

TRANSCRIPTION

by

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of

THE STORY OF SUTTON PARADE

By M.M. Frankling

(May, 1981)

(Sutton Coldfield Library Reference No. QSH 97SUT)



(Photo taken from Ebay)

April, 2020

INTRODUCTION

Although I hope that people of all ages may find something to interest them in this study of the early years of Sutton Parade, it is primary intended for use in schools. The separate handbook and display cards are intended to make information readily available to both teacher and pupils. I am thinking especially of the teacher asked to take a local history topic, who has little knowledge of the subject and little time to prepare a detailed study.

Here is a detailed study for you, and I hope that it will lead you and your pupils to find out more for yourselves about the history of our town.

many a run along it.) The new bridge at a place called Peat's over the E-brook, between Sutton and Maney, a few years ago since, were built out of a part of the stone. Where the present turnpike road goes along, is called the Dam at the present day. The Meadowland whereon the pool of water formerly was pounded for the use of the Corn Mill, is now become the freehold property of Captain Somerville it being part of the Farm called "The Manor Farm."

The story of the Dam comes to life as we think of Mr. Z. Twamley, a little boy again, having "*many a good run*" along the old mill dam wall.

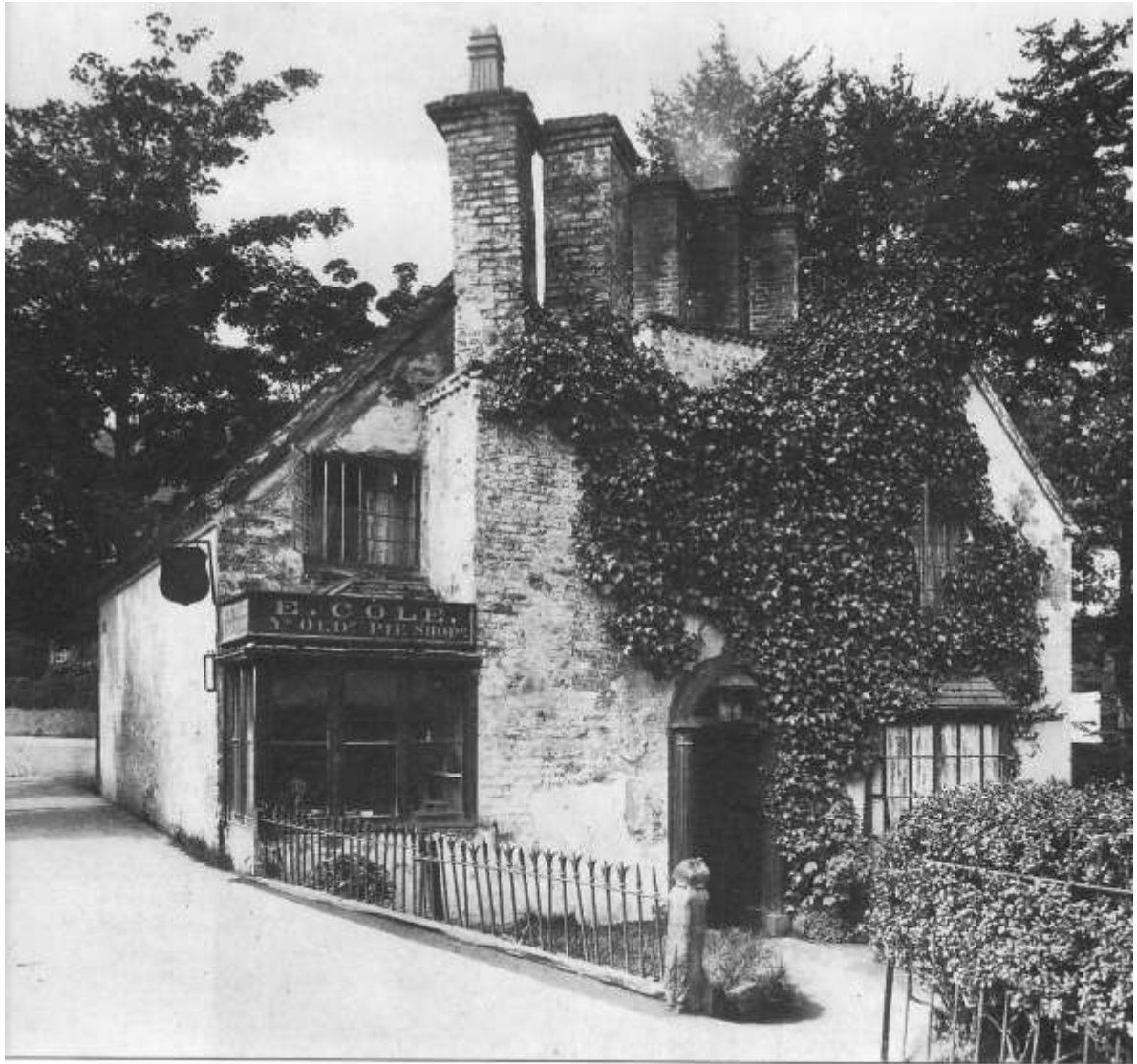
We owe a great deal to Miss Agnes Bracken whose history of Sutton Coldfield was published in 1860, and whose sketches of Sutton may still be seen in Sutton Library. She tells us how the road, which was to become the Parade, came to be made.

In 1826 a piece of new road was constructed between the Manor Hill and Sutton, in order to obtain a better level and more direct line for the turnpike road, by raising it across the valley. The stone dam of the ancient pools was removed which had hitherto formed the wall beside the old road, the portion of the road remaining still bearing the name of the Dam.

In 1869 the land along the Dam became the subject of a 94-year lease, granted from March 25th (which is also known as Lady Day) of that year. Mr. John Dodd of Dodd's Hardware Stores gave me this information, when speaking in his own shop No. 102 Parade, which was surrendered for demolition on January 31st, 1974. As the land was owned in 1869 by Captain Sommerville, (according to Mr. Twamley) we must presume that it was he who granted the lease.

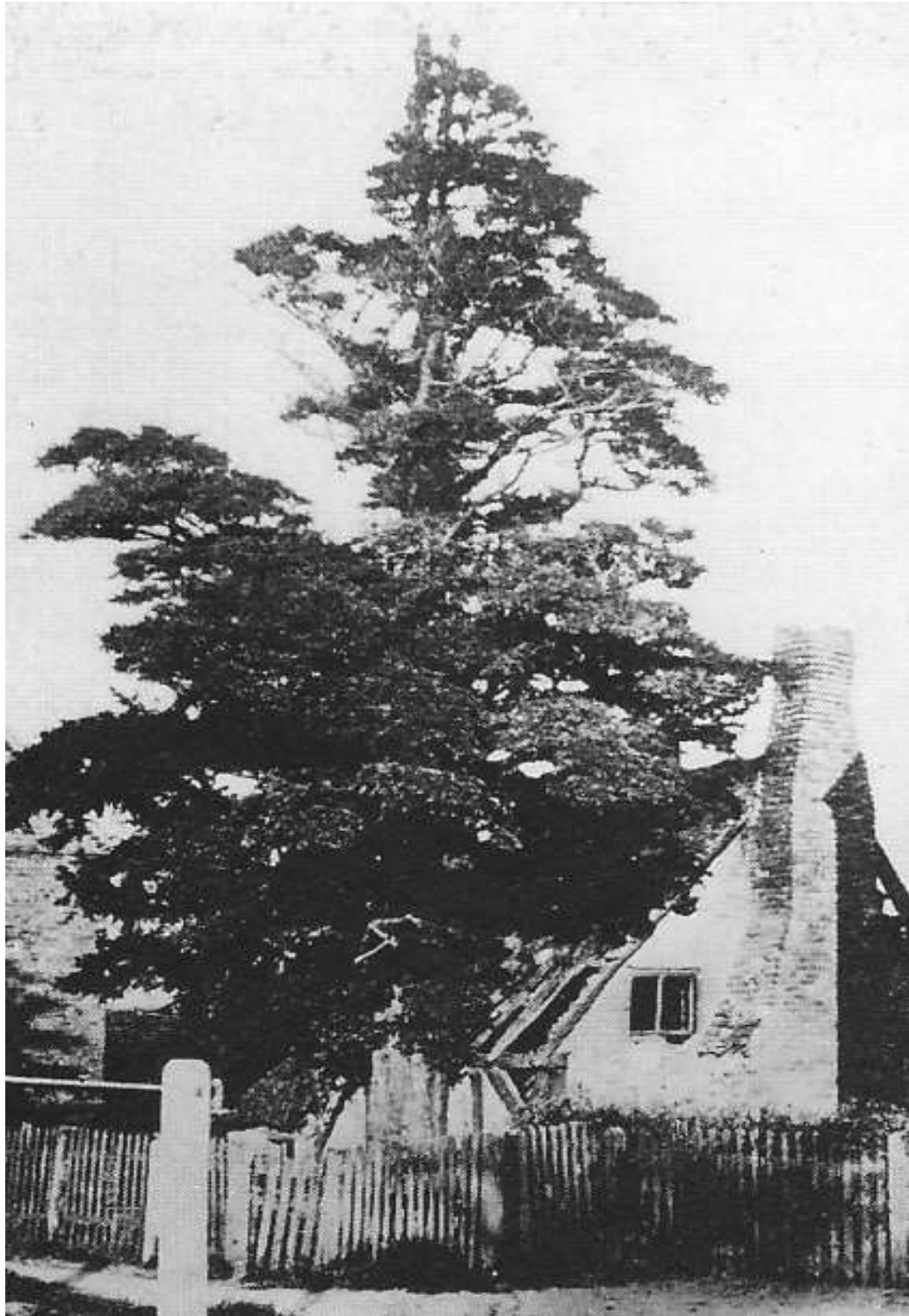
Even before building began on the land leased by Captain Sommerville on the West side of the Dam, there were a few buildings along the Dam. The Old Pie Shop stood at the junction of Manor Road and the Dam, and its chimneys can almost certainly be seen in Miss Bracken's sketch of Sutton in 1840. It was not demolished until 1913, so there are still people alive today who can remember it. One Sutton Lady described her childhood impressions of "*Ye Old Pie Shop.*"

The shop window was on the Parade, but you had to look down into the shop, which sold cooked meats and pies. You had to go down four steps to get into the shop and there was a notice "Bend or bump." Once inside the shop you could only see the feet of the people passing on the pavement, which had been constructed at a higher level, many years after the shop was built.



"Ye Old Pie Shop" from *Old Photographs, Sutton Coldfield* compiled by Marian Baxter, pub. Alan Sutton, 1994

On the part of the road called the Dam but now called Lower Parade stood an even older building "*Yew Tree Cottage.*" In his Guidebook of Sutton, published in 1880 Eliezer Edwards shows a picture of this old half-timbered house facing the dam, the inhabitants of which must have witnessed the great flood of 1668. The Yew Tree which gave the cottage its name was still there but "*the roots of the old yew tree have so undermined the walls that their restoration seems impossible.*" (Both the tree and the cottage) would have disappeared long ago, but they were spared at the intercession of a Sutton Lady.) In addition, there was Yew Tree Terrace a group of five cottages, from which small businesses were conducted. In the Directory for 1872, which can be seen in Birmingham Reference Library, these businesses are listed as being on "*The Dam*" and my personal impression is that they are in Yew Tree Terrace. *John Ferneyhough Blacksmith. James McCann Plasterer. Peter Pimlott, Shoemaker. James Stonehouse Basket maker.*



Yew Tree Cottage taken from Old Photographs of Sutton Coldfield, compiled by Marian Baxter, pub Alan Sutton, 1994

The Dog Public House was also in its Present Position and in 1872 it was run by John Willetts. Originally it was called "*The Talbot*" after a breed of hunting dog used for burrowing, so people often spoke of it as "*The Dog in the Hole,*" or "*The Old Dog.*" The Sutton News of February 5th, 1870 has an

advertisement for the “*Old Dog Inn*” “*Proprietor J. Willetts. Accommodation, beds, stabling at very reasonable terms*”

This reminds us very forcibly that horses were the only means of transport other than people’s own feet, in Sutton Coldfield, until the railway came, and the first train ran on June 1st, 1862. July 1st, 1879 saw the opening of the Sutton Park line.

Another Sutton News advertisement, on January 8th, 1870 advertises James McCann’s Plasterers Business giving the address as 1 Yew Tree Terrace. On January 15th, the Sutton News complains about conditions for cattle kept in the pound when they had been found straying. The pound was also on the Dam next to the Old Dog.

We realise that at this time Sutton was still very much a country town, with stabling and cattle of great importance, while Mr. James Fawdry had, in January 15th, 1870’s Sutton News “*a quantity of old turf for sale.*”

The first building to be erected on the land leased in 1869 from Captain Somerville was the Museum Public House. Although it was built on the Dam on the corner where Brassington Avenue now joins the Parade, it was at first given the address of Mill Street. It was the first building to be erected on what eventually became the Parade, and the first to be demolished, in February 1971, to make way for the Gracechurch centre.

As we look at the Sutton of the 1860s and 1870s the scene is not unfamiliar compared with that of today. There are still some of the Mill Street shops and the building erected in 1859 as the Town Hall now houses a jeweller’s business. The trees and gardens between the two halves of the Dam (or Parade) are not unlike those of today. In 1870 the Gothic front of the Town School looks much as it does today. There are streetlamps but they are lit by gas. Gas first came to Sutton in 1854, the gas works being near Riland Road. The lady who described the Old Pie Shop remembers the old lamplighter with a long pole, going from lamp to lamp. Inside the shops oil lamps were used and they stayed open as late as 11pm.

Horses, carts and carriages would have passed up and down the Dam, which when it was first constructed was part of the turnpike road, from Birmingham to Lichfield. A toll gate stood near Anchorage Road and money had to be paid by travellers before they could continue along the road. Stagecoaches, before the

days of railways, travelled daily between Birmingham and Lichfield, “rattling through the Sutton streets at ten miles per hour, waking the sleepy borough with their horns. Mr. Midgley mentions twenty-four coaches a day, but Miss Bracken refers to six.

The idea of road users paying toll to help in maintaining the roads is looked back on in 1882, by a writer to the Sutton News.

“Take for instance the main road from Birmingham to Sutton. Every day Birmingham trades people are wearing it out with their carts and goods vans. On Sundays holidays and race days (there was a race course in the park during the nineteenth century) they come out by thousands, wearing and tearing up the roads with all sorts of vehicles, yet never pay a penny towards keeping it in repair--- nothing to equal the old fashioned toll-gates W.H.J.” W.H.J is convinced as many people still are today that the old ways are the best.”

In this section we have been given an impression of The Dam before it adopted “the more aristocratic name of the Parade.”

The Parade receives its name.

On January 25th, 1879 an item appeared in the Gossip column of the Sutton News. It read *“in the circular of an enterprising tradesman just issued, the Dam at Sutton is styled “the Parade.” We don’t know that we absolutely object to the alteration and if another row of trees could be planted on the West side and continued up to the bridge, it would make a pleasant promenade. But it is, as it were, removing an old landmark and someone is sure to cry out.”* A comment on this item appeared in the form of a letter which was published in the Sutton News of February 1st, 1879.

Dear Sir,

In the column of Gossip, I notice that an enterprising tradesman gives the Dam the appellation of the Parade. A very good idea I think old landmarks notwithstanding. If, however old Fogies will stick out for old landmarks, then in order not to ruffle their tempers or impair their digestion, call it the Dam

Boulevard des Dames, and then the Royal Town will be stylish indeed. But Keep it dark.

On February 15th, 1879 “S.J.H.” offers an opposing point of view. “I see from your paper of Saturday last that it is talked of to change the Dam into the Parade or something equally senseless. To what good.” There is enough of pretentious and unmeaning names in the new houses and roads about the neighbourhood, do let us keep to one having a reason for being called. “S.J.H.”

“Keep it Dark” and “S.J.H.” continued their discussion for several weeks until the Editor of the “Sutton News” commented that it was time for the correspondence to cease. No one else seemed to feel strongly enough about the subject to join in the controversy. The new name of “The Parade” began to find favour with other trades people and on May 15th 1880 the very first advertisement appeared in the Sutton News for a shop on “The Parade.”

“Malvern House PARADE SUTTON COLDFIELD M TAYLOR begs to inform the inhabitants of Sutton Coldfield and neighbourhood that she has opened the above premises in MILLINERY DRESS AND MANTLE MAKING WOOLS FANCY GOODS etc.” There seems to be no way of finding out just who the enterprising tradesman was, who first named the Parade. Mr. Douglas Jones in his “Commemorative History” says that it was Mr. James Fawdry, but I can find no proof of this, and Mr. Jones cannot now remember what gave him that impression. There seems to be some proof that he was not responsible (ie Mr. Fawdry) for naming the Parade because he had no shop there until 1889 or 1890. He would therefore have had no reason to publish a circular for his customers. The people who did have shops on the Parade and feature in Kelly’s Directory for 1880 were Louis Bayliss - The Tripe House, John Arthur Draycott – Photographer, George Evans – Butcher, Alfred Williams – Grocer. Anyone of these could have been the “enterprising tradesman.” On the other hand, Mr. Fawdry could have been involved indirectly, and Mr. Jones who knew many of the older Sutton people, could have heard of it from a relation of Mr. Fawdry’s. It seems unlikely that he should write “James Fawdry is remembered for having given The Parade its name” if he had no reason for believing it to be true. I make a point of this because it might make an interesting study for further research. “Who was the enterprising tradesman.” I should dearly love to know.

The Parade during the 1880's

Building on the Parade began at the end nearest to Mill Street and continued the West side down towards Manor Road. The Museum Public House stood on its own through most of the 1870's. From time to time it featured in the Sutton News. In March 1878 we read that a George Taylor was charged with stealing 2 ½ gallons of brandy from W. Harrison. Proprietor of the Museum tavern. He was found guilty and fined 1/-. (Fine paid)

At Easter 1878 crowds came out to enjoy the “*invigorating air*” of Sutton Park and before going back to Birmingham by train, many people visited the Museum. During the evening a man was seen to steal money and the police were sent for. When two policemen came to arrest the offender, the mob turned against the officers. Glasses and jugs were thrown, and windows were broken. One troublemaker was arrested, and another ran across the Dam into the Dog. From here he was taken to the jail. As he was escorted to prison the crowd abused the police officers.

Several letters to the Sutton News complained of the unruly crowds coming out of Birmingham at Bank Holiday time and pointed out that it was totally inadequate to have only two police officers responsible for law and order in Sutton Coldfield.

A little earlier that year in the Sutton News of January 12th, 1878, we had happier news from the Museum.



*Museum Public House taken from Old Photographs of Sutton Coldfield,
compiled by Marian Baxter, pub Alan Sutton, 1994*

"The Publicans of Sutton have been going in of late for a little display of rivalry, which must be highly gratifying to the gas companies began with the Rev. W.C.Riland Bedford's wedding, when stars and feathers were the order of the day and gas jets were as common as petrified Kidneys in our street. The display at the Museum Tavern on that occasion was rather a failure--- but a day or two afterwards, when his rivals in trade had returned to their normal state of darkness, the Museum burst into a blaze of light, which has since been well sustained, thanks to a more intelligent appreciation of the law of supply and demand."

Visitors to Sutton enjoyed visiting the Museum where to quote Mr. Douglas Jones *"the hotel provided a sandwich and a glass of ale for 3d (about 1 1/2p), plain teas for 8d (4p) or with ham and beef 1/- (5p)"*. There actually was a museum which contained a large collection of birds, animals, reptiles and fishes. There were also gardens with *"summer arbours and a large green for dancing"*. This was the Museum of the 1870s and 80s. By the time I knew it, in the 1950s, it appeared, from the outside at any rate, to be a very dreary place and I did not hear anyone regretting its demolition in 1971.

Throughout the 1880s building continued steadily and from time to time the newspapers announced that yet another Parade shop had opened. The first one, on May 15th, 1880 has already been mentioned. Here are some others-: August 28th, 1880. W. Crisp. Boot and Shoe Stores. Sewing machines to sell or hire. April 30th, 1881. Dunn Brothers. Merchant Taylors. Malvern House. February 11th, 1882 A.J Rodway. Tailor and Hatter. June 20th, 1885. F. Harrison. Butcher. Ann Higgs Fruiterer and Greengrocer. Late of Station Street. July 4th, 1885 P Bennett. Boot and Shoe Warehouse. August 8th, 1885. J Frank Parr. China Glass and Earthenware. All at Birmingham prices.

Many visitors from Birmingham liked to buy *"souvenirs of Sutton"* to take home and J.F. Parr advertises these on the cutting shown from the 1890 Guidebook. By 1888 at least twenty businesses had opened on the Parade. At A.J.Rodways a dress suit cost 63/-. J. Pugh offered tea at 2/- per pound and at Eastman's one could be roasting cuts of beef for 6d per pound. At Christmas time tradesmen vied with one another in making their shops attractive, although to our eyes their efforts would have seemed rather unsophisticated. For Christmas 1885 Mr. W. Evans purchased the prime fat beast from the Christmas Show. This beast was owned by H.R.H the Prince of Wales, and Mr. Evans was requested by Sandringham House to provide rump steak for the Royal

Household. At Christmas time in 1889 “*no less than six hundred letters were posted after 6 pm on Christmas Eve.*” The shops were decorated with “*delightful displays*” and the Sutton and Erdington Times (which had come in place of the Sutton Coldfield News) felt that the Christmas display was greater than ever before. Shops were closed on Boxing Day and Thursday afternoon closing had begun in 1887. (at first shops closed at 4 pm.)

As the Parade developed the focal point of the town began to move from High Street and Mill Street until the Parade itself became the centre of Sutton Coldfield. Not only were shops developed during the 1880s. On November 24th, 1888 the first veterinary surgeon commenced practice on the Parade. This was Mr F.G. Warmington and his surgery was held at 21, Parade. During epidemics such as Scarlet Fever, he was called upon to test milk sold at local farms and dairies, in case this might be the source of infection.

Queen Victoria’s Golden Jubilee was held during June 1887. The Parade was decorated with “*streamers garlands and mottoes.*” As a more lasting reminder of the Queens Golden Jubilee it was decided that a Wesleyan Methodist Church should be built on the Parade and the building can still be seen today, at the junction with Newhall Street. Tenders were offered, and Mr. Simons of Aston was chosen as the builder. The Mayor, Alderman J.B.Stone, laid the foundation stone on September 10th 1887 and the opening service in the new chapel was held on April 2nd, 1888. The building cost £1675 of which £800 had been raised before the foundation stone was laid. At the opening service every one of the 300 seats was filled, the Mayor attended, and collections amounted to £58-17s. A public tea was also arranged, and a large profit made from it.

One of my older friends attended the Wesleyan Church during the 1930s and was very fond of it. She was sorry when it ceased being a church in 1937 and became our Public Library. As a library I remember it well in 1950s/60s. In the basement the W.E.A Sutton Branch was formed and from this developed our local history group and my work on Sutton Parade.

Although building had developed extensively by the end of the 1880s, footpaths and adequate sanitation had not kept pace with the development. In 1878 at the very start of the development, a letter to the Sutton News from a Birmingham visitor complains of filthy smells within 200 yards of the Town Hall in Mill street and compares the invigorating air of the park with the unhealthy state of the town.

In January 1882 a letter to the Sutton News complained generally of the poor state of roads and footpaths. *"There is hardly a street in Sutton that is in a creditable state. The footpaths for the most part are laid with those old-fashioned "petrified kidneys" (cobble stones) upon which it is almost impossible to walk. Wading deep through the mud in the horse road is far preferable to walking on the cobble stones of the foot path. In these days of progress Sutton seems to have lagged behind."*

Even at the time of the Golden Jubilee in 1887 the Parade came in for criticism, *"One of the most unsightly streets of the borough – a disgraceful state. The wasteland opposite Mr. Evans shop is now a receptacle for all kinds of rubbish – it could be converted into a nice crescent with a fountain and seats."*

In 1888 the Sutton and Erdington Times draws attention to the inconvenience experienced by tradespeople and public in there being no properly defined footpath along the Parade. Sutton Coldfield Borough Council (first formed in 1886) was planning to kerb, channel and pave many streets, including the Parade. Cement and concrete footpaths were planned on both sides of the Parade *"except for the line of lime trees."* By Easter 1888 it was noted that the Parade had been greatly improved by the rails being moved further back, thus widening the path under the trees.

This did nothing to improve the standard of sanitation. Between 1840 and 1890 the population had risen from 3,684 to 8,615 and the old means of sanitation, cess pits and pools, were now a source of danger from disease. On September 22nd, 1888 the rate payers on the Parade *"have taken the initiative and made a move towards getting the footpath in front of their shops thoroughly repaired before winter sets in. The condition of the foot path from the Museum Hotel to Maney Bridge the subject of a petition by the twenty-two ratepayers of the right side of the Parade - WCs should first be installed and then the asphalt pavement laid"*. There would then be no need, to break up the pavement again, in order to lay sewer pipes.

In June 1889 there were still complaints that *"in the most populous part of the town quite twenty houses are not connected to the main sewer"* and *"improvements on the lower part of the Parade are a long time on hand"*. In September 1889 the road past the Dog was left unfinished because a system of drainage was required.

Nevertheless by the end of 1889 it seemed possible to say “*the sanitary condition of the town is now better,*” while the 1890 Guide Book pointed out that the Death Rate compared very favourably with the rest of the country- 10.78 in 1000 as compared with the national figure of 17.8

Two Parade Shopkeepers

Miss Harpur lived at 52 Parade from her birth in 1889 until 1909 or 1910 when she left Bedfordshire. She thinks that her parents probably took 52 Parade between 1892 and 1895. The business was run by her mother and known as The Parade Hosiery Stores. Miss Harpur can remember that there was an attic and a basement in her home. As she looked out of the attic window at the front of the shop, she could see Yew Tree Cottages on the other side of the Parade. She also remembers seeing “The Ragged Robbins” coming along the Parade. This was the name given to poor children who were given the treat of an outing from their homes in Birmingham to Sutton Park. The only car in Sutton in her early childhood was owned by Mr. Wodhams the grocer from 42, Parade. Mr. and Mrs Wodhams were friends of Miss Harper’s parents and she feels that she may have ridden in this car, which was a French one, to visit the Wodham’s other shop in Mere Green.

Her schooldays were spent at a private school in Manor Road, run by the Misses Baguley. There, she said, they learned to dance and play the piano, in addition to the basic subjects.

She and her three brothers and one sister often played in the Park and by the Ebrook, which ran at the bottom of some of the Parade gardens at the back of the shops. The Harpur children all enjoyed fishing and Miss Harpur recalls dropping a jar of minnows on the pavement on the Parade. A shopkeeper came out to brush up glass and minnows. This made her remember, as she told the story that each shopkeeper always brushed the pavement near the shop and also kept it clear on snowy days. Winters seemed colder in her childhood and she remembers playing on the ice in the Park and wearing a muff.

The Harpur family attended the Wesleyan Chapel on the Parade and Miss Harpur went there to Sunday School.

She can remember going to the Cinema in what was the Town Hall in Mill Street and seeing Harold Lloyd in a film.

W.H. Smiths was next door at 54 Parade and remained so until it was demolished in 1973. In the picture post card, which Miss Harpur kindly lent me, this shop could be seen, and also Mrs. Harpur, wearing black outside her own shop.

When Miss Harpur left Sutton, Harpurs Hosiery Stores was sold to Mr. H.L. Botteley himself a member of the Methodist Church. In the 1930 Guidebook it is still known as Harpurs, although Mr. Botteley was still the owner. During 1952 Miss Harper returned to live in Sutton and was invited to look round her old home once again in the 1970s, before it was demolished, to make way for the Gracechurch Centre. From information kindly given by Mr. John Dodd we can see inside a typical Parade shop. Although 102 Parade was built at a fairly late date in the development, sometime between 1902 and 1913, it is similar in construction to the rest.

“The buildings on the West side of the Parade were built as shops with living accommodation for the shopkeeper. In the case of 102 Parade this consisted of kitchen and larder below pavement level but with some daylight filtering down, from the panes of glass fronting the street below the stage of the shop windows, and also the glass tiles of the entrance to the shop. To the rear of these two rooms was a dining room with French windows looking out on to a small bricked yard containing a coal house and W.C. On this level there was also a scullery with a staircase leading up to the shop at Parade level, and further to the first-floor sitting room and landing, from which a further staircase led up to the second floor, containing two attic bedrooms.”

Mr. George Dodd re-opened 102 Parade as an ironmonger's on 31st May 1919, following his army service during the Great War. The shop had been previously had been run by a Mr. Walker, but on the outbreak of war in 1914 he closed his ironmonger's business. During the War 102 Parade was used as a soldier's canteen, mainly for the benefit of troops camped in Sutton Park.

Mr. George Dodd rented the premises from Mr. C. C. Fillmore at £13.18s.0 per Quarter. In 1944 the United Kingdom Provident Institution acquired the Freehold, which in 1869 had been owned by Captain Somerville. On the 25th March 1963 the 94-year lease which he had granted, ran out. “Dodd's Ltd” continued very successfully, as a tenant of U.K.P.I, which still owns the

freehold of Gracechurch Centre. In February 1964 Mr. George Dodd died, but his son carried on the business which celebrated its own Golden Jubilee in 1969, and still continues in the new premises in Gracechurch Centre.

Just as Miss Harpur was able to tell us of her friends the Wodhams at 42 Parade, Mr. John Dodd has been able to tell us of some of his relations, also Parade shopkeepers . At 82 Parade, his great aunt Pheobe Dodd established Dodd's Drapery Stores. In 1915 she sold the business to a Mr. Palmer. His widow carried on after his death and on her retirement sold it to Mrs J Simpson wife of the owner of the cooked meat shop next door. She continued in business until the building of Gracechurch Centre.

I remember Dodd's Drapery Stores very well as a customer and recollect going up to the attic as part of the shop. The old Sutton lady who knew the Old Pie Shop remembered it, probably in the days of great aunt Phoebe Dodd. She could buy a dress there for 1/11 and a packet of pins for a farthing. When the closing down sale was held prior to the demolition for Gracechurch to be built Dodd's Drapery Stores provided passers-by with a smile, for various very old fashioned under-garments, such as combinations and sturdy corsets, appeared in the 1970s shop window display. I do not know if they were ever sold. The very last items were flags and bunting left from some previous Coronation or Jubilee. I laughed then but in 1977 wished I had taken advantage of the sale to provide decorations for Hill West School's celebrations in honour of Queen Elizabeth II's Silver Jubilee.

An interesting Great Uncle of Mr. John Dodd's was Henry Massey. He opened a tobacconist's business at 119 Parade in the early 1900s, when he returned from service in the Royal Navy as a Petty Officer. In those days it was the custom for sailors to scrub the teak decks of the men-of-war in bare feet and using long-handled deck scrub. Harry Massey used to scrub the doorstep and pavement outside his shop every morning, in bare feet, following navel tradition. In 1914 he was recalled to the fleet and the tobacconist's shop changed hands and was subsequently called Wettons, by which family it was still owned in the 1940 directory.

In this section we have been able to see something of the homes of the Parade shopkeepers and to meet some of them and their families, thanks to the kind interest of Miss Harper and Mr. John Dodd.

The Parade in the 1890s and until the end of Queen Victoria's reign.

In the "Register of building plans deposited" we are able to see a record of building dating from 1886, when the Borough of Sutton Coldfield was first formed. There are no records still in existence from the days of the Warden and Society, which governed Sutton prior to 1886.

(The order of building, shown on cream card 4 which has been lost) does not correspond with the order of shops listed on the Parade in the 1900 directory, but it was not unknown for a tradesman to move to new Parade premises. Also, many shopkeepers rented premises from someone else, whose name would be the one to appear in the Register. There are also additions and alterations to existing buildings. The Register does give us the impression of the steady development of an increasingly popular business area.

A wider variety of services was coming available. On April 12th, 1890 a lending library, containing more than 2000 volumes, was opened on the Parade, jointly owned by Mrs Edwards and Mr. S. Taylor.

Mr. C. Coombes has opened a Dining Room and confectioner's on July 5th, 1890, while at Cambridge House John Biddle started a Haircutting and Shaving Saloon, on July 19th Mr. W.W. Sudbury also advertised his services as a carrier during 1890.

During 1891 John Ayer announced the opening of a Shirt and Hosiery Establishment.

The Parade in the 1890s (cont.)

He had shirts for sale at prices ranging from 1/- to 6/6. He pointed out that he closed at 4pm on Thursdays. (the original "early closing").

On June 28th a Pianoforte and Music Warehouse-Harston's - was opened at 72 Parade. Organs and Pianofortes were offered for sale, or on the Hire Purchase system. A Gothic American Organ was offered at £4. 17. 6d or 5/- monthly, and a Frame Pianoforte for 16 guineas or 36 monthly payments of 16/6.

Also, in June 1892 a “home” for children was to be opened, but this did not happen. By August 1892 a “home for rest” for females too ill to work was opened, to provide them with rest and a change of air. In a rather humorous account of “progress” in the Royal Town, a book entitled “*The Sutton Coldfield and Erdington Chronicle*” for 1896 states, “*We now have an establishment for the sale, hire and repair of bicycles, a van for the removal of furniture, and at the commencement of the New Year, as a finishing touch to our progress, or rather moving off, we have a funeral establishment.*” This last is presumably referring to S.J. Bastable who is listed as an Undertaker in the 1900 directory, at 62 Parade. Various Parade shopkeepers or members of their families appear from time to time in the weekly Sutton Coldfield and Erdington Times. In August 1891 we read of Mr. F G Warmington, the Vet, judging horses and ponies plying for hire in the Park, and in October 1892 we read of Mr. Warmington’s wedding.

In January 1892 we read of Emily Rodway, B.H. Rodway and Alice Wort receiving Sunday School prizes, while in 1893 Emily Rodway Lizzie Steventon, Polly Higgs, Alice Higgs received prizes for good school attendance, as did Harry Bastable.

On one occasion in January 1892, we read of a group of Parade shopkeepers being taken to court. “*Ann Higgs, Louis (Lewis) Bayliss, John Haynes, John Frank Parr, George Stokes Evans and Henry Salt all of the Parade, were summoned for not clearing snow from in front of their shops.*” On Sunday January 17th after a snowfall during the night, the defendants had not cleared the pavement by 12 noon although it had been cleared by Monday morning. These were the first prosecutions to be brought under the byelaws, and all the cases were dismissed. The prosecution of these Parade shopkeepers aroused angry letters to the Sutton and Erdington Times, complaining that respectable and hardworking trade people should suffer the disgrace of appearing in court for such a trivial reason.

During the 1890s there was a great deal of discussion about the future of Sutton gasworks. Since 1854 this had been owned by the Sutton Coldfield Gas Light and Coke Company, but with the increase in demand because of increased population since the coming of the railways, the Company did not see its way to expand. £4000-£6000 would be needed to finance improvements. The Sutton Coldfield Borough Council was to be given first refusal and in May 1891 was offered the gasworks at the cost of £20000. In September the Council authorized the gas committee to appoint a competent valuer to advise them

about purchasing the undertakings of the Gas Company. In January 1892 the possibility of Birmingham supplying gas was considered, but *“gas could be supplied as cheaply if the Corporation (i.e. Sutton) took over. Gas consumers have little goodwill towards Birmingham.”* Meetings about the purchase of the gasworks were held in all schools. The Reverend Riland Bedford was opposed to the idea of Sutton Corporation taking over the gasworks because of the expense involved.

On September 29th, 1892 the Gasworks were dismantled and the affairs of the Gas Company were voluntarily wound up. *“In future gas will be supplied by the Birmingham Corporation. On October 12th, 1892 “the Gas Company died a natural death”*said the Sutton Coldfield and Erdington Times.

1895 is remembered especially for its very severe winter.

“ The year has been chiefly remarkable for the long and severe frost which occurred during the months of January and February, and the gale of wind of unusually high velocity which swept over the district on Sunday March 24th. In Sutton Park alone 635 trees were destroyed. The frost commenced on 28th December 1894, and continued with more or less severity until the close of February.”

On January 10th the highest temperature for the day was 10 degrees Fahrenheit, 22 degrees of frost. In January and February 1895, the mean temperature for the month was below freezing point. Snow and Frost were registered in London on May 25th.

The Sutton and Erdington Times of March 30th, 1895 reported *“a gale of unprecedented Fury”* On the Parade the centre pinnacle of the Wesleyan Chapel was blown down. Mr. Byron a tailor on the Parade was in bed when the chimney stack fell into his room. Although the furniture was destroyed, he escaped with a bruise on his wrist. Throughout the whole of Sutton, 50 chimney pots were blown off and 2000 trees uprooted.

Skating was enjoyed on Spade Mill Powell’s Pool and fees were charged, to collect money for the poor. Poor people suffered very badly from the extreme cold. Soup, bread and coal were distributed to help poor and unemployed

people. Many birds such as rooks, wagtails and larks came right into gardens to seek for food. Attendance at schools was badly hit, for the snow was almost impassable, especially for the younger children.

During 1897 the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria was celebrated. Discussions among the tradesmen began on May 1st with a meeting in the Old Dog. Mr. C. Felton was chairman and many other Parade trades people were there. Mr. Davidge was appointed Hon. Secretary and £6 was promised immediately an ox-roasting was planned to be held near Town School, on Jubilee Day, June 22nd. Mr. Thickbroom said that he would give a quantity of wood for the fire. In the Park, Sports and a Maypole Dance were to be held. Thanksgiving services were to be held in all the churches.

The Sutton Coldfield and Erdington Chronicle describes the Jubilee celebrations. *“The town itself presented a very festive appearance. Looking up the Parade to the top of Mill Street, especially later in the day, when the road was thronged with gaily dressed people, decorated vehicles and flower bedecked bicycles, the sight was an extremely pretty and picturesque one”*

On June 26th, 1897 The Sutton and Erdington Times reported that Jubilee Day started rather cloudily but the sun shone later. *“Coming to the Parade there was scarcely a shop which was not decorated, lines of flags and greenery running across the street, notably at the shops of Messrs. Salt, Pugh, Davidge, Smith, Wheeley, Clowes, Watton, Harpur, Harrison, Higgs, Parr, Glover, Archer and Hall, the latter having a very large banner with the words An open Bible the glory of Victoria’s reign.”*

The very next year, in 1898 The Royal Show was held in Four Oaks Park and brought many visitors to the town. On one day alone 26560 people passed through the turnstiles. On the Wednesday of the show, it was visited by the Prince of Wales. Once again streets were decorated and a Mr. Holdcroft of Park Road, brought honour to the town by winning second prize at the show with his dray horse.

In spite of all the interest and excitement the Royal Show eventually made a loss, due to poor weather and unsatisfactory railway arrangements, but it must have brought great benefit to Sutton’s tradespeople from such an influx of visitors.

Shortly before the Royal Show took place an interesting sale was held on the Parade *"six dwelling houses known as Yew Tree Cottages to be sold on May 25th 1898 at 6.30pm. Amounting together to about £78 per annum-let at very old-fashioned rentals. Property has frontage of 37 yards 2ft 4ins and contains 1570 sq. yards of land. Property is situated in the centre of the business part of Sutton Coldfield. Set well back from the road to allow for the erection of shops, thus increasing value four or five times."*

There was a good attendance at the auction. Bidding started at £500 and went up to £1300. Mr. F. Sampson of Maney was ultimately the buyer. Yew tree Cottages were not actually demolished until 1937, to make way for Burtons Menswear shop, which still stands there today.

In 1899 *"a light railway"* was suggested with a route passing through the Parade and terminating in High Street. This was strongly opposed. *"Sir- a light railway indeed, why it will be nothing more than a common tramway.--- I sincerely hope that ---all will combine to prevent our beautiful main road being converted into a so-called "railway." There is no public demand for "trams."*- Arthur L. Crockford."

The leading article in the Sutton and Erdington Times said. *"The tram question – one argument in favour is that Sutton is the only suburb of Birmingham not served by a tram route! Shades of Vesey and Hartopp" Sutton a suburb of Birmingham! Not long since letters to that hardware town were addressed" Birmingham near Sutton Coldfield."*

By October 1899 the threat of War began to be heard in the Sutton and Erdington Times. *"Boers fighting strength" "Transvaal crisis." "War would bring us no glory, and thousands of women widows and children fatherless."*

However, on October 21st, 1899 it was reported that *"a state of war exists between us and the Transvaal."* The Mayor set up a fund for relief of South African refugees and £210 - 12s was raised. In February 1900 six Sutton Volunteers were given a send-off as they left for the front. A Birmingham man wrote from the front to say of the Boar War, *"the task does not seem anything like the easy one the people at first thought."* In the Sanatorium in Sutton fifteen beds were set aside for wounded soldiers.

In spite of newspaper reports detailing events in the Boar War, it seemed rather remote to the people of Sutton. The Sutton News had once again come into

being, announcing its intention to report local news brightly. Cycling was becoming very popular, 33000 cycles passing through the Park gates during 1899. Bayliss's Cycle Stores on the Parade advertised "*Sutton Royal Cycles*" are made of the best materials money can buy.

"The motor car which we are assured is the vehicle of the future, seems to be nowhere, three cycle houses, but only one motor house established. But that may be only the beginning of great things."

"Sutton is growing fast. In 1899 plans were passed for 434 houses and 19 shops. However other trades may be affected by the War, the builder is flourishing like the green bay tree."

The coming of the telephone was also under discussion. In February 1900 it was reported. *"The wished-for telephone extension to Sutton is still hanging fire. The Highways Committee of the Town Council had an interview with Mr. Cotterell, the district manager of the National Telephone Company. Subscription to the telephone system is now so cheap that surely something can be done."* By 1901 Ann Higgs whose Parade fruiterers' shop had opened in 1885, included in her advertisement "*Telephone No: 1X1.*"

Electric lighting was also being considered, and the "*place in Riland Road*" (the disused gasworks) was being discussed as a possible electric lighting station. On March 10th, 1900 we read, *"Electric lighting is soon to come. It will cost £36000 approaching half the entire rateable value of the Borough. It may prove cheaper than gas in the long run and give prestige to the town."*

However, in January 1901, a light-hearted warning is given as far as the coming of electricity is concerned.

"Light electric is coming to S.C. It will be a great blessing and boon. But if certain you be. Just take a hint from me. Don't abandon gas meters too soon."

Nevertheless, on March 2nd, 1901 we read of "*The Forward Electrical Installation Co: - Parade. Electric wiring plants and wiring of every description tendered for and executed by experienced workmen.*"

During the 1890s the Parade seems to have leapt forward into modern times. Certainly, there are still complaints of disgraceful pavements, inadequate sanitation, reports of epidemics of scarlet fever diphtheria and typhoid, but the

mood is becoming modern. By the beginning of the 20th century the telephone is in Sutton, on the Parade. Mr Wodhams the grocer has a car, bicycles are all the rage and there is talk of electric lighting. High Purchase has made an appearance in the advertisements of at least one Parade shop. All familiar things to us today, and nearer to us than the Dam of 1850 when Mr. Twamley talks of the turnpike road.

On January 19th, 1901 the Sutton News reported “ *Her Majesty the Queen attains the age of George III and becomes the oldest monarch ever to reign over the United Kingdom, 81 years, 7 months, 25 days.* ” Very shortly afterwards on February 2nd, 1901, it was announced that Queen Victoria had died. The whole country mourned her death. On the Parade, the whole of the Wesleyan Chapel was draped in black. In the Memorial service held there in her honour the Reverend R.S. Armsby spoke of the Queen. “ *Great as she was as a Queen, she was even greater as a woman.* ”

With the Reverend R.S. Armsby we step forward into the 1940s, and the Sutton Coldfield of 1901, which mourned Queen Victoria, is linked with my own lifetime. For my husband during the 1940s there was a dearly loved retired minister who sometimes preached at Streetly Methodist Church. This minister was the Reverend R.S. Armsby, who had also conducted the memorial service to Queen Victoria at the Wesleyan Church on Sutton Parade.

With the ending of Queen Victoria’s reign, I end my detailed study of the early days of Sutton Parade. To go further in one study would, I feel, result in more information than anyone would want to read. Perhaps someone who reads as far as this in the story might like to continue it. There is so much still to record. Even as I write, the Parade is changing yet again, to become a traffic free area. As a conclusion to this study I would like to record one more important date in the Parade’s story.

Centenary Saturday (April 28th, 1979)

During the Autumn of 1978 I was studying the Sutton News on micro-film and reading once again the 1879 correspondence between S.J.H. and Keep it Dark about the naming of the Parade. I commented to Mr. Lea that the Parade first received its name in 1879 and he replied, “ *it’ll be your centenary next year then.* ”

This gave me the idea that I, like S.J.H. and Keep it Dark, should write to the Sutton News. Accordingly, I wrote an article on my study up to that time and Mr. Evans kindly took it to the Editor of the Sutton News. He was very interested to hear of the Parade's approaching Centenary, and in turn contacted the Sutton Coldfield Chamber of Trade to tell them about it. From there developed a delightful day of celebration which had its beginning in my study.

I was not involved in the hard work of organising the day fixed as convenient for the celebrations – April 28th – so I can describe it as an especially interested spectator.

I arrived shortly after 1.30pm outside the United Reformed Church. My husband and daughter went to look around while I waited for the little group of Hill West schoolgirls who were to take part in the procession. Between us their parents, their teacher Mrs. Carol Cooper, my daughter and myself, had helped them to appear as the Ladies of Long Lane – Victorian young ladies from Clarence Road, where Hill West School stands, and which was called Long Lane until 1895.

Luckily it was fine but rather cold, and the girls wore their 1979 coats until the last minute. There were people of all ages dressed in the costumes of 100 years ago, some like our own little group wore homemade costumes, others wore authentic Victorian clothes. A group of horse drawn vehicles attracted especial interest and brought up the rear of the procession in fine style.

The Ladies of Long Lane, with their banner, were placed immediately behind the Morris dancers, one of whom, Mr. Brian Mills had been a teacher at Hill West. He was very pleased to find a group of friends behind him.

At last we were ready to set off. I walked at a discreet distance with the procession carrying the girl's coats, so that I could share in their walk but not be conspicuous. We turned out of Brassington Avenue into the Parade, past the site of the Museum. The Morris dancers kept up a lively tune and a continuous dancing step which kept us all light-hearted. On we went down the Parade, past the place where Louis Bayliss had kept The Tripe House, past the piece of pavement where Mrs. Harpur stood, on the post card of more than seventy years before. The pavements now were packed with happy spectators, looking out for people they knew in the procession, or simply enjoying the cheerful, colourful scene. As I walked, I did not see one lout or hear one ugly word. Everyone was united in enjoyment of the Parade's Centenary Day.

On the way I looked across the Parade towards Frost's, the Chemists shop. From the upstairs windows shop assistants leaned out to wave excitedly down to the Procession below. They too were wearing the clothes of 100 years ago.

I had not imagined, when I wrote to tell the Sutton News of the Parade's Centenary, that it would lead to giving so many people so much pleasure, and what a happy feeling that was.

At last we turned back into Gracechurch Centre at the Manor Road end. Spectators mingled with people in fancy dress and all merged together into a huge crowd awaiting the announcement of the prize winners. There were people everywhere even perched on the multi-story car park. Everywhere that could be reached seemed to be covered with people. Our girls did not win a prize, but they were not disappointed. It had been exciting enough to dress up, take part in the procession, and have their photographs taken by the Sutton News. We listened and applauded as the prize winners were announced and squeezed their way forward to receive their prizes.

As I stood, hemmed in by the crowd, by Eames the Jeweller's, I saw Miss Harpur standing some way off, with her friends Mr. and Mrs. Tatlow. For me the story of the Parade had come full circle.

Miss Harpur, who as a little girl had looked out on to Yew Tree Cottages from her attic window, now stood with her friends of 1979, enjoying in the new Gracechurch Centre, the Celebration of the Parade's hundred years.

M.M.Frankling.
Completed 1981

I should like to thank the people who have so kindly helped me in this study, especially the following - :

Mr. Norman Evans without whose tremendous knowledge of local history I should never have begun, and without whose continuing and infectious enthusiasm I should certainly never have completed my study.

Mr. Roger Lea, Chief Librarian of Sutton Library, who has helped us all so patiently, and has made the valuable resources of the local history collection readily available.

My daughter Christine Frankling, whose practical help has been invaluable. (She has mounted all the thirty-one display cards and has also contributed the Centenary Saturday photographs on White cards 4 and 5. (lost))

Without the kind help of Miss Harpur and Mr. John Dodd my study would have lacked much in first-hand information.

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