

A bit of Old Morden revealed

The great gale in October 1987, that caused such devastation over south-east England, damaged several trees in the St Lawrence, Morden, parish churchyard and brought the loss of the old chestnut by the Rectory and the hawthorn near the north boundary. It also did away with a lot of dead and decayed wood. In the clearance that followed the hawthorn was found to be particularly affected. Beneath the roots some brick foundations were uncovered comprising a main 14in rear wall and two internal 9in walls which formed a right angle enclosing a small area oriented north-south, open ended towards the north. It suggests a small storage space. Research has since disclosed that the walls form part of a wheelwright's shop dateable to the early 19th century.

In 1797 Jeffry Muggeridge, wheelwright, obtained a licence from the lord of the manor (then Owen Putland Meyrick) to enclose a piece of waste land 'adjoining the churchyard and behind the Pound whereon a workshop now stands'. In 1810, Muggeridge surrendered it to Philip Puttock, wheelwright, and at the same time there was a licence to enclose two more pieces of land, one the site of the pound, the other the site of the 'movable workshop of Edward Polhill, Esq' (of Morden Park c1789-1802). Just south of the workshop area Philip Puttock built a house and a shop which was run by his spinster sister, Sarah. The church has in its collection an engraving (undated) showing what appears to be a sawpit on the north-east corner of the churchyard.

In 1831 Puttock surrendered the whole property to John Walker, wheelwright, subject to annuity of £38 to Philip Puttock and his sister. Walker was to be admitted to another small piece of land south of the shop. Sadly, John Walker lost his young wife, Margaret, who died in November 1833, aged 25. She has a headstone on the south side of the churchyard.

In 1834 John Walker surrendered the property to William Moore of Mordon [*sic*], wheelwright, again subject to the annuity. The Tithe Award Apportionment of 1838 shows William Moore as owner/occupier of the wheelwright's shop and yard, dwelling house, shop and garden. In 1854 Moore managed a quitclaim of the annuity. There follows a series of mortgages until 18 July 1861 when he surrendered the property to Richard Garth (the then lord of the manor).

In the course of time the range of buildings vanished from the local scene. At some point the churchyard was extended eastwards over the foundations, now largely destroyed by later burials. It was fortunate the hawthorn was planted where it was and the fragments of wall survived. Artifacts recovered include a sherd of combed slipware and the workshop appears to have had a pantile roof.

William Moore has a story all of his own. He was born at Chipstead, Surrey, 18 January 1806, the son of James and Margaret Moore. Nothing has been found of any apprenticeship but he must have had some training. He married and by 1834 was established in Morden. A daughter baptised 24 August died less than three months later to be followed by her mother in March 1835, aged 28. Both are buried next to Margaret Walker. He remarried, lost his first son but went on to have four more sons and a daughter.

In the 1851 census Moore was a 'Master employing 6 men and boys' which would leave time for his other activities. The directories describe him variously as wheelwright, coach and cart builder, shopkeeper, postmaster and insurance agent. A busy man. His two elder sons joined him: James, coach trimmer; Augustus, coach body builder. He would have worked closely with the local blacksmith. One of the parties at the surrender of the property in 1861 was a coach ironmonger; at which time Moore had already taken up premises in Lingfield Road, Wimbledon, as a coach builder and harness maker. By 1871 the situation had changed; five men were still in his employ and he had his son, James. Augustus and Roderick were clerks in HM Customs and the youngest, William Henry, was in the Revenue Office. 1878 and William Moore had retired to Church Street, but after 1880 just disappears from the local record. What happened to him? Recent research shows he had moved to Croydon. He died 29 January 1886, just after his 80th birthday, at Lennard House, Lennard Road. The house still stands, but where is he buried?

A belated correction

In Notes and Queries p 4, *Bulletin* 188, it was stated that a trial bore hole through the north side of the tower of St Lawrence, Morden, parish church indicated a filling of rammed chalk. When the lower base was breached to receive the new extension the filling consisted of part roughly coarsed blocks and part random lumps of chalk. There were two through courses of bricks, one about halfway up and the other near the top of the cut Gothic arch. Running along the base about 1m above ground level was a wooden beam (oak?), apparently not uncommon practice for strengthening. Samples have been retained by the writer. He was able to rescue some lamp hangers and a folding brass candle bracket which had been thrown out but, regrettably, the old barrel organ mechanism in its box (built by Bryceson, 1834) was disposed of.

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