

The front cover of the book which I shall call Peers' Guide reads as follows:

WILLEY'S PENNY GUIDES.
SUTTON PARK
TOWN,
AND PROMENADE GARDENS.
BY
A. PEERS.
(ENTERED AT STATIONERS' HALL.)

BIRMINGHAM
PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY WILLIAM WILLEY, UNION STREET, AND UNION PASSAGE.
SOLE PROPRIETOR.

SUTTON:
MRS. BRENTNALL, STATIONER.

WEDNESBURY:
A. W. WHITEHOUSE, MARKET PLACE.

BILSTON:
PRICE AND LEELET, MARKET PLACE

DUDLEY:
C. WHITFORD, HIGH STREET.

WILLENHALL:
J. BENNETT, MARKET PLACE

WOLVERHAMPTON:
COURT, CORSER STREET.

GREAT BRIDGE:
J. WOLLEN, HIGH STREET.

WEST BROMWICH:
HARRIS, HIGH STREET.

The words 'SUTTON PARK' are in letters twice as large as the rest of the title, although this prominence is not reflected in the booklet's contents. Little is known about Absalom Peers, but the 1871 census shows that he was living in Aston Road, Aston, Birmingham, aged 51, with his wife Mary, aged 52, and two sons and three daughters, aged between 26 and 14. His occupation is given as the editor of a Youth's Pictorial Magazine. Others books by him were published by Jarrold & Sons in 1890, namely The Old Clock in the Parlour and Other Stories and Turning the Corner and Other Stories, which appear to be children's books. The original Absalom was the son of the biblical King David. The Concise Dictionary of Christian Names says that it was a popular name in the 12th and 13th centuries, but "has not been much used since about the end of the 14th century." William Willey, the sole proprietor of a printing and publishing company in Union Street and Union Passage off High Street and New Street in central Birmingham is an elusive figure. The opening words on the front of the booklet suggest that there are other 'penny guides', unless this was the first of an intended series which was not continued. Peers' Guide was registered with the Worshipful Company of Stationers, founded in 1403, whose headquarters were at Stationers Hall off Ludgate Hill in London. Lodging a publication with Stationers Hall and the Royal Library was a way of establishing an author's copyright in his work. The front cover indicates that Peers' Guide could be bought from Willey's premises in Birmingham, from Mrs Brentnall in Sutton and from seven other outlets across the Black Country. Mrs Brentnall was a familiar figure*

** I am grateful to Janet Jordan for supplying these biographical details.*

in Sutton Coldfield, although again her Christian name has not come to light. She was instrumental in founding The Sutton Coldfield News in the same year as the publication of Peers' Guide, and in 1880 she was named as one of the sellers of Eliezer Edwards' Sutton Coldfield A History and a Guide.

The cost of Peers' Guide was very cheap, the same as a postage stamp for a single-sheet letter. The Guide was published in 1869, although this date is not mentioned in the booklet itself, presumably on purpose to avoid its appearing out of date after a couple of years. The main impetus behind the writing of a cheap guide to Sutton Park, Town and Promenade Gardens must have been the opening of the London & North Western Railway line from Birmingham to Sutton in June 1862, which resulted in day-trippers flocking to Sutton, numbering thousands per day in the summer and on bank holidays. The other attraction for visitors to Sutton, besides the Park, were the Royal Promenade Gardens, which had been opened only a year before Peers' Guide was published (see below).

The inside front cover of Peers' Guide is wholly taken up by an advertisement for the Royal Promenade Gardens, which reads as follows:

THE
ROYAL PROMENADE GARDENS,
SUTTON COLDFIELD,
(WITHIN FIVE MINUTES WALK OF THE RAILWAY STATION.)

The Royal Promenade Gardens are within five minutes walk of Sutton Railway Station, and are bounded by the far-famed Park, which for varied and picturesque beauty is unrivalled in the Midland Counties. They cover more than twenty acres, the whole area being laid out in various styles of Ornamental Gardening.

RHODODENDRONS, in great variety, are planted in large numbers, about two acres being entirely devoted to their cultivation. The Collection includes the best varieties now grown. HARDY SHRUBS, CONIFERAE, and FLOWERING PLANTS of innumerable kinds, including a grand display of BEDDING PLANTS, have been planted in great profusion; while there are thousand[s] of Roses – the “Queen of Flowers” – which alone will ensure a gorgeous display during the long blooming season.

An excellent Bowling Green has been laid down on the most approved plan; there are also Croquet and Archery Lawns, Cricket Ground, &c.

REFRESHMENTS of the best kinds at moderate charges.

There is an entrance from the Royal Promenade Gardens to Sutton Park.

TERMS OF ADMISSION.

Admission, each person, every day except Friday, -- -- 2d.

On Fridays, admission to Grounds and Sutton Park, each person 6d.

Pic Nic Parties, Dinner and Tea Parties, on large or small scale, including free admission to the Park, arranged for.

J. COLE, Proprietor.

Job Cole was a nurseryman from Aston who hit on the idea that visitors to Sutton Park would be attracted by a formal pleasure garden as a contrast to the natural beauty of the Park. The Royal Promenade Gardens in Clifton Road, where the Wyndley Leisure Centre is now sited, opened in 1868 and was a great success. Cole moved from Perry Barr to a large house on Manor Hill in Sutton. In 1879 Cole built a huge glass-domed building, which served as a conservatory with some refreshment rooms and hotel accommodation, intended to be a shelter for up to 1,500 people in the event of inclement weather. The new building had a similarity to the Crystal Palace built in Hyde Park London for the 1851

Great Exhibition, and the Promenade Gardens soon acquired a new name as the Crystal Palace. The conservatory was declared unsafe and was demolished in 1962 and the fun-fair, which by then was the main attraction on the site, was closed down four months later. The Wyndley Leisure Centre was opened in September 1974

The next four pages of Peer's Guide were devoted to seven advertisements:

ADVERTISEMENTS

W. DAVIS,
Carver, Gilder, & Picture Frame Maker,
16, STEELHOUSE LANE,
BIRMINGHAM.
OLD FRAMES RE-GILT AND PICTURES RESTORED EQUAL TO NEW.
LIST OF PRICES ON APPLICATION.

W. HAWKESWORTH,
Wholesale Ale and Porter Dealer,
GREAT BROOK STREET, BIRMINGHAM.
GUINNESS'S STOUT AND BASS'S ALE IN BOTTLES.
LONDON AND DUBLIN STOUT & BURTON ALES IN CASKS.
Importer of Foreign Cigars of the choicest brands.

BULLIVANT'S
HOTEL & DINING ROOMS,
HIGH STREET,
Corner of Carr's Lane, Birmingham.
Wines & Spirits of the finest quality

LITTLEHALES',
THE SWAN HOTEL,
ERDINGTON.
First-class Accommodation for Travellers &c
Wines, Spirits, Ales, &c.

The Swan Inn was at the south end of the High Street in Erdington; the present Swan Inn, 65 High Street, was built in 1968. The old inn featured in the 1817 trial of Abraham Thornton for the murder of Mary Ashford: Thornton first met Mary when she lived at the Swan, presumably working as a barmaid and resident there.

ADVERTISEMENTS.

JOSEPH SMITH,
RIFLE WORKS,
LOVEDAY STREET, BIRMINGHAM.
PATENTEE OF THE
SELF AND SECURE LOCKING BREECH LOADER,
And Manufacturer of every description of DOUBLE and SINGLE
BREECH and MUZZLE LOADING GUNS and PISTOLS,
FOR HOME AND EXPORTATION.
Contractor to Her Majesty's War Department.
Prize Medal was awarded at the Dublin Exhibition for the Invention;
and first-class Certificate for good Workmanship.

This advertisement includes pictures of a Pin Cartridge rifle and a Central Fire pistol. The Gun Quarter in Birmingham, bounded by Loveday Street, Steelhouse Lane and Shadwell Street was for almost three centuries the centre of the world's gun-making industry, from the English Civil Wars to the First World War, after which it declined until most of the buildings were demolished in the redevelopment of Birmingham's city centre in the 1960s. Joseph Smith was in business from various addresses in Loveday Street between 1851 and 1895.

ADVERTISEMENTS.

SLATER & Co.,
18 & 19 EDMUND STREET,
BIRMINGHAM,
Manufacturers of every description of
SEWING MACHINES.

Amongst which will be found many patents that have expired, viz: the Thomas's, Howe's, Wheeler and Wilson's, Groover and Baker's, &c. These and others can be had new, second-hand, exchanged or repaired as circumstances may require. Every make of Sewing Machines always on hand.

N.B. – Good Discount Allowed for Cash.

Duplicates of every part of the different Machines always in Stock, and fitted at any time in case of accident.

SLATER & Co., in offering their Machines to the Public, beg to call the attention of purchasers, that English manufacturers are now making Sewing Machines equal, if not superior to American or Continental productions. All Machines by Slater & Co. are warranted, being examined by experienced hands before sent away, and Repairs attended with despatch, at moderate charges.

Slater & Co. beg to call attention to the perfect Button-hole Machine which can be instantly changed to plain sewing.

A good hand Machine from £3 3s.; Howe's from £7 7s.; Wheeler & Wilson's £6 6s.
Needles of every description; Silk and Cotton adapted for all kinds of work; and Markers for Flowering
Boots any pattern 6d. each.

Shuttles, Springs, and all extras required of every shape and make always on hand.

SAMPLES OF WORK AND PRICE LIST SENT FREE.

Instructions given to all purchasers and every opportunity afforded for judging the Machines before purchased.

Slater & Co. respectfully request parties requiring Sewing Machines, Velocipedes or Washing Machines, to give them a call, where a large stock of every make are always on hand.

NOTE THE ADDRESS:

SLATER & Co.,
18, & 19, Edmund Street Birmingham.

Thomas Slater's sewing machine manufacturing company had a short life, commencing in about 1860 and closing down in February 1876. Elias Howe (1819-67), Nathaniel Wheeler (1820-93), Allen Benjamin Wilson (1823-88), William O. Grover (fl.1849-75) and William Emerson Baker (1828-88), along with Isaac Merritt Singer (1811-75), were all American pioneers in the invention and development of mechanical sewing machines. William F. Thomas & Company bought the British rights to Howe's patent in 1845. At the end of this long advertisement for sewing machines Slater & Co throw in a casual mention that they also sell bicycles (velocipedes) and washing machines. Like sewing machines, washing machines were developed and improved during the 19th century. In 1782 Henry Sidgier (1760-86) registered a British patent for a rotating drum washer. The technology was very basic until a 'compound rotary washing machine with rollers for wringing and mangling' was patented by Richard Lansdale (died 1904) and shown at the 1862 London Exhibition.

ADVERTISEMENTS.

W. WHITE,
PLAIN & FANCY STATIONER,
BOOKSELLER, BOOKBINDER,
PRINTER & NEWSAGENT
60, HAMPTON ST.,
ST. GEORGE'S
BIRMINGHAM

For a first-class selection of Scent Packets, Birthday Cards, Church Services, and every description of Stationery, this Establishment far exceeds any in town.

The Current and Back Numbers of all Publications kept in Stock.

N.B. – THE ADDRESS IS
60, HAMPTON ST.
NOT GT. HAMPTON ST.

Next comes the title page, which is different from the front cover in that the word 'History' is introduced and only Sutton Park is mentioned:

[page 1]*

HISTORY AND GUIDE TO SUTTON PARK BY A. PEERS.

RULES AND REGULATIONS.

On Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays	1d.
On Fridays and Sundays	2d.
Children under Seven and Charity Schools, half-price.		
For every Conveyance with one Horse	1s.
For every other Conveyance	2s.
For each person on Horseback	6d.

It is not at all clear why the entrance fee to the Park was double on Fridays, but not on Saturdays. The usual working week was Monday to Saturday. The average number of hours of work per week reached a peak in 1830, after which it gradually declined, but in 1860 ten hours per day, six days a week, was still normal. Following the admission charges, the Park Rules and Regulations (or at least some of them) are set out:

All strange Dogs found in the Park will be destroyed.

The sale of all articles in the Park is strictly prohibited.

No Fire to be lighted, or Tents erected, without special permission.

Tickets of Admission to be produced to the Park Keepers on application, or the parties be re-charged.

All persons committing any injury in the Park, will be apprehended and prosecuted.

Bathing after Nine in the morning is prohibited.

An Inspector and Body of Police will be employed to enforce the above Regulations.

*** The page numbers in bold and in square brackets are those of the original Peers' Guide.**

Another advertisement takes up the next page:

[page 2]

J. NEILUS,
GENERAL DECORATOR,
Plumber and Glazier,
No. 5, MOAT ROW, SMITHFIELD,
BIRMINGHAM.

Certificate of Merit, and Prize Medal for Specimens.
Late Industrial Exhibition, Bingley Hall, Birmingham.

Here appears a sketch of the medal inscribed 'Prize Medal Industria' on the front and 'Birmingham Industrial Exhibition Presented to John Neilus Birmingham' on the back. Bingley Hall in Broad Street was the first purpose-built exhibition hall in Great Britain. Built in 1850, it burned down in 1984; the International Convention Centre now stands on the site.

J.N. has had the honor of executing Commissions at the following Noblemen and Gentlemen's Seats:

Apley Castle, near Wellington	Dunstall Hall, near Burton-on-Trent
Amington Hall, Tamworth	Freeford Hall, near Lichfield
Armitage Hall, near Rugeley	Llanbadarn Hall, Penithon, Wales
Aston Hall, near Lichfield	Hanbury Hall, near Stoke
Acton Hall, near Worcester	Radford Hall, near Leamington
Broadwood Hall, Knighton, Wales	Four Oaks Hall (Sir W. Hartopp's)

And also at the Residences of the following Gentlemen:

Joseph Gillott, Esq., Robert L. Chance, Esq., Josiah Mason, Esq., A. Follett Osler, Esq., Thomas Avery, Esq., William Middlemore, Esq., Thomas Short. Jun., Esq., Edward Davenport, Esq., S. Briggs, Esq., Dr. Evans, Dr. James Johnstone, Dr. Middlemore, Dr. Blake, Dr. Alfred Baker, Dr. Jones, and many others in Birmingham and the vicinity.

J.N. begs most respectfully to thank the inhabitants of Birmingham and the neighbourhood for the very liberal support accorded to him since he has been in business, also to inform them that he has taken to the above premises, which, for forty years, were occupied by the late Mr. BRADSHAW, and where he hopes, by charges as low as are compatible with good work, and by constant attention to the wishes of his Customers, to merit a continuance of that patronage and support so liberally bestowed upon him.

A carefully selected Stock of Paper Hangings always on hand.
ESTIMATES GIVEN.

Apley Castle, Hadley, near Wellington, Shropshire was built between 1791 and 1794 by the Charlton family and demolished in 1955. A previous medieval castle, which had been used as a stable block, was renovated and converted into a private residence in 1996.

Amington Hall was built in 1810 by the Repington family and passed to the à Court family in 1837. It was converted into apartments in 1963.

Armitage Hall was built in 1760, but was much altered and extended in 1839 for Josiah Spode (1823-93) grandson of the founder of the Staffordshire pottery business. It was renovated in 2007 and renamed Hawkesyard Hall.

Aston Hall near Lichfield refers to Little Aston Hall, built in 1730 but enlarged and improved by the Hon. Edward Swynfen Parker Jervis (1815-96) in 1857. It was converted into apartments in 1984.

Acton Hall, Ombersley, near Worcester was built in about 1600 and restored in the mid-twentieth century as Acton Manor.

Broadwood Hall, Knighton no longer exists. How Neilus came to carry out work in mid-Wales can only be surmised.

Dunstall Hall was bought by Sir John Hardy 1st Baronet (1809-88) in 1850 and he carried out extensions and improvements. It is now a Grade II listed building.*

Freeford Hall was built in about 1730. Richard Dyott (1808-91) carried out substantial improvements to the Hall in the mid-nineteenth century. It is now known as Freeford Manor, a Grade II listed building, still in the Dyott family.

There are two Llanbadarns, one in modern Powys and the other in Ceredigion, but neither has a surviving Hall.

Hanbury Hall, near Stoke-on-Trent was built in the early 18th century and was owned by the Vernon family from 1818. It is now a National Trust property.

Radford Hall, near Leamington Spa was built in the early 17th century and renovated in 1836. It still stands as a Grade II listed building.

Four Oaks Hall was built by Henry ffolliott 3rd Baron ffolliott of Ballyshannon County Donegal after he married Elizabeth Pudsey of Langley Hall in 1696. Sir Edmund Cradock Hartopp 1st Baronet (1749-1833) bought the Hall in 1792 and it was inherited by his son Sir William Cradock Hartopp 3rd Baronet (1797-1864) in 1849. At the date of Peers' Guide the owner was Sir John Cradock Hartopp (1829-88). Some of the gentlemen numbered amongst Neilus's customers can be identified:

Joseph Gillott (1799-1872) was a Birmingham pen manufacturer and patron of the arts. He lived at The Grove Edgbaston.

Robert Lucas Chance (1782-1865) was a Birmingham glass merchant – he supplied the glass for the Great Exhibition's Crystal Palace in 1851 – and philanthropist.

Sir Josiah Mason (1795-1881) was a pen manufacturer and philanthropist. He founded Mason Science College which became the University of Birmingham and established an orphanage in Erdington.

Abraham Follett Osler (1808-1903) was a pioneer in the measurement of meteorological and chronological data, and a member of the Birmingham Philosophical Institution and its successor the Midland Institute, of which he was a generous benefactor.

Thomas Avery (1813-94) was a weighing machine manufacturer and local politician – twice Mayor of Birmingham. He lived in Edgbaston.

William Middlemore (1802-87) was a wholesale saddler, harness maker and currier in a business started by his father. He lived in Kings Norton. Middlemores Saddles continued in business until 1991.

Dr James Johnstone M.D., F.R.C.P. (1806-69) was a professor of medicine at Queen's College Birmingham and a physician at the Birmingham General Hospital. He was the President of the British Medical Association in 1865. He married Maria Mary Payne Webster, the daughter of Joseph Webster of Penns Hall, in 1834.

Dr Evans is probably not the well-known Alderman Dr Sir Alfred Henry Evans (1848-1938), Mayor of Sutton Coldfield in 1890, who lived at 1/3 High Street, since he was only twenty-one years old in 1869 and would not have qualified as a doctor by then.

Peers' Guide then starts with a description of Sutton, but prefaced by a poem:

[page 3]

SUTTON.

“Beautiful Sutton!
Wert thou not cradled,
Far in the forest,
Beneath the hill cliff,

Where the tall oak trees
Gathered around thee,
Rearing their fond arms
To bless thy repose!

Did not thy little hands
Play with the young fawns,
Gazing upon thee
With seer-like eyes?

What heard they stirring?
The blossom bush nigh thee:
What saw they flicker?
The stream at thy feet.

Only the song bird
Awaking the chorus,
Only the sweet breath
Of winds from the south."

The author of these verses is not given. Two likely candidates are Harry Howells Horton who wrote Sutton Park and Other Poems in 1844, and Charles Barker, the Headmaster of Bishop Vesey's Grammar School from 1817 to 1842, who also wrote poems about the Park, but both of them adopted rhyming couplets in their known verses. Perhaps Absalom Peers himself wrote the lines.

SUTTON COLDFIELD is in the Hundred of Hemlingford; 26 miles from Warwick, 110 from London, and 7 from Birmingham. The Church is a living belonging to the family of the present incumbent – the Rev. R. K. Bedford, patron, -- and is reputed one of the richest livings in the country.

A hundred was an administrative division of a county, abolished in 1894. The origin of the name is obscure; it may have been an area of 100 hides, a hide being sufficient land to maintain one household. Warwickshire had four hundreds, Barlichway, Hemlingford, Kington or Kineton and Knightlow. Hemlingford –known as Coleshelle (Coleshill) in 1086 – was in the north of the county and was subdivided into four districts, Atherstone, Birmingham, Solihull and Tamworth.

The Rector of Sutton Coldfield in 1869 was Rev William Kirkpatrick Riland Bedford (1826-1905) – not Rev R. K. Bedford – whose great-great-great-grandfather Rev John Riland had purchased the advowson of the church in 1710, which was passed down six generations of the Riland and Riland Bedford family until 1909. The owner of the advowson was known as the church's patron and he had the right to appoint the rector. It is difficult to say how wealthy the living of Holy Trinity was; there were sixty-seven acres of glebe land which might have produced an annual income of approximately £250, and there were the tithes of the parish. Both Rev Richard Bisse Riland (Rector 1758-90) and Rev John Riland (Rector 1790-1822) had an eye towards maintaining their income from tithes, whilst being generous in cases of hardship. For instance John Riland wrote to his parishioner farmers in 1796: "Should any of you be disposed to ask me for what Reason I make this Rise in the Tithe, I am very willing in Condescension, to answer. It is that I may receive what is the Order of God for me, and his Gift to me; what the Law of the Land allots me, and secures to me, and what all Equity and Reason, claim, in my Station; by your Means, acting justly for myself and not unjustly to you, and, another Reason is (and which is the most pleasing Part of the Business), that I may, by an Addition to my Income, be better enabled to assist my poor Parishioners next Winter, than I could last; through the small, very small, Proportion of the Value of the Tithe, the last Harvest; which I was contented for your Benefit, to receive from you." (Taken from Riland Bedford's Three Hundred Years of a Family Living (1889). It may be doubted whether the farmers agreed that the tithes were a gift of God rather than an unfair drain on the fruits of their hard work. On John Riland's death in 1822 the new patron of the church was William Bedford, a Birmingham attorney; he inherited half of the advowson in right of his wife Lydia Riland, daughter of Rev R. B. Riland, and bought the other half from his wife's sister Phoebe Williamson. Bedford had a different approach to tithes than his wife's late father and uncle; he was not particularly concerned with the plight of Sutton farmers, but devoted his energy to obtaining the maximum possible income for the new rector, his own son Rev William Riland Bedford (Rector 1822-43). Bedford's grandson, in the book previously quoted, described him as "a man of sound sense and much tenacity of purpose, he had always been an advocate of the Enclosure Scheme, and with his son in the rectory the success of the measure was ensured. In 1924 the Act for the enclosure of the waste lands and commutation of the tithes of Sutton Coldfield became law. For the newly enclosed lands an allotment was given to the rector in lieu of tithes, and a corn rent was fixed for the old enclosures." In fact, the new rector did very well out of the enclosure, mainly as a result of his father's hard bargaining, and

making a thorough nuisance of himself to the Corporation and the Enclosure Commissioner. "Much tenacity of purpose" may be interpreted as pig-headed.

To the Birmingham people Sutton has ever been a great place for pleasure and recreation.

But for the future it must by the help of the extremely well managed railway, which is now opened, be more a place of resort than ever.

With its quaint old church, its sunny downs, and ever running waters, there is something to interest the stranger, and even those who have been there again and again; such is the magnitude of the Park and the diversity of its views that a person may go there hundreds of times and still discover fresh views and ever changing beauties which he has never seen before.

SUTTON TOWN

Whether the name of Sutton Coldfield was a name given it from its exposed situation, or to distinguish it from other and [page 4] many Suttons which are to be found scattered among the neighbouring counties; or whether in the dim old time a family of the name of "Colville" was seated here and gave it their name, which has become corrupted, cannot now be known.

There have been various theories about the derivation of Coldfield – Old English or Celtic words meaning 'the habitation of the religious' or 'stones of omen' (both referring to Druidical rites), or 'field on a hillside', 'cold subsoil', 'charcoal burning', and 'infertile ground', as well as the more obvious 'cold (wind) field' – but the suggestion that it was named after a family called Colville is not one which has been taken up by other local historians, and is extremely improbable.

It is very likely the town has been larger than at the present time, and was in its prosperity when its neighbour Birmingham was a tiny little place making its way upward.

The meaning of this sentence is not entirely clear, but presumably 'larger' refers to population. It is estimated that at the time of the Domesday Book (1086) the population of Sutton was around 500. After the Parish Church was built (c.1250) and a weekly market was established (1300) the population increased to about 1500, but following the Black Death in the 1340s the figure was back to 500. Two centuries later it was no more than 750, but after Bishop Vesey lavished his wealth on the town in the mid-sixteenth century there was a marked increase in the population, and by the time of the 1861 census it was 4662. By comparison the population of Birmingham was approximately 50 (nine households) in 1086, around 1500 in 1550 and 296,076 in 1861.

The town at one time extended further down into the hollow way in front of the church, on the road to Maney, -- to take advantage of the power the water had coming from the dammed up pools to work the forges, for it seems to have been a noted place for the making of spades and agricultural implements a long time back, -- but in July 24, 1668, the banks of the pools broke through, bringing ruin upon many householders, sweeping mills and houses away, and teaching the Sutton folks the lesson that higher ground was the safest.

There were two pools at the bottom of Mill Street, the Town Mill Pool or Sutton Pool and Cross Pool, created by damming the streams flowing from Sutton Park. The Town or Manor Mill, on the east side of the dam, had the monopoly of grinding corn in the town. The Spade Mill or Forge Mill was at Powell's Pool in the Park; the dam there was made in 1730 when a mill for spinning cotton was built, but it was probably not until the early 19th century that spades and agricultural implements were made. There was another mill at the present-day Park House in Sutton Park, which was at various times known as Blade Mill, Mr Addys's Mill and Brown's Mill, which appears to have been a sawmill. There was another sawmill at Wyndley Pool, known also as New Forge Pool, in the late 18th and early 19th

centuries. Other mills, for dressing leather were built at Longmoor Pool in 1754 and at Blackroot Pool in 1759, which later became the Corporation's Sawmill. Another mill was attached to Holland House, in the present-day Upper Holland Road, served by the Ebrook or Plants Brook and used in connection with a gun-barrel making business. The damage caused by the freak storm which occurred in July 1668 was probably not as serious as Peers' Guide makes out, but it did warrant an entry in the parish register: "There was a great fflood of water, so great here att Sutton pools that it ffloed over the stone wall at the further end of the dam by Reason of a suden Rayne, which did breake downe Wyndly-poole dam, and alsoe Brass-bridg pool dam, July 24." The damage to the Town Mill was patched up, but it never fully recovered and eventually lost its monopoly of grinding corn to the mill at New Hall.

It was well known before 1668 that it was more sensible to build houses on higher ground, which is why the centre of Sutton was the High Street, a suitably descriptive name.

The Manor House stood on the hill looking northward over the town of Sutton, where the Manor farm-house now stands.

The Manor House, in Manor Hill, was originally a royal hunting lodge, but a more substantial house was built in about 1100. This building was demolished in the 1520s; the site came into the possession of Bishop Vesey, who gave it as a dowry to his niece Joan Gibbons when she married Thomas Keene. A farmhouse was built on the site around 1700, which was renovated and extended in about 1860, and is now known as The Manor. A new house built in the grounds of The Manor in 1919 is now known as The Manor House.

The road ran along the bank of the pool, and from the brook which crosses the road up to the foot of the hill upon which the church stands, was a stone wall (removed 1826) on one side, confining the waters of the pool; and anyone travelling that way could lean over and reach the water.

The road is still called "The Mill Dam." Pretty near to where the road now turns down to the railway station stood a mill belonging to the Lord of the Manor, at which every person was compelled to grind his corn, under a heavy penalty.

The ancient causeway across the valley between Mill Street and Manor Hill known as the Dam was reconstructed and raised to a better level in 1826, at which time the wall at the side of the new road was demolished. The road leading to the railway station is now known as Station Street. The name of the Dam was changed to the Parade in 1879 as shops began to be built on the west side.

The Manor House was a place of great splendour. King John was a visitor there, (April 7, 1208) from whence he issued a royal command.

King John's visit to Sutton is recounted by Agnes Bracken, but Rev W.K. Riland Bedford questioned the accuracy of this story by pointing out that on 4th April 1208 King John was at Waverley Abbey in Farnham and two days later was at Guildford, and he therefore surmised that King John was at Sutton Green near Woking Surrey on 7th April.

There was a chapel – dedicated to St. Blaise – in connection with the house; which, tradition says, was pulled down to find materials for the building of Water Orton and Curdworth Bridges over the river Tame.

Water Orton bridge still stands, but Curdworth bridge was pulled down in 1836, after standing for three centuries; and I have often had the pleasure of proving the truth of the [page 5] tradition, for in Mr. Brookes's garden, by the side of the present, are some of the remains of the old bridge; and upon some of the stones are traces of work which would never have been there had they been designed only for bridge building. Some of them have formed parts of window frames or door-ways, thus

proving, after being part of the bridge for three hundred years, that they had in a former time been part of some building of pretension, either for the comfort of man or for the worship of God.

The stones can be seen at the present time forming the side of a bank which confines a shallow brook flowing through Mr. Brookes's garden, close to Curdworth bridge.

The chapel attached to the Manor House was probably built at the same time as the original hunting lodge, but was rebuilt and dedicated to St. Blaise (otherwise St. Blaize) in the 12th century. St. Blaise (died c. 303) was the Bishop of Sebaste in Cappodocia who suffered martyrdom under the Emperor Diocletian. Before his death he was tortured by having his flesh raked by an iron comb, as a consequence of which he became the patron saint of wool-carders (people who prepare wool for spinning with a metal comb). He was also the patron saint of sore throats, either by association, or because, according to one of the legends that grew about St. Blaise, he once miraculously cured a boy who was choking on a fish-bone. He was an extremely popular saint in the Middle Ages. In 1495 King Henry VII granted the free chapel of St. Blaise with all lands and possessions belonging to it to Bishop Vesey for life. The previous incumbent had been Rev John Harman, believed to have been Bishop Vesey's uncle. The chapel was demolished with the Manor House in the 1520s. The timber taken from the demolished Manor House was sold to Thomas Grey 2nd Marquess of Dorset (grandfather of Lady Jane Grey) for use in building a mansion at Bradgate in Leicestershire, but Bishop Vesey used the remaining stone to build the two bridges across the River Tame, in order to open up Sutton Coldfield to travellers from Coleshill for the benefit of its trade. The bridge at Curdwoth was replaced by a new bridge in the 1830s, but the bridge at Water Orton still stands.

Perhaps there are but few of the old houses of Sutton now in existence, but there is one you will notice with a large yew tree before the door on the north side of the Birmingham Road; which is the oldest, the house or the tree, cannot be told, but undoubtedly both have seen centuries. For more than a century it was the only wheelwright's shop in the place. The roots of the tree have struck under the house in all directions, so that when the wind blows on stormy nights, swaying the tree to-and-fro, the house rocks from side to side – swinging like the cradle we remember of in our childish years, which “rocked on the tree top.” But so firmly is the oaken frame which forms the house linked together, that however strong the storm the house suffers no damage.

Yew Tree Cottage in Lower Parade was still occupied as a private residence in the 1920s and was eventually demolished when South Parade was laid out. “Rocked on the tree top” refers to the nursery rhyme, first written down in 1765, which starts: “Rock-a-bye [or Hush-a-bye] baby on the tree top, when the wind blows the cradle will rock.”

That it was a place of note visited by some of our earliest kings, is to be gleaned from different histories; and report, which generally has some substratum of truth for its foundation, points out the hill at Maney as the site of the Castle where King John occasionally resided when here to hunt in Sutton Chase; certain it is that hereabout have been discovered stones, which, from their carving, have formed parts of what must have been no mean building in earlier ages.

There is scant evidence that King John hunted in Sutton Chase and the existence of a castle at Maney is not mentioned elsewhere; the stones referred to were probably from the demolished Manor House.

But whatever may have been the state of Sutton in very early times, when for six hundred years the Saxon Kings lived at Tamworth and Kingsbury, it became the property of the crown at the Conquest and continued so till the time of Henry I., who granted it to Roger, Earl of Warwick, one of whose successors in the time of Edward I. obtained a charter for a fair and market at Sutton. And some idea may be formed of the times from the following prices of stock, wheat, &c.:-

Best Fat Ox (grass fed)	£0 16 0
Ditto (grain fed)	1 4 0
Best Cow	0 12 0
Best Hog (two years old)	0 3 4
Best Shorn Mutton	0 1 2
Best Goose	0 0 3
Hens	0 0 1 ½%
Wheat (per quarter)	0 6 0
Rye	0 5 0
Barley	0 3 0
Beans and Peas	0 2 8
Oats	0 2 0
Eggs (20)	0 0 1

Roger de Beaumont 2nd Earl of Warwick (c.1102-53) acquired the Manor of Sutton, including the Chase, in 1126 when King Henry I exchanged it for two manors in Rutland. In 1300 Guy de Beauchamp 10th Earl of Warwick obtained a charter from King Edward I for a weekly market on Tuesdays and an annual fair on the eve of Holy Trinity and the following three days. Trinity Sunday was a moveable feast, being eight weeks after Easter Sunday. The markets and fairs were held in the area known as Great Sutton at the junction of Mill Street, Coleshill Street and High Street, and they attracted sellers and buyers of merchandise and produce from a four-mile radius of the town. In 1353 Thomas de Beauchamp 11th Earl of Warwick obtained a charter from King Edward III for a second annual fair to be held on St. Martin's Eve and Day (10th and 11th November). St. Martin's Day was widely celebrated in the Church's calendar to mark the end of Autumn. The quoted prices of various commodities cannot readily be equated with modern money; it is more to the point to note that in 1300 an unskilled labourer earned about £2 a year and a skilled worker received between £3 and £5 a year.

About this time (Edward I.) a notable case of robbery is recorded, which no doubt caused a great stir among the lawyers of that time. One Elias-de-Collier was robbed of three hundred pounds on the Ridgeway or Ridgeway, at nine o'clock in the morning, -- which Ridgeway I take to be the old Roman way, which no doubt for years would be used as a near cut over a wild moorland country, and which road was a "ridge" or raised way for miles over the Coldfield.

A great deal of trouble has been taken to try to fix upon the road called "The Ridgeway." In my opinion there need be but little speculation upon the matter, as the Roman road is a raised or ridged way up till the present time, and no doubt appeared more so, centuries back.

And again, (which I think will go very far to prove me right) the old British road, the Icknield Street, in Berkshire, is called "The Ridgeway" up to the present time.

It seems Elias the Collier was not a man to lose his money without some effort to get it back, so went to law with the hundred of Hemlingford. The Sheriffs of Staffordshire and Warwickshire levied what they could from the Inhabitants, who pleaded great poverty, but the Bishop of Lichfield pleaded the case for the people so well that after levying forty marks the case was stayed.‡

‡ Rambles around Birmingham.

The Ridgeway was not Icknield (or Ryknild) Street or any other Roman road, but the name for part of Chester Road in the district of Oscott. Chester Road (A452) was an important route in Roman times but was not a Roman road. Elias le Collier was robbed in 1324 and under the 1285 Statute of Winchester he could claim compensation from the hundred in which the crime took place if they failed to bring the culprits to justice. As the Ridgeway formed the boundary between Warwickshire and Staffordshire Collier sued both the Hemlingford Hundred in Warwickshire and the Offlow Hundred in

Staffordshire. The Court ordered the sheriffs of both counties to levy £150 to compensate Collier for his loss, but after £13 had been raised the Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry intervened on behalf of his tenants in both districts and procured a suspension of the writ. Rambles around Birmingham has not been traced; perhaps it was another publication by A. Peers.

Shakespeare, with that touch which calls up things to live for ever, has immortalised this town in Henry IV., where, just before the battle of Shrewsbury, 1403, he makes Falstaff say to Bardolph "Get thee before to Coventry, fill me a bottle of Sack, our soldiers shall march through; we'll to Sutton Coldfield to-night."

Falstaff would have taken the road from Coventry to Birmingham and turned off right onto Chester Road, through Sutton Coldfield, until it joined Watling Street (A5) on his way to Shrewsbury. The quote is from King Henry IV Part One Act 4 Scene 2. In texts based on the Quarto edition of the play (1598) and the Folio edition (1623) Coldfield is spelt either Cofil or Cophill. Since Shakespeare was familiar with Sutton, his mother being related to the Ardens of Peddimore Hall and Park Hall, these variations of spelling can be taken to indicate either that the town's present name was not established until after Shakespeare's day or that the name was pronounced differently. Peers' Guide adopts an obsolete spelling of Shakespeare's name.

[page 7]

In 1419 the Earl of Warwick leased to Sir Ralph Bracebridge, of Kingsbury, his Manor House, at Sutton, with the Park and Pools for life, hence the name of one of the Pools in the Park, most probably made by Sir Ralph.

His tenure was rather curious being a yearly rent of Ten Pounds or One Hundred and Twenty "brems," at Twenty Pence each, of which payments the following particulars have been preserved.

"Item: John Burbage and Wm. Lempre, for fyching on Wensday nexte before the Exaltacion of the Cros, and dyde take 2 brems, and were lade to my lord to Lychfielde be Will. Alyn; and to the said fychers hyre and for hire costs, mans mete and horsemete 3s. 10d.

"Item: The same Fychers were sent for againe, on Thursday, Fridaie, and Satyrday, and took 4 brems, their hyre and other costs 4s. 8d. Item : the costes of bakying the seyde 4 brems in flowere 12d. Item: in Spys, Pepyr, Safurn, Clows and Synamon, 6d. Item: The costs of caryng the seyd 4 brems to Mydlam to my Lord to the North Contrey, by Thomas Hayrs of Sutton 10s."

The 1419 lease was granted by Richard de Beauchamp 14th Earl and 1st Duke of Warwick. It is likely that Sir Ralph Bracebridge created Bracebridge Pool specifically for the purpose of providing bream for the Lord of the Manor's table, the fish being a great delicacy at the time. The quote is copied from Dugdale's The Antiquities of Warwickshire which he took from the Earl of Warwick's bailiff's accounts for 1453/54. The obscure language of the original is rather out of place in a popular guide to Sutton Park. A free translation into modern English might have served better, such as:

"1. John Burbage and William Lemper for fishing on the Wednesday before the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross (14th September) when they caught two bream which were taken to my Lord at Lichfield by William Allen, including payment to the fishermen, hire of carriage and refreshments for carrier and horse 3 shillings 10 pence.

2. The same two fishermen were sent for again on the Thursday after the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, and on the Thursday, Friday and Saturday they caught four bream; their hire and expenses 3 shillings 8 pence.

3. The cost of baking the bream in flour 12 pence.

4. For spice, pepper, saffron, cloves and cinnamon 6 pence

5. The cost of carrying the four bream to my Lord at Middleham in the north country, by Thomas Harris of Sutton 10 shillings."

The Lord referred to was Richard Neville (1428-71), known to history as Warwick the Kingmaker, who was the 16th Earl of Warwick by virtue of his marriage to Anne de Beauchamp 16th Countess of Warwick. Middleham refers to Middleham Castle near Leyburn North Yorkshire, where in 1469 the Kingmaker imprisoned King Edward IV for a short time before he escaped and regained his throne.

In the reign of Henry VI, the defection of the Earl of Warwick caused the king to seize his lands, and Sutton was granted to Sir E. Mountfort for ten years, and the Rangership of the Chase to John Holte, of Aston, for life. The loss of the local influence of the Earls of Warwick caused a rapid decline in the town; the market failed, the Manor House was destroyed, and its materials sold to build Bradgate in Leicestershire. In 1528 the improvement and future wealth of Sutton were secured by John Harman (or Vesey) the Bishop of Exeter, who obtained a charter granting the manor of Sutton to the trust of a corporation for the benefit of the inhabitants. This and other advantages conferred by the Bishop in his native place raised Sutton from its declining state, and placed it in that condition of corporate affluence which it now enjoys. John Harman – for this was the name his immediate predecessors had borne, although he is also called Vesey, as probably connected with the Norman de Vescis – was born at Sutton, and went to Magdalen College, Oxford, in 1482. Probably by the influence of Wolsey, and certainly by the good will of Henry VII. and Henry VIII., John Harman rose to be Bishop of Exeter. His cleverness and perseverance made him a favourite. He was sent on various embassies, and was honoured and trusted by Henry VIII. Although a churchman he was a King's man too, and [page 8] evidently more of a courtier than a churchman should be. He advocated the extension of the civil law over ecclesiastics: he took but little trouble about the services of the Church, was constantly absent from his diocese attending to his beloved Sutton, and took care to provide that the school he founded should have only a layman for its master, which rule being obeyed for three centuries, was disobeyed, and the present master, the Rev. Albert Smith, from King Edward's School, Birmingham, was elected, and the choice has been fully justified by the great improvement in the school while under that gentleman's care.

Warwick the Kingmaker switched his allegiance from King Henry VI to the future King Edward IV in the 1450s. Peers' Guide takes the mention of Sir Edmund Mountfort (called Mountford by Riland Bedford) from Agnes Bracken, but neither gives a date. The grant is not mentioned in Dugdale's history. It was probably in 1459, but whether Mountfort, who held the post of Royal Carver in King Henry VI's household but is otherwise a rather shadowy figure, remained in possession of the Manor of Sutton for ten years may be questioned, seeing that King Henry VI was deposed and replaced by King Edward IV in 1461. The Kingmaker was then the driving force behind King Henry VI's readeption in 1470, but after he was killed at the Battle of Barnet in 1471 and King Edward IV regained his throne, the king settled the Manor of Sutton on the Kingmaker's two daughters, Isabel, married to the king's brother George Duke of Clarence, and Anne, the widow of King Henry VI's son Edward Prince of Wales, but now married to the king's younger brother Richard Duke of Gloucester. It was at this point that the fortunes of Sutton declined. In 1487, both Isobel and Anne being dead, King Henry VII restored 118 manors to their widowed mother Anne 16th Countess of Warwick. She immediately returned 117 of the manors to the king, but was allowed to keep Sutton until her death in 1492. Riland Bedford says that it was the Manor of Erdington which she retained.

John Holte was a descendant of John atte Holte who purchased the Manor of Aston in 1367. Like Sir Edmund Mountford, Holte was a member of King Henry VI's Royal Household.

John Harman's father died in 1471, when he was probably about nine years old, and it is believed that he was then brought up by his mother's relatives named Vesey, but they have not been traced and it is impossible to say whether there was any connection with the old noble Norman family of de Vesci.

Rev Albert Smith was the Headmaster of Bishop Vesey's Grammar School from 1863 to 1902. It is not quite correct to say that Smith's appointment disobeyed Vesey's rule that only a layman should be appointed, since a Scheme of the Charity Commissioners allowing the appointment of a clergyman had been obtained. Circumstances had considerably changed since Bishop Vesey's day; then there were

religious wranglings between the established Catholic Church with the Pope as its head and the new Protestant Church of England with King Henry VIII as its head, and Vesey wanted to avoid having one of the new breed of clergymen as the schoolmaster; now the Church of England had been the country's established religion for three centuries and many if not most qualified teachers were in holy orders.

One of the most celebrated masters of the school was Laurence Noel, who had amongst his pupils Burton, the celebrated author of the "Anatomy of Melancholy."

There were two Laurence Nowells (as the name is usually spelt) who were first cousins; one was a celebrated antiquarian, cartographer and scholar of the Anglo Saxon language and the other was a much more obscure schoolteacher and later churchman. Unfortunately, Sir William Dugdale in The Antiquities of Warwickshire conflated the two men into one. In his account of Sutton he quoted William Camden (1551-1623), the author of Britannia, a topographical survey of the British Isles, who called Nowell "a man famous for his uncommon learning and the first in our times to revive the Saxon language of our ancestors," and Dugdale added that a century later Nowell was still famous for his singular learning, but Camden was referring to Laurence Nowell the antiquarian, not to his cousin the schoolteacher. Anthony à Wood (1632-95), the author of The History and Antiquities of the University of Oxford repeated the mistake, which was copied by Agnes Bracken, Rev W.K. Riland Bedford and others in their histories of Sutton Coldfield. The error persisted through the Dictionary of National Biography into the 20th century and it was only in the 1970s that the biographies of the two Laurence Nowells were disentangled. The teacher Laurence Nowell (died 1576) was Headmaster of Bishop Vesey's Grammar School from 1546 to 1548; he resigned after the Corporation applied to the Court of Chancery for his removal claiming that his diligence in teaching scholars fell far short of their expectations. He subsequently took holy orders and was appointed as Dean of Lichfield in 1560.

Robert Burton, the author of The Anatomy of Melancholy, was born in 1577 and was not therefore at the school under the headmastership of Laurence Nowell.

Liberal as Bishop Harman's benefactions were, he was too much of a courtier and time-server to be very much admired.

He was essentially a "secularist," looking well to the things of this world, whatever he might think about the next. He did not approve of the old religion, and did not hesitate to confiscate its lands, but scarcely committed himself to the new religion, and was pretty much a Vicar of Bray. Perhaps in those stormy times it was more pardonable to shift with every gale, but there were some men who made "a conscience of the matter," and could not be moved either by persecution or death. To Sutton, however, the Bishop was a lifelong friend, and spared no time, trouble nor cost to improve and enrich the home of his early days. In 1527 he began a house at Sutton, near the Moat House, (the modern Moor Hall of his ancestors, and lived here with 140 men, in scarlet caps and gowns, as his retinue, on £1,500 a-year. He paved the town at a cost of £40 3s. 8d.; in 1530 gave the church an organ, which cost £14 6s. 8d., founded a Free Grammar School, and gave lands and rents for various minor purposes.

It is certainly true that Bishop Vesey kept his head (literally) throughout the Reformation period, but the evidence is that he adhered to the old religion. He was replaced as Bishop of Exeter by Miles Coverdale in 1551 under the Protestant rule of King Edward VI, but reinstated in 1553 when the Catholic Queen Mary I came to the throne. As mentioned above, the most likely reason for Vesey stipulating that the master of the school he founded should be a layman is that he did not want an adherent of the Church of England to be appointed. The Vicar of Bray is an 18th century satirical song about a vicar who changed his religion and politics to suit the prevailing fashion during the reigns of King Charles II, King James II, King William III, Queen Anne and King George I.

Moat House refers, not to the property of that name in Lichfield Road, but to Bishop Vesey's supposed birthplace Moor Hall Farmhouse, which Agnes Bracken calls "the antient Moat House of his

ancestors". It is now thought that the present stone building was built by Bishop Vesey in about 1525, but that there was a previous timber-framed property on the site where Vesey was born, which was surrounded by a moat. The pool from which the moat flowed is still there, known as Wall Pool. There is a closing bracket missing after "Moor Hall", but the meaning would be clearer if the sentence said that "he built a house at Sutton (the modern Moor Hall) near the Moat House of his ancestors".

In order better to promote the true prosperity of the place, he built fifty-one houses of stone – some of which yet remain – in his endeavours too localise the manufacture of woollen kerseys, as in Devonshire, by granting houses rent free; but such a manufacture could not be forced, and the comparative isolation of the town caused the scheme rapidly to fail. In order to check the robberies common at the time on the [page 9] roads over Bassett's Heath, he gave land and built a house for one of his servants to live near Canwell Gate, which Dugdale describes as a den and haunt of thieves. He improved the roads by collecting the rolling pebbles in heaps, gathered by poor people he employed; and built at his own expense a bridge at Water Orton, and one at Curdworth, over the river Tame. When Henry VIII. died, Vesey's prospects seemed likely to become impaired, but he held his office for three years longer, and tendered his resignation of the see of Exeter in 1550, and Coverdale was appointed in his place. The revenues of the see had been sadly lessened during Vesey's holding, from his munificence to Sutton, and had fallen from £1,500 to £500 a-year. When Mary (who had been his pupil) came to the throne on Edward's death, Coverdale escaped to Geneva, and Vesey became bishop again; but as his infirmities increased, Dr. Moreman was appointed his coadjutor, and he passed most of his time at Sutton, where he died somewhat suddenly in 1555, at the great age of 103, or at any rate 93, as some suppose. He was buried in the north aisle of Sutton Church, where his recumbent effigy and the inscription recording his good works still remain. Would that we could end here, and only say good of the old bishop, but history should be told truthfully or not at all.

Kersey was a coarse ribbed woollen cloth used for work clothes and was accordingly cheaper than other forms of woollen cloth. Bishop Vesey was familiar with the successful Devonshire kersey trade, and he imported skilled weavers from Honeybourne near Evesham to train the Sutton workers. The main reason for the failure of the enterprise seems to be that the expenses outweighed the revenue; the small cottage industry could not compete with larger well-established cloth manufacturers.

The main road from Lichfield to London crossed Bassett's Heath just south of Canwell, near the present-day Bassett's Pole. The house near Canwell Gate was one of Bishop Vesey's fifty-one stone houses built in the 1520s and 1530s; it still exists as part of Vesey Grange in Weeford Road. By 1824 three brick-built cottages had been added to the original stone house, but by 1911 the row of four houses had been converted into one substantial dwelling. Canwell Gate was the name of a small district of Canwell near the entrance to Canwell Priory, founded in about 1140 and dissolved in 1530.

With regard to improvement of the roads, Riland Bedford says: "Tradition asserts that the compulsory labour instituted by the Bishop took the shape of gathering stones from the highways, and as late as 1765 the road map from London to Chester gives at the 113th mile from London on the Coleshill and Lichfield-road the 'Bishop's heap of stones'."

Bishop Vesey was required to resign his see by King Edward VI in 1551, but he was given a generous pension of £485 a year.

Vesey and the humanist scholar and physician Thomas Linacre (c.1460-1524) were named as Princess Mary's tutors shortly after her birth in February 1516. Mary was a precocious child and at the age of nine she could read and write Latin, French and Spanish, and was an accomplished keyboard player and dancer. For three years from 1525 she had her own court at Ludlow Castle, which was also the headquarters of the Council of Wales and the Marches, of which Bishop Vesey was the President.

Bishop Vesey died on 23rd October 1554 (wrongly stated as 1555 on the monument in Holy Trinity Church erected by his several times great-nephew Sir John Wyrley in 1687). The monument says he died in his 103rd year, but it is generally thought that ninety-two is more likely to have been his age when he died.

In the 23rd of the reign of Henry VIII., Thomas Bennet, M.A., attached papers to the doors of Exeter Cathedral, declaring the Pope anti-Christ. He was brought before Bishop Vesey, who sentenced him to be burned to death. The sentence was carried out at a place called Livery Dale.

Most likely the Bishop did no more than carry out the law in this case, and what most men would have done; but when we see so much good which he did we would gladly he had left the burning of poor Bennet undone.

With all the evils of our time – and however much we may think them evils which require reforming – we must feel glad that we live at a time when human life is thought of more value than to be sacrificed for a speculative theological opinion.

It is said that “things are only great or small by comparison.” In judging Sutton, and comparing it with other and now much greater places, it makes a very respectable figure.

An account of the burning of Thomas Bennet appeared in The Book of Martyrs (1570) by John Foxe, based on John Hooker’s The Antique Description and Account of the City of Exeter, but Geoffrey Fryer in John Vesey and his World (1997) casts doubt on the whole incident by quoting a footnote in Rev George Oliver’s Lives of the Bishops of Exeter (1861) to the effect that no mention of Bennet’s trial is made in the Bishops’ Acts’ of that period. Furthermore Hooker related that the Sheriff of Devonshire, who was responsible for superintending Bennet’s burning, founded some almshouses by way of atonement, and yet Oliver points out that the almshouses were not built until thirty years after the sheriff’s death.

It is surprising that Peers’ Guide makes no mention of what was perhaps Bishop Vesey’s greatest benefit to Sutton Coldfield, namely obtaining a charter from King Henry VIII which created the town council and turned Sutton from a royal feudal manor into a self-governing borough, with the Park preserved for the benefit of its inhabitants.

[page 10]

In 1636, when Charles I claimed ship-money, Birmingham paid £100; Coventry, £266; and Sutton, £80; a goodly sum for so small a town.

In 1634 King Charles I levied a tax to meet naval expenses, known as ship-money, from maritime towns in accordance with an ancient practice, but from 1635 to 1640 he also levied the tax from inland areas. There was much resistance to the tax, led by John Hampden, and Parliament abolished it in 1641.

Again, in 1655, when collections were made for the persecuted Piedmontese, of whom Milton wrote –

“Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughtered saints, whose bones
Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold;
Even them who kept thy truth so pure of old,
When all our fathers worshipped stocks and stones
Forget not! In thy book record their groans,
Who were thy sheep, and in their ancient fold
Slain by the bloody Piedmontese, that rolled
Mother with infant down the rocks. Their moans
The vales redouble to the hills, and they
To heaven; their martyr’d blood and ashes sow
O’er all the Italian fields where still doth sway
The triple tyrant; that from these may grow
A hundred fold, who having learned the way,
Early may fly the Babylonian woe.”

The whole country was roused by the cruelties then practised, and collections were made for their relief: -- Sutton, £14; Birmingham, £15 11. 2d.; Aston, £4 14s. 2d.; Shenstone, £3 6s. 9d.

Milton's sonnet On the Late Massacre in Piedmont was written following the Easter Massacre of some 1,700 Waldensians in Piedmont by the troops of Charles Emmanuel II Duke of Savoy in April 1655. The Waldensians were an ascetic proto-Protestant sect founded by Peter Waldo in about 1175. Their beliefs conflicted with those of the Catholic Church and they were declared heretical. In Milton's poem "the triple tyrant" means the Pope with his triple crown, and "the Babylonian woe" refers to 'The Whore of Babylon', a name given to the Roman Catholic Church by Protestant Puritans. The sums given by each place are taken from Agnes Bracken, whose source was an account preserved in the British Museum.

During the Commonwealth, Thomas Willoughby (magistrate) married those of Sutton. He lived in the house covered with stucco, with bay windows, standing about the middle of the High Street.

Civil marriages were introduced by an Act of Parliament in 1653 and, until the Act was repealed in 1660, many of the fifty or so marriages recorded in Sutton took place at Vesey House, then known as the Brick House, in the High Street, and were conducted by the owner of that property Thomas Willoughby; if Willoughby was not available marriages were conducted by Waldiv Willington at Hurley Hall North Warwickshire, or by Richard Baston at Tamworth. Willoughby was a colonel in Oliver Cromwell's New Model Army and he was one of the four Warwickshire MPs elected to the short-lived parliament from 1654 to 1656.

In 1665, (April 14,) there was a great fire in the Park.

This sentence is taken from Agnes Bracken, who merely says that there was a memorandum in the parish register to this effect.

1668 –4th June – Buried Ellinor Clibery, widow; and also William Clibery, her son. Both were drowned in a pit, going to fetch a gosling.

This again is taken from Agnes Bracken quoting the parish register.

The family of Clibery is not yet extinct; one of the same name now (1868) keeps the Cup Inn at Maney.

The Cup Inn in Birmingham Road Maney was built in the mid-eighteenth century and, like the nearby Horse and Jockey, derived its name from local racecourses. An advertisement in 1893 called it the oldest licensed inn in Sutton Coldfield. Joseph Clibbery was the licensee for more than a decade from about 1863, running the inn with his wife Sarah. The Cup Inn converted from a public house to a restaurant in 2008.

1668. – There was a flood of water so great at Sutton, that it flowed over the stone wall at the farther end of the dam –by reason of a sudden rain – broke down Wyrley pool dam and Bracebridge pool dam. (July 24th.)

This paragraph, which has already been mentioned in Peers' Guide, is again taken from Agnes Bracken, quoting the parish register. In fact, the accounts of the ship money, the Piedmont Massacre, the drowning of Ellinor and William Clibery and the great flood of 1668 all appear on the same page in Miss Bracken's history. Agnes Bracken correctly recorded the spelling of the damaged pools as it

appears in the register as Wynly and Brass-bridg. Peers' Guide, perhaps not realising that Wynly was Wyndley, mistakenly converts it to Wyrley.

In 1690, William III. sent 1,000 baggage waggons loaded with provisions to his troops in Ireland; they went along the Chester Road.

Following the Glorious Revolution of 1688 when King James II was deposed and replaced on the throne by his daughter Queen Mary II and her husband King William III, the deposed king raised an army in Ireland hoping to regain his crown by force. King William himself headed for Ireland and took charge of his own army. The bloody Battle of the Boyne, fought on 1st July 1690, was decisively won by William and put paid to James's aspirations.

1728. – Thomas Eastham was murdered in Holly Lane, by Edward Powers, who was afterwards gibbeted on Little Sutton Common.

This sentence also derives from Agnes Bracken, quoting the parish register, which adds that Eastham was buried at Sutton although he was a 'stranger'. He was travelling along the London Road towards Coleshill when he stopped for refreshment at Canwell Gate Inn, where he met Edward Powers who volunteered to show him a short cut across the commons to Lindridge Road, the eastern end of which was then part of Holly Lane. Here Powers robbed and murdered Eastham. He was a notorious bad character and was soon arrested and taken before the Sutton magistrates, who committed him to trial at Warwick Assizes. He was found guilty and hanged, and his body was sent to Sutton to be displayed, as a warning to others, on the gibbet at Little Sutton.

[page 11]

1745. – A portion of the Duke of Cumberland's army marched across the parish, on its way to meet the Pretender in Scotland. Stopped at the New Inn, Castle Bromwich, now called the Bradford Arms. The Colonel got so drunk that he marched away leaving his sword behind him! On the road they met a man near Tyburn, who having no roof to his mouth, could not answer the questions put to him; thinking he was a spy, he was shot and his head being cut off was carried on a halberd to New Shipton, and there tossed into a tree; the body being thrown into a ditch at Echelhurst, near Pipe Hayes. Body and head were found (1827) within a few weeks of each other.

Miss Bracken recounted this anecdote, or rather two separate anecdotes, which were contributed to her book by Baron Dickinson Webster of Penns Hall, who presumably was familiar with the stories from his family's connection with the Walmley area. Webster gives more details of the mislaid sword: "The officer in command, on moving with his regiment next morning, was not sufficiently sober to know that he was without his sword. On reaching Basset's Pole he made the discovery, and was obliged to retrace his steps to recover his weapon. He was, however, so much entertained by the adventure, that on reaching the inn he declared that as long as he lived he would give a banquet there on the anniversary of the day on which he marched to fight for his king and country without his sword. This promise he fulfilled, and persons now living have had the circumstances related to them by those who actually assisted at the celebration of an exploit, which at this day would not be regarded as justifying an annual jubilee." Webster prefaced his account of the man without a roof to his mouth with the words: "The same officer may have been a principal actor in another adventure that morning." He added that in 1827 the body was found when the meadows at Eachelhurst were drained and a few weeks later the head was found "on the felling of the ruins of one of the finest old oaks in the parish".

William Augustus Duke of Cumberland, the son of King George II, crushed the Jacobite rebellion by the supporters of Prince Charles Edward Stuart, grandson of King James II, known as the Young Pretender or Bonnie Prince Charlie, by leading an army which decisively defeated a Highland army at

the Battle of Culloden on 16th April 1746, the last battle to be fought in Britain. A halberd or halbert was a combined spear and battleaxe.

The Parish of Sutton is 14,000 acres; and to show how things were managed in 1754, the Corporation leased to Joseph Oughton, of Birmingham, the Stonebed Moors, Fleam Brook, the Blade Mills, and Moorish Grounds, for 1,000 years. Had it been their own property they would probably not have done it; it being the property of the poor should have prevented their doing so, recollecting “that for all we do there is a time coming when we must give an account.”

Joseph Oughton (died 1773) was the Warden of Sutton Coldfield in 1767. He was a successful Birmingham gunmaker who moved to Sutton. Riland Bedford says that in 1754 Oughton was granted a perpetual lease of “some marshy ground to the south of the town, now known as Holland” and that he set up a mill for gun barrels. However, a deed dated 1740 made between Joseph Oughton and the Corporation refers to “three closes called Stonebed Moors with watercourse, mill etc”, which suggests that Oughton already had an interest in the land before 1754 and had built the mill there. By 1760 Oughton had also built a substantial house in the same area. In 1763 Oughton conveyed “Stonebed Meadow, a mill, a messuage and land” to the trustees of a settlement on the occasion of his son’s marriage. The house, or messuage, which became known as Holland House, was where Plantsbrook School now stands. It was completely surrounded by water, a series of ponds being used to harness the Ebrook running from the Park to power the watermill. The name Holland came from the area’s perceived similarity to the terrain of that country. The names of the property granted to Oughton in 1754 mentioned in Peers’ Guide all relate to parts of the area known as Holland. ‘Fleam’ is an old-fashioned word for a stream, particularly a mill-stream. Blade Mill is more often associated with the mill at Park House in Sutton Park, but it must also have been used for Oughton’s watermill; ‘blademill’ was a generic word for a certain type of mill. ‘Moorish’ meant swampy or boggy, the secondary meaning of ‘moor’ being a marsh. Peers’ Guide is somewhat ingenuous in saying that the property belonged to the poor. The Warden and Society were obliged to use their income for the purposes set out in the 1528 Charter, one of which was the relief of poor inhabitants, but the words “any other secular pious use” (i.e. any non-religious charitable purpose) gave them a fairly wide remit, so they could not be criticised provided they used the rent from Oughton’s lease for a proper purpose. It was a common feature of leases granted by the Warden and Society that no thought was given to inflation and so rents were for a fixed sum however long the lease.

The quote is not taken from the Bible, but summarises a precept which appears in several places in the Bible.

Not a stream of water runs into the parish, yet 6 mills are worked by water power.

Plants Brook, formerly the Ebrook, which runs through Maney and Walmley into the River Tame at Minworth and eventually reaches the North Sea by way of the Trent and the Humber, rises in the Park by Streetly Gate and leaves the Park, via Little Bracebridge, Bracebridge and Blackroot Pools, near the Town gate. Before Plants Brook leaves the Park, Longmoor Brook which rises above Lord Donegal’s Ride and flows via Longmoor, Powell’s and Wyndley Pools, and a third brook, rising just above and flowing via Keeper’s Pool, merge with Plants Brook.

The existence of six mills in Sutton is taken from Agnes Bracken, who lists them as Longmoor Mill, the sawmill at Wyndley Pool, the Forge Mill at Powell’s Pool, New Hall Mill, Hill Hook Mill and the mill at Holland. However, Peers’ Guide fails to take account of the demolition of Mr Oughton’s blademill at Holland by its new owner John Jerome in 1861, leaving only five mills in 1869. Penns Mill in Walmley had been closed down in 1859.

Mere Pool, not so large as formerly; 1 rood 36 perches.

Mere Pool, previously known as Mare Pool, was in the middle of the Village Green at the junction of Lichfield Road, Belwell Lane and Hill Village Road in Mere Green. Agnes Bracken says that the larger part of the pool was converted into gardens for the Hill Corporation Schools in 1826, leaving a pool of 1 rood and 36 perches. However, this measurement was taken from an 1811 plan of Corporation property let to Henry Curzon, which suggests that the reduction in size of the pool happened some time before 1826. The original name of Mare Pool was taken from an adjoining field called Mare Field, presumably where horses grazed, but was corrupted to Mere Pool, probably because 'mere' and 'pool' are synonyms. A rood was a quarter of an acre and there were forty perches in a rood. 1 rood and 36 perches was therefore just under half an acre.

Bracebridge Pool was made in the reign of Henry V., by Sir Ralph Bracebridge; is now owned by Sir W.E.C. Hartopp. It is 35 acres.

The Earl of Warwick granted a lease of the Manor of Sutton to Sir Ralph Bracebridge in 1419 (see above for details of the lease). The Warden and Society granted a perpetual lease of Bracebridge Pool to Simon Luttrell of Four Oaks Hall in 1757 and it remained in the possession of the owners of Four Oaks Hall, including Sir William Edmund Cradock Hartopp from 1849 to 1864. This sentence in Peers' Guide is copied from Agnes Bracken's history, but Sir William Hartopp 3rd Baronet died in 1864 and in 1869 the owner of Four Oaks Hall was Sir John William Cradock Hartopp 4th Baronet, who sold Bracebridge Pool back to the Warden and Society for £1,520 in that year.

Powell Pool is the largest pool in the parish.

Powell's Pool is 28 acres in area, and so smaller than Bracebridge Pool.

1815. – A Camp formed on Hill Common, near Little Hay. It consisted of the Edinburgh and Sussex militias, the 7th dragoon guards, and a brigade of artillery to guard the French prisoners of war.

1815 is one of the most familiar dates in British history as seeing the end of the Napoleonic Wars by the final defeat of Napoleon by the Duke of Wellington at the Battle of Waterloo. The camp on Hill Common, off the present-day Hillwood Common Road, is remembered in the names Camp Road and Camp Farm.

1826. – The new road formed between Manor Hill and Sutton. The stone dam of the ancient pools was removed, which had hitherto formed the wall beside the old road – The road is now called The Dam.

This paragraph, also taken from Miss Bracken, repeats a previous comment (see above).

1836. – The parish of Sutton thrown into Aston parish.

This sentence is somewhat misleading. What Agnes Bracken said was: "In 1836 the parish of Sutton was thrown into the Aston Union, and the duty of restraining the wants of the needy devolved on strangers." Riland Bedford said that in 1836 the old workhouse in Mill Street became useless in consequence of Sutton being added to the Aston Union by the Poor Law Act of 1835. Under the 1601 Poor Law Act the Warden and Society were responsible for the relief of the poor. The 1835 Act introduced a new system for the administration of the poor law which grouped parishes together into Poor Law Unions, and Sutton poor came under the jurisdiction of the Aston Board of Guardians from 1836. The inmates of the Sutton workhouse were transferred to the Union workhouse in Erdington.

CORPORATION OF SUTTON.

Income. – Invested in the Public Funds, £30,554 18s. 10d. three per cent. Consols, bringing in £916 13s. per annum.

[page 12]

Rents, £1,200 per annum.

Timber and under-wood sales from 1727 to 1787, at ten different periods, £8,263 7s. 11d.

Expenditure. – Seven Free Schools, in which are educated 120 boys and 120 girls. Fifty of each sex are clothed also.

Two Sunday Schools in the town.

Infant School at Mere Green, and one at Hill; about 600 children receive instruction, and 400 receive medical attention at the cost of the Corporation.

Ten Alms Houses, 15s. per month for a single person; £1 5s. for a man and his wife, with coals.

Fifty pairs of blankets to the poor of the parish every year.

Lying-in Charity £76 per annum.

Ten children apprenticed annually, or allowed clothing on going to service.

Twenty-four boys assisted in their education at the Grammar School.

On the first of May in each year, a portion is given to four poor maidens on their marriage – natives or long residents in the parish, of good character, and providing their husbands are of good character too.

Lord's Meadow Charity gives to fifteen poor widows £2 per annum each.

It is calculated that 700 persons receive direct benefit from the Corporation.

The inhabitants have a right to free pasturage in the Park.

Many of the details about the Corporation of Sutton are copied from Agnes Bracken. Consols is short for consolidated annuities, a capital loan to the Government at a fixed rate of interest repayable at the option of the Government. The last consols were redeemed in 2014.

Miss Bracken says that there were seven free schools and mentions the boys' schools at Sutton and Hill, the girls' school at each place, a girls' school at Walmley, a boys' school at Green Lanes, a girls' and infant school recently built on the Cofield, one infant school and two Sunday schools in the town, an infant school at Mere Green, and one at Hill. It is difficult to make a total of seven schools from this list.

Details of the Corporation's elementary schools (up to age 12) in Sutton in the mid-nineteenth century are as follows:

Town School at the bottom of Mill Street by the junction with Trinity Hill, opened in 1826 for 100 pupils, known officially as the Corporation Boys and Girls National School, now the Sutton Coldfield Baptist Church.

Hill School in Mere Green Road, opened in 1826 for 100 pupils from Hill and Little Sutton, now the Old School House Restaurant, previously named the Old Speckled Hen, Loch Fyne and Le Rendezvous des Amis.

Walmley School in Fox Hollies Road near the junction with Signal Hayes Road Thimble End, opened in 1826 for 40 pupils. This school was converted into two cottages in 1851 when a new school was built next to St. John's Church in Walmley Road.

Green Lanes School for boys at the junction with Little Green Lanes, opened in 1840.

Boldmere School for girls and infants half-way along Boldmere Road, opened in 1848.

A School of Industry, part of the Town School, for older girls where they were taught sewing, knitting and spinning.

Miss Bracken also mentions Infant Schools (presumably pre-school nurseries) at Sutton Town, Hill and Mere Green, although Hill and Mere Green were alternative names for the same district, and two Sunday Schools in Sutton Town.

The ten almshouses were built in the 1820s in Mill Street below the workhouse. More almshouses were built in Hill, Walmley and Boldmere in the 1860s, bringing the total to twenty. The original almshouses were sold and demolished in the 1920s.

The requirement for the Master of Bishop Vesey's Grammar School to teach twenty-four parish boys English and arithmetic was a condition of the lease of the newly built School granted by the Corporation to the Master in 1734, but when the Governors of the School transferred the site of the old School near the Parish Church to the Corporation in 1830 in exchange for the freehold interest in the new School, the condition in the lease ceased to have any further effect. Nevertheless, the Corporation felt obliged themselves to pay for the non-classical education of twenty-four parish boys at the Grammar School.

The Lord's Meadow was a twelve-acre field near Peddimore which belonged to the Earls of Warwick as Lords of the Manor of Sutton, but after 1528 when the Warden and Society became the owners of the field they established a charity by which the net proceeds of the sale of hay from the field were given to poor widows for their maintenance. Tradition has it that Bishop Vesey was responsible for setting up this charity. In 1825 the Lord's Meadow was allotted to a local farmer under the Sutton Coldfield Enclosure Award, but the Warden and Society were given land at Hillwood Common in lieu, and the revenue from this land continued to be granted to poor widows, and the name Lord's Meadow Charity continued to be used until 1975, after which date no further grants were made.

So much for the history of Sutton in the times gone by; but there must be a still greater history for it in the future. With its fine school and charities well administered, helping the really deserving, while driving away the lazy, Sutton, with its noble park, must draw to her crowds who must bring wealth and intelligence.

This sounds like a final sentence, but it will be seen that Peers' Guide still has much to say about historical events.

But with them must come change – the self-elected bodies who ruled in days of old, and very properly so, for then there was no middle class of well-informed men to step into the ranks as others died, -- the very circumstances of the case narrowed the class from whom men could be drawn to administer for their fellow men – but that has passed away – now no local administration can give satisfaction which is not elected in the most open and fearless manner, giving out yearly the receipts and expenditure for the mass to ponder over.

[page 13]

To such a consummation Sutton must come sooner or later, and the sooner the better for all parties.

Following the 1832 Reform Act which made parliamentary constituencies more democratic, there was a demand for the reform of local government. Sutton had been governed by a body of twenty-five men called the Warden and Society since the charter of King Henry VIII in 1528 and whenever a vacancy occurred, when a member died, resigned or left the district, the remaining members appointed his replacement. In 1835 Sutton was one of 246 boroughs with a self-elected council which were the subject of official enquiry. Thomas Holbeche, the town's Deputy Steward (equivalent of Town Clerk) and Rev William Riland Bedford, the Rector, gave evidence to the Commission set up to conduct the enquiry to the effect that Sutton was well governed, and as a result, although the 1835 Municipal Corporations Act introduced democratic elections in 239 of the boroughs enquired into, Sutton was one of the remaining seven which were omitted.

In 1854 a mass meeting of over 2,000 people expressed dissatisfaction with the Warden and Society and resolved to petition the Government for a new democratic charter. A public enquiry was held at Sutton the following year and Rev William Kirkpatrick Riland Bedford, the Rector and Warden, Vincent Holbeche, the Deputy Steward, and Baron Dickinson Webster of Penns Hall presented the case in favour of maintaining the status quo so well that the Commissioner, Major Warburton, decided that

no reform was needed at Sutton. By the time the 1882 Municipal Corporations Act was passed the Warden and Society themselves were in favour of reform, and a new charter came into force in 1886 which replaced the Warden and Society with a democratically elected Council with twenty-four members, and established six wards each of which elected four members.

On the 19th October, 1868, two young men named Abel Edward Dorsett, and Richard Dorsett, the sons of Mr. Richard Dorsett, the Hollies, Four Oaks, Sutton, went into Sutton Park with a dog. For this offence they were summoned by Inspector Bloxham, at the instigation of the Corporation. The magistrates on the bench were Thomas Colmore, Esq., and the Rev J. Kittoe, Warden of Sutton.

Mr. Motteram defended the young men, and denied the power of the magistrates to act as prosecutors and judges at the same time. The case was adjourned.

On the second hearing the same magistrates sat again. Mr. Motteram denied their power to do so, as he contended they were interested parties in the case. The matter was again adjourned till Friday, January 15th, 1869.

Mr. Durlington, of Meriden, and Mr. Croxhall, of Shustoke, county justices, were on the bench. Mr. Motteram denied that they had power to hear the case, as the Charter of the town passed in the 20th year of Henry VIII, and confirmed by Charles II., precluded such persons from having jurisdiction. The objection was overruled, and the case went on. The proceedings, though very interesting, are too long for our pages. Eventually the case was withdrawn as regards Richard Dorsett, as he being an inhabitant of Sutton Coldfield, had a right to be in the Park.

Abel Edward Dorsett was fined 6d. and 15s. 6d. costs, as he was not an inhabitant or resident in the borough of Sutton Coldfield.

The excitement caused by this case was very great, and no doubt the result will be a speedy alteration in the manner of election to the offices in the borough.

It is not clear what offence the young men were accused of, but the words "with a dog" point to poaching. Thomas Colmore (1803-70), a Birmingham solicitor and Justice of the Peace for Warwickshire who lived at Ashfurlong Hall, was Warden of Sutton from 1864 to 1866. Rev Edward Hooper Kittoe (not Rev J.) was the Vicar of St. Michael's Church in Boldmere from 1857 to 1894 and Warden of Sutton from 1867 to 1870. James Motteram (or Mottram) (1817-84) was a prosperous barrister who lived at Maney House in Maney Hill Road (then known as Maney Lane). Mottram's Close was later named after him. He was subsequently appointed as Queen's Counsel and became a County Court judge. He had been invited to become a member of the Sutton Corporation, but refused to do so whilst it remained an unelected body. He was regularly critical of the Corporation; Stephen Roberts referred to him as 'The Scourge of the Corporation' (title of an article written for the Royal Sutton Coldfield Town Council in March 2021 www.sclhrg.org.uk).

SUTTON ROYAL HOTEL.

This hotel is a handsome and commodious building, forming a striking feature in the landscape from the turnpike road as well as from the railway. The style of architecture is an adaptation of early English to the domestic purpose of the present century. The building is of brick, with Bath and Forest of Dean dressings; designs of blue brick [page 14] are introduced to relieve the monotony of the red brick work. The edifice has a pleasing appearance when viewed from a distance. The architect was Edward Holmes, Esq.; the builder, Mr. C. Jones, Birmingham. The Hotel was opened first in May, 1865, secondly in January, 1869, by a new company, called the Sutton Royal Hotel Company, Limited.

This paragraph refers to the hotel in King Edward Square built to attract travellers coming from Birmingham by train after the line to Sutton ending at Sutton Station was opened in 1862. The company behind this ambitious enterprise went into liquidation seven months after it opened with debts of £13,000. The second company was more successful, but in 1896 the hotel was converted into

a private sanatorium, especially for the treatment of tuberculosis. The sanatorium lasted for only six years and the building was bought by the Sutton Coldfield Borough Council and converted into municipal offices. This use continued after Sutton came under the control of the Birmingham Metropolitan District Council (later the Birmingham City Council), but in 2014 the building was sold to a developer to convert into private residential apartments, now called Royal Sutton Place. The architect Edward Holmes (1832-1909) was born and died in Moseley, Birmingham. He designed many churches and other public buildings in and around Birmingham.

THE CHURCH.

should be first seen. It is a very old structure, was rebuilt by Bishop Herman. There are several good monuments in the church, but the principal one is that to Bishop Herman, who lies buried here. His monument is at the eastern end of the Church; it has been gilt, and seems to have been a piece of good workmanship.

At the north-east corner of the Church is the effigy of the Bishop, (the only one of a bishop in Warwickshire,) below is the following inscription:--

“Beneath lie the remains of that pious and learned prelate John Herman-als-Vesey, who was promoted by King Henry VIII., in the 11th year of his reign, to the see of Exeter – was employed by him on sundry embassies; was tutor to his then only daughter, the Lady Mary, and President of Wales.

So great was his affection for this his native place, yt he spared neither cost nor pains to improve it and make it flourish. He procured it to be incorporated by the name of a Warden and Society of the King’s Town of Sutton Coldfield, granting to them and their successors for ever the Chase, Park and Manor.

He built two isles to ye Church and an organ; erected ye Moot Hall with a prison under it, and a market place, fifty-one stone houses, two stone bridges (one at Curdworth and one at Waterorton), paved ye whole town, gave a meadow to poor widows, and for the improvement of youth founded and endowed a Free Grammar School, which was re-built 1728. He built Moor Hall, where he spent ye latter part of his life in hospitality and splendour; saw for many years ye good effects of his munificence; and died in ye 103rd year of his age, and in the year of our Lord MDLV.

This monument erected by John Wyrley, of Hampstead, in Handsworth, Staffordshire, Knt., to the memory of the good [page 15] Bishop, his great uncle, was repaired and beautified by this Corporation in the year of our Lord MDCCXLVIII.”

Calling Bishop Vesey, formerly John Harman, Bishop Herman appears strange, but the use of Herman, rather than the more usual Harman, was adopted by Thomas Cox in his Magna Britannia Antiqua et Nova (1720/31), which may have been one of Peers’ sources. Holy Trinity Parish Church is believed to have been built in the mid-thirteenth century; the Rectors’ Board displayed at the Church records Simon de Daventry as the first Rector from 1250 to 1294. Bishop Vesey did not rebuild the Church, which had been enlarged by the addition of a tower and north and south aisles in the late 15th century, but he built side chapels on either side of the chancel. Details of Bishop Vesey’s life and good works have already been mentioned in Peers’ Guide (see above). Peers’ Guide correctly states 1748 as the year that the Corporation repaired Bishop Vesey’s monument; Miss Bracken wrongly quotes the year as 1827. The date of the erection of the monument by Bishop Vesey’s several times great-nephew Sir John Wyrley was 1687.

In the Churchyard is the grave of Mary Ashford, who was murdered in the year 1817. She was a farmer’s servant who attended Birmingham Market with butter, -- she had been to Birmingham as usual on the day she met with her death, -- in the evening she attended a dance at Tyburn House, a public house standing a mile to the right of the Birmingham and Sutton turnpike road, on the road to Tamworth. She left there early in the morning in company with a young man named Abraham Thornton; they were seen together by several persons, and in the course of the next day her body was

found in a pool some distance from Sutton, dead; but it was thought impossible for Thornton to have done the murder and got to Castle Bromwich by the time he was seen talking to John Haydon, a gamekeeper; to do so he must have got over the ground at the rate of fifteen miles an hour.

MARY ANN ASHFORD'S GRAVESTONE.

"As a warning to female virtue, and a humble monument to female chastity, this stone marks the grave of Mary Ashford, who, in the 20th year of her age, having incautiously repaired to a scene of amusement without proper protection, was brutally violated and murdered on the 27th May, 1817."

"Lowly and chaste, as is the primrose pale,
Rifled of virgin sweetness by the gale;
Mary! The wretch who thee remorseless slew,
Avenging wrath which sleeps not will pursue;
For tho' the deed of blood be veiled in night,
'Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?'
Fair blighted flower, the muse that weeps thy doom,
Rears o'er thy murdered form, this warning tomb."

The stone was erected by the Rev. Luke Booker, Vicar of Dudley, who composed the inscription which appears upon it.

The stone is sadly out of repair; surely some good Suttonite can be found who will help to perpetuate the sage counsels of the Vicar of Dudley, by keeping the stone readable.

There have been few murders that have caused greater sensation through the country than that of Mary Ashford. Rush, the American Ambassador to England, in his [page 16] interesting memoirs states that he was present at the second trial of Thornton for the murder, he having been brought in not guilty on the first trial, who, taking advantage of an old act of parliament, claimed to be tried by wager or trial by battle with the next of kin of Mary Ashford, who at the time was an infant; but if such had not been the case, the country in the nineteenth century could not allow such resort to barbarous usages, so Thornton was acquitted. Though freed, the voice of the people pronounced him the guilty party. After a fruitless attempt to brave it out he emigrated to America; what became of him afterwards is not known. There was a report that he was shot in a public-house brawl, but be that as it may, Mary Ashford's was a case which brought death to her and ruin to many of the relations of Thornton; I have heard old men relate how some of the witnesses who were thought at the time to have forsworn themselves to help the prisoner to get acquit, went down from bad to worse till they died in abject poverty amid the scorn of their fellow men.

The opinion is pretty general now (1869) that Mary Ashford was not murdered, but that after being brutally ill-used by Thornton, which he acknowledged having done, she in a moment of desperation threw herself into the pool. The exact truth will never, however, be cleared up till that day when "all things will be known."

Tyburn House was the common name for the Three Tuns Inn, built in about 1760 on the corner of Chester Road and Kingsbury Road (the road to Tamworth) close to the Birmingham and Fazeley Canal. It was demolished in 1930 and the present Tyburn House was built on the site. Mary Ashford's body was found in a disused marlpit off Penns Lane; the cause of death was drowning.

The verse on Mary Ashford's gravestone starts with the word 'Lovely', not 'Lowly' as Peers' Guide has it. The gravestone can still be seen in Holy Trinity's churchyard, but the inscription is now all but indecipherable. The inscription referring to Mary Ashford's brutal murder was written before Abraham Thornton was acquitted of the charge. No other account of the case credits Mary Ashford with a middle name; her mother and older sister were called Ann.

Richard Rush (1780-1859) who held various posts in the US Government, including Acting Secretary of State, Attorney General and Secretary of the Treasury, was the US Minister to the UK from 1818 to 1825.

Mary Ashford's brother William appealed against Thornton's acquittal and Thornton challenged him to trial by battle. Mary was aged twenty and William was older, not an infant even in the legal sense of under age. Although not as robust as Thornton, William was quite willing to take up Thornton's challenge, but he was persuaded to withdraw his appeal after the judges ruled that trial by battle was still a valid legal process. It was abolished the following year.

In the last paragraph Peers' Guide appears to accept that Mary Ashford was not murdered, which is at odds with the opening sentence of this section. Thornton did not acknowledge that he had brutally ill-used Mary, but claimed that they had sex by consent. The general opinion today is that the cause of Mary's death was accidental drowning.

The final quote is adapted from words of Jesus as recorded in St. Luke's Gospel chapter 12 verse 2 and St. Mark's Gospel chapter 4 verse 22.

The view from the Churchyard in the spring or summer time over the Park is one of beauty. To the west is one forest of trees spreading out into the distance, while in autumn the different colours of the leaves blending together make it one of the most beautiful sights the eye can rest upon. Immediately below the Church is the

NEW MOOTHALL.

Outside it is a pretty building, while inside the cleanliness in which it is kept, the lightness of the style, the encaustic flooring, and the correct adaptation to the requirements for which it is needed, must strike every one who inspects it, and all are welcome to do so, and meet with civility. One of the rooms is fitted up as a Reading Room and Library, where all who wish may, for ten shillings a year, enjoy all its privileges.

[page 17]

But not unmindful of strangers, any are admitted to the Reading Room for One Penny, thus placing it in every one's power to pass a pleasant hour away. At the time we were there the tables were covered with newspapers of several sorts.

The original Town Hall or Moot Hall was built by Bishop Vesey at the junction of Mill Street and Coleshill Street. This building collapsed in 1671 and a new Town Hall was built on the same site. This building in turn was found to be unsafe and was demolished in 1854. A third Town Hall, built in Mill Street next to the old workhouse, was opened in September 1859 (now the Masonic Hall Building). 'Encaustic', meaning literally burning-in, originally described an ancient method of painting in which wax and pigment were fused onto a surface with heat, but in the Victorian era the word was used to describe two-colour ceramic tiling, and is now the common name for inlaid tile-work.

Nearly opposite the Moothall is the road leading down to the Park, from which you can get a good view of the

RAILWAY STATION.

It is a neat commodious building, and the servants seem models of civility. Passing on the Park you pay One Penny and receive a ticket which will free you for the whole day.

In that interesting book, "A Tour in Ireland, by an Oxonian," upon coming to a spot more beautiful than any he had seen, after expatiating upon its beauties, he says: "But were there such a scene of tranquil loveliness four miles from any of our great manufacturing towns, it will be a refreshment and a blessing evermore to thousands of our weary artisans, just as 'The Pool' by Sutton Coldfield (one of the prettiest in England) is the holiday resort and resting place of the working men of Birmingham."

The road leading down to the Park is Park Road (known as Park Lane in 1869) which ran straight from the bottom of Mill Street to the Town Gate, until it was bisected by Brassington Avenue. A Little Tour in Ireland by Samuel Reynolds Hole, an Oxonian was published in 1859 with illustrations by John Leech, also the illustrator of Dickens' A Christmas Carol. Hole (1819-1904) was an Anglican priest who was appointed as the Dean of Rochester in 1887. He does not say which of the seven pools in Sutton Park he considered to be one of the prettiest in England, but it is often said that Bracebridge Pool is the most beautiful in the Park.

Turning to the right you pass a white house, which was for perhaps a couple of centuries the site of a spade manufactory. It was then situated at the edge of a large pool, and the banks are now to be seen which confined the water. A family named Brown resided there for nearly two hundred years. It is now owned by Mr. Wiggan.

The white house referred to is now the Toby Carvery Sutton Park Restaurant. There were two pools within the grounds of Park House which powered a mill known as the Blade Mill, built by Simon Perrott in 1594. The mill was destroyed in the freak storm of 24th July 1668, but rebuilt by Thomas Addys after he acquired the site in 1678. The mill was used for a variety of purposes, including boring musket barrels and making knives, bayonets and spades, for the next 160 years. George Brown and his parents were the owners of the mill and Park House for fifty years from 1790, during which period the mill was known as Brown's Mill. The mill had closed down by 1850 when the site was acquired by John Wiggan, who converted the house into a gentleman's residence with ornamental gardens and walks by the stream.

In course of time the land here got into the family of the Hartopp's, one of which exchanged [it] with the town of Sutton for other lands more convenient to his estate: he it was who made the present road leading from Sutton town into the Park.

Sir Edmund Cradock Hartopp (1749-1833) of Four Oaks Hall purchased some land near the town centre on the east and south sides of the Park from Wriothesly Digby and he then offered this land to the Corporation in exchange for 63 acres out of the Park adjacent to his Four Oaks Park, including the wood known as Ladywood. Henry Ryder, Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry, was appointed to oversee the negotiations, each side engaging their own valuer to make submissions. It was decided that because of the additional value of Ladywood, Sir Edmund should give 93 acres of land in exchange for the 63 acres he had his eye on. He also agreed to construct Park Road leading to a new entrance to the Park at the Town Gate. The land given to the Corporation included the Meadow Platt and land near Powell's Pool. Only 52 of the 93 acres were added to the Park; the remaining 41 acres were retained by the Corporation to let out and were subsequently developed as Richmond Road and Tudor Hill.

SUTTON PARK RACECOURSE

Is situate on that portion of the park known as Westwood Coppice, near the far-famed Rowton Well, a portion of it crossing that ancient landmark the Roman Road; the entrance from the Railway Station at Sutton Coldfield (the nearest Station to the course,) being by the gate near James' Flour Mill. The distance from the Station is about a mile-and-a-half, but as the road is right through the park, a delightful **page 18]** walk is afforded to the pleasure-seeking community in the district. By road the distance from Birmingham is six miles, and is a pleasant and agreeable drive. The distance from Walsall is about the same, and is within easy driving distance from Wolverhampton and a number of towns in the Black Country. The entrance gate for visitors from the above named towns is near the celebrated tavern known by the sign of the "Parson and Clerk," now called "The Royal Oak." The Course has been formed at a very great expense; in form it is an elongated oval of about one mile and a quarter in extent. A capital run in of seven furlongs, nearly straight, is obtained by adding a "tongue."

The whole Course thus presents the appearance of a figure 6; from the top of the same the distance is one mile and three-quarters. The Stand, though a temporary erection, is substantially built, under the superintendence of the Corporation Surveyor of Sutton Coldfield, and will hold about 800 persons. Summer Meeting, the 8th and 9th of July, under the stewardship of the Earl of Coventry and Captain Douglas Lane.

Westwood Coppice is on the western boundary of the Park parallel to Chester Road. Rowton's Well was a natural spring which gained a reputation for the curative properties of its waters which were impregnated with iron; 'taking the waters' at the well was fashionable in the mid-nineteenth century, particularly amongst the ladies (see below for a further account of Rowton's Well).

The Roman Road (Icknield Street) runs northwards from Westwood Coppice parallel to Thornhill Road. Sutton Coldfield Station, which had been opened in 1862, was a short distance from the Town Gate, which was about a mile and a quarter from the racecourse on the other side of the Park. There was also a railway station at Wylde Green, which was slightly further away from the racecourse. The Sutton Town Station in Midland Drive, the Sutton Park Station in Midland Road and stations at Four Oaks and Streetly had yet to be built. James' Flour Mill has not been identified; presumably it was somewhere near the Town Gate.

See under 'Parson and Clerk' for details of that inn.

George William Coventry 9th Earl of Coventry (1838-1930) was a Conservative politician with a passion for horseracing. Two of his horses won the Grand National in 1863 and 1864. Little is known about Captain Douglas Lane, but two 1861 photographs of him by the French society photographer based in London Camille-Léon-Louis Silvy (1834-1910) are housed in the National Portrait Gallery. They show a jovial-looking middle-aged man, with a moustache and full head of hair, wearing a rather dandyish pair of check trousers and holding a cigar in his left hand, casually leaning against a small cabinet on top of which is displayed a large silver cup.

The Westwood Coppice racecourse was opened in July 1868 and although crowds of up to 2,000 people, particularly from the Black Country, attended on race days, the course lasted for only twelve years, the last race being in August 1871. A good number of middle-class Suttonians did not approve of horseracing, and especially the betting which was associated with it.

BLACKROOT, OR PERKINS'S POOL

Is a large sheet of water very clear, of 15 acres and 30 perches, made in 1757, by Edward Homer and Joseph Duncomb. Blackroot Pool, is its right or original name. It is now in the occupation of Mr. J.C. Phillips, of the Wheat Sheaf Hotel, New Street, Birmingham. A large number of boats are kept on this pool.

The 1757 lease of fifteen acres of land in the Park was to Nicholas Dolphin, Warden of Sutton Coldfield in 1756 and 1757, and Edward Homer, who was the Corporation's Deputy Steward from 1751 to 1763. They constructed a dam to form Blackroot Pool (so called because there was a dark tree stump in the middle of the pool), and made an income from hiring out the pool for pleasure parties in the summer, wildfowl shooting in the winter and fishing all the year round. Two years later Joseph Duncumb of Moat House, who was Warden of Sutton Coldfield in 1760 and 1761, became Dolphin's and Homer's partner, and he obtained permission from the Corporation to build a leather-mill at Blackroot powered by a waterwheel. Dolphin and Homer died and the pool became known as Duncumb's Pool. Duncumb died in 1793 and the lease of Blackroot Pool, the mill and Moat House passed to his daughter's husband Shirley Farmer Steele Perkins, Warden of Sutton Coldfield in 1804. The leather-mill closed down and Blackroot Pool, which was mainly used by boating parties from Moat House, became known as Perkins' Pool. Perkins died in 1852 and his son surrendered the lease of the pool to the Warden and Society, who let it to C.J. Phillips who set up a business to provide boating, fishing and refreshments to the general public.

BRACEBRIDGE POOL,

Made in the reign of Henry V., by Sir Ralph Bracebridge; is now owned by Sir W.E.C. Hartopp, Bart. It is thirty-five acres in extent. Beyond that is the park wall of Sir F. Hartopp, Bart., with two deer carved in stone, surmounting the pillars of the gateway. Turning to the left you may enjoy some of the most enchanting walks to be obtained anywhere. Up through arched ways where the grass is soft under foot, and the boughs arch overhead, and where the cuckoo is shouting out from the trees above –

[page 19]

“O blythe new comer I have heard,
I hear thee and rejoice;
O cuckoo – shall I call thee bird,
Or but a wandering voice?”

And when you get out to the open ground what a view meets the eye! Far away you see the clouds of smoke over Birmingham; close to you, you see the

For Sir Ralph Bracebridge see above. Henry ffolliott 3rd Baron ffolliott (1663-1716) of Four Oaks Hall acquired a lease of Bracebridge Pool in about 1709, for fishing and duck-shooting. The lease was assigned to various owners of Four Oaks Hall until it came to the Hartopp family in 1792. The owner in 1869 was Sir John William Cradock Hartopp 4th Baronet (1829-88); Sir William Edmund Cradock Hartopp 3rd Baronet had died in 1864 – the mistake in Peers’ Guide arose from copying a sentence from Agnes Bracken’s history of 1860. The mention of Sir F. Hartopp is also a mistake, as there was no such person until Sir Frederick Cradock Hartopp 7th Baronet inherited the baronetcy in 1930. It was the 3rd Baronet who built, at considerable expence, a high wall in Staffordshire brick along the boundary between Four Oaks Park and Sutton Park from Four Oaks Gate to Hartopp Gate. The wall still stands; the gateway with its handsome pillars topped by heraldic beasts is now blocked up and hidden by undergrowth. The 4th Baronet surrendered the lease of Bracebridge Pool to the Corporation in 1869.

The quoted verse is taken from the opening lines of Wordsworth’s poem To the Cuckoo.

NEW OSCOTT COLLEGE.

It is built on Gibbet Hill, where a man was hung in 1729 for murdering and robbing a London Mercer, who was travelling on business along what was then the great Chester Road; it was all common then, and I have heard an old person say, when he first came to Birmingham, about 1760, there was open common up to the back of Aston Church.

The Catholic College I believe is not a place which the stranger can see at any time. If one or more days in the week could be set apart for persons to pass through and see the books and pictures it would be a great source of enjoyment to the visitors. Passing on you come to

The murder of Thomas Eastham by Edward Powers has been mentioned above. The Church of St. Peter and St. Paul, the Parish Church of Aston, is in Witton Lane opposite Aston Hall Park. St. Mary’s College in Chester Road New Oscott was built in 1835. Two years later a large collection of oil paintings was presented to the College by John Talbot 16th Earl of Shrewsbury. The College library contained about 30,000 volumes, according to Eliezer Edwards’ Sutton Coldfield A History and a Guide (1880). Today the College is opened to the public on selective days for a small charge.

ROWTON WELL.

This has been without doubt one of the holy wells of the Catholic times, and even down to our own time whispers have come of miraculous powers of the waters in many diseases. At the present time it is noted for its coldness and bracing tendency, and good qualities in eye diseases.

See under 'Sutton Park Racecourse' for a previous mention of Rowton's Well.

Keeping on you come to the Royal Oak Hotel, a public house upon the Chester Road, better known years ago as the

PARSON AND CLERK.

There used to be on the top of the house two figures, one of a Parson leaning his head in prayer, while the Clerk was behind him with uplifted axe going to chop off his head.

These two figures were placed there by John Gough, Esq., of Perry Hall. It seems there was a law-suit between him and the Rev. T. Lane; each annoyed the other, Mr. Lane, kept Gough out of the houses; while Mr. Gough sent his servants every day to church to form a congregation, and so compel the Clergyman to officiate – but at last Mr. Gough was the victor, and to perpetuate his victory he placed the [page 20] figures on the house, and had painted on the end of the house:--

“These Buildings were licensed houses and were unlawfully withheld and undermined by the Rev. T. Lane and Solomon Smith, his Clerk, in the year 1788, afterwards re-built by the lawful owner, J. Gough, Esq., Perry Hall.”

It appears from this rather garbled tale that John Gough was the owner of the Royal Oak Hotel, but was dispossessed by Rev T. Lane, the Rector of Handsworth, who allowed the property to fall into disrepair, but Gough was reinstated as the owner following litigation. The name of the inn seems to have alternated between the Royal Oak and the Parson and Clerk. The original name of the Royal Oak was changed to the Parson and Clerk after Gough's victory in 1788, but Peers' Guide refers to it (in 1869) as the Royal Oak known years ago as the Parson and Clerk, and then some time after 1869 the name was changed to the Parson and Clerk for a second time, under which name it is still known.

The Royal Oak was a very popular name for public houses after the restoration of King Charles II in 1660. It refers to the oak tree in Boscobel Wood near Shifnal in Shropshire in which the king hid to escape capture by Roundhead soldiers following his defeat at the Battle of Worcester in 1651. Another Royal Oak Hotel was built at the top of Mill Street in 1890, and demolished in 1937 to make way for the Vesey Gardens in front of the Parish Church. The entrance to the Park close to the Parson and Clerk is still known as the Royal Oak Gate, although on a map of 1779 it is named as the Brandy Gate, because the Staffordshire Hunt led by Lord Donegall would assemble in the yard at the Royal Oak and take a stiff glass of brandy before setting off along Lord Donegal's Ride for a day's hunting. The Parson and Clerk has undergone many changes over the years, but still stands, much extended, on the same site.

A short distance from the Royal Oak, over the stile just inside the Park is the

ROMAN ROAD,

The Icknield Street, which, commencing at Southampton, passes through the kingdom to Tynemouth.

I shall never forget the glorious summer night I first saw the road; it was a time never to be forgotten. But do not mistake, my gentle reader, and go expecting what is impossible from the old road. I well remember when in the fulness of my feelings I took three persons to see it, when they got there and saw me groping among the ling they stares and straightway abused me for taking them so far to see so little – they had expected to have seen at least a road with houses on – perhaps windows with hot cakes, but most certainly “beer and tobacco.”

Don't be deceived – stooping down in the heather you will see a straight line extending off towards Birmingham, and the other way through Little Aston Park. Although more than a thousand years have passed since the Roman Army trod along it with their “Impedimenta,” there is the old line still, and

should a necessity arise, very soon from one end of the country to the other, such is the durability of the materials used, the road could be made of service.

More modern research has cast doubts on whether Icknield Street began in Southampton and ended at Tynemouth; its course can only be definitely traced over 125 miles from Bourton-on-the-Water in Gloucestershire to Templeborough in South Yorkshire. In 1869 the present-day Roman Road in Little Aston was within the park attached to Little Aston Hall. 'Impedimenta' is the Latin for equipment for a military expedition which is considered to be an encumbrance. The line of the Roman Road can still be made out in the Park, evidence of the agger (raised ridge or embankment) which served as the carriageway, and the fossa (ditch) on either side which provided soil for building the agger and acted as a drainage system, being discernible in places.

THE OLD STEEPLECHASE COURSE.

The Old Steeplechase Course is situated by the side of the Lichfield Road, just through the Town of Sutton, and past the Toll Gate. It comprises a number of fields of turf and arable land of splendid hunting country, between the Tamworth Lane on the South, the Lichfield Turnpike Road on the West, the Little Sutton Lane on the North, and the beautiful park belonging to Moot Hall on the East. Through the park, by the kind permission of Mr. Lloyd, the horses are allowed to run. The Course, from the undulating [page 21] character of the ground and the splendid scenery round, forms one of the finest Steeplechase Courses in the Country, and from its proximity to the Railway Station – being but ten minutes' walk – helps to swell the attractions of this very popular meeting, and a company of 25,000 to 80,000 people is no unusual occurrence, when the elements are favourable to the Racing Committee, whose attractive programme always justifies the expectations of the most ardent admirer of this division of our national sports. The Meeting is usually held about the middle of February, is two days, and generally comprises nine or ten important races.

The turnpike toll gate was at the junction of Lichfield Road and Tamworth Road, then called Tamworth Lane. 'Moot Hall' is an error for Moor Hall; a large part of the steeplechase course was over what is now Moor Hall Golf Course. The first steeplechase meeting was held on 12th February 1866, organised by John Sheldon, a wine merchant living at Yew Tree Cottage in Chester Road, who went on to run the horseracing at Four Oaks Park. The steeplechases continued until 1873 when some of the land was taken for development. The description of the steeplechase course as old implies that the 1866 meeting was a revival of an event which had taken place some years previously. The races included the Erdington Plate, the Hunt Cup, the Hunters Stakes, the Warwickshire Hunt Steeplechase and the Sutton Handicap Plate. In 1867 40,000 tickets for admission were issued, but the elements were distinctly unfavourable as the grandstand collapsed in a violent storm, although there was no serious injury.

Moor Hall was inherited by George Algernon Beynon Disney Hacket in 1864; he lived on the Isle of Wight and he let Moor Hall to Sampson Samuel Lloyd (1820-99), a wealthy iron-founder and mine-owner from Wednesbury, later a director and chairman of Lloyds Bank Limited.

GREAT FIRE IN SUTTON PARK.

August 4th, 1868, the townspeople of Birmingham were alarmed by an express from Sutton stating that, by some means at present unexplained, a fire had broken out in Sutton Park. The flames commenced a little distance to the right of the Beggar's Bush, close to the park of the Hon. Parker Jervis. They spread quickly, and soon consumed six or seven acres of gorse and brushwood and the palings which divided the Park from the road. A crowd assembled, and the fire was partially stamped out, but about nine o'clock a breeze sprang up from the direction of the town, and the flames again burst forth with fury. About three-quarters of a mile of gorse was blazing, emitting huge volumes of

smoke. A number of trees, including several magnificent old oaks, were ignited, and the lurid glare of the burning gorse and wood seen for miles off. Close to the scene of the conflagration the fire presented a splendid spectacle, and hundreds of persons visited the place during the afternoon and night. The Sutton Coldfield engine was on the spot, but was of little use in extinguishing the flames; fears were entertained that they would reach the woods in the vicinity. Whether the fire was caused by a careless throwing away of a lighted Vesuvian, as some people maintain, or not we cannot say, but there is no doubt that it is a very common and dangerous practice in the Park.

The scene on the outskirts of the Park was something akin to a racecourse. The news that the trees and bushes of this favourite place for pic-nics and short outings were in a blaze, attracted visitors in thousands.

[page 22]

Various opinions are given of the extent of ground which has suffered from the flames –estimates range from 300 up to 1,000 acres; but the nearest calculation is perhaps the medium of the extremes. In consequence of the dense smoke which clouds the Park, a personal view of the scene cannot determine the area of destruction, but there is no doubt that from 700 to 800 acres of gorse, heather, and under wood were burnt. Water was obtained from the premises of Mr. Crundall, and by the engines playing around the roots of the large trees, the fire was confined to the underwood. Trenches made by ploughing and digging very much prevented the extension of the fire in the gorse and heather; the new racecourse suffered considerably.

After a thorough investigation by the authorities, it was their opinion that some incendiary had set the turf on fire, either purposely or by culpable negligence, and therefore they issued the following notices:

“FIRE IN SUTTON PARK. – In consequence of the excessive drought and the disastrous fire which has recently occurred in Sutton Park, notice is hereby given, that until further orders, no person will be allowed, under any circumstances, within the bounds of the Park. Anyone trespassing will be Prosecuted, by order of the Warden and Society, Holbeche and Addenbrooke, Deputy Stewards.”

“FIRES IN SUTTON PARK. -- £100 REWARD. – Whereas, within the last few days, several large fires have occurred in Sutton Park, which there is reason to believe were the acts of incendiaries, damage to a considerable extent has been done: this is to give notice, that a Reward of £100 will be paid by the Warden and Society of Sutton Coldfield, to the persons upon whose information the parties guilty of such acts of incendiarism shall be apprehended and convicted, by order, Henry Addenbrooke, Deputy Steward. – Sutton Coldfield, August 7, 1868.”

The weather had been unusually warm and dry which caused the fire to burn with great fierceness. Notwithstanding the above reward the guilty party has not been discovered.

The opening paragraph of this account of the Great Fire is taken verbatim from a report of the fire appearing in a local Birmingham newspaper on 4th August, the day after the fire started.

‘Express’ was short for express messenger, that is a messenger sent with a single express purpose. Mention of the Beggar’s Bush is misleading; it cannot refer to the inn of that name at the junction of Chester Road and Jockey Road, which is about three miles away from the fire. The Hon. Edward Swynfen Parker Jervis (1815-96) had owned Little Aston Hall since 1844 and the large park attached to the hall stretched to Rosemary Hill Road, Thornhill Road and Foley Road East so that the north-west corner of Sutton Park, where the fire occurred, by the junction of Streetly Lane and Thornhill Road, adjoined the Little Aston Park. Unless the mention of Beggar’s Bush is a mistake, there must have been another Beggar’s Bush just within the boundary of Little Aston Park, although it is not noted on contemporary maps.

Sutton Coldfield had no official fire brigade until 1887, but before that the Corporation owned one horse-drawn fire engine with a small water tank, but no horse (which had to be quickly hired when a fire occurred). A vesuvian was a slow-burning match for lighting cigars and pipes, especially out-of-doors; the word derives from Mount Vesuvius, the volcano near Naples which erupted in 79AD engulfing Pompeii and Herculaneum. It is not known who Mr Crundall was, or where his premises

which could supply water were situated; possibly he was one of the Hon. Parker Jervis's tenant farmers. The mention of engines in the plural means that at least one must have come from another parish. The reward of £100 was a large one, perhaps £10,000 in present-day money; at this time the annual salary of the Modern Languages master at Bishop Vesey's Grammar School was £80.

The Park was closed to the public for eight days and reopened after the smouldering fire was extinguished by a heavy fall of rain.

And now turn again towards Sutton, the hill on your right, outside the Park is,
[page 23]

KING'S STANDING HILL,

Where in 1642 the unfortunate King Charles the First addressed his army, just arrived from Shropshire, on their way to Edge Hill. But King and men have passed away, and history only tells us of the circumstance.

What Peers' Guide calls King's Standing Hill is a small mound on the west side of Kingstanding Road just before it becomes Sutton Oak Road at the junction with George Frederick Road. There is not much to see nowadays, but there is a commemorative plaque on the site. The Battle of Edgehill, near Kineton in south Warwickshire was fought on 23rd October 1642. It was the first major battle of the English Civil Wars, although there had been a skirmish at Curdworth Bridge (Bishop Vesey's bridge) two months earlier, and a recent archaeological find suggests another earlier skirmish at Coleshill Manor.

The hill you see in the distance is Barr Beacon, one of the places where in troublesome times fires were lighted to act as "Beacons," so that in case of invasion or other evils signals could be conveyed from one end of the country to the other.

Macaulay, in speaking of these beacons, says:

"And on and on without a pause they bounded still,
All night from tower to tower they sprang, all night from hill to hill,
Till the proud peak unfurled the flag o'er Derwent's rocky dales,
Till like volcanoes flamed to heaven the stormy hills of Wales,
Till twelve fair counties saw the blaze on Malvern's lonely height,
Till streamed in crimson on the wind the Wrekin's crest of light,
Till broad and fierce the star came forth on Ely's stately fane,
And town and hamlet rose in arms o'er all the boundless plain,
Till Belvoir's lordly towers the sign to Lincoln sent,
And Lincoln sped the message on o'er the wide vale of Trent,
Till Skidaw saw the fire that burnt on Gaunt's embattled pile,
And the red glare on Skidaw roused the burghers of Carlisle.["]

The last time the beacons were used was when England expected Buonaparte to invade her shores. Men were kept ready to flash signals from sea to sea. On the night of the 31st January, 1804, one of the men left to guard the beacon on the Sussex coast, carelessly let his rockets get too near the fire, in a moment they were all in a blaze, and flashing signals, which were repeated through England and Scotland, and before the mistake was found out thousands of volunteers had marched into the principal towns.

Barr Beacon is just under two miles north-west of King's Standing Hill, on the east side of Beacon Road, north of Bridle Lane. The verse by Thomas Babington Macaulay 1st Baron Macaulay (1800-59) is the closing section of his poem The Armada. There are several mistakes in the first three lines, which should read:

*"And on and on without a pause, untired they bounded still,
All night from tower to tower they sprang, they sprang from hill to hill,
Till the proud peak unfurled the flag o'er Darwin's rocky dales,"*

and in line 9 the original poem refers to "Belvoir's lordly terraces".

In The Years of Victory 1802-1812 Sir Arthur Bryant said of the false alarm: "A chance spark from a limekiln and not Boney's coming had set the northern beacons blazing."

Just underneath the hill is Barr Hall, the seat of the Scott family. Here the noted Lunar Society was held, of which Watt, Boulton, Priestley, and other noted men of the time were members.

Mr. Galton, the originator of the club, resided at Barr Hall.

It was there when on club day the butler seeing some of the guests coming up the Park before the preparations for their reception were made, rushed into Mr. Galton's room exclaiming, "Whatever shall we do, sir, some of the Lunatics are coming and we are not ready for them?"

Barr Hall means Great Barr Hall, a mile and a quarter south-west of Barr Beacon. It was built by Sir Joseph Scott 1st Baronet Scott of Great Barr (1752-1828), but he got into financial difficulties and let the hall to Samuel John Galton (1753-1832), a Birmingham arms manufacturer, in 1788.

The Lunar Society was a dinner club and learned society of prominent industrialists, natural philosophers (scientists) and intellectuals who had monthly meetings at various venues, including Erasmus Darwin's house in Lichfield, Matthew Boulton's residence Soho House in Handsworth and Great Barr Hall. The Society was founded in 1765 by Erasmus Darwin (1731-1802) a physician, inventor and writer (not by Samuel Galton) and folded in 1813. James Watt (1736-1819) was a Scottish mechanical engineer and inventor, Matthew Boulton (1728-1809) a Birmingham manufacturer and partner of Watt, and Joseph Priestley (1733-1804) a chemist, natural philosopher and theologian. The Lunar Society took its name from holding its meetings on evenings when there was a full moon so as to provide more light for the journey home. The members referred to themselves as 'lunaticks' (a word derived from the old belief that a full moon could bring on temporary insanity.)

[page 24]

Not far from Barr is the farm house at which resided Booth the money maker. He had long carried on the trade of making counterfeit coin; all endeavours to trap him had proved fruitless. One morning a lad was going from Birmingham with an ass to fetch milk, there had been a great fall of rain for the past few days, and the lad noticed some of the banks washed away as he went along; in one place he saw several pieces of money, and on making a search he found two old milk cans full of coin buried in the bank.

Giving up all thoughts of his milk he loaded his ass with as much money as he could carry, and returned home, no doubt thinking by the way that he should have no more early journeys in the cold and wet now his fortune was made; unfortunately for him the money was all base, and the notice of the police authorities being called to the matter, a plan was adopted to catch Booth.

The Scotch Greys were then quartered in Birmingham barracks, and on a given day they were ordered out as if for an airing, the men not knowing where they were going or what was the object of their journey.

They were taken over Perry Bridge and on towards Barr, and when they came in sight of Booth's lonely house, the word was given, and in a few minutes the soldiers surrounded the house.

When the Peace Officers had succeeded in forcing an entrance into the lower part, they found that the only way to ascend from one room to another was by means of a ladder through trap doors, and Booth had pulled the ladder up after him.

He was summoned to surrender, but refused, and through one of the windows he was seen to be burning heaps of spurious bank notes.

All at once the crowd outside set up a shout, Booth looked out to see the cause, when a man held a note which the smoke had whirled up the chimney.

He made no resistance after he saw the proof of his guilt, and allowed them to take him prisoner to Birmingham.

He was tried at Warwick and sentenced to be hanged. At his execution the rope broke. He came to himself while they were fetching a new rope:- looking round, he said, "It is hard to die twice." The next rope was more trustworthy and finished his existence.

[page 25]

The country people thought his double hanging a just retribution, as years before he was judged guilty by the common voice of having killed his brother with a spade, in a quarrel, then placing him at the heels of a vicious horse, he provoked the horse to kick, to avert suspicion from himself.

In recounting the exploits of William Booth, a notorious figure in the annals of Birmingham crime, Peers' Guide is straying somewhat from its proper subject. By one account Booth was a respectable Warwickshire farmer (even though had he been fortunate to be acquitted on a charge of fratricide) until he decided to better himself by embarking on a life of crime. In 1799 he bought an isolated farmhouse in Perry Barr, about a mile south of Great Barr Hall, which he set up with equipment to print Bank of England notes and to forge coins, both modern tender and rare old coins, and turned the building into a fortress with trap-doors and concealed rooms. In 1812 one of his servants was arrested in Walsall after passing off a forged £2 note, and suspicion fell on Booth. It required ten special constables and seven mounted dragoons to force a way into Booth's farm and he surrendered while trying to wipe printers ink off his fingers. His trial was at Stafford Assizes (not Warwick, as Perry Barr was in Staffordshire at that time). One account of his execution, after describing the failure of the first attempt to hang Booth, adds that "on the second try the drop refused to budge when poor Booth gave the signal for it to be let loose, and it took two strong men several minutes of hard tugging to finally deliver the felon to his maker." (www.mises.org/library/ramble-round-old-birmingham and www.thefreelibrary.com/thebirminghamcoiners)

The Royal Scots Greys is a cavalry regiment of the British Army, formed in 1681 and since 1771 part of the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards. The Birmingham barracks were the Duddeston Barracks in Great Brook Street Duddeston, built for use by the cavalry in 1793 and demolished in 1932. Perry Bridge across the River Tame was near the present-day Aldridge Road just south of Perry Park. There was another Booths Farm below Powell's Pool in Sutton, which was demolished when Carnwath Road was laid out, but the Booth's Farm in Perry Barr was near the present-day Booth's Farm Road and Booth's Lane.

Should you feel inclined to go along the road outside the palings you will find a pleasant walk. It is the old Chester road, where a century ago all the traffic between London, Chester and Ireland, passed along – and where Turpin has had many a moonlight ride. At a farm house further along the road towards Stonnall was born Tom King, the accomplice of Turpin.

The road was very lonely a century ago, leading over wild commons, and it seems to have been a favourite resort for highwaymen.

It is not clear which palings Peers' Guide is referring to, possibly the boundary fence of Great Barr Hall. Chester Road is two miles to the east of Great Barr Hall, but in 1869 there were no houses on the land in between apart from a few farmhouses.

There is no evidence connecting Dick Turpin (1705-39) with Chester Road in Sutton Coldfield; he mainly operated as a highwayman, with his partner-in-crime Matthew King (c. 1712-37), known as Tom, in the Essex and London areas and they had a hideout in Epping Forest. A Tom King who was born in a farmhouse near Stonnall (by some accounts at the Welsh Harp now called Wordsley House just off the Chester Road) is said to have been a highwayman on the London Road between Sutton and Lichfield and to have been caught and hanged on the gibbet at what is now New Oscott. His hideout was at Muffin's Den or Ruffian's Den in Weeford Road Roughley, a district which Sir William Dugdale writing in 1656 called the haunt of thieves. This Tom King cannot have been Turpin's associate as he

was killed at Whitechapel whilst attempting to escape arrest; tradition has it that he was accidentally shot by Turpin, but this may well be a myth, like many of the stories about the 'gentlemen of the road'.

We read that in 1750, as reported in the *Birmingham Gazette* of that time :--

"Birmingham, Oct. 1. – On Wednesday, Mr. Henry Hunt, of this town, was stopped on Sutton Coldfield, in the Chester Road, by two highwaymen, who robbed him of his watch and money; but on Mr. Hunt asking him to give him back some silver, the highwayman returned him six shillings, and immediately rode across the Coldfield, and robbed another gentleman in sight of him, and then rode quite off."

And again in 1751:--

"Birmingham, May 6. – On Tuesday last the Shrewsbury Caravan was stopped between the Four Crosses and the Welsh Harp* by a single highwayman, who behaved very civilly to the passengers, told them that he was a tradesman in distress, and hoped they would contribute to his assistance, on which each passenger gave him something, to the amount in the whole, of about Four Pounds, with which he was mighty well satisfied; but returned some half-pence to one of them, saying he never took copper. He then told them there were two other collectors on the road, but he would see them out of danger, which he accordingly did, and begged that they would not at their next Inn mention the robbery nor appear against him if he should be taken up hereafter."

This must have been a very gentlemanly "Collector," one of the Claude Duval school.

* The "Welsh Harp" is now a respectable country inn and well conducted.

The Coldfield was the old name for Boldmere, when it was waste land before any development commenced; Henry Hunt must therefore have been robbed on that part of Chester Road between the Beggar's Bush and Birmingham Road.

The Four Crosses Inn, on Watling Street near Cannock, was built in 1636, and was so called because the heraldic arms of the Bishop of Lichfield included four crosses. It was a coaching inn on the main route from Shrewsbury to London. It closed down in 2016, but is still visited by parties of ghost hunters. The Welsh Harp Inn was on the Chester Road at Stonnall, dating from 1677. It was also a well-known coaching inn; it still stands as a private residence called Wordsley House.

Claude Duval (1643-70) was a French highwayman who operated in London and was known for his dislike of violence, courtesy to his victims and gallantry towards women. He was eventually caught and hanged at Tyburn, despite appeals for clemency.

[page 26]

THE MISSING PEDLER.

Straight on over Sutton Coldfield, beyond the "Welsh Harp," at the village of Stonnall, on the line of the old Chester Road, stands a house which years ago was the Inn where the coaches and waggons changed horses; it was the next stage beyond Castle Bromwich.

It is a large old farm house now, and the stables which used to shelter a hundred horses are now converted into barns.

There was a great amount of traffic on the Chester Road a century ago, and this old Inn could not accommodate the whole of those who travelled that way; so that a smaller house was built on the other side of the road at which the second rate travellers stopped.

On a cold blustery November afternoon a Jewess, who travelled the Midland Counties, dealing in jewellery, left the Bell and Cuckoo to cross the common, intending to stop for the night at Stonnall.

She was well known for miles, and was thought by many to carry a goodly amount of wealth about her person.

The clouds of evening were [were] coming down when she passed Druid's Heath, but she was seen there by a wayfarer walking briskly along with her box of pedlery at her back.

About an hour later she was seen to enter the small public house at Stonnall – after which she was never seen again.

As she was in the habit of moving from place to place at all hours, it was some time before she was missed; but when she did not appear among her friends in Birmingham at one of the Jewish Feasts – and she had never been absent before – enquiries were made concerning her.

The house was searched where she was seen to enter, but nothing was found, no one could be heard of who had been dealing with any of the goods.

Rewards were offered, but all in vain, no tidings could be gained of the lost Rebecca.

Years rolled on, and the poor Jewess was almost forgotten – the people who kept the Inn went to another part of the country, and fresh people came, but the business fell off, for strange noises were heard and strange sights were seen in the house.

[page 27]

Different landlords tried to draw custom, but without success; no one would stay in the house after dark, for every one believed it to be haunted.

It chanced one autumn evening that a party had met to celebrate harvest home. There were men and women dancing, singing, and joking [which] made the time pass swiftly away. There was no fear felt, for all had swallowed enough, according to Burns, to make them “fear no evil,” when, just as the fun was at the fastest, a shriek from one of the company caused all eyes to be turned in one direction.

And there standing on a settle was the poor Jewess, not dressed as in life, but wrapped round with a luminous robe. There was a melancholy look on her features as she turned her face full to the company.

The partially drunk became instantly sober, and the loud noise of revelry was hushed in awe. In a few minutes the apparition passed slowly away.

There was a rush for the door – men and women found their voices, and shouts and screams woke up all in the neighbourhood.

From that night no one would live in the house, and after standing empty for years it was pulled down.

When the settle was taken down, beneath it was found the skeleton of a woman – no doubt, that of the poor pedler – at least all the neighbourhood believed it to be so[.]

A new house is built a little further back from the road than where the public house stood; it is a charming residence surrounded with beautiful gardens.

The bones of the ill-used traveller were buried in the churchyard, and from that time the ghost of the murdered Jewess has never been known to trouble any of the dwellers in these parts.

It may not be believed by many. I do not say how much credence I myself give to the story – but this I know, that there are many living round Stonnall, who religiously believe in its truth.

The old farmer who told me the story was a solemn believer that what he told me was every word true.

Unfortunately, Peers' Guide does not mention the name of the Inn where the coaches and waggons changed horses, and does not give the year that the pedlar went missing. Another difficulty arises from Peers' Guide's prolific use of commas; does the phrase “at the village of Stonnall” in the first sentence refer to the Welsh Harp or the new Inn? And the phrase “the next stage beyond Castle Bromwich” could mean the next stage on the road from Castle Bromwich beyond the Welsh Harp, or the first stage beyond Castle Bromwich, neither of which makes much sense. However, the account clearly states that the unnamed Inn was at Stonnall. In The Stonnall Mysteries (2010) John Ward-Davies says that there were two coaching inns in Stonnall. One he describes as “the once nationally famous and now almost legendary” Welsh Harp (now a private residence called Wordsley House), without saying why it was famous or legendary, but presumably because it was wrongly thought to be the birthplace of Dick Turpin's associate Tom King. The other, the Swan Inn, Ward-Davies says, was erected in the early 18th century in competition to the Welsh Harp, but in close proximity to it; this inn was also converted into a private residence and is now known as the Manor House. It seems, therefore,

that the unnamed Inn was the Swan Inn at Stonnall, and the expression “beyond the Welsh Harp” means a few yards above the Welsh Harp on the other side of Chester Road.

The Bell and Cuckoo Inn was on the north side of Sutton Road in Erdington at the junction with Chester Road. It was an old posting-house where horses were kept both for the use of postriders (either private messengers or men employed by the General Post Office to deliver mail on horseback). It was demolished when Chester Road was widened. Druid’s Heath is a mile north-east of Aldridge, half-way between Erdington and Stonnall.

The brief quote from Robert Burns (1759-96) comes from his poem Tam o’Shanter:

*“Inspiring bold John Barleycorn! [the personification of barley, and ale and whisky made from it]
What dangers thou canst make us scorn!*

Wi’ tippny, we fear nae evil [with twopenny ale, we fear no evil]

Wi’ usquabae [whisky], we’ll face the devil!”

A settle is a type of high-backed wooden bench.

It was in this road on the 17th July, 1791, that Hutton, the historian of Birmingham wrote so pathetically:--

“By the smiles of the inhabitants of Birmingham, I [page 28] acquired a fortune – by an astounding defect in our police, I lost it. In the morning of the 15th I was a rich man; in the evening I was ruined; then at night on the 17th I might have been found leaning upon a milestone upon Sutton Coldfield, without food, without a home, without money, and what is the last resort of the wretched, without hope.

While surrounded by the gloom of night and the still greater gloom which oppressed the mind, a person seemed to hover about me who had evidently some design – whether an honest man or a knave gave me no concern, for I had nothing to lose but life, which I esteemed of little value. He approached nearer with seeming diffidence. ‘Sir, is your name Hutton?’ ‘Yes.’ ‘I have good news: the Light Horse some time ago passed through Sutton on their way to Birmingham.’

As I had been treated with nine falsehoods for one truth, I asked his authority: he replied, ‘I saw them.’

This arrival I knew would put a period to plunder. The inhabitants received them with open arms, with illuminations, and viewed them as their deliverers.”

The horses were so tired, having come from Nottingham almost without a halt, that they sunk down in the High Street. Straw was spread, and there horses and men passed the night in the open air.

At that time the house now Lloyd and Company’s Bank, was the town residence of the Taylor family. A portico came from the door over the footpath, and from that door through the night men were busy carrying out to the spent soldiers every comfort that was likely to benefit them.

William Hutton (1723-1815) was born in Derby into a Unitarian nonconformist family. At the age of seven, after two years of schooling, he entered a seven-year apprenticeship at Derby Silk Mill, after which he took a second apprenticeship with his uncle, a Nottingham stocking maker. In 1746 he taught himself bookbinding and three years later he opened a bookshop in Southwell Nottinghamshire. After a year he moved to Birmingham where he also ran a small bookshop. In 1756 he opened the first paper warehouse in Birmingham, which was immensely successful and profitable, and he was able to buy a house in the High Street, and also to build a country house in Bennett’s Hill (now Bennett’s Road) in Washwood Heath. He began taking an interest in local history and his principal work An History of Birmingham was published in 1781. In 1801, at the age of seventy-eight, he walked 600 miles from Birmingham to Hadrian’s Wall, then along the entire length of the wall and back to Birmingham, writing The History of the Roman Wall when he got home. He also wrote, amongst other divers works, several books of poetry and an autobiography, from which the extract quoted in Peers’ Guide is taken.

The events of July 1791 which Hutton refers to were the Birmingham or Priestley Riots, which started on 14th July and lasted for four days. The rioters’ main targets were religious dissenters, most notably the politically and theologically controversial Joseph Priestley, supports of the French Revolution of

1789 and members of the Lunar Society (see the account of Great Barr Hall above). The riots started with an attack on the Royal Hotel in Temple Street and then, beginning with Priestley's house Fairhill in Sparkbrook, the rioters attacked or burned down four dissenting chapels, twenty-seven houses and several businesses. The damaged houses included Moseley Hall and Bordesley Hall belonging to the banker John Taylor (son of the founder of Taylor and Lloyds Bank), John Ryland's Baskerville House, William Russell's Showell Green in Sparkhill and both Hutton's houses, and his business premises which were completely razed to the ground. Hutton and his family fled to Sutton overnight and had breakfast at the Three Tuns Hotel before finding lodgings to stay at until the danger was past. This presumably was why he was on the Chester Road when he heard the news of the arrival of the cavalry.

The 15th Light Dragoons, founded in 1759, based in Nottingham, was the first light cavalry regiment, being lightly armed and riding swift horses. Their appearance in Birmingham soon dispersed the rioters. The police were criticised for not dealing with the riots forcefully and expeditiously, but there was in fact not a lot they could do in the face of a large and out-of-control mob. Although Hutton was dejected at the time he soon recovered his spirits, and eventually obtained £5,390 compensation from the Birmingham authorities.

Taylor and Lloyds Bank was the first private bank in Birmingham, founded by John Taylor (1711-75) and Samuel Lloyd (1699-1779) and their sons in 1765. Its name was changed to Lloyds and Company in 1852.

At one time most of the business of Birmingham was carried along this turnpike road – at that time as the carriers and coaches missed Birmingham, there were men with waggons who plied between Birmingham and Castle Bromwich, where at the Bradford Arms, both waggons and coaches stopped to change horses. When you have passed Pine Wood on the road, you come to a fine hawthorn tree standing at the corner of a road turning to the left, this is the noted

BEGGAR'S BUSH,

So called, it is said from the body of a poor vagrant being found underneath it, who had perished in the cold of a winter's night.

[page 29]

The story goes, that the bush stands between, but not in either of two parishes, so that when the poor fellow was found neither parish would bury him – then as law is so cheap, at it they both went, spending ten times the amount which would have prevented the life leaving him for some time, and when it did leave him would have buried him decently. At length, so uncertain is law, that neither parish could tell which was at fault, so they kindly agreed to bury the body between them.

When the winter has passed away, and the brooks are loosed

“To come from haunts of coot and erne,

And make a sudden sally,

To sparkle out among the fern,

And bicker down the valley,”

Then the Beggar's bush is a “thing of beauty,” standing out in the road covered with its silver blossom.

The Bradford Arms, previously known as the White Lion and then the Bridgeman Arms, at Castle Bromwich, was another coaching inn on the Chester Road, dating from 1723. Its named was changed to the Bradford Arms in 1815 when Orlando Bridgeman (1762-1825) of Castle Bromwich Hall was created Earl of Bradford.

The Pine Wood has not been identified, but it may refer to part of Westwood Coppice in Sutton Park, adjacent to Chester Road, which is mostly of oak and Scots pine. The road turning to the left is the last section of the present-day College Road leading into Jockey Road. The hawthorn tree known as the Beggar's Bush marked the boundary between the parishes of Sutton Coldfield and Perry Barr. None of the accounts of the dispute between the two parishes mentions a date for the event. Some accounts

suggest that the story is a legend and that the beggar was not found dead, but merely begged for alms underneath the hawthorn tree. The original bush was destroyed in the mid-1930s when Chester Road was widened, but was soon replaced following a local outcry. The new bush was in turn bulldozed when traffic lights were installed at the junction in 1998.

The quoted verse is adapted from the opening lines of Alfred Lord Tennyson's poem The Brook:

*"I come from haunts of coot and hern [heron],
I make a sudden sally."*

The expression "a thing of beauty" comes from the opening line of John Keats' poem Endymion:

"A thing of beauty is a joy for ever."

Should you pass the bush going on to Erdington, there is the New Catholic Chapel – one of the most complete buildings for style fully carried out, we have about here. In the Chapel yard is a small hill called "Mount Calvary," where there is a recumbent figure of "the Dead Christ," being mourned over by a Sister of Mercy; while at the foot of the mount are two figures as large as life, "The Two Marys," painted to represent living persons, but to my fancy rather to [too] bright in colour. However, I don't know any place where you may see the Catholic system carried out as on the Continent, so fully as here.

The New Catholic Chapel refers to the Church of St. Thomas and St. Edmund of Canterbury, also known as the Abbey, built in Station Road Erdington in 1850 at a cost of £15,000 paid by Father Daniel Henry Haigh (1819-79), a noted art lover and scholar of Anglo-Saxon history and literature. It was designed by Charles Francis Hansom (1817-88) in the Gothic Revival style, but was subsequently considerably enlarged.

"Not far from here is one of the old posting-houses called the "Bell and Cuckoo."

How long it has been there, catering for man and beast, I know not, but it was a noted house in 1750, and the then landlord must have been no ordinary one, if the verses he sent out as an invitation were his own composition.

Here is his invitation in the pleasant month of July, 1750.

"To all Gentlemen, Tradesmen, &c. Give me leave to inform you, that the House known by the sign of the Bell, on the Chester Road, near Cuckoo's Corner, has lately been put in very neat repair, where you may depend on being accommodated in the most obliging manner by your humble Servant, William Haynes.

The under-written will give you a more distinct idea of the above-named house –

[page 30]

Here nature smiles, and here the blooming Spring,
Emits her Sweets, indulgent, unconfin'd;
Each Hill and Dale decks with her gaudy trim,
To please the Eye, or charm the human mind.

Our home-bred Flocks in Thousands here are seen,
Whose bleating Echo fills a neighbouring Grove;
And larger Cattle daily spread our Green,
Witness the numbers seen in every Drove.

In these green Lanes the Cuckoo Sings,
Here talks the mimic Jay;
Here the pale Primrose early springs;
And here the Black Bird sweetly sings to usher in the May.

'Tis here the Flying Coaches speed their way,
And Equipages grand, with pompous show,
All Colours display, so brilliant they,
When noble Lords to Senate go.

Here runs the Fox, and here the Hare is seen,
Most pleasing to the Sportsman's sight,
Hounds in full Cry pursue them o'er the Green,
Here rides a 'Squire, there a Baronet.

'Tis here the early Lark, whose Note
You here [hear] at prime of day;
'Tis here the Thrussell swells his Throat
And sings in tuneful Lay.

Here Robin whistles to his Team
As he stalks by his Plow;
And Cicely she, as blithe as he
Sings to her brindled Cow.

Here works the Ant and curious Bee
Whose instinct seems Man's reason to excell,
Governed by laws, yet always free,
Their Rights maintain, but ne'er rebel.

Which way so'er we cast our eyes,
With Nature's works they're always blest,
So great, so wonderful, so wise,
The Atheist stands a fool confest.

Here Churches and Chapels in one prospect rise,
Shewing the Zeal of Ages gone before,
Thus the fix'd Planets beautify the skies,
Proclaim a God, and bid Mankind adore.

Such are the Pleasures of this Place,
So free, so unconfin'd;
When my Friends appear around me here,
They more than charm my mind.

The Bell and Cuckoo Inn at the junction of Sutton Road and Chester Road has been mentioned in connection with the Missing Pedler above. Cuckoo's Corner was the name of the district on the opposite side of the junction, otherwise known as Yenton (which is an old pronunciation of Erdington).

At the back of the Chapel, down the lane, is the Railway Station, from where you may go to Sutton or **[page 31]** Birmingham. If you turn to the left down the lane where the Beggar's Bush stands at the corner you have a pleasant walk till you come to the

SPADE MILL POOL OR NEW FORGE POOL.

It is a large sheet of water, where, in windy weather, the waves rise like a mimic sea. Here you can have refreshment, a cup of tea, or a draught of milk; and should you be as fortunate as I once was in meeting with a companion, you can talk of men of the present or past – I found him a reader and a thinker – he refreshed his memory [memory] of the glorious summer when he had that legacy left him, and was able to wander up the Rhine; he spoke of valleys and castles he had seen there, or if minded, he could talk of the times when Cromwell and his Ironsides stormed through the land.

Where that mill stands most likely men have worked for centuries forming spades and other implements – strong and stalwart men who feared nothing in their day, but now death has swept them into the grave and other men toil on – to follow to the same place.

The Railway Station at the back of the Chapel is Erdington Station, opened in 1862, and the lane referred to is now Station Road. Spade Mill Pool and New Forge Pool were former names of Powell's Pool. If you wanted to walk from Erdington Station to Powell's Pool today you would go down Gravelly Lane and cross the Chester Road into Boldmere Road; you would not need to go back to the Beggar's Bush, but perhaps in 1869 the route along Chester Road and a right turn into Jockey Lane (as Jockey Road was then known) was a more pleasant walk.

At one time the site of Powell's Pool formed part of Stonehouse Farm and belonged to Sir Thomas Holte 1st Baronet of Aston Hall (1571-1654). The dam which created the pool was built in 1730 and a mill was erected for use by the Sutton-born inventor John Wyatt (1700-66), who was a pioneer in the development of the spinning machine and was the first to spin cotton thread by mechanical means. Powell's Pool remained in the possession of the Holte family until the death of Sir Charles Holte 6th Baronet in 1780, after which date it passed to the Somerville family. William Powell was the tenant of the mill in 1750, when it was used for rolling sheet metal; in 1824 Powell's descendant, another William Powell, held the mill and ran a thriving business manufacturing spades, forks, saws, axes and steel pens, while the pool was let out for fishing and boating. The mill was demolished in 1936 and a year later Powell's Pool was acquired by the Sutton Coldfield Borough Council and incorporated in Sutton Park, when Monmouth Drive was laid out.

The Ironsides were a troop of cavalry, formed in 1642, in Oliver Cromwell's Parliamentary Army during the English Civil Wars; the name came from one of Cromwell's nicknames 'Old Ironsides'. It seems odd that Peers' Guide, instead of saying much of interest about Powell's Pool, tells us about a man who had visited the Rhine and could talk about Oliver Cromwell.

When you have had your row on the lake – or your rest by its margin, then up again and looking at the large holly trees as you go for the wood, you will see a sight worth remembering, then, turning to the right you come to Sutton Station and Town. The Park is so large that many different walks may be found to get back to the railway.

The wood referred to is Holly Hurst, the largest wood in the Park.

But if you have enjoyed as I have, the free air – the glorious sunsets – the flight of birds – the hum of bees – the scent of flowers – and the sights where the “blue bell lies in showers,” then you have had enjoyment.

If you call at the Keeper's Cottage, above Rowton Well, you will get a draught of new milk, sweet and good, and while the wind is singing hymns among the trees above your head, you may sit and think with old Isaack Walton, “Lord, what music hast thou provided for thy saints in heaven when thou affordest bad men such music on earth [.]”

To call at Rowton Cottage you would need to turn left at Holly Hurst, rather than turning right towards the Town Gate. The Scheme of the Chancery Court which resolved the long-standing dispute between

the freeholders of Sutton and the Warden and Society in 1825 authorised the building of two small houses in Sutton Park for occupation by two Assistant Park Keepers. One of these cottages was built on Rowton Hill Bank just north of Lord Donegal's Ride (taking its name from nearby Rowton's Well); it had a quarter of an acre of garden land attached to it, where presumably the cow was kept which supplied fresh milk to passing visitors. Rowton's Cottage is shown on a map of 1887, but it was probably demolished not long after that date.

Isaak Walton (1593-1683) was a writer and philosopher whose The Compleat Angler remains a classic of English Literature. He also wrote biographies of the poets John Donne, George Herbert and others, collected in Walton's Lives.

But the shadows begin to lengthen, the birds are flying to their nests; the setting sun is flinging his beams into the [page 32] windows of the New Hotel, making it look like a palace with golden windows. The train will soon be here, and then away to the big town and bustle – smoke and noise – but often may we steal an hour to run down and get a glimpse of nature in her beauty.

The New Hotel referred to is the Royal Hotel, re-opened in January 1869 (see 'Sutton Royal Hotel' above). This paragraph should mark the ending of Peers' Guide, but there is one further section, on the Royal Promenade Gardens mentioned in the title on the front cover and the subject of an advertisement on the inside front cover.

THE ROYAL PROMENADE GARDENS.

Just opened a very important attraction to the visitors of Sutton is the establishment of the *Royal Promenade Gardens*, by Mr. Job Cole, of the Aston Lane Nurseries, Birchfields [.] The undertaking was only commenced in the early part of last year, and was much impeded by the hot and dry weather which prevailed during last summer. It has since been completed, plants and shrubs have thriven in the interval. The gardens are situated between the far-famed Park and the road leading past the Manor House to Maney, and are consequently within a very short distance of the railway station. The site, about twenty acres in extent, is admirably adapted to its present purpose, and its natural advantages as respects aspect and surface and undulations have been turned to good account by the effective manner in which it has been laid out. The arrangements comprise a *Fernery* sheltered by rhododendrons and azaleas; separate beds of rhododendrons, occupying nearly two acres; a large *Rosery*; an *Italian Garden*: lawns and ornamental plantations, together with borders innumerable for bedding plants. To these are added a *Bowling Green*, as well as spacious cricket, archery, and *Croquet* grounds, which have been carefully formed, and the turf of which is in capital order. Nor must we omit another very pleasant feature – namely, an extensive sheet of water, which has been obtained by the partial deviation of two main springs from the Park, which meet together here, and lower down join the stream known as the Ebrook, a tributary of the Tame. A spacious conservatory, for floral displays; and buildings for the enjoyment of "creature comforts" have also been erected, in short, everything appears to be (to use a well-known saying) arranged regardless of expense. We certainly with confidence recommend to all visitors a walk through these Spacious and Floral Gardens which add another attraction to Sutton and its grand old Park.

This is the end of the text of Peers' Guide, but there are still another 22 pages of advertisements:

JAMES WATTS,
MANUFACTURER AND IMPORTER OF CIGARS,
TOBACCO CUTTER,
SPINNER, AND
CAVENDISH MAKER,
STEAM MILLS,

14 and 15, Snow Hill, and 2, Congreve Street,
BIRMINGHAM.

Dealers will find this the Cheapest House for Good Articles, and the Largest Stock to select from.

Cavendish means tobacco pressed into a solid cake.

ADVERTISEMENTS.

C. & W. HARWOOD.
General Machinists,
AND SOLE MANUFACTURERS OF
MESSRS. THOMAS & Co.'s,
PATENT SEWING MACHINES,
LONDON MACHINE WORKS,
NEW TOWN ROW,
BIRMINGHAM.

This advertisement contains a sketch of the London Machine Works in New Town Row, with one tall and seven smaller chimneys belching black smoke across Birmingham. For Messrs Thomas & Co see the advertisement for Slater & Co at the beginning of Peers' Guide.

ADVERTISEMENTS.

The Midland Photographic Rooms,
54, NEW STREET,
OPPOSITE THE THEATRE ROYAL.

I beg to inform you that Mr. Mole's (105, New Street,) extensive PHOTOGRAPHIC BUSINESS is disposed of and REMOVED to this first-class Studio, formerly in the occupation of the eminent Photographers Messrs. BURTON and SONS, which is expressly opened to ensure a uniform highly-finished CARTE DE VISITE at 5s. per dozen, (equal to anything produced in the photo profession,) and also to afford increased accommodation in superior Operating, Waiting, and Dressing Rooms, &c.

Yours obediently,
J. SUNDERLAND.

ENTRANCE IN BENNETT'S HILL.

Copying, Enlarging, and Colouring of Cartes de Visite.

Manufacturers' Patterns and every description of Works of Art copied on reasonable terms.

John Burton & Sons were photographers and printers, active from 1860 to 1910, with premises in Leicester, Nottingham, Derby and Birmingham. The sons were Alfred Henry Burton (1834-1914) and Walter John Burton (1836-80). A carte de visite was a photograph mounted on a piece of card the size of a visiting card. They were very popular in the second half of the 19th century and there was a considerable craze for collecting celebrity cartes de visite in albums.

ESTATE, GENERAL AGENCY, VALUING & AUCTION OFFICES,
18, UNION PASSAGE, BIRMINGHAM,
Messrs. W. ENDALL & SON, Proprietors.
OFFICES – BIRMINGHAM AND HENLEY_IN_ARDEN.
ESTABLISHED 1840.

FARMS TO BE LET,
ALSO,
RESIDENCES AND LAND.

STOCK SALES EFFICIENTLY CONDUCTED
SALES OF HOUSEHOLD FURNITURE
FREEHOLD & LEASED PROPERTY DIS

BUSINESSES OF EVERY CLASS SOLD
AND PROCURED.
INNS AND BEER-HOUSE VALUATIONS
UNDERTAKEN.
VALUATIONS FOR ADMINISTRATION
AND OTHER PURPOSES.

POSED BY PUBLIC OR PRIVATE SALE
FARM VALUATIONS PRACTICALLY UN-
DERTAKEN.
TIMBER SOLD AND VALUED.
ESTATES VALUED.

Money Advanced on *bonâ fide* Sales.

Working Farm Bailiffs recommended
gratis.

N.B. – LIST OF FARMS AND RESIDENCES CAN AT ALL TIMES BE OBTAINED FREE

Observe the Address
OPPOSITE SUFFIELDS DINING ROOMS.

ADVERTISEMENTS.

HUDSON'S EXTRACT OF SOAP.

CAUTION! – Be careful to see that the
TRADE MARK, A WOMAN'S ARM AND DOLLY,
Is on every Packet as the above Label; -- NONE
OTHER BEING GENUINE.

Sold in Packets 1d. and ½d. each, also in 1lb. and ½lb. Packets.

NEVER WASH CLOTHES, CLEAN PAINT, OR SCOUR
FLOORS, WITHOUT USING
HUDSON'S EXTRACT OF SOAP

From Mr. J.S. GREGSON, Manchester:--

MRS. BALL, the Matron of the Baths and Washhouses, Leaf Street, Hulme, says she supplies
"HUDSON'S EXTRACT OF SOAP" to the women that go there to wash their clothes, and that it is so
much better than any other Washing Powder that has ever been used in that Establishment that the
women will have no other.

MANUFACTORY:
ROYAL CHEMICAL WORKS
WEST BROMWICH.

This advertisement shows a picture of a packet of Hudson's Concentrated Extract of Soap with the motto ONCE USED ALWAYS USED and the trade mark of a woman's arm and dolly on the top, and DIRECTIONS FOR USE on the side: Dissolve in every two buckets of hot water a packet of the Extract of Soap, and having soaped the dirty parts of the clothes, let them lie in soak till the wash. Then put into the boiler to every two buckets of water a packet of Extract of Soap. Two more sketches of the trade mark appear at the bottom of the advertisement. A dolly was a short but sturdy wooden implement for stirring clothes in a wash-tub. Robert Spear Hudson (1812-84) was a very successful businessman who popularised dry soap powder. His son Robert William Hudson sold the business to Lever Brothers in 1908 and they retained the Hudson name until 1935.

ADVERTISEMENTS.

PERFECTION OF MANUFACTURE.
THE "IMPERIAL" MACHINE
MAKES THE LOCK-STITCH BY MEANS OF A
ROTATING HOOK,
(Wheeler & Wilson principle)
SIMPLE, SILENT,

SECURE and RELIABLE!!
The only Machine in the Market which is perfectly interchangeable, and is
guaranteed better made than any Machine yet introduced.
MOUNTED IN A VARIETY OF STYLES.
PRICE FROM £7 10s. 0d.

JOSEPH HARRIS,
MANUFACTURER,
ORIEL HOUSE, BULL STREET, BIRMINGHAM.
AGENTS WANTED WHERE NONE ARE APPOINTED.

For Wheeler & Wilson see the advertisement for Slater & Co at the beginning of Peers' Guide. Joseph Harris (1831-1913) was the Birmingham-born son of a grocer who built up several businesses, including the manufacture of sewing machines. In 1869 he was granted a design registration for an ornamental sewing machine treadle. He sold this side of his business to the Royal Sewing Machine Company in 1877.

ADVERTISEMENTS.

ORIEL HOUSE,
BULL STREET;
and
WORKS,
GT. CHARLES ST.,
BIRMINGHAM.
JOSEPH HARRIS,
STEAM POWER
Dyer, Cleaner, Bleacher, &c.
THE LARGEST AND MOST COMPLETE DYE
WORKS IN THE MIDLAND COUNTIES.
Carriage Paid one way upon all Parcels of 10s. upwards.
PRICE LISTS FREE.

This advertisement for another of Joseph Harris's businesses as a steam power dyer contains a sketch of Oriel House, an impressive four-storey building looking like a cross between a church and a mock-gothic castle.

ADVERTISEMENTS.

CASTLE AND FALCON
COMMERCIAL HOTEL,
SNOW HILL,
OPPOSITE GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY STATION,
BIRMINGHAM.
CHARLES GERBER,
PROPRIETOR.
EXCELLENT ACCOMMODATION.

ESSENCE OF CATTLE FOOD

THOS. GILMAN'S

MEDICINAL POWDERS

Are guaranteed to Keep Horses and all Farm Stock in perfect health and condition.

300 per cent. CHEAPER and BETTER than any Cattle Food hitherto known

Grains, Pulped Turnips, &c., are greatly improved by its use.

T.G. especially recommends Farmers, in Building hay or Clover Ricks, to sprinkle a portion in each course: by so doing it will wonderfully improve the quality, and give a relish to the same.

→ MIX A PORTION WITH THE FOOD AT NIGHT.

Sole Manufacturer:

THOS. GILMAN, Aston Manor & Gosta Green, Birmingham.

Sold in 12-lb. Boxes, 10s.; 25-lb. Boxes, 20s.

Carriage Free to any part of the Kingdom.

Twenty-five years' test and no complaints. – Thousands of Testimonials may be obtained by asking for.

ADVERTISEMENTS.

FREE TO THE PUBLIC!

MUSEUM HOTEL

TEA GARDENS,

SUTTON COLDFIELD,

Corner of the Park Lane, nearly opposite the Town Hall, and leading to the Park.

This Hotel has a very large FREE MUSEUM attached to it, which is open to the public daily. It contains some Thousands of Foreign and British BIRDS, ANIMALS, REPTILES, FISHES, &c. This Museum is the Largest in the Midland Counties.

THIS HOTEL AFFORDS GREAT ACCOMMODATION TO THE PUBLIC.

THE REFRESHMENT DEPARTMENT.

A Sandwich and Glass of Ale, Threepence.

Plain Tea, Eightpence; with Ham and Beef, One Shilling.

HIGH CLASS WINES AND SPIRITS.

ALES AND STOUTS of the CHOICEST QUALITY.

Refreshments provided for large parties.

SUMMER ARBOURS & LARGE GREEN FOR DANCING!

GOOD STABLING AND LOOSE BOXES.

Proprietor, T. WEBB

Refreshments at town prices.

The Museum Hotel was the first property to be built on the Parade (No. 2) in 1870. It was demolished in 1971 to make way for the Gracechurch Centre.

ADVERTISEMENTS.

BLACK ROOT POOL,

SUTTON PARK.

THIS PICTURESQUE AND FINE SHEET OF WATER,

UPWARDS OF FIFTEEN ACRES IN AREA.

BOATING & FISHING MAY BE HAD,

APPLY TO THE KEEPER, OR TO

MR. C. J. PHILLIPS,

WHEAT SHEAF HOTEL, NEW ST.,
BIRMINGHAM.

See 'Blackroot, or Perkins's Pool above. The Keeper means the Park Keeper or Head Ranger, an employee of the Sutton Corporation.

JOSEPH RILEY,
Pianoforte & Harmonium Warehouse,
20c, CONSTITUTION HILL,
BIRMINGHAM.

MANUFACTURER AND IMPORTER OF ALL KINDS OF
MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS.
THE TRADE SUPPLIED. NEW MUSIC AT HALF PRICE
PIANOFORTES TUNED, REGULATED, AND REPAIRED.
ESTABLISHED 1851.

ADVERTISEMENTS.

"BODEGA" SPANISH WINE CELLAR,
YORK PASSAGE, BIRMINGHAM.
THE "BODEGA" SHERRY, 32s. per Dozen.
PRICE LIST OF SHERRIES.

No.	(BOTTLES INCLUDED.)	Dock sample glass	Bott.	Doz.	Qr. Cask.
1.	Pale Full	3d.	1/8	20/	£12
2.	" Dry	4d.	2/2	26/	£15
3.	Rich Gold	4d.	2/2	26/	£15
4.	Vino de Xerez	5d.	3/0	36/	£21
5.	Montilla	6d.	3/4	40/	£23
6.	Amontillado	6d.	3/4	40/	£23
7.	Flor de Xerez	6d.	3/4	40/	£23
8.	Vino de Pasto	6d.	3/4	40/	£23
9.	Amontillado – Fino	8d.	4/2	50/	£30
10.	Vino Fino de Pasto	8d.	4/2	50/	£30
11.	Oloroso	8d.	4/2	50/	£30
12.	Old East India	8d.	4/2	50/	£30
13.	Crown, Pale dry	10d.	5/0	60/	£36
14.	Double Crown, Magnificent old Fino	1/0	6/0	72/	£46
15.	Manzanilla	8d.	4/2	50/	£30
16.	1820 vintage guaranteed	1/3	7/6	84/	£52
17.	West End Club Sherry	8d.	4/0	48/	£29
18.	Old Port	4d.	2/2	26/	£15
19.	1861 vintage Port	6d.	3/4	40/	£23
20.	1858 Port, Sandeman's	8d.	4/2	50/	£30
21.	1844 Port, Cockburn's	8d.	4/2	50/	£30
22.	Magnificent old Wine, the celebrated 'Rex Regina'	10d.	5/0	60/	£36

N.B. – Of all Wines above 6d. per dock sample, half glasses will be drawn.
The dock sample glass contains two ordinary wine glasses.

To all who seek pure, genuine, and unadulterated Wines the above extensive Establishment offers advantages never before placed within the reach of the general public.

The Sherries and Ports are imported especially for the "Bodega," and may be tasted in the "Dock Glasses," from the original packages at a charge exactly proportioned to the wholesale price at which these wines are sold by the Bottle, Dozen, and Quarter Cask.

Connoisseurs are invited to judge for themselves.

Olives, Biscuits, &c., are provided free of charge; and every facility is given to enable the purchaser to arrive at a correct judgment.

BIRMINGHAM AND MANCHESTER.

Bodega is the Spanish for a wineshop.

ADVERTISEMENTS.

ORIENTAL INK.

TRADE MARK  VERA VINCENT.

REGISTERED AT STATIONERS' HALL.

"ORIENTAL INK" is a beautiful writing fluid, made only from pure chemicals, without any admixture of Acids or Salts of Iron.

When first used it is of a fine purple tint, which soon turns black, and deepens with age.

It is made of the right strength for copying, and for this purpose it is not surpassed by any other copying ink whatever; at the same time it is suitable for all other office purposes, thus preventing the necessity for having two kinds of black Ink on the desk at once.

It flows freely and does not clog the pen.

It is not greasy or sticky.

It does not smear the page.

It does not turn mouldy; nor does it get thick or dry up so soon as ordinary Ink.

It does not turn brown, but becomes blacker with age; hence it will be found to be invaluable to Lawyers, Bankers, and all others who require their documents to be preserved for a considerable length of time.

IN BOTTLES, 4d., 9d., 2s., and Gallons 8s. each.

T. M. SIMKISS AND Co.,

Proprietors and Sole Manufacturers,

8, CLEVELAND STREET, WOLVERHAMPTON.

SOLD BY ALL STATIONERS & CHEMISTS, & WHOLESALE

BY W. WILLEY, BIRMINGHAM.

This advertisement tells us that William Willey, the publisher of Peers' Guide, had a sideline in the sale of ink, and presumably other stationery items.

ADVERTISEMENTS.

B. ESSEX,

BOOK AND MUSIC SELLER,

STATIONER, &c.,

POST OFFICE,

66, CONSTITUTION HILL,

(FOUR DOORS FROM GREAT HAMPTON ROW,)

BIRMINGHAM.

FOR BIRTHDAY CARDS AND SCENT PACKETS

Of the Choicest Designs and New Poetry, this establishment
stands unequalled in the Midland Counties.

BIBLES, PRAYER BOOKS & CHURCH SERVICES

In various Bindings.

PHOTOGRAPHIC ALBUMS.

BOOKS SUITABLE FOR BIRTHDAY PRESENTS

and

SUNDAY SCHOOL REWARDS.

(A LIBERAL ALLOWANCE TO TEACHERS.)

FANCY AND MOURNING STATIONERY.

→ Observe the Address:

66, CONSTITUTION HILL.

ESTABLISHED 1856.

ADVERTISEMENTS.

DINING

and

LUNCHEON ROOMS

THE STORES,

TOP OF NEW STREET,

OPPOSITE THE TOWN HALL,

BIRMINGHAM,

J. HILLMAN,

PROPRIETOR.

GENTLEMEN Dining at this Establishment will find every comfort
that a large and well-fitted Dining Room can afford.

HOT JOINTS, FISH, SOUPS, &c.,

FROM 12 Till 4.

ALES AND DUBLIN STOUT OF THE FINEST QUALITY.

Wines and Spirits of the best Brands.

ADVERTISEMENTS.

WYATT & CO.,

SOLE AGENTS FOR THE

CITY OF DUBLIN BREWERY Co's

CELEBRATED STOUT,

And for Messrs. J. & G. CAMPBELL'S

IRISH WHISKY,

&c.

WHOLESALE BOTTLERS

AND DEALERS IN

BURTON ALES & DUBLIN STOUT.

31, PARADISE ST.,

BIRMINGHAM.

ADVERTISEMENTS.

HAYDEN'S
COMMERCIAL
DINING ROOMS,
70, EDGBASTON ST.,
BIRMINGHAM.
Chops, Steaks, Fish, & Hot Joints daily
TEA AND COFFEE ALWAYS READY.
FIRST-CLASS ALES & STOUTS
WELL-AIRED BEDS.

The last line of this advertisement leaves one wondering exactly what type of establishment Hayden's Commercial Dining Rooms were.

ADVERTISEMENTS.

CHRISTIAN'S PÂTE DE LICHEN,
For Coughs, Colds, Hoars[e]ness, Sore Throats, Asthma, &c.
It removes Phlegm, and gives relief in all disorders of the Voice, Throat, Chest, and also Bronchial Affections. In Colds, accompanied by Cough, Hoarseness, and that peculiar tickling and dryness in the throat usually called huskiness, its beneficial effects are felt almost immediately. It is most agreeable to the palate; and being free from any preparation of opium, may be given to children as well as adults. To Public Speakers, and Singers it is most invaluable, as it imparts both Clearness and Strength to the Voice.

Sold in Boxes, 1s. each; and Canisters equal to about three Boxes 2s. 6d.; or to six Boxes, 4s. 6d.

CHRISTIAN'S SARSA TARAXACUM,
CONTAINING ALL THE ACTIVE PROPERTIES OF
SARSAPARILLA AND DANDELION.

This NEW PREPARATION is introduced with confidence to the public as one of the most efficient RESTORATIVES hitherto produced. As an ALTERATIVE, TONIC, and PURIFIER OF THE BLOOD, it is invaluable. For LANGUOR, INACTIVITY OF THE LIVER, WEAK DIGESTION, FLATULENCE, SPASMS, BILIARY OBSTRUCTIONS, GENERAL DEBILITY, BOILS, and CUTANEOUS AFFECTIONS, it has been employed with the greatest success, where other medicines have been unavailing. It is not objectionable to the palate, but of a most agreeable flavour.

*Sold in Bottles, 2s. 6d., 4s. 6d., 8s., and 10s. 6d. each. There is a considerable advantage
In purchasing the larger sizes.*

CHRISTIAN'S TARAXACUM
OR DANDELION CHOCOLATE,

Prepared from Pure Inspissated Juice of the Dandelion Root, combined with Chocolate.
This new and most agreeable article of diet for breakfast, luncheon, or supper, is invaluable to persons who may be predisposed to Affections of the Liver, Spasms, Flatulency, Biliary Obstructions, Weak Digestion, or General Debility. A cupful may be prepared without the slightest trouble, and ready for use, in less than three minutes.

*Sold in Packets at 6d., 1s., and 2s. each; also, in Family Packets, equal to three
of the 2s. size, 5s. each.*

PREPARED ONLY AT
CHRISTIAN'S DISPENSING ESTABLISHMENT,
NEW STREET, Corner of CANNON STREET, BIRMINGHAM.
PRESCRIPTIONS

Are carefully prepared and accurately dispensed by the Proprietor, or under his immediate superintendence, by duly qualified Assistants. Every Drug employed is perfectly fresh; and Chemical or Pharmaceutical Preparations are of the purest and most genuine quality.

NO APPRENTICES KEPT IN THE ESTABLISHMENT.

Taraxacum is the scientific name for dandelion. Dandelion chocolate sounds like a cause, rather than a cure, for one or other of the ailments mentioned. Lichen paste doesn't sound much better.

CROCKFORD, GROVE, & LOUD,
FUNERAL FURNISHERS, 101 and 102, BULL STREET, Birmingham, wish to direct attention to the following List of Mourning Articles, which, upon inspection, will be found to be cheaper than any other house in the trade.

Black Coburgs and Alpacas, from 5½d to 1s per yard
Wide width ditto ditto .. " 8½d to 2s 6d "
" " " Baratheas " 10½d to 2s 6d "
New Crape Cloth " 1s4½d to 2s 6d "
Black Grenadines " 4¾d to 1s 6d "
Black Balzarine & Ophenes " 2¾d to 8½d "
Shawl, Cloth, two yards wide, 1s 11d to 6s 9d "
Princetta & Henrietta Cloths, 1s 9½d to 3s 9d "
Black French Merinos ... 1s 11d to 5s 9d "
Mourning Prints & Gingham, 4½d to 8½d "
Hat Band Silk (good quality) 1s 6d to 2s 11d "
Black Gloves 6½d to 3s 9d pair
Crape and Bugled Collars 2¾d to 1s 6d each
Wide width Patent Crape from 1s 2½d to 5s 9d per yard
Mourning Falls, in all the newest styles.
Black Shawls, silk or wool fringe, from 3s 11d to 25s each.
The Largest Stock of Black Silks in Birmingham, from 1s 6½d to 12s 6d a yard.
Poult-de-soie, Gros-de-suez, Gros grains, and Gros-royals, in great variety.
Silk and Crape Hat Bands on hire.
Coffins of any description made to order at 24 hours' notice.
All kinds of Funeral Carriages provided as required.
This List of Prices is subject to the fluctuations of the markets.
Every information given relative to any of the Cemeteries upon application.

CROCKFORD, GROVE, & LOUD,
Wish to observe that one of the firm attends personally to the Funeral Department of our Establishment, which generally saves much unnecessary trouble to those who intrust us with their orders, and it is our system always to charge the lowest possible remunerative profit on our goods, these occasions are not used by us as opportunities for making extravagant charges, nor inducing parties to go to useless expense for the purpose of making an extensive bill.

This advertisement, as befits its subject matter, has a thick black edging round it. Allen Lepard Crockford, John Ross Grove and Edward Loud were in partnership as drapers until September 1874 when Loud left the partnership and the other two continued as Crockford and Grove. Crockford lived

at Doe Bank Sutton Coldfield and was a member of the Sutton Corporation and a Governor of Bishop Vesey's Grammar School.

The Victorians were very keen on the correct protocol for funeral and mourning wear, and several different names were given to fabrics of the same or very similar type. Some of the names mentioned are still familiar today, but others have fallen out of fashion. Coburg was a thin worsted and cotton or silk fabric twilled on one side; the word came into fashion after Queen Victoria's marriage to Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg. Baratheia was a fine woollen cloth mixed with silk or cotton, used for coats and suits. Grenadine was a silk or silk and woollen textile used for dresses, named from Granada in Spain. Balzarine was a light dress fabric of mixed cotton and wool. Princetta cloth was also a blend of wool and cotton; Henrietta cloth was a fine woollen fabric made in a twill weave, taking its name from Queen Henrietta Maria, consort to King Charles I. A bugle was a black lozenge-shaped glass bead. A mourning fall was a woman's veil. Poult-de-soie was a fine corded silk, grosgrain a heavy ribbed silk fabric.

ADVERTISEMENTS.

LATEST NEWS!!
CARTE DE VISITES
FROM
4s. PER DOZEN!
J. NORRIS,
5, UNION PASSAGE,
BIRMINGHAM.

For cartes de visite (the correct plural of carte de visite) see the advertisement for The Midland Photographic Rooms above. Joseph Norris ran a successful photography business from c. 1862 to 1885.

ADVERTISEMENTS.

STATION HOTEL,
OPPOSITE THE RAILWAY STATION,
SUTTON COLDFIELD.
REFRESHMENT BAR.

Sandwich and Glass of Ale, 3d. – Plain Teas from 9d. each.
DUBLIN STOUT 2/6 per doz. INDIA PALE ALE 3/3 per doz.
DELIVERED FREE IN THE PARK.

High-class Wines and Spirits – Fine Ales – Stouts of the choicest qualities.

The Hotel contains spacious Assembly Room and well arranged Sitting and Bed Rooms, in which Private Parties will find all the comforts of a home.

STABLING, LOOSE BOXES, & LOCK-UP COACH HOUSES.
RUSTIC SUMMER ARBOURS.

G. JONES, Proprietor.

There were two hotels built in Station Street following the opening of the railway line from Birmingham to Sutton and the building of Sutton Station in 1862. One was the Station Hotel, which still stands, and the other the Railway Inn, on the opposite side of the road, which was demolished when Brassington Avenue was created and the site is now a municipal carpark. George Jones was the licensee of the Station Hotel for about a decade from the late 1860s.

JAMES HANDLEY,
Stationer, Bookseller, and Printer,
Dealer in Fancy Goods, &c.,
46, PARADISE STREET,
BIRMINGHAM.
Artists' Materials of every description always on hand.

ADVERTISEMENTS.

"OH ME!" "OH MY!"
ANOTHER FACT!
THAT
W. WHITE'S
ESTABLISHMENT
Is the only House in the Midland Counties
where the constant Smoker can depend
on
A GOOD CIGAR
AND
TOBACCO
As IMPORTED from the PLANTATION.
60, HAMPTON STREET,
SAINT GEORGE'S,
BIRMINGHAM.
TYLOR AND PACE'S VESUVIANS, 1s. 10d. per Gross.

For vesuvians see Great Fire in Sutton Park above. Henry Tylor was an inventor who patented a chair that could be converted into a bedstead in 1854.

Finally, the inside back cover and the back cover contain three more advertisements:

ADVERTISEMENTS

TEA! TEA! TEA!!
Never boys give way to sorrow,
Of your tea no more complain:
Go and tell your wives to morrow
Splendid Tea is come again.
JOHN COLLETT AND COMPANY
SELL
TEAS OF SURPASSING EXCELLENCE.
TEAS OF CHOICEST GROWTHS.
TEAS OF ABOUNDING STRENGTH.
TEAS OF FINEST QUALITY.
TEAS OF EVERY COUNTRY.
TEAS GENUINE AS IMPORTED.
TEAS, VERY FINE AT 2s. 6d.
TEAS, FINEST GUNPOWDER 4s., usually sold at 5s. and 5s. 4d.
TEAS, STRONG, RICH, AND RIPE, 2s. 6d.
TEAS, JOHN COLLETT & COMPANY'S.

TEAS, JOHN COLLETT & COMPANY sell any quantity, from a quarter of a pound upwards. They have original packages of all kinds of Tea, in Chests, about 90lbs; Half-chests, about 45 lbs; Caddy Boxes, 16 to 20 lbs. each. These are lined with lead and will keep the Tea good and fresh for a very long period.

JOHN COLLETT and COMPANY'S Prices are calculated for Net Cash.
16, Carr's Lane, Birmingham.

HENRY DARWIN,
69, HIGH STREET, and 1, UNION STREET,
BIRMINGHAM.
TAILOR, CLOTHIER, & OUTFITTER.
TO MEASURE OR READY MADE.
BOYS' CLOTHING in every variety.
DARWIN'S TROUSERS, 12s. 6d., 14s. 6d., 16s.
" BUSINESS COAT, 21s., 28s., 35s.
" SUIT OF BLACK, Complete; Frock Coat
40s., Waistcoat 10s., Trousers 20s.
" CLOTH SUMMER OVER COAT, 21s.
69, High Street, and 1, Union Street,
Opposite the Corn Exchange.

MERRYWEATHER'S
HOSIERY, GLOVE, AND SHIRT WAREHOUSE,
57, BULL STREET.
Gentlemen's SUMMER VESTS FROM 2s. 11d. EQUAL TO BESPOKE at 4s. 6d.
DRESS AND PRINTED SHIRTS FROM 3s. 6d.
Umbrellas, Portmanteaus &c. &c.

This advertisement by J.S. Merryweather, Hosier and Glover, has a sketch of his shop at 57 Bull Street, Birmingham displaying various articles for sale, labelled as Gentlemens Travelling Rugs, Gentlemens Hosiery, Flannel Shirts, Collars, Dress Shirts, Ladies & Gentlemens Best Kid Gloves, Umbrellas and Ladies Hosiery.

Afterword

Peers' Guide is a strange publication. As a History and Guide to Sutton Park (as announced on the title page) it does not contain a lot of information. There is a bit about Blackroot and Bracebridge Pools on page 18, and even less about Powell's Pool on page 31, five lines about Rowton's Well, mention of the Roman Road, a somewhat longer account of the racecourse and a rather too long account of the fire of 1868. As far as the history of Sutton is concerned, much of the detail given is lifted straight out of Agnes Bracken's history of 1860, and it is presented in a rather haphazard manner. In the second half of the book there are stories, which have the Chester Road as their common link, about the murder of

a pedlar in Stonnall, about William Hutton and the Birmingham riots of 1791, about the capture and execution of the Perry Barr forger William Booth, and about Samuel Galton of Great Barr and the Lunar Society, which have very little to do with Sutton. Perhaps story-telling was Peers' forte; you can sense the mounting excitement as each sentence becomes a separate paragraph as a story reaches its climax.

The book is of interest because it is very much a product of its own time, and gives us an idea of how things were changing, with the recently opened railway station, the new Town Hall, the popularity of the racecourse in the Park and the steeplechase course, and the opening of the Crystal Palace less than a year ago. It is also of interest to read the mid-19th century criticism of the undemocratic Sutton Corporation, arising out of the prosecution of Abel and Edward Dorsett in 1868, and the contemporary assessment of Bishop Vesey, and reflections on the death of Mary Ashford.

In summary, Peers' Guide has its flaws, but anyone interested in the 19th century history of Sutton, should find it worth reading as an addition to the histories of Agnes Bracken and Rev W.K. Riland Bedford. And the advertisements are a delight in themselves.

Index

N.B. The page numbers are those in the original Peers' Guide.

A.

Abbey, the (Erdington) 29, 30
 Addenbrooke, Henry 22
 Allen, William 7
 Alms houses 12
 America 16
 Ashford, Mary 15, 16
 Aston 7, 10, 11, 19
 Aston Lane Nurseries, Birchfields 32

B.

Barr Beacon 23
 Barr Hall (see Great Barr Hall)
 Bassett's Heath 9
 Beauchamp, Richard de 14th Earl of Warwick 6
 Beaumont, Roger de 2nd Earl of Warwick 5
 Bedford, Rev W K R 3
 Beggar's Bush 21, 28, 29, 31
 Bell & Cuckoo 26, 29
 Bennett, Thomas 9
 Birmingham 3, 4, 10, 11, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 24, 26, 27, 28, 31
 Birmingham Gazette 25
 Birmingham Road 5
 Bishop Vesey's Grammar School 8, 14
 Blackroot Pool 18
 Blade Mill 11
 Bloxham, Inspector 12
 Bonaparte, Napoleon 23
 Booker, Rev Luke of Dudley 15
 Booth, William 24
 Boulton, Matthew 23
 Bracebridge, Sir Ralph 7, 11, 18

Bracebridge Pool 7, 10, 11, 18
Bradford Arms 11, 28
Bradgate 7
Bridges 4, 5, 9, 14, 24
Brookes, Mr 5
Brown, George 17
Burbage, John 7
Burns, Robert 27
Burton, Robert 8

C.

Camp 11
Canwell Gate 9
Castle Bromwich 11, 15, 26, 28
Chester 25
Chester Road 10, 19, 25, 26
Charles I, King 10, 23
Charles II, King 13
Charter 7, 13
Clibery, Elinor 10
Clibery, William 10
Coldfield, the 6, 25
Cole, Job 32
Collier, Elias le 6
Colmore, Thomas 13
Coventry, George William 9th Earl of Coventry 18
Coventry 10
Coverdale, Miles 9
Cromwell, Oliver 31
Croxhall, Mr of Shustoke 13
Crundall, Mr 22
Cumberland, Duke of 11
Cup Inn 10
Curdworth 4, 9, 14

D.

Dam, the 11
Dorsett, Abel Edward 13
Dorsett, Richard 13
Druid's Heath 26
Dugdale, Sir William 9
Duncumb, Joseph 18
Durlington, Mr of Meriden 13
Duval, Claude 25

E.

Eachelhurst 11
Eastham, Thomas 10, 19
Ebrook 32
Edgehill 23
Edward I, King 5, 6
Edward VI, King 9
Erdington 29, 30
Exeter 9

F.

Fair 5
Fire 21, 22
Fleam Brook 11
Flood 10
Four Crosses Inn 25

G.

Galton, Samuel 23
Geneva 9
Gibbet Hill 19
Gough, John 19, 20
Great Barr Hall 23

H.

Harman, John (see Vesey, Bishop)
Harris, Thomas 7
Hartopp, Sir E C 17
Hartopp, Sir W E C 11, 18
Haydon, John 15
Haynes, William 29
Hemlingford Hundred 3, 6
Henry I, King 5
Henry V, King 11
Henry VII, King 7
Henry VIII, King 7, 9, 13, 14
Highwaymen 25
High Street, Birmingham 28
High Street, Sutton Coldfield 10
Hill Common 11
Holbeche & Addenbrooke 22
Hollies, The (Four Oaks) 13
Holly Lane 10
Holmes, Edward 14
Holte, John 7
Holy Trinity Church 3, 9, 14, 16
Homer, Edward 18
Hunt, Henry 25
Hutton, William 27, 28

I.

Icknield Street 6, 20
Ireland 10, 17, 25

J.

James' Flour Mill 17
Jervis, Hon Edward Swynfen Parker 21
John, King 4, 5
Jones, Mr C 14

K.

Keeper's Cottage 31
Kersey manufacture 8
King, Tom 25
King Edward's School, Birmingham 8
Kingsbury 5, 6

King's Standing Hill 23

Kittoe, Rev E H 13

L.

Lane, Capt Douglas 18

Lane, Rev T of Handsworth 19, 20

Lempre, William 7

Library 16

Lichfield 7

Lichfield Road 20

Little Aston Park 20

Little Hay 11

Little Sutton 10

Little Sutton Lane 20

Lloyd, Samson Samuel 20

Lloyd & Co Bank 28

London 3, 25

Lord's Meadow Charity 12

Lunar Society 23

M.

Macaulay, Thomas Babington 1st Baron Macaulay 23

Maney 4, 10, 32

Manor House 4, 6, 7, 32

Market 5, 7

Mary I, Queen 9, 14

Mere Pool 11

Middleham 7

Mills 4, 11

Milton, John 10

Moat House 8

Moor Hall 8, 14, 20

Moorish Grounds 11

Moot Hall 14, 16

Moreman, Dr 9

Motteram, James 13

Mountford, Sir Edmund 7

Murders 10, 11, 15, 19, 26, 27

N.

Neville, Richard 16th Earl of Warwick 7

New Forge Pool (see Powell's Pool)

New Oscott College 19

New Shipton 11

Nottingham 28

Nowell, Laurence 8

O.

Oughton, Joseph 11

P.

Park, The (see Sutton Park)

Park House 17

Parson & Clerk 18, 19

Perkins' Pool 18

Perry Bridge 24

Perry Hall 19, 20
 Phillips, C J 18
 Piedmont Massacre 10
 Pine Wood 28
 Pools 4, 6, 10, 11, 17, 18, 31
 Powell's Pool 11, 31
 Powers, Edward 10, 19
 Priestley, Joseph 23
 Pye Hayes 11
R.
 Racecourse 17, 18
 Railway 3, 13
 Railway Station (see Sutton Station)
 Reading Room 16, 17
 Rhine, River 31
 Ridgeway, The 6
 Roman Road 17, 20
 Rowton's Well 17, 19, 31
 Royal Hotel (see Sutton Royal Hotel)
 Royal Oak Hotel 18, 19, 20
 Royal Promenade Gardens 32
 Rush, Richard 15, 16
S.
 St. Blaise 4
 Schools 8, 12, 14
 Scotch Greys 24
 Scott family of Great Barr 23
 Shakespeare, William 6
 Shenstone 10
 Shrewsbury Caravan 25
 Smith, Rev Albert 8
 Smith, Solomon 20
 Southampton 20
 Spade Mill Pool (see Powell's Pool)
 Steeplechase Course 20, 21
 Stonebed Moors 11
 Stonnall 25, 26, 27
 Sutton Chase 5, 7, 14
 Sutton Coldfield 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 20, 26, 28, 30, 31
 Sutton Coldfield Corporation 11, 12, 14
 Sutton Park 1, 3, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 31, 32
 Sutton Royal Hotel 13, 14, 32
 Sutton Station 4, 17, 21, 31
T.
 Tame, River 4, 9, 32
 Tamworth 5, 14
 Tamworth Lane 20
 Taylor family (bankers) 28
 Thornton, Abraham 15, 16
 Toll Gate 20
 Turnpike Road 13, 15, 20, 28

Turpin, Dick 25
 Tyburn 11
 Tyburn House 15
 Tynemouth 20
V.
 Vesey, Bishop 7, 8, 9, 14, 15
 Vesuvian 21
W.
 Walsall 18
 Walton, Isaak 31
 Warwick 3, 24
 Water Orton 4, 9, 14
 Watt, James 23
 Welsh Harp 25, 26
 Westwood Coppice 17
 Wheatsheaf Hotel 18
 Wiggan, John 17
 William III, King 10
 Willoughby, Thomas 10
 Wolsey, Cardinal 7
 Wolverhampton 18
 Wordsworth, William 19
 Wyndley Pool 10
 Wyrley, Sir John of Hampstead 14, 15
Y.
 Yew Tree Cottage 5
 Young Pretender, the 11

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