



A 'Ghost sign' on Hamilton Road, South Wimbledon



The original civic centre still recognisable in central Wimbledon



Ornate chimneys in Raynes Park

Sign of the times

It's not often you can claim to have spotted a real 'ghost', but if you're looking for the right type there's a chance you could catch them on film!

'Ghost-hunting' for examples of faded wall art, advertisements and street furniture from back in the day is gaining popularity with a number of locals who see the past time as a way of getting to know their ancestors and the way they lived.

Clive Yelf, a long-term resident of Morden and staff member at Merton Council, has been out on the hunt for the examples of local history in South West London for the last four years.

"It's about picking up on all those threads of history that are all around us," says Clive. "It's archaeology that's not buried and you get a sense of the environment and area that you're walking through."

Clive's love for ghost-sign spotting started as a boy when he walked past an old sign on his way to school everyday in Merton. Over the years he watched it deteriorate and realised that what he was seeing was a piece of history disappear before his eyes. Now, thanks to modern technology, Clive and many other locals have started photographing these living pieces of local history before they disappear. "There's so much out there," says Clive. "The nameplates of buildings, mosaics in shop fronts, hand painted designs and advertisements surround us everyday.

Every now and then they peep through from behind new exteriors and give you an awareness of your environment and how things change and develop over the years."

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You can discover many of these archaeological treasures for yourself by visiting the Faded London website www.faded-london.blogspot.com. The site hosts photos of the many different ghost-signs spotted in south west London so far. Or you can download a map with the exact location of each piece allowing you to go and take a closer look. Check the site regularly for updates and also for information on a treasure hunt with a difference taking place this summer in Wimbledon. ■

Merton heritage on the move

Merton Council's Heritage Centre has moved home to join up with Merton Local Studies Centre and ensure that all residents can make the most of the historical resources, exhibitions and events provided by the two services.

The new Heritage and Local Studies Centre is now open six days a week on the second floor of Morden Library, improving the overall service to suit residents' needs.

Cabinet member for community services Councillor Maurice Groves said: "Merton has an extremely rich heritage and many famous people, including Lord Nelson, have lived here. We want to make sure as many people as possible have the opportunity to find out all about Merton's history and the new Heritage and Local Studies Centre will mean we will be able to do just that."

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For more information about Merton's history visit our website www.merton.gov.uk/history

