a bit of very personal local history I had picked up on. It's led me down all sorts of interesting roads, combining the place where I grew up, a country that has held a lifelong fascination and the place where I live today. All my life I'd been curious about the possible existence, somewhere in India, of a statue of someone who was raised in the ruined farmhouse across the road from where I lived in Northern Ireland. We knew this place simply as 'Kelly's'. It was the 1970s and it had been empty for quite a few years. Overgrown and surrounded by trees, it was a great place for a young boy to explore or hide himself away. A member of the Kelly family had apparently gone on to become a Police Chief in pre-independence Bombay.

That Saturday in Merton Park saw the last piece of jigsaw fall into place when the talk was attended by Harshita Goregaokar (*right*), whose grandfather, Nanabhai K. Goregaokar sculpted the statue of my 'neighbour' Sir Patrick Kelly, 'the father of the modern-day Mumbai police' who after retirement spent the last 30 years of his life, in Wimbledon, just up the road from where I now live.

You can read the full account of how my vague knowledge of Sir Patrick's story was dramatically enhanced a few years back in a story I posted on [my blog](#). I'd visited the small village of Kilskeery where I grew up, and an old friend, Barney McAnespey, prompted me to try and revive a bit of research into his

Great Uncle. The last time I'd searched online there was nothing about him but on this occasion a quick google revealed a recent article in *The Hindustan Times* and a thread on Twitter/X. A couple of tweets later I was in contact with Mumbai author and journalist Dhaval Kulkarni. He kindly dug out an old newspaper cutting and

for the first time, Barney and I saw an image of Sir Patrick Kelly's statue (*left*). I put the story online and we got in touch with Michael Kelly, Sir Patrick's grandson. Six months later Chris Madden, working for an international law firm in Singapore, but with a keen interest in Irish colonial history, contacted me. He often travelled to Mumbai and I put him on to Dhaval. The next thing I knew he was sending me photos of the statue – currently in the Mumbai Police HQ. It looked in tip-top condition – in the care of police historian Deepak Rao, awaiting placement in their planned new museum. This was all so exciting. Michael Kelly filled in a few more background details and told us that his sister had visited Mumbai at some point and seen the statue. However, Harshita, whose grandfather Nanabhai Goregaokar (*right*) had received a congratulatory medal for this commission, until recently didn't know of the statue's reappearance at the Police HQ after it went missing in the late 1960s. She most certainly does now! After getting in touch and coming to my Merton Historical Society talk and hearing the full story, on her next visit to Mumbai, she plans to visit Police HQ (coincidentally a building designed by her great grandfather, Harischandra J. Goregaokar in 1896) and view the statue! It was extraordinarily moving to see photos of the medal on Harshita's phone and think back to my boyhood adventures exploring that old ramshackle farmhouse.

Quite a story then, but what is the Wimbledon connection? Well, newspaper cuttings we located indicated that in 1939, six years after he retired and three years after the statue was installed in Bombay, Sir Patrick Kelly was appointed 'Chief Air Warden' in Wimbledon. Still relatively young, this would've been an important role, ideally suited to someone who'd faced some very tough situations in his police career. It's most likely he settled in this area so his diabetic wife Elizabeth would receive good medical treatment and it was where his doctor son was living. Both Kelly families resided in Ernle Road, close to the golf course and Cannizaro Park where Michael has fond memories of being taken to by his grandfather. He recalls making dens near the pond and being taught numbers, drawn out with a stick in the sandpit. Sir Patrick passed away in 1966 and is buried in Randall's Park Cemetery in Leatherhead. Anyone who lived locally with memories of that time or connections with Sacred Heart Church or Royal Wimbledon Golf Club might remember him – the old man who every Christmas wrote a card sending his very best wishes to whoever held his former role of Police Chief in Bombay.



1966 was also the year that his statue was removed in line with post-independence and the desire to dismantle prominent reminders of the colonial era. But the police made sure it went into safe-keeping and in 1989 there was even a proposal to re-erect it. Just a few years after Sir Patrick's death, sectarian violence erupted in Northern Ireland, the beginning of a conflict that required the deployment of British troops and would last for 25 years. The story of an Irishman knighted by the Crown and serving the Brits would be buried for a generation. It would surely be a fitting tribute to him if the discovery of Sir Patrick Kelly's statue, erected by residents of Bombay in appreciation of his bravery and devotion to keeping the city safe through some very turbulent times, could now bring people together in celebration of a most remarkable life.

Geoff Simmons, 9 April 2026

<https://summerstown182.wordpress.com/>

RECENT LOCAL PLANNING DECISIONS

Motspur Park gasworks site

Facebook, 16 March 2026: Plans to redevelop the old Motspur Park gasworks site, which straddles the border of Kingston and Merton (most in Kingston, northern access in Merton), have been refused by Kingston Council. Developer Berkeley Homes (with gas firm SGN) proposed demolishing three historic gasholders to build five apartment blocks (up to 16 storeys tall) with 586 homes, including 175 affordable homes. The vision included green spaces, 200+ new trees, >25% biodiversity boost, better paths to stations, and addressing the housing shortage, but residents (across Motspur Park in both boroughs) pushed back strongly — calling it overdevelopment on protected Metropolitan Open Land, out of character, too tall/dense, and a strain on local infrastructure.

Despite officers recommending approval, councillors voted it down (10-1) on March 11, citing harm to openness and neighbourhood feel. Merton Council is yet to decide on their identical application for the northern access parts. It's not over as Sadiq Khan's GLA could call it in, or an appeal might follow.

Gorringe Park Hotel

Instagram, 23 March 2026: Project Gorringe reported that the application for alterations and an addition to the Gorringe Park Hotel, 29 London Road, Mitcham, had been refused, and the hotel had been listed as an Asset of Community Value.

(right: photograph by E N Montague, 1975 – mhs-em-nm-18)

Majestic Way and Clarion's proposed apartment development

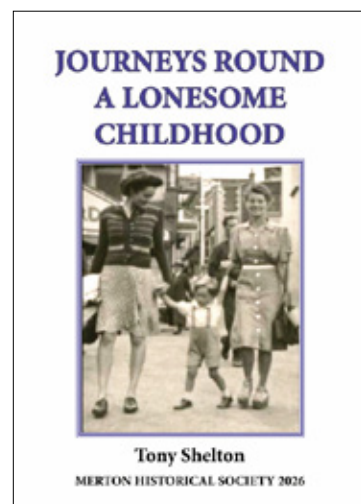
No decision – the saga goes on.....



HOT OFF THE PRESS!

Tony Shelton's memoir, *Journeys round a Lonesome childhood*, is the Society's latest publication. It is an endearing tale of growing up in the 1940s and 1950s in Mitcham, by an only child in an area called 'Lonesome', which was not quite in London, not quite in Streatham, and not quite in Mitcham. The story of a curious and observant child, told with humour by a wiser and well-travelled adult, reminds us that even places seemingly of no consequence in the bigger scale, still had a charm and individuality that is worth recalling. So much has changed in 80 years – the streets, the houses and the schools are still there, but the factories, with their local employment opportunities have, however, disappeared.

Email publications@mertonhistoricalsociety.org.uk for details on how to purchase a copy, or look out for our stall at local heritage events.



LOCAL HISTORY WORKSHOPS

Workshop 9 January 2026 6 present

- ◆ **Tony Dayan** said that he found Irene Burroughs' book *The Physic Gardens of Mitcham* very interesting. He is researching medical herbalists in Mitcham in the last century, but finding it difficult to locate sources. Rosemary suggested the Wellcome Collection or street directories on Find My Past or Ancestry. Lucy suggested the Herbal History Research Network at www.herbalhistory.org.
- ◆ **Lucy East** is researching her Gypsy ancestry. She is interested in Romany families who visited or lived in Mitcham, and anything that has been written about them. She has a copy of Bill Deadman's book *Redskin Village* and met him in 2022. Her ancestors lived at Half Acre Row in 1881 and Concrete Cottages in 1891. She is looking into whether they worked for the Mizens. Lucy has two WW1 soldiers' photographs. One was Joby Carey, who lived on Queens Road, who was not included in the Carved in Stone project because he survived the War. It was suggested that she try the Imperial War Museum for help with identifying the soldier's uniform.
- ◆ **Rosemary** reported on two interesting enquiries, one was from a descendant of John Marsh Pitt, who was the son of Priscilla and George Pitt who started the Berkeley Teetotal Society. He wanted to know the location of Shamrock Villa, Mitcham Park. George Pitt, and later John Marsh Pitt, moved there after they left Berkeley House.

On the 1911 census John Marsh Pitt was living at no 5 The Parks Mitcham. Mitcham Park is a road that runs from the Causeway opposite the Cricket Green to London Road near Mitcham tram stop. Mitcham History Notes mentions 1-7 Mitcham Park and also includes an aerial view of the house, with an entry from the *South London Press* 9 August 1902: 'Close to Mitcham Common, 2 pairs of semi-detached villas known as 1, 3, 5 & 7. Sale by auction Wednesday 10 September 1902. Each house contains 5 bedrooms, two reception rooms, kitchen and usual offices. No 5 to let at £55 per annum. No 9 will be sold with vacant possession.'

The site says that the road may have been gated at both ends as there are posts next to the Police station. Eric Montague confirms this and has a photo of the post in his book *Mitcham: a Pictorial History*.

The second enquiry related to Sibford House, Cricket Green, Mitcham. The enquirer had been clearing out his late aunt's house and came across some papers relating to the house, which he offered to our Society. The envelope includes a plan of the proposed layout of the garden together with correspondence from D S Thomson & Sons, Wimbledon, Nursery and Seedsmen, and a detailed list of the plants to be used and where they should be planted. There was also an old, undated, postcard of the house, where the photo had been printed in reverse.

He is the grandson of Dr AH Shelswell who was the last Shelswell to live at the house and carry on the doctor's practice there. The house was bought in 1899 by Oscar Berridge Shelswell and in the 1911 census entry, London Road has been crossed through, and replaced with Lower Cricket Green. The house was sold in the 1950s to the council for £20,000 for use as an old people's home.

The enquirer said that he might try and put together some family memories in the new year, as the junction outside was quite dangerous pre-war and his grandmother used to go out to help with accidents. On one occasion she heard one bystander say to another 'One more look at the blood, dear, and then we'll go home for tea', which became a family saying.

Rosemary Turner

Workshop 20 February 2026 9 present Rosemary in the chair

- ◆ **Bill Bailey** had continued to work on the development of local government and in the 1900s the Mitcham Parish Council was under pressure to provide services for a growing population. Issues included poverty in periods of unemployment, perceptions of unfairness in the representation on the Council of different parts of the Parish, and the Golf Club denying public access by enclosing land on the Common.

The representation problem was addressed by the creation of a ward system with four wards for the 1912/13 elections, and Urban District Council status was finally achieved in 1915. Also, the Mitcham parliamentary constituency was created by Act of Parliament in 1916, including the urban districts of Carshalton, and Beddington and Wallington.

- ◆ **John Sheridan** had resumed his research on William Bailey. High on the south wall of the sanctuary at the east end of Mitcham Parish Church there is a monument to Bailey, who died on 22 November 1834 aged 57. *The Times* report of his death contained the intriguing statement that 'By this lamentable accident the poor have lost a most benevolent friend.'

The monument is not mentioned in the section devoted to the church in Eric Montague's *Mitcham Histories* Vol 12, or in Montague's *A Guide to the Parish Church of St Peter and St Paul*.

John will write an article for the *Bulletin*, setting out his research and conclusions.

- ◆ **Peter Hopkins** had been helping an enquirer locate the address of his great-grandfather, Peter Beattie, in the pre-war years. The enquirer had established that Beattie had been a shepherd in 1910, living at Harriott's Cottages, West Barnes Lane, New Malden. In 1911 and 1921 he lived at 1 West Barnes Cottages, West Barnes Lane, which might have been his 1910 residence under a different name. As a shepherd he might have been working for William Harriott, a local farmer. Sometime between 1910 and 1921 his occupation changed from shepherd to sheep farmer, with an employer in Aberdeenshire. His new job was to coordinate sheep grazing in a number of London parks. The change in Beattie's circumstances might have coincided with the disposal of Harriott's farm and urbanisation. Around 1924 Beattie set up in business with a partner to run their own sheep grazing and trading enterprise.

The enquirer thinks Beattie lived at the same address until 1933/34. By then the number of properties in the area had increased, although we can identify two rows of properties that survived from the Edwardian era and are still there now. On the western side of the railway three cottages, once known as Dicksons Cottages, were, according to the 1910 Lloyd George Domesday Survey (*extract right*), then known as Harriott's Cottages, owned by William Harriott. The survey did not list the tenants of the cottages, but it seems likely that Beattie lived in one of them.

Reference No.	2704	Map No.
Situation	3 Harriott's Cottages, West Barnes Lane		
Description	Cottage		
Extent			
Gross Value	Land £	Buildings £ 7	Rateable Value
			Land £
			Buildings £ 5
Gross Annual Value, Schedule A, £			
Occupier			
Owner W. Harriott, West Barnes Lane, New Malden			
Interest of Owner Freehold			
Superior interests			
Subordinate interests			
Occupier's tenancy, Term from			
How determinable			

West Barnes Terrace, between Seaforth Avenue and the level crossing, was owned by G Aubrey Stapleton on behalf of the executors of Chas Blake deceased. Of the nine plots, numbers 1-4 were described as cottages and the others as land. No tenants were named. It is unlikely that Beattie lived there.

The wider interest here is in the process of transition from farming to urban development. The 1933 25 inch OS map indicates that factories were springing up at that time. The immediate area is now dominated by Raynes Park High School, a large Tesco supermarket and housing – including some older properties.

- ◆ **Christine Pittman** reported that Stan Churchillmann had been helping us with an enquiry about a possible local football team from 1911, and had sent us a copy of his recent article, written for the match day programme for the game Leyton Orient v AFC Wimbledon.

The East Stand was originally built for Mitcham Stadium in 1936, when Sydney Parks had a plan to bring greyhound racing to Mitcham, but he failed to gain a licence. Undaunted, he tried to move in rugby league football clubs, but they failed to attract the crowds, and were wound up.

The ground was used by the Irish Gaelic Athletic Association on Whitsun and August bank holidays, for hurling and Gaelic football games in the 1940s and 50s. An attempt was made to move in a football club from Croydon, which was renamed Mitcham Rovers, only for the club to close down before playing a single game, much to the relief of the neighbouring Tooting and Mitcham United FC. Millwall FC took Mitcham Rovers' place in the Metropolitan League but they only used the stadium for their third team's home games for one season, 1951/52, before moving on.

The London GAA tried to buy the stadium but found that the house builder Wates had acquired an option to buy the site. The land was eventually used as the site of the Laburnum Estate. The East Stand was re-built in Leyton Orient's Brisbane Road home, where it remains to this day.

Stan Churchillmann has agreed to write a piece on his Tooting Graveney Football History Project for the *Bulletin*.

- ◆ **Rosemary Turner** said that a friend had looked up the 1910 Valuation entries for the two houses that she mentioned at the last workshop.

Shamrock Cottage is listed as 5 Mitcham Park. The extension at the rear of the house was contemporary to when John Marsh Pitt and his father were living there. It was a substantial semi-detached house with 7 bedrooms, valued at £700. The freehold was held by the trustees of the developer, Maximillian Lindner deceased. They were based in Birmingham. Lindner died in 1898 leaving a quarter of a million pounds.

In the 1911 census John Marsh Pitt was 39 and a retired builder, now landlord. On the next census he was semi-retired. According to Eric Montague's *Mitcham Histories*, he and his father built quality housing for the local people, but according to Bill Bailey's research they also built some of poorer quality. It was noted that on 5 March 1913, 11 houses were empty in The Park, out of about 38.

The second house was Sibford House, address given as Lower Green West. It was a substantial, well-built detached house, stable, coachhouse and garden, held freehold by Oscar Berridge Shelswell, who was a GP. He bought it in 1899 for £400 – subsequent expenditure £2374. Total Valuation £2090. Rosemary had an old postcard depicting the house.

Rosemary was also engaged in a project to obtain information from the 1901 Census about individuals named in the Berkeley Society membership book for 1906. One such individual was William Stephens of Queens Road, Mitcham. Cross-referencing with the 1901 census, she found him living with his family at the same address by using the address search option. He was 23, so was born in 1878.

Rosemary had noticed that 'Find My Past' now links to newspaper entries possibly relating to the person she is looking for. *The South of England Advertiser*, 4 April 1912, had a William Stephens, 29, who enlivened breakfast at the workhouse by throwing porridge over the heads of other males. He was now doing 1 month's hard labour. It didn't say why it happened or why it was reported in the newspaper. The mismatch in age leaves it unclear if he was the person identified in the census.

John Sheridan

EMAILS TO THE EDITOR

Wade Brice wrote:

The photo by Eric Montague of Three Kings Pond in 1974, on the MHS website (*right*, <https://mertonhistoricalsociety.org.uk/mhs-em-tkp-45>) shows the Croydon power station chimneys and cooling towers in the distance. I made a note in my diary on 20th January 1974 that I heard the explosions from the demolition of the cooling towers. It's possible then that Mr Montague took this photo in January to capture the view before the towers were gone. The two power station chimneys can also be seen in this photo, and if it wasn't for the tall trees now lining Mitcham Common, these would still be visible. They are now the Ikea chimneys!



Peter Hopkins replied:

Thanks, Wade. Our catalogue says March 1974, but that may actually be the date when the slide film was processed, rather than when the photos were taken.

Our Art Correspondent writes:

Something prompted me to look up Harry Bush on Art UK today, and I was delighted to find that [Harry Bush: painter of suburban South London](#), now includes an image of a painting I hadn't seen before – *Wet Roofs* (1954). I think I recognise this as St John the Divine High Path (and I think some of the trees may still be there!). My impression (which may well be wrong) is that it shows a time when there were more houses on the west side of Morden Road than there are now: I don't know if that reflects the situation in 1954 or if the painting is based on an earlier view (*Spring Morning, Merton, 1932*, which is reproduced in Tate Britain's catalogue *Art of the Garden* (2004) is similar).

All this prompted me to look up Harry Bush on the (wonderfully searchable) MHS website. I see there have already been articles about him and mentions of him in *Bulletins* 133, 137, 151, 162, 166-8, 193 and 199, but the most recent of these is now nearly ten years ago, and I don't think any spell out the connection with St John's. So I wondered if it is worth alerting current members to these wonderfully 'relatable' paintings of Merton by mentioning the Art UK site in a future edition of the *Bulletin*? Just a thought, please ignore if not helpful!

The Imperial War Museum currently has an exhibition entitled *Beauty and destruction: wartime art in London*. Unfortunately, it doesn't include his painting *A corner of Merton, 16 August 1940*. Even though this painting is in the IWM collection, Harry Bush wasn't an official War Artist.

Art UK website: www.artuk.org

MITCHAM, 1890s: HOUSING OF THE WORKING CLASSES

In an earlier contribution the changes in local government introduced by the 1894 Local Government Act were summarised.¹ Mitcham was one of the Parishes in the area of the Croydon Rural District Council (CRDC) and members of the new, elected Mitcham Parish Council served on the Parochial Committee of the CRDC. Concerns about the housing of the working classes were raised by reports of the Medical Officer of Health which contained evidence of insanitary housing, some of it unfit for human habitation, in parts of Mitcham.

At the October 1897 meeting of the Parochial Committee, Alfred Mizen proposed a motion which drew the attention of the CRDC to the inadequate housing for the working classes in Mitcham. It called on the RDC to take steps to obtain from the County Council a Certificate to bring The Housing of the Working Classes Act 1890, Part III, into operation in Mitcham. If this was successful the CRDC would be able to build working class 'cottages' to meet the local needs. The Committee's decision was to stand the item over to the next meeting.²

At the November meeting of the Parochial Committee, when discussion was resumed on the Mizen motion, it was suggested that an inquiry take place to see whether accommodation was needed and, if it was, whether land was available and how it would be paid for. It was decided to ask R M Chart, Secretary to the Committee and Surveyor to the CRDC, to investigate and to report on whether it was necessary to adopt Part III of the Act for Mitcham. At the next meeting in December Chart reported that there were no figures available about how many families were living in each house, nor as to the number of 'cottages' occupied by people who needed to live in Mitcham because of their employment.³ This latter comment, based we may assume on Chart's experience, was to widen the discussion of the housing issue, since it added to the assessment of the adequacy of housing another question, perhaps of concern to other Mitcham village residents: how far was it the duty of the Parish to provide for people who lived in the Parish but worked elsewhere, and who were not 'Mitcham people'?

Chart presented his report at the January 1898 meeting. It contained returns on population and the number of houses; 'special features' relating to such parishes as Mitcham, and estimates for providing cottages for two classes of houses of workmen in Mitcham.⁴ The reception was an interesting one. Two councillors, Thomas Allen and W Mapp Thompson moved that the Parochial Council should not take any view on this issue until after the Parish Council elections due in March. We may assume them to be opposed to the proposal and that they hoped that the elections would result in councillors sharing their view being elected. In answer to this an amendment from Edward Ernest Mizen and Edward Johnson Mizen proposed that a Parish Meeting be called to gather the view of parishioners on the housing issue. This was voted down by 7 votes to 4; three of the losing votes were cast by the Mizen brothers (Alfred, Edward Ernest, and Edward Johnson). After these exchanges it was decided to adjourn discussion to the next meeting.

Surely not coincidentally, and a little more than two weeks later, on 4 February 1898, a Special Parish Meeting did take place. This was called by six parish electors with the express purpose of discussing the Housing of the Working Classes Act 1890 and how the Parochial Committee and the CRDC might be persuaded to act. Present were members of the Parish Council and 250 electors and the meeting discussed the question and passed the motion:⁵

That in the opinion of this Meeting that the housing accommodation for the Working Classes is very inadequate and some of it is insanitary and it is desirable that Part III of the Housing of the Working Classes Act 1890 should be adopted for the Parish of Mitcham and that such adoption will not entail any additional burden on the rates and that this meeting recommends the Mitcham Parochial Committee and the Croydon Rural District Council that a Certificate should be applied for from the Surrey County Council for this purpose for as soon as may be.

The resolution was passed, 98 for, 11 against, and it was also resolved to pass the resolution to the RDC and the Parochial Committee. No reason was given for the small number of votes recorded; perhaps it showed some doubt about the assertion that dealing with the housing situation could be done without adding to the rates.

The Parochial Committee on 15 February received the resolution from the Parish Meeting and resumed discussion on the Thompson/Allen motion that the decision would 'stand over' until after the elections in March. The minutes suggest that there was a long discussion before it was agreed to defer discussion by 11 votes to 3. During this discussion Chart informed the Committee that the Gorrington Park Estate at Tooting Junction was being laid out for sale with a view to the building of 'workmen's dwellings'.⁶

Working class housing was a main issue in the Parish Council elections in March 1898 when twelve candidates shared an election address which focussed on the housing question and eleven of these were successful. At its May meeting, on the motion of E J Mizen, the RDC agreed to pass the motion to the County Council with changes in the text to the effect that the costs of carrying out the 1890 Act would be borne by the Mitcham Parish and not by the whole Rural District. This was carried by eight votes to four, those against including T Allen and J Innes of Merton.⁷ There was a short delay before the RDC received a reply. At the 9 June meeting the County Council's letter was read in which it asked the RDC to define the area in Mitcham where the housing need existed. This drew from J Innes a motion requiring the Parochial Committee

to identify the area. Mizen answered this by putting forward an amendment that it be defined as 'the Parish of Mitcham'. The amendment was lost 5 – 4, Allen and Innes voting against, and the original motion carried.⁸

In June the RDC debated the request from the SCC as to the defined area and A Mizen moved again that housing was needed across the whole Parish but that the Parochial Committee would agree an area in the centre of the Parish convenient for many factories and workplaces. W Mapp Thompson helpfully replied to this with an amendment to the effect that the area be given as the whole of Mitcham 'except the high-class estates', and then that it be the area within a half-mile radius of the Conservative Club.⁹ These amendments were not pressed and Mizen's motion passed. The Parochial Committee took up the issue more seriously the following month and, knowing that they were legally required to decide upon a 'defined area', decided on a block of about 592 acres lying on the west-central part of the Parish:

'...that portion of the said Parish of Mitcham bounded on the north-west by the Tooting, Merton, and Wimbledon line of railway from Tooting Junction to Merton Abbey, on the south side by the Croydon and Wimbledon line of railway from Mitcham Station to the boundary with Merton Parish, on the east and south-east by the London Road from Tooting Junction bridge aforesaid to Mitcham Station, and on the west by the boundary of Merton Parish...'

Not 'the Parish of Mitcham' but a very large part of it. This was passed through the RDC to the County Council.¹⁰

The County Inquiry

The November 1898 meeting of the RDC was informed that the SCC would shortly hold an inquiry on the Council's application.¹¹ This was arranged to take place at the Vestry Hall, Mitcham, on 14 December, beginning at 11.30 in the forenoon. The Commissioner appointed by the SCC was W Welch, Chair of the SCC's Sanitary Committee; he was accompanied by E J Halsey, Esquire, the Chairman of the County Council, the Deputy Clerk of the County Council, and the County Medical Officer.

Welch reviewed the events since the Parish Meeting's resolution in February, and recorded that there had been complaints in the past, so that in 1889 a house-to-house inspection had taken place. This had led to the appointment by the Sanitary Authority of a full-time Medical Officer of Health.¹² Evidence for the application was given by the Clerk to the RDC, Wilson, the case against by T Allen, Wm Mapp Thompson and J Farewell Jones, all Mitcham RDC and/or Parish Councillors. This was followed by evidence from others present.

Overcrowding was pointed up by the Medical Officer as the cause of epidemics of scarlet fever, measles or diphtheria in every year since 1893, and the Inspector of Nuisances had inspected 258 houses of which most were damp and insanitary. Of these 171 had definite sanitary defects and fifty ought to be closed. He emphasised that in the past summer there had been twenty deaths from infantile diarrhoea. Wilson spoke to emphasise the reluctance to condemn dwellings when the inhabitants had nowhere else to go. Nevertheless, seventy five houses in the Parish had been closed since 1893 as unfit for human habitation.

In his evidence R M Chart showed how the increase in accommodation had not kept pace with the increase in population. His estimate was that, to meet the actual demand 28 new labourers' dwellings were needed each year. But during the last three years only 43 had been built, and fourteen old houses demolished, giving an annual increase of ten. Plans for new cottages in the previous three years were: in 1896, 18; in 1897, 20; and in 1898, 65. If approved, when or whether these would become concrete and bricks was uncertain. At this point the Report reads: 'A Mr Wilson' stated that 'he was the owner of Gorrington Park Estate... (just outside the defined area)...and he undertook to erect, within eight months, 200 cottages with three or four bedrooms and bathrooms...' His development of the estate had been delayed by a difficulty in obtaining access to the main road, but it was now possible to make a start. He had already deposited plans for roads, sewers and some cottages.¹³

Examining the evidence, the Commissioner referred at length to Chart's Report to the Parochial Committee in January 1899. It was noted above that in this report Chart moved from the question of the inadequate supply of houses to the changes taking place in the parish which affected housing for the working classes. For Chart, the reason people could not be provided with cottages was the 'very considerable importation of persons into the parish'. From his figures, it was obvious that 'if only those who worked in the place lived in it there would be accommodation for the working classes in Mitcham for some years to come'. The demand for housing they were facing was not 'spasmodic'. It would go on and was 'the natural outcome of the development of the railway system of workmen's trains, of the tramways and of the progress of sanitary science', which had led to the condemning and demolition of large numbers of workmen's dwellings in the Metropolis. This meant that Mitcham would continue to change, and the question of how far it was bound to provide cottages for those living but not working in the parish would be answered by events.

The Commissioner's conclusion, given in the language of the 1890 Act, was that he was unable to certify that accommodation was necessary and would not be provided without the implementation of the Act, and that, because of the burden that would be incurred on the rates, it would not be prudent for the Authority to provide the needed housing. He appears to

have accepted, despite attempts at the Inquiry to discredit it, Wilson's stated intention to build 200 houses at Gorrington Park; he commented, 'I am informed that that gentleman had already built several hundred houses in a neighbouring parish'.¹⁴ There were no signs that, given the increased number of plans deposited for building approval, Mitcham was going to afford a rare example of the failure of 'the economic law of supply and demand'.

For Alfred Mizen, his brothers, and those behind him in his efforts to improve Mitcham's working class housing, this was a disappointment. We don't know how confident or optimistic they may have felt about the Commissioner's decision. Despite opposition and resistance from some of their colleagues, they had taken their case, made possible by legislation, to the County Council where the proposal from Surrey's largest parish had been turned down. The Parish Council did not accept the decision and met soon after the decision was announced and forwarded to the RDC a motion asking the Council to ask the SCC to reconsider the Mitcham application. In this motion 'the especial attention' of the SCC was drawn to the facts given at the Inquiry about the provision of workmen's dwellings on Gorrington Park Estate 'which weighed with the Commissioner in his decision to refuse the application', and it was also pointed out the rents of many cottages had recently increased to a level that they were 'beyond the means of a working man'.¹⁵

The reply from the SCC, received by the RDC at its May meeting, stated that its Sanitary Committee felt it wise to defer consideration of the application until it was known whether the Housing of the Working Classes (Amendment) Bill, then passing through Parliament, would become law during the current session.¹⁶ On the Bill becoming law a further application was made, the County replied that 'as they wished to see the effect of the Housing of the Working Classes Act, 1890, they cannot direct a further inquiry to be held on the subject at present'.¹⁷ The air of finality about this communication was strengthened when, a few days later, the Parochial Committee recorded its thanks to Chart for his work in supporting the case for action on the housing issue in the Parish.¹⁸ Their failure to achieve change through the institutions and legal framework available to them would lead to Alfred Mizen and his supporters considering other ways of improving the housing of Mitcham's working classes. This would involve local agreement on Mitcham taking steps to obtain urban district council status. This would give the council some responsibility for housing – including that of ensuring all dwellings were fit for habitation - and the power to take on loans to provide needed housing.

1 *Bulletin* No. 236, December 2025.

2 Mitcham Parochial Council Minutes 19/10/1897.

3 Mitcham Parochial Council Minutes 21/12/1897.

4 Mitcham Parochial Council Minutes 18/01/1898. No copy of the Report has been found but see the discussion of the SCC Inquiry Report below.

5 Mitcham Parish Meeting Minutes 4/02/1898.

6 Mitcham Parochial Council Minutes 15/02/1898.

7 CRDC Minutes 12/05/1898.

8 CRDC Minutes 9/06/1898.

9 Mitcham Parochial Council Minutes 21/6/1898

10 Mitcham Parochial Council Minutes 7/07/1898.

11 CRDC Minutes 10/11/1898.

12 SCC Sanitary Committee Minutes, 14/02/1899, Appendix 1, 'Parish of Mitcham: Housing of the Working Classes Act'.

13 This was accurate as, earlier in the month, the Buildings Committee had approved for 'J Wilson' plans for roads and sewers at Gorrington Park, and for 12 houses there on Grenfell Road (CRDC Buildings Committee, 8/12/1898).

14 This too was accurate. Joseph Wilson and his brother Isaac had built houses in Fulham and other parts of West London and in the future would build many in Mitcham, including the development of the Gorrington Park Estate.

15 CRDC Minutes 8/02/1900.

16 CRDC Minutes 17/05/1900.

17 CRDC Minutes 15/11/1900.

18 Mitcham Parochial Council Minutes 20/11/1900.

CONGRATULATIONS!

Motspur Park 100, the event that celebrated 100 years of Motspur Park station, as reported in *Bulletin* 235, September 2025, won the Railway 200 Legacy Award for small groups. Judges looked for imaginative ways groups connected communities with the railway across the four themes of skills and education; innovation and the environment; heritage, culture and tourism; and celebrating railway people. The judges noted that 'Motspur Park Station Adopters delivered a remarkable two-day celebration involving talks, heritage displays and creative workshops to mark the station's centenary while embracing the spirit of Railway 200.' There was a substantial community element of the Motspur Park 100 commemoration, including the production, by volunteers, of over ½-mile of bunting, and the involvement of the Friends of Joseph Hood, the Friends of West Barnes Library, Merton Historical Society and Raynes Park and West Barnes Residents' Association. The organisers are to be congratulated.

MAJESTIC WAY AND UPPER GREEN PHARMACY Norma Cox

Majestic Way is a short modern pedestrianised street at Upper Green Mitcham which runs from the southern end of St Marks Road to the Upper or Fair Green. It has shops on both sides, constructed in the 1980s. Majestic Way was a continuation of the older St Marks Road, which had originally been called Killick's Lane in the early 20th century. From the 1820s on Upper Green, at the end of Majestic Way, there was a terrace of eight houses and shops named York Place and number one York Place was a chemist shop, in use for over a century. Studying the history of this chemist shop was a good way to observe the social history of this area, as it revealed the business and street name-changes that had taken place at Upper Green from 1838.

Introduction

Majestic Way was named after the *Majestic* cinema that had once occupied the site on Upper Green. The cinema was built in 1933 but by the 1950s, attendance at cinemas had declined everywhere due to the advent of television, and it eventually closed in 1961. With the passing of the Betting Act in 1960 and the relaxation of the laws governing gambling, the *Majestic* building continued in use, but as a bingo hall and casino, called 'Caesars'. This business continued for 14 years until the site was sold for the building of a new shopping precinct in 1975. 'Caesars' closed the following Easter, and the former *Majestic* cinema was demolished in 1978. A new Sainsbury's superstore was built on the site and opened in 1980, but by 1990 the superstore had moved to the new 'Savacentre' at Merton. Sainsbury's building was empty and boarded up, but was eventually taken over by Kwik Save food store. The shoppers' car-park at the rear was on the site of the builders' yard used by the businesses of Killicks, then Drewetts and WW Jenner (Mitcham) Ltd.¹ Following them, came Kwik Save, which was replaced by Poundland, but this business closed down in 2025 (*right top and bottom, photographs by the author 2025*).



Majestic Way was originally part of St Mark's Road and was renamed Majestic Way in the late 1980s, after the cinema had been demolished. On the corner of St Marks' Road and York Place was a terrace of eight cottages or shops with gardens, yards and sheds at the rear, and Number 1 was a chemist shop. Here is the history of the chemist shop in Upper Green Mitcham, from information in street directories at the Local Studies Library, Morden and also in Pharmaceutical Registers at the Royal Pharmaceutical Society Headquarters.

The Chemist Shop at York Place Mitcham 1834-1980.

The first recorded chemist in an Upper Mitcham directory is John Danforth Greenwood, a surgeon at Upper Mitcham in 1834. No street was identified. He may also have been a chemist and druggist, as, in the early nineteenth century the roles of physicians, surgeons and chemists were uncontrolled and it was possible that a surgeon could also be a chemist and druggist.

The next Surgeon, Chemist and Druggist to be recorded was J Roberts at York Place, Upper Mitcham, in 1838. John Roberts appears again in 1840. Then in 1851 the *Post Office Directory of the Six Home Counties* recorded Robert Arthur Mudd as Chemist and Druggist, Upper Mitcham.

Joseph Mickle, Chemist, of Upper Mitcham is listed in nine different directories between the years 1860 and 1874. In 1874 there was also a post office on the premises. From 1876, William Jones, chemist, of 1 York Place, Upper Mitcham is listed up to 1892, when William Jones had a Post Office and stationer business in the chemist-shop building. In 1895 and 1896 the directories list the street name as Killicks Road, Upper Mitcham.

In 1898 and in 1899 the directories listed another chemist and druggist, Thomas W Hutton. There was also a post office in the chemist's shop, at Killick's Road, Upper Mitcham.

John K Harvey was listed at 1 St Marks Road, from 1905-06 to 1915-1916. A photograph on Mitcham History Notes website (*right, <https://www.mitchamhistorynotes.com/2016/10/10/york-place>, reproduced courtesy Wade Brice*) shows the chemist shop at 1 York Place in 1915.



The name J K Harvey, chemist was listed at 1 St Marks Road in various years between 1937 and 1961. No post office was mentioned. It seems unlikely that J K Harvey was still a practising chemist and druggist for 55 years; however the name and goodwill of a chemist business often continued when a business was sold.



After this point, I moved on to the Registers of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society, and from 1961-1966 the chemist shop of J K Harvey is still listed at 1 St Marks Road. A photograph of 1 York Place by Eric Montague shows the shop itself was still standing in 1975 (www.mertonhistoricalsociety.org.uk/mhs-em-ug-13, right).

Conclusion

The local trade directories listings showed that there was a chemist and druggist business at 1 York Place, Upper Mitcham for 123 years (1838-1961) and even possibly 127 years (1834-1961). The recorded street name of the businesses ranged from just Upper Mitcham to 1 York Place, Upper Mitcham to Killick's Road, Upper Mitcham and to 1 St Marks Road. Chemists provided medical remedies to many people especially the poor as treatment by a doctor was expensive. The memories of Constance Pope, who grew up in Mitcham between the wars, mentioned using the chemist in St Mark's Road when, as a child, she scalded her foot and a neighbour cycled down to the chemist to get some oil to put on it. Constance said 'should they have had any illnesses, her doctor lived in Lower Mitcham but doctors cost money and they rarely saw one'.² A chemist shop was a familiar and friendly health-business and the chemist served the community and people professionally and was always remembered with affection over the years.

Postscript: Majestic Way's Last Word

Visiting Majestic Way today is a somewhat sad affair as most of the shops on the west side of the street are closed and a notice in Boots gives directions as to where the nearest pharmacy is. These directions are a legal requirement in case a prescription needs to be dispensed in an emergency. Something was happening here and information online pointed out that a planning application was under review with Merton Council to build an 11-storey glass extension to Majestic Way. Such an extension would go against previous Merton Council directives and would be detrimental to the whole street and nearby schools. The date of Merton Council's verdict was to be the 28 February 2026; however this date has been put on hold. Perhaps the shops of Majestic Way and the overshadowed local schools will be saved after all.

Acknowledgements: to Karen Horn, Librarian at Royal Pharmaceutical Society Head Quarters East Smithfield, London for allowing me to view the Pharmaceutical Society Annual Registers.

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THE CRESSWELLS OF FIGGS MARSH, MITCHAM

Graham Diprose

My own family connection to Mitcham can be traced back to my 3x great grandfather, the wonderfully named Griffin Cresswell (1768-1853). He was born in a hamlet called Shelton, a little upstream of Shrewsbury, on the River Severn. It seems very likely that he came to London in his early twenties to seek a better life. When he was 25, he married a Mary Burrowis (or Burrows) (1770-1828), at St Mary's parish church, Newington, Southwark, on 8 May 1793. The church was once situated at the junction of what is now Newington Butts and Walworth Road, near the Elephant & Castle roundabout. In the 1870s, the church was pulled down as part of a road-widening scheme, but the churchyard was retained as a public space and is still marked as such on contemporary maps today (2026). Victorian mourners of those interred there could not have possibly envisaged how their loved ones would have to 'rest in peace'. One of South London's major traffic junctions, rumbles a mere six to eight feet above their mortal remains!

We next discover Griffin Cresswell some five years later with a Land Tax Record, that very usefully establishes him and his new wife already living in Mitcham, Surrey, by 1798. This raises the question of what exactly was a 'Land Tax' in 1800, and also Griffin Cresswell's occupation and assets, that caused him to become liable to pay it? In the 18th century, the structure of English taxation was quite different from today. Presently, most employed people pay tax on their earnings and a further levy on most items that they purchase with their income. The 'Land Tax' was paid by the more prosperous sections of society, from the wealthiest duke to the owners of business premises, such as tradesmen, shopkeepers and innkeepers. The rate of tax was set by Parliament each year in a Land Tax Act and was usually between two and four shillings in the pound, based on the value of each individual's land, or property.

We can find many individual years of Griffin's tax records, which confirm to us that he was running a business in Mitcham, from 1797 until the 1840s, when he would have been in his early 70s. We also have his record in the very first 1841 Census, with his occupation described as a 'Tallow Chandler', or a maker and seller of candles. By the 1840s possibly soaps and other similar products such as lamp oil, for example, would have also been part of his trade.

Very close to where Griffin Cresswell was married in 1793 in Newington, at the Elephant & Castle, a Sperm Whale Oil Factory was opened at the junction with the Walworth Road. Probably the thought will horrify many contemporary readers. This was about the time that many tallow makers were experimenting with a new technology. Tallow candles had always been made from beef or mutton fat for centuries, but this was not a particularly efficient process. Two pounds of animal fat had to be heated to about 120°C and stirred for a time and then cooled, just to achieve the tallow for about 20 candles. By taking crystallized sperm whale oil, which was becoming cheaper as whaling fleets increased, pouring this into candle moulds and then allowing it to harden, a much better-quality candle could be made in bulk. The process also used less heat, and left behind many of the smelly bi-products from animal fats.

From 1805, Griffin might have been able to receive his sperm whale oil from the new Surrey Iron Railway, which had just opened from the Thames at Wandsworth to Croydon, passing through Mitcham. He may have been able to send his candles further afield, to Merton in the north, or south to the rapidly expanding town of Croydon. The period 1793-1815 was one of general prosperity for Mitcham and its population increased by 20 per cent between 1801 and 1811. Griffin and Mary's eldest son, William (1803-1886) later worked in the Physic Gardens in Mitcham. One wonders if any of the specialist herbs grown there, might have been sold by Griffin Cresswell's tallow shop, or even if he had experimented with some of them, to make specially scented candles and soaps?

Two of Griffin and Mary's other children are of particular interest to our story. Third son Joseph Cresswell (1805-1876) was my 2x great grandfather. When he was 28 years old, he married 19-year-old Ann Monk (1814-1881), at the very imposing church dedicated to St. John The Baptist, in central Croydon. They had nine children between 1833 and 1851, including my own great grandfather Charles Cresswell (1846-1886), who was their 7th child. He was born at 5 Figgs Marsh Cottages. Their next child Selina Louisa Cresswell (1848-1933), probably has the strongest Mitcham connection and we shall return to her shortly. Joseph was also a gardener by trade, perhaps again in the local Physic Gardens as this seemed a popular local employer at the time.

In the 1871 Census, at the age of 25, Charles Cresswell was now manager of *The Albion* public house at 23 Vauxhall Walk. His bar assistant was a 15-year-old James Munday, who in 1879, married Charles's younger sister Selina Louisa Cresswell, who we noted in the paragraph above. Our next record for my great

grandfather Charles Cresswell comes two years later, when he was married on 22 April 1873. His bride was Caroline Hannah Russell (1847-1885), my great grandmother. This time Charles was described as the publican of an establishment in Kennington Lane, hence he had not moved far from *The Albion* in Vauxhall. Possibly both pubs might have been owned by the same brewery, which was a common practice at this time. I believe that Caroline might have been one of the bar staff in Charles' pub, as her brother George Alexander Russell (1843-1896) was also a publican. He was destined to play a very important role in our family history, and particularly in the life of my grandmother, Florence Louisa Cresswell (1875-1962), as I will relate below.

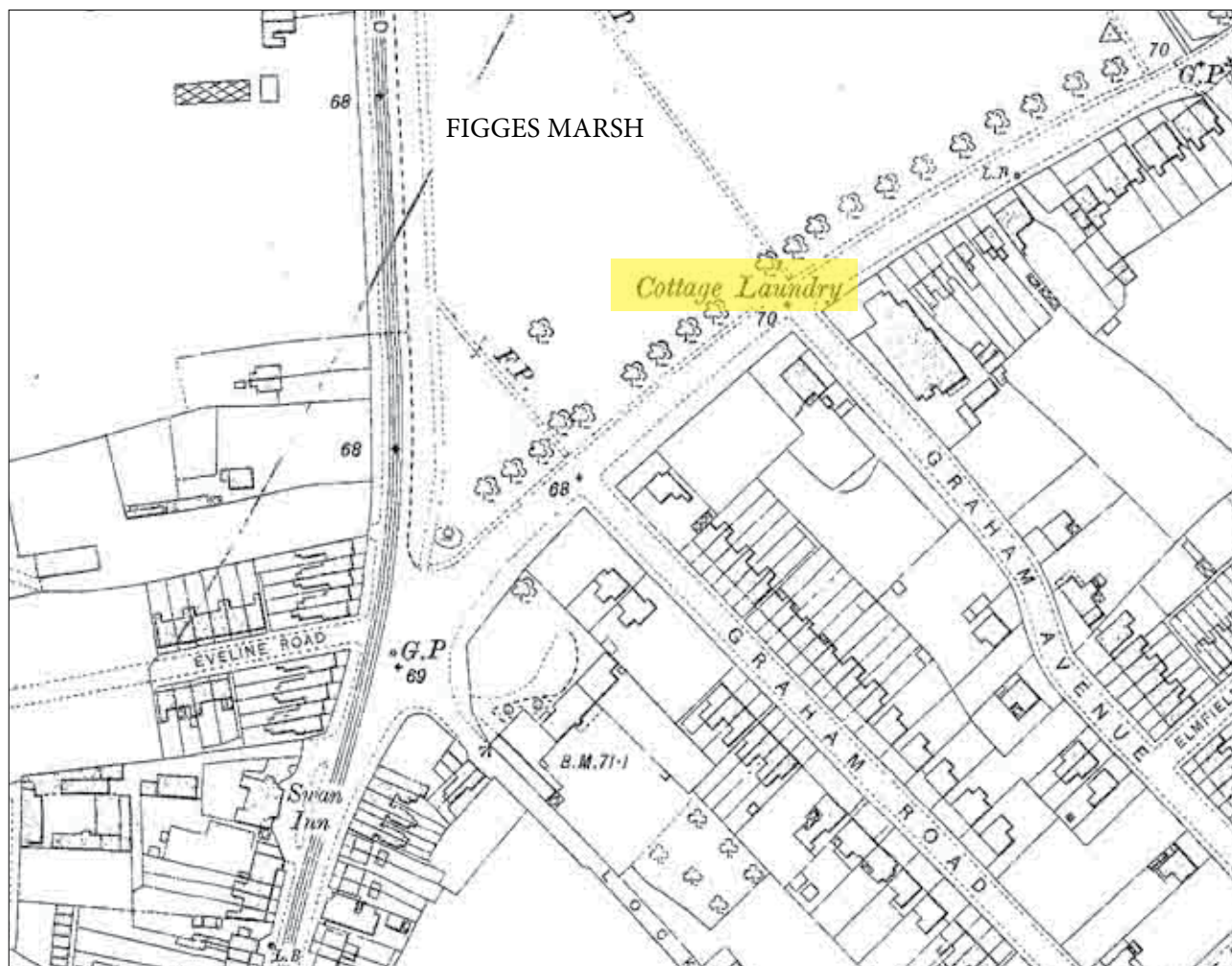


Caroline Hannah Russell (1847-1885) and Charles Cresswell (1846-1886) taken about 1884, shortly before their deaths

Tragedy struck the Cresswells in 1885-6 when both Charles and Caroline (née Russell) died within six months of each other, leaving Florence Louisa as an orphan. A year earlier, their first child Ellen Louisa Cresswell had been born in March 1875, baptised on 14 June and sadly buried in Norwood Cemetery on 24 November. George Russell very kindly took in nine-year-old Florence and looked after her through her schooling and teenage years. No doubt she became part of the staff in *The Queen's Head and Artichoke* in order to earn her keep. By a remarkable co-incidence, Joseph Tyler (1811-1904), a 'Professor of Music', and my 3x great grandfather on my mother's side, was living with his family at 105 Albany Street at the same time that the Russells were the publicans at *The Queen's Head and Artichoke* at 30 Albany Street, with his ward Florence Cresswell helping out there. One can but wonder if my father's ancestors were serving my mother's forebears the odd pint, some sixty years before my own parents first met?

When former bar assistant to Charles Cresswell, James Munday (24) married Selina Louisa Cresswell (31) on 27 April 1879 at Christ Church, Mitcham, both their fathers' occupations were gardeners, so not any immediate evidence of any entrepreneurial spark. Selina had been recorded as an 18-year-old laundress in the 1871 Census for Figgs Marsh Cottages. She must have actually been 23 years old at the time, but I am sure that we all have many examples of women, and occasionally men, taking a few years off, particularly when speaking to the Census taker on their doorstep!

It is a pity that I cannot find James Munday or Selina in the 1881 Census, since these were obviously the years when the couple set up, or took over 'The Cottage Laundry'. The 1891 Census records James Munday of Figgs Marsh Cottage Laundry as 'Proprietor', now with sons Sydney aged ten, Alfred (five) and a live-in servant, Alice Forster (22). Hence, we may suggest that this was a successful and expanding business venture throughout the 1890s.



Location of Selina's Cottage Laundry on the Ordnance Survey 25in:1 mile map of 1911-13, courtesy Surrey History Centre

However, further tragedy was not far away. Publican George Russell died on 1 February 1896, initially leaving his legacy to his sister Eliza Mary, who promptly died a month and a half later, on 22 March. The Albany Street pub was to be sold up and my 21-year-old grandmother, Florence Louisa, was once again homeless. Our family hold a copy of George's will and he did make a generous provision for his former ward until her 21st birthday, but it appears that his executors were happy to carry on with an annual allowance until her circumstances changed, or she was married. She was welcomed back to Mitcham by Selina and her husband James Munday, and no doubt helped out with the running of the Cottage Laundry and the everyday household. George did leave £9,852 at his probate, equivalent to about £1,150,000 today, although there were other Russell family beneficiaries.

While not particularly evident from the will itself, there was either a great affection between the Cresswells and the Russells, or further funds from the sale of *The Queen's Head and Artichoke* went to Selina Cresswell and her family. The large house beside the Cottage Laundry in Graham Avenue being called Russelton, is an example of this link up. I believe that this is now the site of a large Lidl supermarket by Graham Avenue, if that helps you to locate the site.

James Munday died in August 1899, when he was only 43 years old. However, our family oral history was that Selina was a 'very formidable woman' who was to continue to be involved in the management of the business up to her death in May 1933 in her 85th year. When James died, her son Sidney was 18 years old, and was able to help her, along with my grandmother Florence and another distant family member, Alice Eldred, who became a live-in companion in my grandmother's later years.

Sometime in the next decade, Sidney Munday met Edith Jane Diprose (1884-1942). She had initially been living with her family in Brixton, so not too far from Mitcham, but I do not know how the couple met. By the time of their wedding on 27 April 1910, Edith's family home was in St Margaret's Twickenham, and hence St. Stephen's nearby, was her local church. She also moved into Russelton to help out with running the Cottage Laundry.

However, my grandmother Florence had decided to go on quite a remarkable adventure to Paris a couple of years previously. 'The Cordon Bleu Culinary Art School' had been founded in 1895 and began attracting more international students by the turn of the century. Perhaps she had enjoyed her teenage years in the kitchen of *The Queen's Head and Artichoke*? However, the school appears to have been a very male preserve initially. Hence, it is quite possible that at 33 years old, Florence Cresswell was the first Englishwoman to successfully complete the full course there, gaining her diploma in 1909.

She then returned to Selina, in Russelton and to the Cottage Laundry in Mitcham, in time for the wedding of Edith (née) Diprose and Sidney Munday. A witness on the marriage certificate was Edith's older brother, Henry George Diprose (1881-1975), so at some point he was introduced to Florence Cresswell. My grandparents, Henry and Florence, married on 14 September 1910 at St Marks, Mitcham, which at that time was a brand-new building. They went to live in Richmond, close to the Diprose family home in St Margarets. Luckily Selina still had Edith and Sidney to help out with the ever-busy laundry business, after Florence's departure. When 'call-up' was introduced later in WW1, her son Sidney was in his mid-thirties, but we have an interesting record from the Mitcham Military Service Tribunal as reported on 22 February 1918. Selina had to ask for exemption for her son, as his health was not good and also, we get a remarkable insight into her enterprise that 'she employed one hundred women, and had between three and four hundred customers'. Sadly, this did not help her that much since Sidney died on 16 May, just a few months later.

Selina continued to run the laundry and live at Russelton up until her death on 9 May 1933, at the age of 85. Edith (née Diprose) was certainly still working there too in a 1929 electoral register. At probate Selina left £23,911, equivalent to about one and a half million pounds today in 2026. As for my grandparents, Florence and Henry George, they had one son, my father, Douglas Russell Diprose, who became an optician and married one of his receptionists, Marjorie Bates in 1942. I was their only child, born in 1951. Occasionally my father would surprise us all at some family occasion with a very beautifully cooked meal, and on reflection, my mother did seem to panic quite a bit when Granny Florence Louise was coming for Christmas Dinner. I suppose it must have been rather daunting to have a mother-in-law with a Cordon Bleu medal!



Florence Louise (née) Cresswell with her son and my father Douglas Russell Diprose, about 1915 when he would have been four years old.

Epilogue: A Family Heirloom: Florence Cresswell's Cordon Bleu Medal comes with a bit of a mystery. We know she was awarded it in Paris in 1909, but our medal is in English (*see photographs on p.1*). Possibly the original was mislaid during a house-move and when Cordon-Bleu London was opened in 1935, she was able to apply for the replacement seen here.

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