

# South Mimms, A Time Capsule by William Marsterson, Jan 2017.



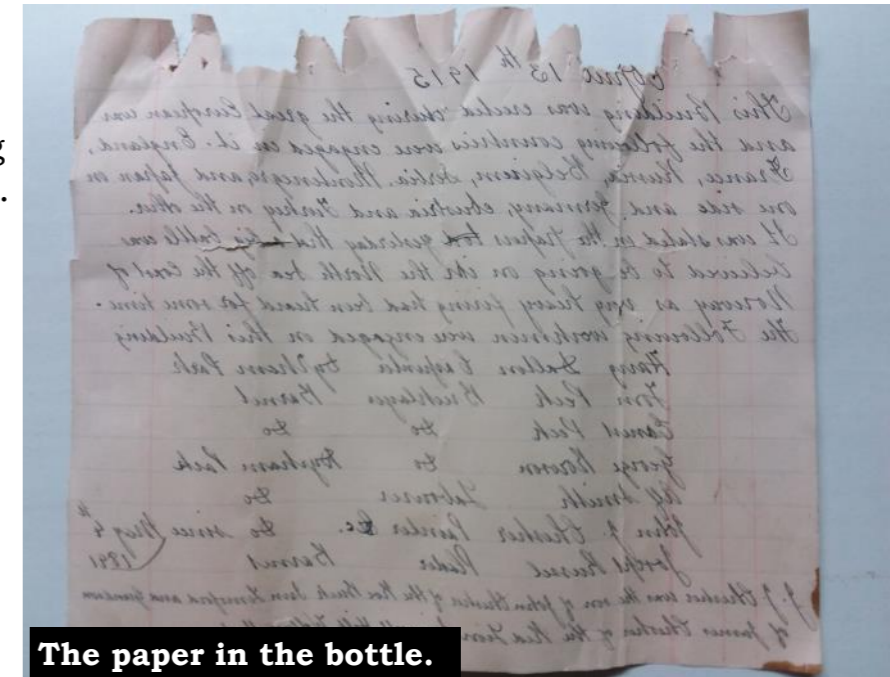
The Time Capsule bottle

In South Mimms Village Hall there is a memorial plaque on the wall opposite the doors, to the men who fought in the Great War (WWI) and to those who did not return. The plaque is headed "South Mimms Mission Hall". It is all that remains (in public) of a building erected to provide a place for religious worship in the village, if perhaps St. Giles was far too Catholic for some people's taste. And maybe still is!

The Mission Hall behind 62-64 Blanche Lane, had been built on the initiative of the village postmaster, Mr. Hollis, who lived in no. 60, and ran the shop and post office next door. It ceased to be a Mission Hall in 1955, when it was sold by the successors of the London City Mission. The terms of the sale included restrictive covenants: it should only be used for domestic purposes and should never again be used as a place of worship. It has been a workshop, a recording studio and a store for a shopfitter. He sold it, and his cottage, 60 Blanche Lane, to me. We created a home for my Mother, and a flat to let out, with garages below.

I had known that Mr. Hollis, the Postmaster, had persuaded Captain Trotter, of Dyrham Park, to put up the funds for building the Mission Hall. But when was it built? Here's where the time capsule comes in. A time capsule is a container (box, bottle or whatever) containing something which tells the finder about the date and context of something.

Recently work had to be done on the roof and guttering on the south side of the Mission Hall, from the garden of no. 58: the Mission Hall's south wall is the north wall of that garden. In the process of removing some tiles a bottle was discovered. Inside was a rolled up piece of paper, with beautiful handwriting. It reads:



The paper in the bottle.

**"April 13th 1915**

***This Building was erected during the great European war and the following countries were engaged in it. England, France, Russia, Belgium, Serbia, Montenegro and Japan on one side and Germany, Austria and Turkey on the other. It was stated in the papers yesterday that a big battle was believed to be going on in the North Sea off the coast of Norway as very heavy firing had been heard for some time. [not Jutland, as that was 1916]***

***The Following workmen were engaged on this Building***

<b><i>Harry Dalton</i></b>	<b><i>Carpenter</i></b>	<b><i>Dyrham Park</i></b>
<b><i>Tom Peck</i></b>	<b><i>Bricklayer</i></b>	<b><i>Barnet</i></b>
<b><i>Ernest Peck</i></b>	<b><i>Do.</i></b>	<b><i>Do.</i></b>
<b><i>George Brown</i></b>	<b><i>Do.</i></b>	<b><i>Dyrham Park</i></b>
<b><i>Alf Smith Labourer</i></b>	<b><i>Do.</i></b>	
<b><i>John J. Chesher</i></b>	<b><i>Painter &amp; c.</i></b>	<b><i>Do.</i></b>
<b><i>Joseph Russel</i></b>	<b><i>Plaster</i></b>	<b><i>Barnet</i></b>

The writer must be Mr. Chesher, because he gives so much circumstantial information for that name. There are several Cheshers buried in St. Giles graveyard, if they are related to the person who wrote the note is unclear.

It's a fascinating document. The details about WWI; the names of Captain Trotter's staff who he employed on building the Hall; and the decision to leave a record of the building's construction hidden away in the roof. And that is where it has been returned to, along with another bottle, with a note about what happened to the Mission Hall subsequently.

This was not the first Mission Hall (or rather, room) in South Mimms. At the back of the Shop and Post Office is an extension, which served as a Mission Room and some may remember as a butcher's shop, the Shop and Post Office closed in 1975.