



MUSEUM



NEWSLETTER

Issue 82

May 2013

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1 Newsdesk

Visitors to the Museum have been good during the spring months. We have welcomed two groups from Beecholme Primary School and another from Hollymount, both for free textile workshops thanks to our Grant from The

Ernest Cook Trust. Garfield Primary are booked in for a workshop in June and this offer of free visits for schools continues until the end of October 2013. We were also pleased to have a second visit from Melanie Nunzets Walking Group in March.

Outreach The printing team have been busy during March and over the Easter Weekend at The Chapter House at Merton Priory. Mary and Alison

were invited back to Trellis House to give another talk and demonstration and Meg gave an illustrated lecture about William Morris at Donald Hope Library in Colliers Wood.

The annual Country Fair at Morden Hall Park over the May Bank Holiday proved a success this year. As the weather was fine and sunny the fair was well attended and we raised over£200. Thanks to all the volunteers and friends who gave their time to help us make this event a success.



**Figure 1: New volunteer but old friend of the museum, Melanie Nunzet on duty at the May Fair.
Photo: Ray Leyden**

Events - Past A group of members and friends enjoyed a visit to the newly restored William Morris Gallery in Walthamstow.

The Members and Volunteers Lunch was on May 22nd over 24 members, volunteers and friends enjoyed the buffet lunch kindly prepared by Mary.

Events -Future The opening of the new Exhibition is on Saturday June 15th at 11am and you will be receiving your printed invitations shortly. This year's Exhibition is called 'Things you may not know about the Wandle' so we hope to see as many of you as possible at this event.

Help is requested at next two events:

- Wimbledon Village Fair on Saturday, 22nd June and
- On Sunday, 7th July the Green Day Out at Morden Hall Park.

Please put these dates in your diary.

Sadly this will be the last Newsdesk that I write as Administrator of the Wandle Industrial Museum. I am informed by my Orthopaedic Surgeon that I require a complete knee replacement and as there is long waiting list for this procedure plus recovery time I shall be out of action for the next six months. Looking through the records I note I have been here for 19 years so I must have been enjoying myself to stay so long! I have been involved with the Museum for about 25 years originally through my late husband Peter. I shall remain a Volunteer and a member so hope to keep in touch with all of you and hope to see the museum in Ravensbury Mill one day.



Sheila Harris May 2013

Figure 2: Sheila being presented with her tokens of recognition from our chair and vice chair.

Photo: Auriel Glanville

PS During the ‘Members and Volunteers’ Lunch Sheila was presented with a gift of an Orchid and two William Morris roses from the ‘In house Team’ . this was a an extraordinarily well attended event, well over 20 in attendance, including our Chair, Rev.

Andrew Wakefield, and Cllr Nick Draper whose cabinet responsibilities include our Museum. Although not billed as a ‘Sheila Leaving’ event, this attendance was evidence of the respect we all have for her devotion to the Museum over such a long and sustained period.

2. Museum Update

SHEILA HARRIS

Sheila and Peter moved down to London in the 70's. Always having an interest in history they came across Jowett's book, "The History of Merton and Morden". This began a long interest in the history of the local area which led to an interest in the museum. Peter became involved with the museum first but when Andy Vail resigned as administrator in 1993 Sheila, who had by now retired from teaching, took on the role.

Her long teaching career meant she was well prepared to be part of the education team but as for the rest it was learning on the job.

As one of the few volunteers who was retired most of the "office" tasks fell to her. She became the first contact with the museum for many people (no computers then) and was responsible for booking the group visits to the museum.

Quite a large part of her time was taken up with keeping an eye on the week to week finances, making sure bills were paid both to us and by us. Ordering stationery, and very importantly making sure we had a supply of tea and coffee, and biscuits.

Sheila often arranged the member's outings, making sure we knew how to get there and checking out the refreshment facilities!



Figure 3: Sheila celebrating her 70th birthday at home with us. *photo Ed.*

Sheila was very good at making sure we had enough volunteers for the Sunday openings and to cover our stalls at the fairs we attend, and of course, helping herself.

Sheila's news desk column in the newsletter kept members up to date with what was happening in the museum.

Sheila's long association with the museum and her interest in the Wandle meant she was often a useful source of information for us and for museum visitors.

When Sheila had an operation on her knee last year she hoped that would solve her problem. Unfortunately this was not the case and she now has to have another operation. At the moment Sheila needs a stick on good days and a crutch on the not so good days.

This means she feels she can no longer carry out her role as administrator to her satisfaction and feels it would be better if she resigned. This does not mean she is cutting all ties with us, when she has recovered from the operation she will be happy to return as a volunteer.

Wednesday mornings will be very different!

We, at the museum, would like to thank Sheila for her long service to the museum and to recognise all the hard work she has put in over the 19 years she has been with us.

Meg Thomas

Curators Report -

The London Museums Group held their AGM in Tate Britain. This meant passing through the new exhibition. It is amazing but don't try to do it in one go. They also have two huge screens showing continuous images. I saw an elephant and on another planes but as I was hurrying through to the meeting I couldn't stay to watch the whole show. What you can do with money!

This year's new exhibition is about odd and quirky facts about the river and its mills. Hopefully there will be several things that will cause visitors to say "I didn't know that"

We have the usual problem with the new display - where to put it!

Oh well over the years we have become quite adept at squeezing a quart into a pint pot.

Meg Thomas

Archive Report

We have at last started on the preparation of our photographs for our in-house digitisation project, using as guidance some of the fields chosen for the Merton Memories project. To say that the details we have on some items were a little sketchy would be putting it mildly.

Alison attended an event at Spitalfields Market and managed to get a photo of a silk sampler of paisley patterns in various colours. There was a silk weaving demo and the opportunity to practice, but in the presence of so many experts this was not followed up.

We tried unsuccessfully to obtain a couple of photos of Garrett Copper Mills which had pitched up on Ebay, to which we were alerted by Judith Goodman. As they went for over £80 we were not in that league. Please contact the museum if you spot any relevant historic photos of the Wandle or its industries or of course if you yourself have some.

Alison & Jacqui

General

Ravensbury

We were very lucky to have James McGinlay, the LBM departmental head who has been directly responsible for energising the action over Ravensbury Mill, come to our special meeting of the committee on that project.

He was very direct about the council's plans, and undertook to arrange for a meeting on site to enable his officers to show us the work they intend to carry out to make the Mill habitable for us.

Hopefully we will be able to report on that in more detail next newsletter.

Overall, the plan is that we should commit to the new lease before the New Year, so, although our Chair's promise at last year's AGM that this year we should be meeting in Ravensbury looks a trifle optimistic, that possibility does now look close enough to touch.

The image here is of the details prepared by Mr Wrightson, the historic buildings architect who was helping us with our last HLF bid, and shows some of the layout changes for Ravensbury over the last 200 years.

When the move comes, as it will, we will need to expand our volunteer base, both for the move, and for what comes after – restoration of the wheels, new displays, new materials, more frequent opening. If any of our readers would be interested in volunteering in any capacity when that comes (but without

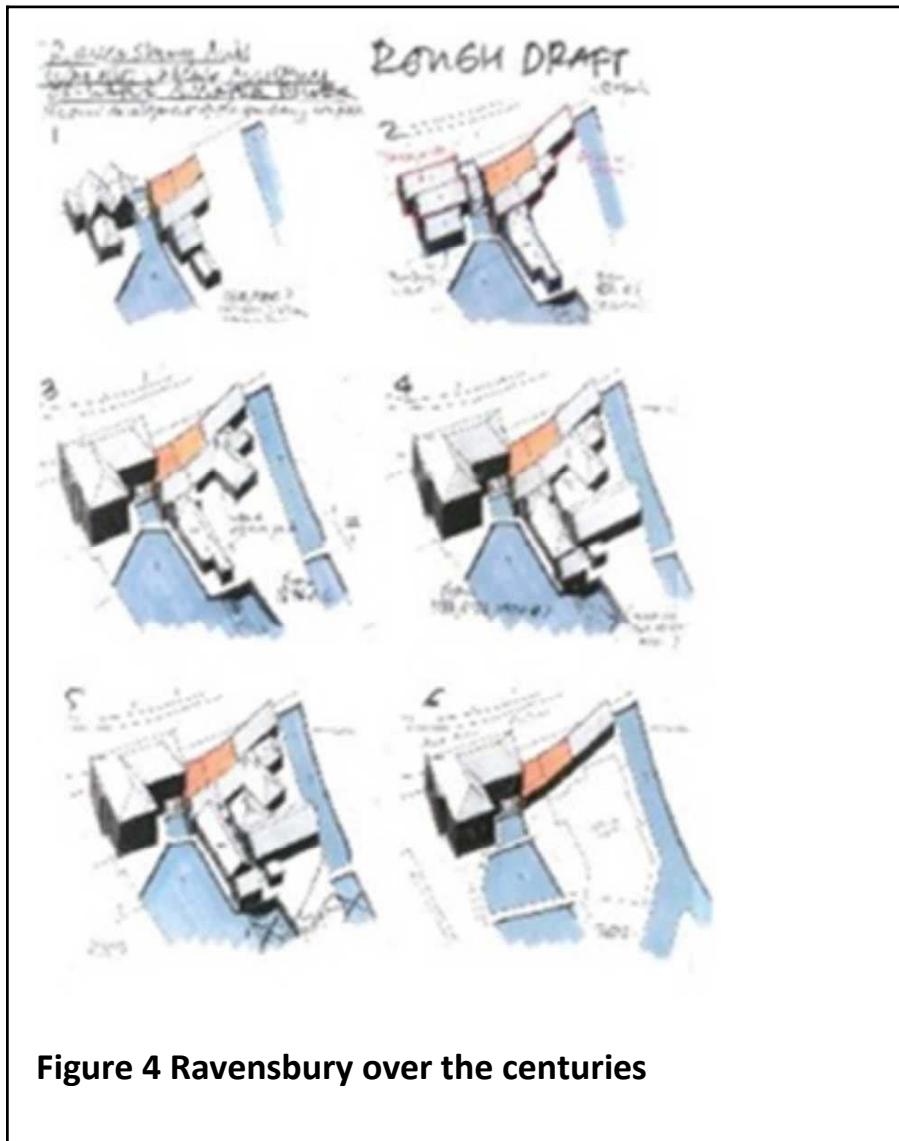


Figure 4 Ravensbury over the centuries

obligation), please contact us – email : office @wandle.org, telephone and leave a message: 02086480127; or write to us at the Vestry Hall Annexe, London Road, Mitcham CR4 3UD.

The Web: Michael Taylor has been working hard to ensure we are properly represented on social media – see his report below under “Camera, Action and Cut!”



Figure 5: The Wm Morris Gallery workroom display. Photo: website

Visit to the William Morris Gallery.

A small group of us met up at the William Morris Gallery in Walthamstow to look around the recently refurbished building and displays.

We started out by assessing the cafe facilities. Those of you for whom this is of little interest can skip this

bit. Although the food was quite good, they are trying to be a bit ambitious in providing an extensive menu in too small a space. We also forgot that it was still the school holidays and it seemed like an entire Mumsnet cohort and offspring had descended. Still, we were able to admire the decorated glass roof and look out over the as yet unfinished garden reconstruction. A design fault we discovered the hard way – for those of us on the tall side, it would be advisable to avoid sitting beneath the display cabinets against the wall. Ouch !

On to the themed galleries and some new features. Interactive displays were immensely appropriate and great fun, especially a touch-screen quiz to test one’s ability to run Morris’s business. (Also on the website at www.wmgallery.org.uk/learning/activities-online)

The Workshop was very popular and included the option to try and assemble a stained glass window. There was also a small model of the William Morris Works, but without great detail. The display of the printing blocks, suspended from the ceiling, was a disappointment because they lacked any up lighting. The upstairs area included a sound installation on the landing, affording a seat for anyone suffering from museum backache.

Alison Cousins

NT: The National Trust have a very effective online brochure which sets out all the 2103 activities in Morden Hall Park, well worth a visit online – use this short hand URL to get there: <http://bit.ly/12QAvVf>

Summer Opening

You should all by now have received your invitations to our Summer Opening. For those who haven't been, it is normally a very jovial affair, much food and drink, a few speeches, the formal opening (this year by the Deputy mayor) and Mary's catering. Last year's event saw 6 former Mayors of Merton as well as the current Mayor. In previous years, for many guests this this event is a useful oasis at which to fortify body and soul before proceeding on to the Mitcham Carnival and the event is timed so as to allow this to happen again.

Wandle Valley Weekends

The Wandle Valley Festival this year extends over 2 weekends, and, although there was no budget for a printed brochure, the web site has a full listing of all the events at www.wandleweekend.org.uk

WANDLE WEEKENDS

June 1-2 and June 8-9



Activities for everyone to explore and enjoy the history, nature, wildlife and resources of the River Wandle

www.wandleweekend.org.uk

The Museum will be open on both Sundays as usual, and there will be the usual block print materials on display at the Chapter House at Merton Abbey Mills on all 4 days, although the hands on printing will only take place on the second weekend.

3. Merton Abbey Mills and Merton Priory

Merton Priory/HLF

Only 3 weeks now until we know the outcome of the WVLP HLF bid. All the signs are good, so this year may be the last chance to see the Chapter House in its 'old' layout. By this time next year the new diagonal glass curtain wall should be in place, allowing viewing from the outside for the first time in many years, with a kitchen and toilets installed inside so that we can make volunteers and visitors properly comfortably.

The plans are available to see on the open days this year, first at the Wandle Weekends, then at the end of July for the Museums month opening, and again on the third weekend in September for Open House.

MAM

The second Wandle Weekend is also the annual Merton Abbey Mills birthday party, with many additional events and attractions. The Mayor will open this as usual, and we hope to see the Young's Brewery horses in action again.

On a more sentimental note, Keith Cook has now finally retired. He has manned the fresh food stall at the Mills for as long as I can recall, and has purveyed his finest quality produce as well as dispensing much practical wisdom about the ways of farming and livestock. His stall is now in the good hands of Pat and Rick, and we hope to see them prosper well into the future.

4. Camera, Action and Cut!

The museum has opened up three other avenues that will enable you to interface with us. We have entered the world of Facebook, FlickR and You Tube.

Facebook

Our web address is: www.facebook.com/WandleIndustrialMuseum.

No need to join Facebook to see the information and comments put on there. If you are already a member of Facebook, or join, you can post comments, share information with other members, add links to photos and photos and generally promote museum.

FlickR

Our web address is:

<http://www.flickr.com/groups/wandleindustrialmuseum/>

FlickR is a photo sharing web site. Again you don't have to be a member to view any photos that are on the site. You need to join FlickR if you wish to add photos to the site. Flick is broken into different parts – Individuals and Groups. You join first as an individual and then you join a group or groups. From here you can upload your photos past and present of the River Wandle and its industries. Other groups that exist on FlickR are: The River Wandle, Wandle Delta Creek, Wandle Valley Festival, Ravensbury Park and London Waterways.

You Tube

Our You Tube Channel can be found at:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/WandleIndMuseum>

No need to join. The films we have on the channel can be viewed by going to the above web address. We currently have four films on our site. If you have

any films that are associated with the river or its industries and would like to share them with us then please contact the museum. One interesting film, not ours, that can be found on You Tube is a walk along the Wandle Trail by ‘Ratterthe dog’. It is split into two parts.

I hope you enjoy viewing these web sites and you join us on FlickR and Facebook. If anyone would like help accessing or using this web sites then please contact me at the museum

Mick Taylor

5. Brewing Revival

The loss of Young & Co’s Ram Brewery in Wandsworth was not only a blow to Wandsworth’s heritage, but with the move of its brewing activities to Bedford, came a distinct alteration of flavour. However, SW London is fighting back on the real ale front.

Sambrook’s Brewery, with its Wandle Beer is now well established, and was joined last year by a micro-brewery called “By the Horns”, whose brewery tap is at 25, Summerstown. More recently still the Belville Brewery arrived in the Wandsworth Common area, and now we have one which is on Kimber Road SW18, and almost on the Wandle Trail ! It is called The Rocky Head Brewery, and is so new that at the time of writing, the website is still incomplete, hopefully because they are too busy brewing. Its equipment is described as possibly the most ramshackle in the UK and is a collection of casts-offs from a larger brewery.

Our intrepid researchers report very favourably on these new upstarts. It is reassuring that volunteers can still be found for the onerous task of attending beer festivals to assess the quality and strengths of these products.

Alison Cousins

6. The London Underground – a talk by Oliver Green of GLIAS reported by Peter Cousins



Figure 6: of Met no1 at Farringdon. Photo Peter Cousins

I attended a GLIAS (Greater London Industrial Archaeology Society) talk at St Bartholomew's Hospital on Wednesday 15th May.

Oliver Green, formerly Curator of the London Transport Museum, entitled his talk 'The archaeology of London

Underground: a future for its past' and looked at the responsibilities LU has to its historical infrastructure, and how it has reflected the changes in London over the years.

The huge successes of the 150th anniversary celebrations and the smooth operation during the Olympic Games in 2012 and 2013 made London Underground world famous.

He cited Farringdon Station as an example of how one of the earliest stations has been radically modified to cater for modern travel needs, without sacrificing too much of the original fabric.

In the past, though, some important items have been saved only through luck. The Metropolitan Railway Beyer Peacock 4-4-0 locomotive no 23 from the 1860s, now in the London Transport Museum, only survived because it had been sent to a remote part of the network to see out its days. It was then sent to Neasden works as a shunter, and abandoned in a corner in 1940, where it stayed for many years until someone realised it was worth

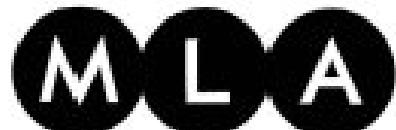
preserving – another piece of good fortune, as in the 1950s, there was no appreciation of the need to preserve anything. Lighting suffered greatly, as LU was one of the first adopters of neon strips and replaced many fine Victorian fittings. Many of the stations now being refurbished are actually reconstructions using new materials to old patterns, e.g. tiles at Arsenal (Gillespie Road).

A spiral escalator was found at the bottom of an abandoned lift shaft at Holloway station where it had lain since being dismantled after its unsuccessful trials. Frank Pick and Albert Stanley (Lord Ashfield) brought the underground up to date in the 1920s making LU one of the best-run undertakings in the country: Holden's design for Piccadilly Circus station was futuristic for its time. After Pick and Stanley, standards slipped and very little was built until the 1960s, and then both the Victoria Line and the DLR needed extensive repair work almost as soon as they opened.

In the 1990s, the Thames Tunnel at Rotherhithe had to be refurbished to heritage standards as befitted its listed status. Good design was now employed throughout, even where not seen by the public, as at Stratford Market Depot on the Jubilee Line. Lots Road power station was most unpopular when it was built on the Chelsea waterfront, but it is now being refurbished as flats – the control room is mostly still intact. The HQ at 55 Broadway SW1 is listed and is also being sold for use as flats. Aldwych station still survives and has been used for testing décor styles – it may be turned into a themed venue!

The former LU boss Tim O'Toole, who is American, recognised the care of its heritage as part of what passengers expect from LU. Transport for London has become the most powerful organisation in London and can get its planning requirements approved, whereas in the past, the LCC and the GLC had no interest in transport planning. Having said that, the listing of the Tower Subway has not been granted.

Peter Cousins, May 2013



**Accredited
Museum**

A full colour version of this newsletter is available online at www.wandle.org. If any subscriber is happy to receive the newsletter by email, could you please send a request to office@wandle.org. This helps us to reduce our costs.

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;  
Every Sunday 2 ~ 5 pm.

(The Museum may be closed some Bank Holiday weekends)

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