Roman/Saxon period
Mitcham was identified as a settlement long before the Roman occupation of Britain. By the 7thC, it was the site of a thriving Saxon settlement. It is thought the inhabitants may have been encouraged to settle in the area to protect the approaches to the city of London from sea-borne raids.
Settlements in the late Saxon and early Norman periods centred on the current greens – Upper Green (Fair Green) and Lower Green (Gordon Green) which even then were central to road networks (tracks) leading to surrounding villages.

Medieval/Tudor period
By the 11thC, Mitcham had large manor estates in Mitcham held by tenants of King Edward the Confessor. These Saxon landowners were displaced by Norman nobles rewarded with English estates for their part in the Conquest.

From the mid 13thC there is evidence that wealthy merchants and bankers from the City of London were seeking estates in Mitcham, as a means of attaining the higher status of landowners. Thus by the 17thC Mitcham was becoming renowned for its good company. Also in its favour was its closeness to London and Royal Thames, and its reputation for fresh air and pure water – both scarce in Tudor London. By the end of the 16thC many notable people had estates or land in Mitcham – too many to mention here, but important enough for Queen Elizabeth I to visit on five separate occasions.

By the 1740C Mitcham was a prosperous agricultural village with open fields in step cultivation, extensive commons and water meadows. By the mid 1790C Epson had become a Spa much favoured by Londoners. The road system had been improved and Mitcham was a busy thoroughfare for travellers and coaching parties with many inns with stable facilities for horses.

Georgian period
Mitcham became better known in the 18thC for the cultivation of hedges and ornamental hedges which had actually started in the 1740C but increased on an industrial scale through innovative methods used by Ephraim Potter and William Moore. By 1802 nearly 500 acres of land in Mitcham supported hedge growing. At the same time, textile processing industries in the River Wandle area with mills, printing and dye works were flourishing in the increased demand for coloured and printed fabrics, alongside flour paper and small mills. Transport for goods and coal fed the various industries was a problem, so the Surrey Iron Railway, the first public railway in the world, was opened in 1803 – running from Wandsworth, through Mitcham to Croydon.

Victorian period
The mid-Victorian period saw Mitcham thriving. The local gentry were active in philanthropic activities to alleviate the lot of the poor. Mitcham Cricket Club, the oldest in the country, could hold a team to take on all comers. The annual Mitcham Fair (to be chartered by Queen Elizabeth I) was looked forward to by everyone. Gypsies attracted by the Fair and employment in the herb gardens came to Mitcham in dozens and many settled in the Pippis Bridge area in what is still known as Redden Village. But Mitcham had been shifted by the expanding railway network, and was losing its popularity amongst the wealthier classes, affecting indeed, more than the fair share of other industries – paint, varnish and linoleum manufacturers employing poison processes. A gasworks was established in 1849, and even the smell from the hundred or so factories and workshops was becoming overpowering. Change was inevitable.

20th Century
The old ecclesiastical parishes of the Church of England were being divided into smaller parishes, plus the growth of the Free Church and Non-Conformist movement saw other churches and chapels springing up. New parishes were formed to serve the spiritual needs of the many new estates being developed across Mitcham. In the first decade of the 20thC the population doubled, reaching 25,000. The growth of civic awareness, and the increasing complexity of local government responsibilities, called for an advance in administrative status, and the area of the ancient medieval parish was created the Urban District of Mitcham in 1915. Mitcham was granted Borough status in 1934, and in 1965 joined Wandsworth and Merton to become the London Borough of Merton. From 1995, Mitcham joined the armed forces campaign, a move that saw wide support from the local population.

Historically, Mitcham has always had a reputation for money-making, and was always firm in its line to celebrate important occasions. In the 20thC Mitchamians continue to use any excuse to hold a celebration, and many events still take place throughout the year, including the Mitcham Stakes Fair and the Mitcham Carnival in June.

This leaflet has been written and produced by The Mitcham Society and LB Merton. Future Merton Team Civic Centres, London Road, Morden SM4 5DX
The Mitcham Society and McDonalds, Mitcham, from the proceeds of the sale of this leaflet
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Heritage Walks: Upper Mitcham – for the area, Lower Mitcham – local history
mitchamsociety@tgm.com
Heritage Walks – Lower Mitcham

Fair Green Maze
The maze with a dragon's head exit. Advertising a horse rated 3.5.

Site of GUTTERIDGE – Morden Hall Park
– Morden Hall Park, which was founded in 1707 was the original green roof above flat roofs, until the roofs were raised in 1702 and a flat roof was added above.

Site of THE FRESSES, Elwood Lane – Langley Mill
Langley Mill, a 19th-century mill, now a restaurant. It has a unique industrial heritage, having been the site of a silk mill until 1973, when it was converted into a restaurant. It is now a popular venue for weddings and events.

Site of THE FRESSES, WICKFORD LANE
Wickford Lane is a residential street in the south of the town, which was once the site of a 19th-century mill. The mill was demolished in 1973, and the site is now used as a car park. The lane is named after the mill.

Site of the ZON CHAPEL, BIRTHER SCHOOL
The Zon Chapel,Birthers School, was a 19th-century school that provided education for working-class children. It was closed in 1973, and the site is now used as a community centre.

Site of the ROSE COTTAGE – 13 Commonside East
Rose Cottage is a 19th-century cottage that was once part of a large estate. It was demolished in 1973, and the site is now a public garden.

THREE KINGS - Iced – 13 Commonside East
Iced is a 19th-century building that was once a public house. It was converted into a residential property in 1973, and the site is now used as a home.

Site of the BEEHIVE PH – 13 Commonside East
The Beehive PH is a 19th-century pub that was once a popular meeting place for locals. It was closed in 1973, and the site is now a private residence.

Site of the PROWLEGS, ROMAN WELL – Wool Road
Roman Wells is a 19th-century site that was once a Roman settlement. The site is now a public park.

END OF TERRACE FOLLY 
Folly Road is a 19th-century street that was once part of a large estate. The street is now a residential area.

DEE CITY FARM – Moniosk Farm
Moniosk Farm is a 19th-century farm that was once part of a large estate. It is now a residential property.

FAIR GREEN CAFE – Wool Road
Fair Green Cafe is a 19th-century cafe that was once a popular meeting place for locals. It was closed in 1973, and the site is now a public park.

Site of Figges Marsh Tollgate – Site of Figges Marsh
Figges Marsh Tollgate is an old tollgate that was once part of a 19th-century estate. The gate is now a public landmark.

Site of ST MARKS CHURCH OF ENGLAND ACADEMY
St Mark’s Church of England Academy is a 19th-century school that was once part of a large estate. It is now a residential property.

Site of the FAIR GREEN METHODIST CHURCH
The Fair Green Methodist Church is a 19th-century church that was once part of a large estate. It is now a residential property.