



MUSEUM

**NEWSLETTER**

**Issue 73**

**February 2011**

## 1. NEWSDESK

**Visits to the Museum** have picked up as the weather improved, with Sundays proving a popular day for people making a special visit to do research.

**Outreach** – a Lavender talk at Trellis House – see report on p 12 below.

### Events Past

The Volunteers Christmas Party proved a very successful and happy event with over 20 members and friends attending. Once again our sincere thanks to Mary for her wonderful spread of Christmas food and goody bags.

The Members New Year Dinner was once again held at Mamma Rosa Italian Restaurant at Merton Abbey Mills with 21 Members and friends enjoying a splendid meal at the same price as last year! Also shown here is a picture of Mamma Rosa in the snow, just the week before, to remind us how close we were to being cancelled!

### Events Present.

A guided tour of the new Wandsworth Museum in its new site in the old West Hill Library has just taken place on 22nd February. See report below on page 5.

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**Figure 1 New Year's Dinner at Mamma Rosa**



**Figure 2 Mamma Rosa in the snow, Christmas 2010**

## **Events Future.**

The next Volunteers Lunch Meeting will be on Wednesday March 23rd at 12.00 noon and no doubt Mary will be contacting you nearer the time about your menu choices. Also do come along with ideas about any visits you would like us to arrange for the summer.

## **Dates for your Diary**

- We shall once again be having a stall at the Morden Hall Park Country Fair from **30th April to 2nd May** inclusive and we really do need your help.
- The opening of the new WIM Exhibition will be on Saturday **June 11th**- more information in the next newsletter.
- Wimbledon Village Fair Saturday **June 18th** all day.
- The National Trust Green Day Out Sunday **July 17th** from 12.00 noon - 4.00pm.

## **Membership Subscription 2010 -2011**

A big thank you to everyone who has paid their subscriptions - a receipt is enclosed with this newsletter. A reminder slip is included for those who have not yet paid.

We do hope to see you at some of our spring/summer events.

S. Harris 16/2/11

## **MUSEUM UPDATES**

### **From our Curator**

This is the time of year when I begin to plan the new display for June. I am faced with the perennial problem of trying to fit a quart into a pint pot. We don't want to lose the information that is already on display but we want to show some fresh aspects of the river and its environs. Still we do seem to manage it each year but we soon may be looking for some elastic walls!

We have been given a display case left over from the River of Cloth project, so we can at last display a few more of the printing blocks. We were also given one of the panels produced by the schools. Eric is weather proofing it so that we can display it outside the museum when we are open, perhaps to attract passing trade.

### **Sunday Opening**

As many of you know we would like to open every Sunday afternoon, in this way we hope to raise our profile and encourage family visits at the weekend. We have already had several offers from volunteers but we would like a few more so the volunteers would only need to commit to one Sunday a month. So if you feel you would like to help please contact in the usual way. We do offer tea, coffee and biscuits-sometimes chocolate ones!

### **Latest on MLA**

The majority of the functions of the MLA (Museums Libraries and Archives) will be transferred to the ACE (Arts Council of England) by April 2012. MLA was set up and funded by the government to oversee museum development, accreditation and the Renaissance in the Regions among other things. Importantly for small museums like ours the MLA

has run courses and workshops free of charge. In the present financial climate I doubt this will continue. ACE will receive £46 million extra funding to carry out its new responsibilities. With amalgamations there is always a reduction in staff and the MLA employees have now been told they are "at risk" of redundancy. It is expected that the Museum of London will run the Museum Development Officers until the ACE takes over. It is presumed that ACE will decide how best to support the MDOs. This is good news for museums like ours with no museum trained staff as the support of MDOs like Kate Hebditch was vital to our Accreditation application. The takeover of MLA by ACE caused some concern as ACE is an Arts council and therefore not au fait with the running of a museum. In an attempt to allay some fears, Sir Andrew Motion, chairman of MLA, is to join the board of ACE in an advisory capacity.

Meg Thomas

### **Visit to Wandsworth Museum**

Fifteen of us visited the Wandsworth museum on 22nd of February. Sheila and I had been to the opening but this was a chance to see the museum now it was up and running. Andrew Leitch, the first director, has had to leave due to ill health and the director is now Ken Babour.

Lauren McCallum one of the four full time paid staff took us round the museum. The first room follows the history of Wandsworth as a time line from prehistoric times to the present day. Many of the items on display were all too familiar to us, nothing to do with the age of the group I'm sure. There are some very attractive water colours of Wandsworth past on display. Fortunately the documentation of these had been very well kept, making life easier for the staff, but many of the

items in storage were not so well listed so there are still some items yet to be displayed.

As it was half term there were some objects laid out on the floor for the children to look at. The items showed things that we use now, light bulb, mobile phone, ball point pen, walkman and shower gel, and equivalent items that were used in the past. The task for the children was to match the old and the new, dare I add it wasn't so straightforward for some of our



**Figure 3 The group assembling in the café, with a replica old style shop in the background. The museum shop itself was well stocked, and included our two joint publications with WVF**

group. Continuing the children theme the museum has a large education suite that can accommodate 60 children and has room for artefacts that the children can explore and clothes for role playing.

It also has an excellent model of a watermill made by Eric Shaw of course! The education room opens onto a grassed area that Lauren hopes to be able to use in the better weather. This is just a taster of what there is to see, it is well worth a visit and we all came away with a ticket that will now allow us free entry for a year. There is also a pleasant café, that you can get into without going into the museum, furnished we were told with tables and chairs from Youngs Brewery.

Meg Thomas

## **From the Archivist - Archive/Research**

We have had two significant additions to our resources this year.

One is a very comprehensive piece of research - Name Index to Textile Workers, Printers and Allied Trades – Mitcham compiled by Peter Cousins. This has been extracted from the Census records between 1841 and 1871, and complements the earlier work by John Wallace for Merton and Wimbledon.

Current address and place of birth is given in full for each person where available and an attempt has been made to give modern street equivalents where known. A description of each enumeration district of the census is also included.

It is available in print or as a CD.

Kindly donated by Peter McGow, we now have some V&A postcards depicting the designs of William Kilburn, a calico printer working at Wallington Bridge Mill in the late eighteenth century. He was notable for his achievement in obtaining copyright to prevent his designs being plagiarised. We hope to add more of these beautiful floral illustrations at a later date.

Alison & Jacqui

## **From the Editor - Some additional Updates**

### **Ravensbury Mill**

Litigation between LB Merton and the freeholders continues. Hopefully we will have something to report next newsletter.

## William Morris Gallery

The William Morris Gallery successfully bid for significant HLF funding for a major development in Walthamstow. Their plans look very exciting, and the image above is from the website of the GuM Partnership who are the designers responsible. Meg and Alison attended a launch party recently, which was not as informative as they had hoped, but we look forward to visiting this major new showcase once it is finished. See

**Figure 4 GuM's plans for the William Morris Gallery – see their website for detailed view**

[www.gum.uk.com/portfolio/projects-progress/william-morris-gallery](http://www.gum.uk.com/portfolio/projects-progress/william-morris-gallery)

## Mary and her Marmalade

Mary and I visited the Lakes again this year for the 2011 Worlds Original Marmalade Festival. I am pleased to report she received 2 Gold Awards, 2 Silver, and Bronze and a Highly



**Figure 5 Mary at Dalemain**

Commended. The competition is growing in importance, and she was seized on to have her photo taken officially to be added to the new archive of past winners - see photo.



**Figure 6 Looking out over Ullswater**

We had a day driving round the Lakes, so a gratuitous couple of photos to remind us all how stunning the scenery can be.

Mary will be bringing in a couple of boxes of her marmalade for the next Volunteers meeting, so everyone can have some of this year's vintage - all proceeds to the Museum.



**Figure 7 Ullswater**

## **FROM INDUSTRY TO LEISURE**

Okay folks I know I have nicked Meg's title for the current exhibition. I make no apology for it as I think the following fits this article well.

Inspired, or was it curiosity, by the piece on the Brixton Windmill in the last newsletter I started surfing the net one afternoon when I had nothing better to do. Up popped reference to the Wandle Valley Sewerage Board Railway. So what is this all about and where was it? First thoughts were that it was at Beddington Park and the sewerage works there. A little further research showed that the Wandle Valley Sewerage Board Railway was located in Merton but where?

The following Wednesday the question was posed to Alison to provide a map showing its location. She found a map that showed its location alongside the River Wandle between Wandle Park and Plough Lane. As it turned out I should have looked closer to home. The works turned out to be shown in a London A-Z I have from the late 1970's/early 1980's. Below is a copy of the page from the A-Z showing the sewerage works.

In addition the old sewerage works are also mentioned in the Wandle Trail Map: Plough Lane to Merton High Street. So what of the history of the sewerage works? The information below is from the London

Metropolitan Archives and refers to the Wandle Valley Main Drainage Authority.

**Administrative/Biographical history:** The sewage works in Byegrove

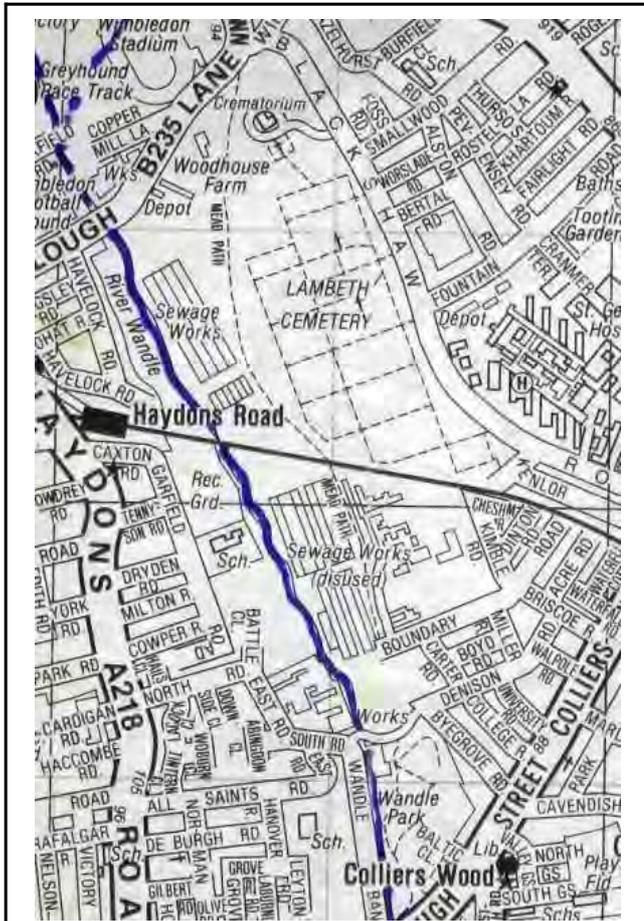


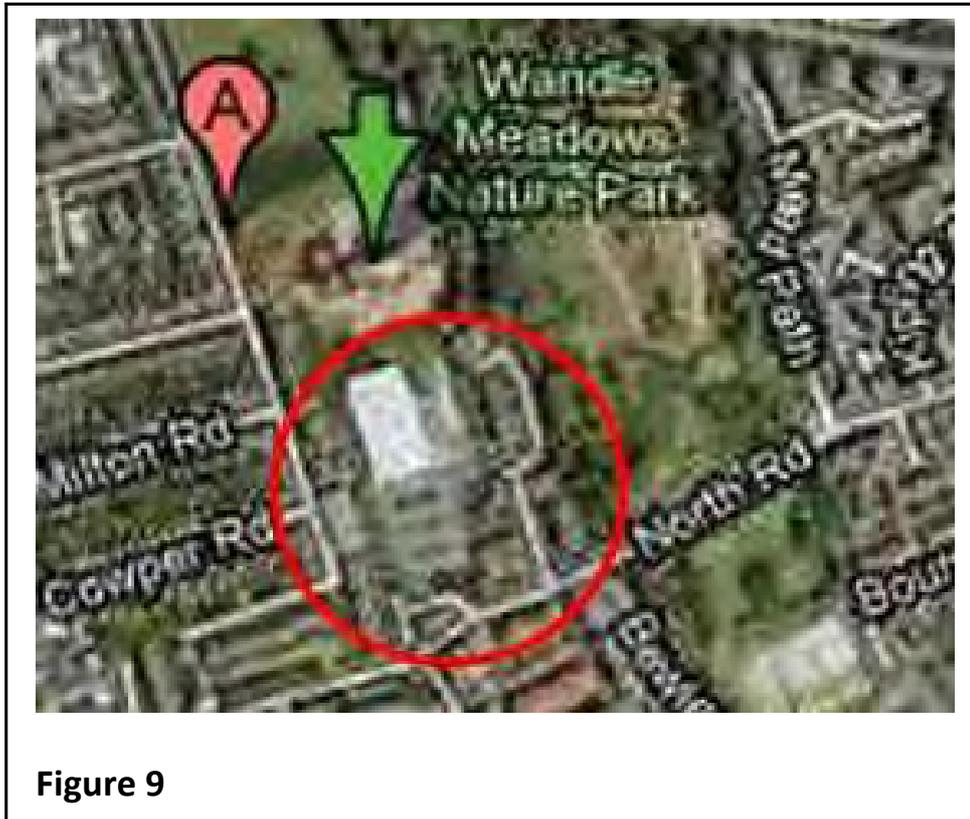
Figure 8

Road, Colliers Wood, were originally constructed by the Croydon Rural District Council to serve the northern part of its area. On 31 March 1915, this Authority ceased to exist, parts of its area being transferred to the rural districts of Epsom and Godstone and the remainder formed into the three urban districts of Beddington and Wallington, Mitcham, and Coulsdon and Purley. The parish of Morden had already been transferred from the Croydon rural district to the Merton urban district on 1 April 1913.

Following these changes, the three new urban districts together with the Merton and Morden Urban District Council decided to form a Joint Drainage Committee under Section 57 of the Local Government Act 1894 to manage the works and continue its services throughout the area hitherto served.

In 1916, by provisional order under Section 279 of the Public Health Act 1875, the Local Government Board created the Wandle Valley Joint Sewerage Board, to consist of the Chairman and 3 other members from each of the two urban districts of Beddington and Wallington and

Mitcham and the Chairman and 2 other members of the urban district of Merton and Morden. Coulsdon and Purley Urban District Council was not represented but the small part of its area covered by the works continued to be covered as a transitional arrangement until alternative means of sewage disposal were put into effect in its respect.



The name of the authority was changed to the Wandle Valley Main Drainage Authority by the Wandle Valley Main Drainage Order 1962 (S.I. 1962 No. 2616) and its functions were transferred to the Greater London Council

on 1 April 1965 by virtue of Section 35(1) of the London Government Act, 1963.

Therefore the works existed from 1915-1965. As to the railway, which operated on the site, it existed until 1963. As to its start date that is unclear. For those who like to know these things it was a 2ft (610mm) gauge internal sewerage railway. A picture of it can be found in the Middleton Press book 'Industrial Railways of the South East'. Eric, who has a copy of the book, will I am sure happily show the picture to anyone who wishes to see it. The sewerage works, or at least some of it, was given over and become the Wandle Meadow Nature Park. Hence

the reference to and the use of the title 'From Industry to Leisure'. Not all of the sewerage works was put over to the nature park. Looking at Google Maps some of the sewerage beds still exist on the site. See p. 10.

Future plans to extend the nature park are included as part of the Wandle Valley Regional Park. The following is taken from a London Strategic Parks Project document in 2005.

'In the Colliers Wood area, the Council will work towards the provision of additional open space to address deficiencies by creating a park that would be of equivalent value. The disused Wandle Valley Sewage Works now provides a public open space of high landscape and nature conservation value, and it is proposed that additional space can be provided at the Thames Water site on Byegrove Road to unite open spaces at Wandle Park, Wandle Meadow Nature Reserve and Garfield Road in order to create the equivalent of a District Park.'

So the remaining sewerage beds could disappear under these plans. We will wait and see. The last thing to note, and you will need to look at old and existing maps to see this, is how the roads around the area have changed.

Mick Taylor

## **OUTREACH AT TRELIS HOUSE**

On February 3rd Mary and Alison were scheduled to talk on Mitcham Lavender and Natural Dyes and Dyeing at Trellis House in Colliers Wood. Unfortunately, Mary was indisposed so only the lavender talk went ahead. The area allocated this time was not as conducive to an easy presentation as it turned out to be the first floor landing, and having to compete with the lift "dinging" as it disgorged yet another

passenger did not help. However, having met many of the audience last year, it was easy to slot into a good rapport with them.

I talked about the history, development, and demise of the lavender industry and threw in plenty of anecdotes, quoted the various rhymes, but spared them a rendition of Lavender Blue! Mary had kindly prepared three different Mayfield Lavender oil samples for them to compare, plus an example of a lavender “faggot”, but the best bit was being able to give them all a little lavender bag newly made by Mary.

They were delighted that the industry was thriving once more. A couple of the ladies were from Mitcham and were attentive listeners, and one gentleman told us all (frequently) that his family used to cut the lavender. Mary has now amassed quite a collection of items which we can use at subsequent talks.

After the visit I was invited to the room of one of the ladies who had done her own print at Mary’s session last year, to see it duly framed and hanging on the wall. She was immensely proud of it. So often framing is suggested to participants so to actually see one done was rewarding. I have also subsequently met up with the two ladies from Mitcham, Mrs Drewett and Mrs Harris, both of whom lived in the vicinity of “Rocky”. I made some notes of their reminiscences, and although not a great deal was relevant to the industries of the Wandle, both Betty Harris and Margaret Drewett knew the famous Sparrowhawk family, and Mrs Drewett had sat next to one of the girls at school. Mrs Harris told me about the massive Sparrowhawk contingent in Epsom cemetery, an area to which they had gravitated as a result of their lucrative racing activities. It was a fascinating afternoon which we all enjoyed.

Alison Cousins

## MERTON ABBEY MILLS AND PRIORY TRUST UPDATE

### Eels at the Wheelhouse

The Wheelhouse is fast becoming a centre for matters piscatorial. Not only is Fishcam back, but Steve, Claire and Norman have been meeting with Dr Bella Davis of Wandle Trust to implement a scheme for the installation of an eel ladder so the eels which are beginning to repopulate the lower Wandle can climb above the weir and



**Figure 10** An Eel ladder in Canada - look how steep and high it goes

start to repopulate the upper Wandle.

This is to be run in conjunction with an eel monitoring survey they are conducting for London Zoo from April to October. A separate eel barrel will be used to isolate eels which can then be measured, photographed, and put back above the weir.

Clair and Steve are very excited

about this project, and have agreed to be Eel Monitors, visiting the eel barrel at least twice a week to keep an eye on progress. The waterwheel there is continuing to operate almost silently, thanks to the improvements and maintenance afforded to it by Norman and Steve. It will be a great demonstration of how wheels can operate without causing a nuisance to residents if we need to comfort anyone at



**Figure 11** The refurbished wheel

Ravensbury. The picture here shows one of the new specialist hard wood paddles in between two older ones.

## **Chapter House**

The improvement works are now well under way. To keep up to date with progress, and for information generally, you can log in to its Facebook page - search for 'The Chapter House' (the 'The' is important - the next most popular site, headed just 'Chapter House', belongs to a tattooed brunette!)

The new display cabinet, kindly donated to the Trust by Ray when it wasn't needed by us, is now on site, and should enable Mary to make a more permanent display for the Museum there as well.

The painting of the walls is now far advanced, thanks to the herculean efforts of Dave Saxby, and the next step will be to remove the sand from the remains

themselves which will get under way shortly.



**Figure 12 The newly painted walls at the Chapter House**

**INVESTING IN VOLUNTEERS**  
IN THE WANDLE VALLEY



The Wandle Industrial Museum, The Vestry Hall Annexe, London Road, Mitcham, Surrey CR4 3UD. Tel: 020-8648-0127

**Company No 01792482, Charity No 288655.**

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OPEN: Every Wednesday 1 ~ 4 pm;  
First Sunday of each month 2 ~ 5 pm.

The Museum is also open to schools and groups by appointment.

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Admission: Adults 50p, Children & Senior Citizens 20p

The Wandle Industrial Museum would like to point out that the views of contributors to this newsletter are not necessarily the views of the Museum. We would be happy to give the right to reply to anyone who finds the content contentious.

All contributions and news items gratefully received and appreciated - please feel free to let us know at any time - telephone or write or email to [ndhart@wandle.org](mailto:ndhart@wandle.org)