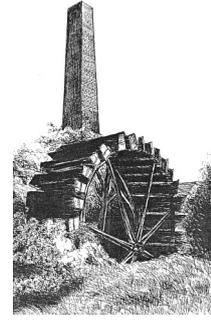


WANDLE INDUSTRIAL MUSEUM



BULLETIN



The late Kevin Leyden, whose idea it was to establish the museum

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WANDLE INDUSTRIAL MUSEUM

PRESIDENT

Harry Galley

TRUSTEES

Chair: Fr David Pennells,
Nicholas Hart, John Hawks
and John Harding.

OPERATIONS TEAM

Alison Cousins, Eric Shaw,
John Sheridan, Roger Steele,
and Michael Taylor.

Editorial

This edition of the Bulletin marks the 40th anniversary of the opening of the museum in November 1983.

Please note in particular Alison Cousins' request in her article "Forty Years On!!" for any contributions to help her complete her booklet about the history of the museum. The draft booklet is available on the museum's website at https://www.wandle.org/about_us/historyofthemuseum.html

To show that this bumper edition is not just about the museum talking to itself, we include a substantial article about a local industrial firm, Corfield and Buckle, based on the memories of a former employee, Jim Parker. Jim has also given us a rich collection of photographs of the works.

John Sheridan

Cover Picture: The late Kevin Leyden was joined by Harry Galley, Brian Shenton and Trevor Watling in the committee that secured the funding and took the practical action required to open the museum.

Photos:

Cover: WIM archive.

Page 1: Auriel Glanville.

Page 2: Auriel Glanville.

Pages 3 & 4: John Sheridan.

Page 5-7: WIM archive.

Page 8: (1) By permission of Historic England; (2) Jim Parker.

Pages 9 & 10: Jim Parker.

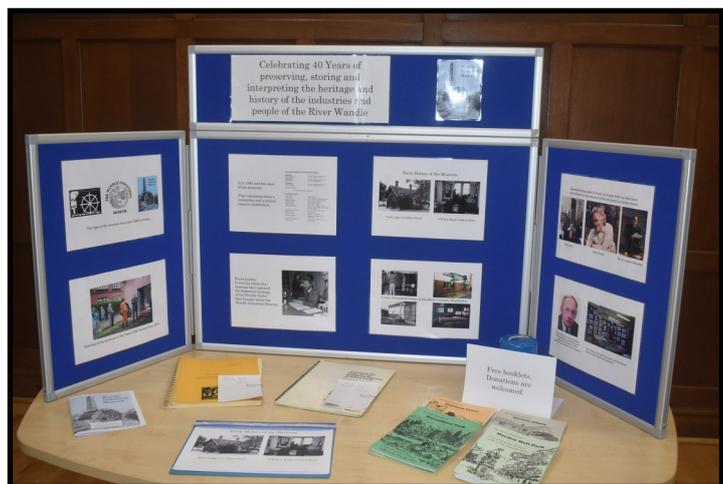
Page 11: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/user:Russss>. Sharealike4.0 International.

Page 12: Auriel Glanville.

Page 13: Mick Taylor.

Operations Team Report

Aside from the formal business, the theme of our AGM on Thursday 16 November was celebration of the 40th anniversary that month of the founding of the museum. A selection of photographs and documents pertaining to the museum's history was on display in the meeting room.



Mick Taylor presented a film at the AGM featuring contributions by:

- Harry Galley, founder and president of the museum, who spoke about his and the late Kevin Leyden's roles in establishing the museum;
- Dante Pertusini, one of the early employees placed at the museum by the Manpower Services Commission;
- Ray Leyden, long term volunteer who helped arrange the museum's move to the Vestry Hall Annexe;
- Val Cova, Vestry Hall employee when the museum was based there;
- Sheila Harris, former museum administrator who worked with her husband the late Peter Harris to run the museum in the 1990s;
- Nicholas Hart, trustee, former pro bono legal adviser, and husband of the museum's textile expert the late Mary Hart; and
- Auriel Glanville, long term volunteer who worked with Mary Hart to develop block printing resources and workshop materials suitable for children.

The film can be viewed on the museum's YouTube channel at <https://youtu.be/7Obu3fW3R9Q>.



Trustees and operations team at the AGM: from left, John Harding, Fr David Pennells, Roger Steele, Mick Taylor, Eric Shaw, Alison Cousins, Nicholas Hart, John Sheridan, John Hawks.

On 19 November Mick Taylor circulated to those who attended the AGM a draft booklet compiled by Alison Cousins to commemorate the anniversary. The booklet is still in draft form and can be found on our website (wandle.org/about_us/historyofthemuseum.html). Any ideas for additional material to complete it would be welcome. In due course it will be uploaded onto the museum's website. Alison has written an article ("Forty Years On!!"), which appears elsewhere in this edition of the bulletin, about the compilation of the booklet.

Also appearing elsewhere in this bulletin are two short notes sent to us on the occasion of the anniversary from Lisa Barnes and Andy Vail, who had involvement with the museum in the past.

Other Operations Team business

We intend that the 2024 exhibition will feature the Wandle leather mills and their products. The centrepiece will be the Moroccan hide (see Bulletin 119), assuming we can get it conserved in time.

As we will be giving up our off-site storage space in the spring, we have been reviewing the condition of its contents to decide what to keep. In anticipation of moving artefacts to the museum, we are planning to remove the basins, toilet and urinals that are in the store room and to remove two walls to give us more space for storage. Currently we are waiting on Merton Council to start the work. Hopefully this is not too far away as the work on the Vestry Hall is all but completed. We will also be starting over the Christmas/New Year period on changing a number of the displays in the museum. This includes turning the fish tank into a display cabinet. There will be changes week on week in the New Year.

We have plans to enable the museum front doors to open both ways. This will make it easier for wheelchairs to access the museum via the portable ramps.

The museum conducted eight guided industrial heritage walks in 2023 on different stretches of the Wandle trail, the last on 21 November for LB Merton's public health team as part of their awayday. We will publicise a similar or expanded programme of walks in 2024, some of them to form part of local festivals such as the Wandle Fortnight.



Collapsed section of Merton Priory precinct wall under repair

The operations team was represented at the Wandle Valley Forum Annual Meeting on 21 September, and at a presentation by the National Trust on 21 October about their work to restore part of the Merton Priory perimeter wall and to create a “Pickle Park” containing the wall and the Pickle Ditch: funding for the completion of the project is uncertain.

Members of the Operations Team attended a presentation by Anthony Hopkins, Head of Merton's Library, Heritage and Adult Education Service, about the borough's bid for London Borough of Culture 2027. The successful borough will be expected to include a heritage element in its cultural activities. The museum is willing to support Merton. The deadline for bids was 30 November. Wandsworth is bidding against the same deadline for London Borough of Culture 2025. We have not engaged with Wandsworth in the development of their bid, but would be prepared to support them with any relevant outreach activities.

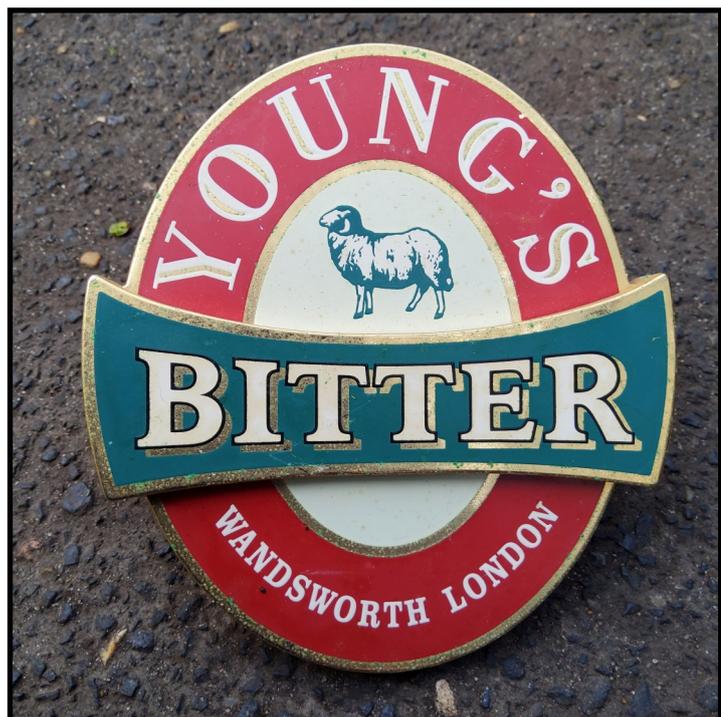
We have added new photographs and photograph descriptions to the museum's Flickr archive. These include photographs of the Corfield and Buckle works at Colliers Wood, the Riverside Business Centre at Earlsfield, the Wimbledon Mill on Copper Mill Lane, and stone Surrey Iron Railway sleepers set into the ground at the former Ram brewery site in Wandsworth. The photos are in relevant albums on Flickr, and also show up as the most recent additions in the photostream. The Flickr site is here: <https://www.flickr.com/search/people/?username=wim%20archive>

Representatives of the museum hosted and visited several schools to deliver block printing workshops. Melrose Primary School, Church Road, Mitcham, gave positive feedback following a workshop on 12 October, adding that they were creating a group wall hanging using the pieces their pupils printed. We had a very successful couple of days running our textile workshop with 36 children of L'Ecole de Battersea.

We have received a donation of a collection of memorabilia relating to Young's Brewery.

The objects in question are pump clips (one of which is pictured alongside), silk ties, playing cards and golf tees. Young's used to hold golf tournaments for their licensees.

John Sheridan



WIM Memories: anniversary messages

Andy Vail: I remember when I worked at the WIM in the 1990s we used to run stalls at the big annual Bank Holiday Weekend Fayre in Morden Hall Park, Mitcham Carnival & the Merton Green Fair on London Road Playing Fields, usually staffed by Peter [Harris], myself, Ray Leyden & another volunteer called Len.

Lisa Barnes (WIM treasurer, late 1990s to 2004): I first became involved with the Wandle Museum about 30 years ago when I moved into the new flat development on Wandle Road. My flat was right next door to the old [Ravensbury] Mill house room which was brought into a state of repair when the development was done. As the entrance to my flat was right opposite the door into the Mill house I must have encountered members of the museum looking round it. The Wandle museum wanted to move their premises into it but it needed a bit of work doing still and we put a business case together to get some funding from possibly the heritage lottery or a local council fund. Unfortunately it was not successful as we needed a steady income to maintain the building but we had fun trying to get some money. I would like to know what has happened to that building. After 7 years I moved from the flats, started a family and retired my position as treasurer. It's great to hear that it is still going after all these years!



June 1991: official opening of the museum at its current premises by the Deputy Mayor of Merton, Cllr Marie-Louise de Villiers, accompanied by the London Town Crier, Peter Moore.

Forty Years on!!

By now, most of you will have seen our outline history of the first forty years of the museum. The title **“We Are Where We Are”** is meant to convey our aims and outlook having ended up where we currently are after all past and promised moves.

This is not a finished work – the plan is to incorporate some comments from the recent interviews given by a few of the people involved during the early years and hopefully any contributions received as a result of this article and from reading the booklet.

There are inevitable omissions and likely contentious inclusions but this is predictable when selections have to be made. A consensus from our members as to changes needed will of course be acted on.

For the early years as a nomadic institution, and especially when in Wimbledon, there is abundant and often quite detailed documentation. The Manpower Services Commission (MSC) funding enabled around twenty staff to work on the project of establishing an industrial museum and records of progress were kept to provide evidence of this.

Also the local newspapers of the 1980’s were more inclined to take an interest in local history as so many established firms were closing and site use changing in the borough so we have quite a good selection of newspaper cuttings.

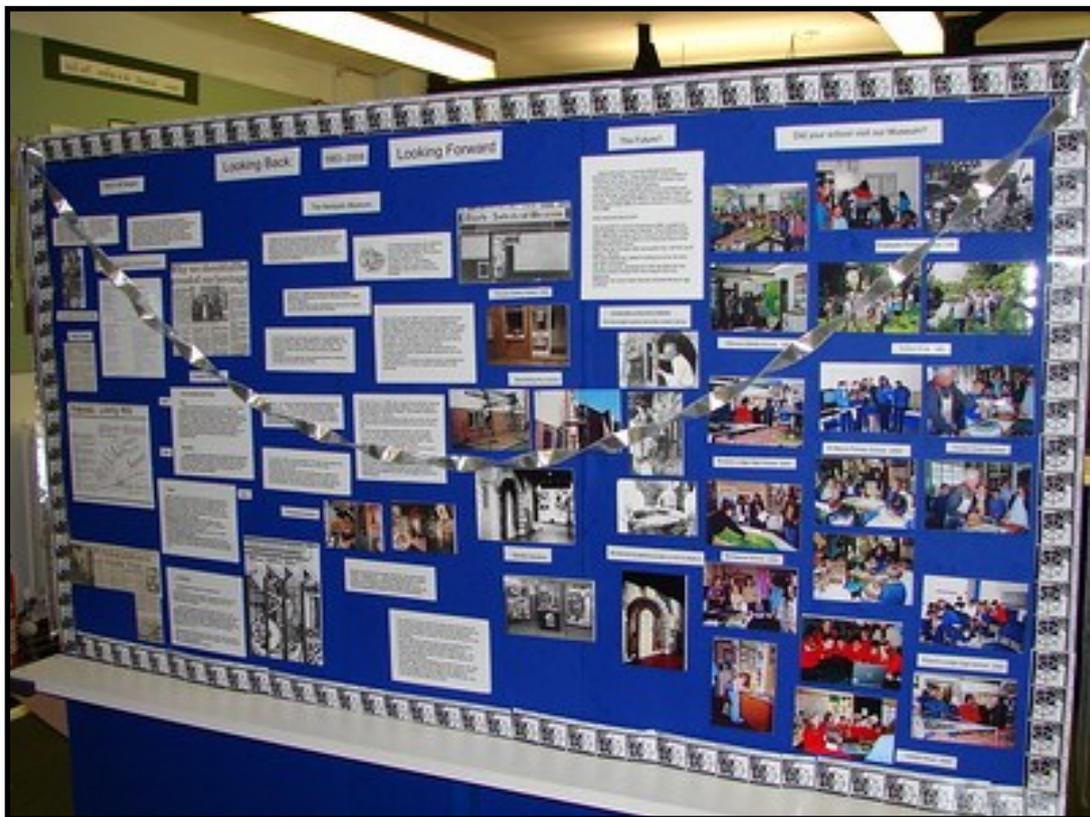


May 1986: removing the previous occupant’s name board prior to moving the museum in to its Hartfield Crescent, Wimbledon, premises

Photographs of Hartfield Crescent in particular, which was the first location to have actual display space, show the MSC team up on scaffolding, decorating, creating display structures, drilling etc. yet clearly having some fun. Many of these young people had not found it easy to get jobs up until then so this project enabled them to gain team working experience for a brief period. As individuals they had specific jobs such as designer, publicist and education liaison officer, which we now take on board collectively. This team undertook considerable research and created very professional displays in the short time granted to them until the finance was withdrawn.

Ironically, once a “permanent” home was found in the Vestry Hall Annexe, documentation is sparse, but photographic evidence is plentiful. This is particularly true for school parties and block printing workshops as suitable premises now existed. We now have a variety of exhibitions, with a new display every year, limited floor and storage space but loyal and knowledgeable volunteers. A very artistic poster from the mid-1990’s exists announcing an imminent move to Ravensbury Mill. Although a very professional and detailed plan was submitted, too many hurdles were in the way and so for now **“We Are Where We Are”**.

Alison Cousins

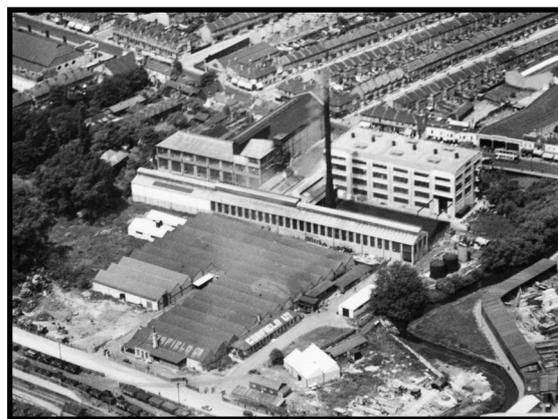


Display to mark the 25th anniversary of the museum, 1983-2008

Corfield Memories — John Sheridan

A visitor to Merton Priory Chapter House Museum in August 2023 mentioned that he had once worked at Corfield and Buckle Ltd, on a site known as the Trafalgar Works, very close to the Merton Priory site. The site is now occupied by Colliers Wood Sainsbury's and Marks & Spencer.

The visitor's name was Jim Parker and he subsequently came to the Wandle Industrial Museum to chat about his time at Corfield and Buckle and to share some photographs, mostly dating from around 1948. The photos are in the WIM Flickr gallery at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/156007781@N04/albums/with/72177720310886792>, and a few of them are reproduced in this article.



Trafalgar Works in 1929, in front of the New Merton Board Mills. The Morris & Co works are partly hidden in the trees, top left; and the Pickle Ditch is visible bottom right.

Jim joined Corfield and Buckle in January 1961, served a five year apprenticeship and was required to serve a further three years as an “improver” before qualifying as a toolmaker. He worked as a press toolmaker at the works until the firm ceased trading in July 1981.

In the post-war period, Corfield and Buckle manufactured pressed metal products including Morphy Richards irons and toasters, brass Tilley lamp bases, artificial legs and knees, and milk churn tops. Artificial legs were cylindrical and acquired a bulge by means of a small internal explosive charge.

Morphy Richards took their business elsewhere around 1968, but Corfield and Buckle secured a large contract making gas meter casings for Smith Meters of Mitcham. Meter casings were made of mild steel in two halves, which were pierced for the gas pipes,



Some Corfield & Buckle products

trimmed and sealed together once internal components had been inserted. In the 1970s Corfield and Buckle took over the manufacture of Aladdin paraffin burners from a factory in Wales where production had stalled because of a strike.

The firm had some 120 power presses, including some specialised large “deep drawing presses” capable of pressing deep depressions into thick sheets of metal to make products such as meter casings, milk churn tops and iron bodies. There were also hand-operated fly presses, using leverage to bend or pierce holes in sheet metal or to stamp designs or logos onto metal surfaces. The firm had more than 100 employees.



Power presses operated by female workers at Corfield and Buckle

Next door to Corfield and Buckle's works was Corfield Sigg Ltd, another firm within the Corfield Industries umbrella. Corfield Sigg also manufactured pressed metal products, specialising in aluminium and stainless steel pots and pans, known as holloware. Their best-known brand was Crown Merton.

The two firms shared a tool room, in which some thirty toolmakers were employed, and a free-standing works canteen, in front of which was a garden and a plaque commemorating Merton Priory. Tools were at the core of the business. A hardened steel tool, mounted on a press, took the form of an inside-out representation of the product, made by Jim and his colleagues to specifications provided by the client. The steel was hardened by heating it until it was

red hot and then quenching it in whale oil. The pressing process was carried out on cold metal, usually aluminium or brass. There was no smelting or casting at the works.

In the late 1960s a new managing director at Corfield Sigg Ltd introduced new production lines with spray plants to make pots and pans with polytetrafluoroethylene (PTFE)-coated non-stick interiors and



The Trafalgar works canteen

enamelled exteriors, coloured orange or turquoise. These were so successful that a rival firm, Tower Housewares, lost market share and their parent company, Midland Aluminium, bought Corfield Industries in 1969, having made a bid of £2.5m to Corfield shareholders, 58 per cent of whom were Corfield family members. Midland Aluminium removed the new Corfield Sigg production line and tools to Womborne, Staffs, near Wolverhampton. This enabled the third Corfield Industries firm, Hancock, Corfield and Waller Ltd (HCW), to leave their Imperial Works in Mitcham and move in to occupy the newly vacated space at the Trafalgar Works to make wire products such as record racks and coat hangers, as well as metal advertising plaques, ash trays and cigarette dispensers.

HCW had in fact occupied spare space at the Trafalgar works before, after the Imperial Works were bombed in September 1940. Press reports in 1970 attributed a shortfall in Midland Aluminium's results to Corfield Industries' poor performance. Midland Aluminium were subsequently taken over by Tube Investments, a holding company, which, somewhat remote geographically, left Corfield Industries to its own devices until 1981 when the loss-making Trafalgar Works were closed.

Tube Investments subsequently sold the site to Sainsbury's, who also acquired the site of the adjacent New Merton Board Mills when they closed in 1982. Sainsbury's then levelled the area between Merton High Street and the former Merton, Tooting and Wimbledon Railway. The railway line and sidings and Merton Abbey Station had already been removed in the mid 1970s, following which the archaeologist Scott McCracken uncovered the foundations of the Merton Priory chapter house. The clearance of the whole site in the mid 1980s paved the way for more archaeological excavations on the Merton Priory site, and the construction of the Savacentre hypermarket (now Sainsbury's and Marks and Spencer), and the Merantun Way over the route of the former railway.

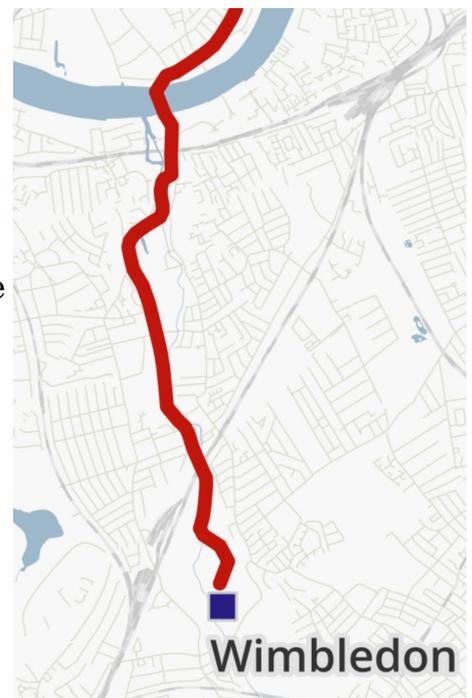
Jim remembers the redundant railway siding that emerged from the railway line, crossed Station Road, passed through the Corfield car park, and snaked alongside the Pickle ditch to the back of the board mills. That siding is visible on old Ordnance Survey maps but was presumably redundant by the 1920s, when Corfield arrived and when lorries would have been large enough to transport bulky goods to and from the board mills.

Jim also spoke about occasional flooding at the Corfield works after heavy rain. It happened more than once during the works' summer holidays, when most of the workforce were away but Jim and other toolmakers were present, preparing and mounting new tools. They would have to stop work to sweep water out of the shop floor. Parts of the Wandle remain prone to overflowing, but flooding does not seem to happen nowadays at Sainsbury's, and it would be surprising if they had not surveyed the site, raised the ground level and improved the drainage when they built the store.

London Power Tunnels

Did you know that there is a concrete tunnel, 10 feet wide, deep under the course of the River Wandle between Wandsworth and Wimbledon? It is part of London Power Tunnels, a £2bn National Grid infrastructure project to modernise electricity transmission which, when complete in 2027, will cover 37 miles some 100 feet under London.

The Wandsworth-Wimbledon section was constructed between 2011 and 2018 by a tunnel boring machine named Evelyn, and it contains 400kV and 132kV cables. Access for maintenance is by means of shafts on the former gasworks site near Armoury Way, Wandsworth, and at the large electricity substation on the east bank of the Wandle at Copper Mill Lane, near the AFC Wimbledon football ground.



The tunnel crosses the Wandle at least twice

The project will enable the network to meet increasing demand without the need for roadworks to access existing ageing cables.

Charles Dickens Museum outing

A group of museum trustees, members and volunteers visited the Charles Dickens Museum on Doughty Street, Bloomsbury, on Thursday 21 September. Emma Harper, the curator and the WIM Accreditation Mentor, showed us some rare letters and a miniature portrait from the secure storeroom before we toured the museum at our own pace. The museum comprises two adjacent early 19th century houses, one of which

was occupied by Dickens between 1837 and 1839. It contains over 100,000 items, including manuscripts, rare editions, furniture and paintings. There was also an exhibition about pollution in Victorian London: one item was a manuscript report of a factory



inspector of his visit to a factory which made white lead, a noxious process which was also carried on at one or two Wandle mills.

John Sheridan



AGM 2023 attendees (with Emma Harper on Zoom)



John Hawks (left) and Nicholas Hart receiving Merton Partnership Civic Pride Trustee Awards 2023, on behalf of all of the museum's trustees, from Cllr Gill Manly, Mayor of Merton.



Dates for the Diary

Christmas reception at the museum, noon Weds 13 December. All volunteers and members are welcome. RSVP office@wandle.org

The museum closes for Christmas at 5pm on Sunday 17 December, and reopens at 2pm on Sunday 14 January.

New Year lunch, Noon Weds 10 January at the Toby Carvery Park Place, 54 Commonsides W, Mitcham CR4 4HB. Email Roger Steele (Roger.Steele@blueyonder.co.uk) to book your place. Payment of £20 per person in advance please, by cash, cheque or bank transfer (Sort Code: 16-32-45 and Account No: 12263437. Reference your name please).

Talk by Mick Taylor, 10.30am Tues 16 January, West Barnes Library, on Apprentices, Children and Labour.

Textile printing Display and Demonstration. Honeywood Museum, Carshalton 11am—4pm 27 January 2024. Open to all.



Accreditation Mentor: Emma Harper Charles Dickens Museum Service.
Museum Advisor: Yvette Shepherd, Museum of London (Docklands).

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 is closed Bank Holiday weekends)

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

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Free Admission. Donations welcome.

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 office@wandle.org

You can find us on:

