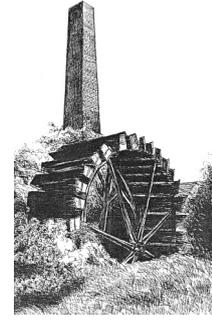


WANDLE INDUSTRIAL MUSEUM



BULLETIN



The mayor of Merton, Cllr Gill Manly, and the chair of the Wandle Industrial Museum's trustees, Fr David Pennells, open the museum's latest exhibition, Sport Along the Wandle, on Saturday 10 June. They are accompanied by the exhibition's curator, Mick Taylor.

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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, Roger Steele, and Michael Taylor.

Editorial

This is a bumper edition, reflecting a busy summer both in the museum and in our outreach activities.

Outreach has included several talks and walks, and manning our stall at various festivals.

The internal appearance of the museum has changed with the appearance of the Morris fabric, the Sport along the Wandle exhibition, the fish tank and of course the newly cleaned carpet! The Moroccan hide has yet to go on display.

Eric Shaw has been missing from his usual front of house position for a few weeks following his wife's fall. We send them both our best wishes and we look forward to Eric's return.

John Sheridan

Cover Picture: Auriel Glanville.
Please see article on page 4.

Photos:

WIM Arts Festival: Auriel Glanville.

Culvers House Primary School: Jessica Haines, headteacher.

Moroccan hide: Mick Taylor.

Merton Discovery Day, block printing: Auriel Glanville.

Sport Along the Wandle: Sutton Archives.

Stoneware flagon: John Sheridan.

Corruganza boxmakers plaque: Geoff Simmons.

Corruganza boxmakers banner: Sharon McElroy.

Judith Goodman: Richard Goodman.

Mick Taylor: himself.

Eric Shaw: Mick Taylor.

Operations Team report – Summer 2023

The new exhibition in June depicted “Sport Along the Wandle” and revealed how many unexpected activities took place in our area. There are also two new talks by Mick Taylor, “Snuff and the Wandle Mills” and “Apprentices, Children and Labour in the Wandle Mills”. John Sheridan has developed a talk on “Papermaking on the Wandle”.

For the first time ever we took a stall at Mitcham Carnival – impossible in past years because of the date clash with our annual exhibition. There was little interest, however, so this may not be repeated.

The volunteers from Brixton Windmill paid us a visit and we were able to continue discussions as to how we could maybe help them with their accreditation application.

In July we held another “Wandle Arts Festival” (note the plural this year). With fewer volunteers available it was decided to keep this to a single day to reduce the need for storing and carrying. But two of our trustees stepped in to help set up which was much appreciated. The weather was not so kind this year, however, but our new massive gazebo protected the various musicians.



We joined in Mitcham's annual Community on the Green event and this too inevitably involves us getting a good soaking. And so it was this year.

Walks and talks continue to expand, both by topic and location of delivery. Sadly it looks as if the Probus groups are not thriving but



fortunately other organisations are catching up. Mick Taylor in particular whizzes around with the projector and even managed two events on one day.

Two members of the team attended the Croydon Green Spaces event and did a mammoth day long Wandle walk and a printing workshop for Culvers House School seeing a total of 60 pupils. The headteacher sent us a nice letter of thanks. St John the Divine school at the Oval paid the museum a visit for another workshop to tie in with their work on William Morris.

Culvers House Primary School, Mitcham

The sample of original Morris fabric mentioned in the last bulletin is now encased in perspex and in place at the side of the Morris works model.

I suspect that in future colleagues will think twice before they share offers of “freebies” to me after my assurance that we OF COURSE could find a novel use for an empty fish tank formerly in the reception area of the Vestry Hall. Lo and behold it was duly delivered. We are also looking to re-arrange our storage room and planning how to accommodate more local history files in the main office.

But the good news is that our carpet was treated to a professional deep clean courtesy of Merton Council and this has made a huge visual difference.

Mick Taylor continues to organise our social media. Over the last year (April 2022 to March 2023) we have seen continuous growth of followers on our main platforms - Facebook, Instagram and the former Twitter now X. Flickr, where we host a number of photographs from our archive, receives a steady number of views as does our video archive on YouTube platforms.

Visitor numbers are creeping up steadily. One from Peru (without duffle coat and red hat) and one from Germany from a fellow museum volunteer. Also David Woolford, who subsequently sent us photos of the section of tramway he had recently purchased from a friend who had found it in 1967 in a cave under the A22.

We received a spectacular donation from a former director of Deed's Mill – a full Moroccan hide decorated and gilded and in superb condition considering it was apparently displayed at the 1851 Great Exhibition. We are currently taking professional advice as to how best it could be displayed. A set of scales and an embosser used by the mill were also given to us.



The Moroccan hide on the clean carpet

We also obtained a commemorative mug of Mitcham's charter year of 1934, from the former home of Judy Goodman, whose tribute is elsewhere in this Bulletin.

Merton Discovery Day in August was successful but tiring both at our stall and with a steady stream of children wanting to do a block print in the children's library. This year two sessions only were advertised but inevitably cut-off times had to be elastic to accommodate latecomers. John Sheridan also led a walk from the Civic Centre which was blessed with fair weather.

Alison Cousins



Roger Steele with young block printers on Discovery Day

Sport along the Wandle exhibition

Mick Taylor's flyer for a talk about this exhibition said that it explores the stadiums, factory teams, sporting activities, forgotten sports, and some other sports that may disturb you, that have all taken place along the banks of the Wandle.

The exhibition consists of around fifty images, mostly old photographs, with captions written by Mick giving brief descriptions and histories of the sports portrayed. The disturbing sports are perhaps otter hunting and cock fighting, now consigned to history.

A forgotten sport could be jousting at Merton Priory in 1347 when King Edward III visited to celebrate victory at the Battle of Crecy. Other more recent sports were lacrosse, tug of war and archery. An unusual sport was ballooning, fuelled by gas to advertise Wandsworth gas works.

The highest profile sport is football at AFC Wimbledon. Their current Plough Lane stadium stands on the site of a former greyhound stadium, somewhat incongruously opened by the American actress Tallulah Bankhead, who was in London to perform in a West End play. Footage of the opening ceremony in 1928 still exists at: <https://www.londonsscreenarchives.org.uk/title/19791/>. Speedway racing, popular in the post-war years, also took place at the stadium.

Visit the exhibition for more Wandle sporting knowledge and enlightenment!

John Sheridan



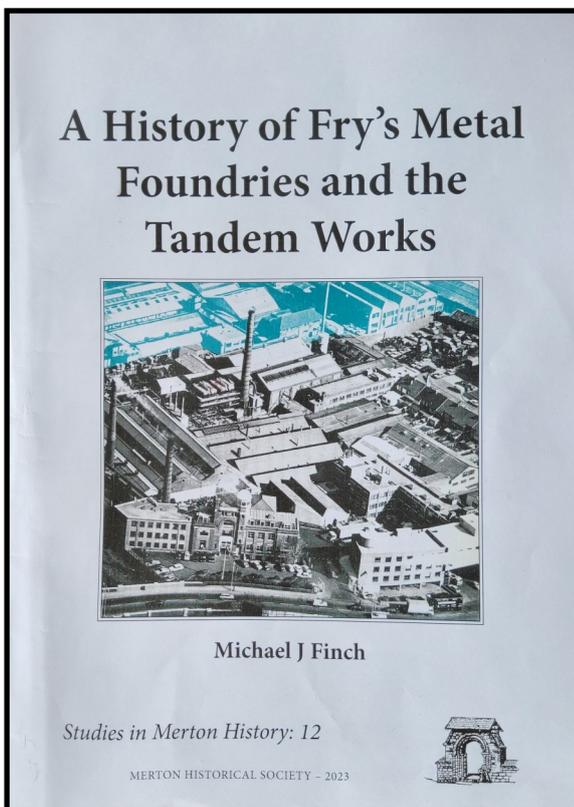
This is an Edwardian picture showing archery in Beddington Park. The vicar seems to be enjoying the sport and the company of the ladies.

An image from the exhibition

A History of Fry's Metal Foundries and the Tandem Works by Michael J Finch (Studies in Merton History: 12; 2023)

This publication was mentioned briefly in the Operations Team's report in the Spring 2023 edition of the bulletin. The booklet's importance as an addition to our knowledge of the industries of the Wandle valley, and the involvement of longstanding WIM volunteer and former Fry's employee Eric Shaw, justify further comment.

The author acknowledges contributions from some of his family members who worked at the Tandem works, from a number of others including Eric, and from a monthly magazine, The Fry Record.



This brief review will not repeat the contents of my review in the Merton Historical Society's Bulletin No. 227, but will merely add a few of Eric's recollections, recounted in conversation. The booklet mentions on page 40 a pollution incident in 1990, when a waterway was turned bright blue by copper sulphate, and Fry's was fined £10,000. Eric adds that the copper sulphate solution was a by-product of a process of extruding copper and tin to make brazing rods; the rods acquired an oxide coating which was removed by pickling them in sulphuric acid. The copper sulphate solution was a by-product, which was mistakenly allowed into a surface drain and ended up in the Pickle ditch. Brazing rods are

used to join pieces of metal together: at the right temperature, the brazing alloy melts into the joint. Brazing differs from welding, where the metal to be joined is melted.

Eric was smelting manager at one time. The firm smelted lead and other metals from metal oxides ("dross"). The smelters would originally have been fuelled by coal or coke from the coal yard adjacent to the old railway line and its sidings, near the site of the Merton Priory Chapter House Museum. Later, the smelters were fuelled by gas, apart from a brief experiment with the use of enhanced oxygen.



Smelting ended in 1986 after nearly 70 years, because the other manufacturing works which supplied dross were closing at the time due to economic circumstances. The group that owned Fry's already had smelting plants overseas. The Tandem works were closed in 1991 and its operations dispersed to other sites. Lead has fewer uses than in the past, but is still smelted for use in, for example, car batteries, cable sheathing, ammunition, radiation protection, lead crystal glass, some solders, and roofing.



Eric was also Fry's hygiene officer for a period. The role included monitoring lead and other emissions by taking 24 hour samples from inside the chimney stack on a monthly basis. Every so often the works were inspected by the Alkali Inspectorate. Emissions were usually within allowable limits, and lead emissions were in fact lower than those from road traffic in the area around the works during daytime when traffic was heavy. Lead emissions from vehicles could be distinguished from the works' emissions by the presence of other material such as tin and cadmium in the latter. Fry's used two methods to filter its emissions. One was bag filters made of felt; and the other was cyclone filters, making use of centrifugal force to isolate metal particles which were then recycled back into the smelter. Emissions exceeded permitted levels only on the rare occasions when bag filters got too close to the furnace and caught fire!

Stoneware flagon dug up at the former Fry's site by David Saxby of the Museum of London Archaeological Service, and later rediscovered in a box at Merton Priory Chapter House Museum. Now at the Wandle Industrial Museum.

Eric has written previously about the Tandem works in Bulletin No. 114, Spring 2022, Volunteer Focus, at <https://wandle.org/pdfs/WIM%20Bulletin%20Spring%202022.pdf>; and in a newsletter dating from 2000 at <https://wandle.org/news/issue31/briefhist.htm>.

The booklet is available via the Merton Historical Society's website at <https://mertonhistoricalsociety.org.uk/publications/>. Price £4 to members, £5 non-members, plus postage; and from the WIM, price £5.

John Sheridan

The Corruganza Boxmakers by Sharon McElroy

I first heard about *The Corruganza Boxmakers* strike when I attended Geoff Simmons' guided walk during *Wandle Fortnight 2022*. As an artist and filmmaker, I enjoy creating artistic responses to heritage sites and associated communities and have worked in a variety of these contexts. Learning about the courageous Corruganza women inspired me to create an artwork that would both acknowledge and commemorate this significant event in the history of women's empowerment in the workplace. Conversations with Geoff followed as we considered how my artistic response could be linked into the forthcoming *Corruganza Boxmakers Walk* and a Blue Plaque unveiling ceremony that Geoff was planning for spring 2023.



I decided to create a 2.1 m x 1.5m textile banner both as a homage to the female workers and to reference the long established tradition of using banners for Trades Union purposes. Research is integral to my practice, and I made several visits to *The Wandle Industrial Museum* to research the River Wandle's industrial heritage and I would like to thank Mick Taylor and Alison Cousins for their kind assistance and support. I also began researching the Corruganza story further, and thank

Geoff Simmons for his support with this.

From there I started to develop designs inspired by both research areas by way of hand rendered drawings and digital processes. It was important to include The River Wandle and The Corruganza factory building in the banner and I resized and printed my designs onto calico to form part of the background. To these I added hand and machine appliquéd figures of women and girls at work in the factory and in the home.

This imagery illustrates some of the conditions and hardships the workers endured. In another area of the banner, Mary MacArthur, who was the founder of The National Federation of Women Workers leads the striking women and their supporters at rally held in Trafalgar Square in 1908.

I enjoyed researching the clothing and hair styles worn by women in the Edwardian era, with the intention of giving an authenticity to the 'characters' who were conveying the narrative.



I also wanted to assimilate the River Wandle's rich textile industry into this work especially as I had learned that the Summerstown Printworks had pre-dated the Corruganza factory on that particular site; references are made to the calico printing, scarlet and indigo dyeing industries as well as the Corruganza cardboard industry through process, fabric and colour choices. I am very pleased to say that being a member of a local community scrap scheme gave me access to a multitude of recycled fabrics and wools for the task.

Having completed working on the banner it was a privilege to parade it on 20 May 2023 at Geoff's *Corruganza Boxmakers Walk* and blue plaque ceremony in Summerstown. It was a memorable and moving event.

The banner is currently on display on the ground floor of the Hunter wing (in the lift lobby) at St George's Hospital in Tooting until 20 November 2023. Thereafter it will be displayed at Wandsworth Heritage Centre (within Battersea Library) for an indefinite period. I do hope that some of you will be able to visit one of these locations to view the banner.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Wandle Valley Forum for their support in funding this project.

Sharon McElroy

www.sharonmcelroy.net

Note: Bulletin No. 111 (Summer 2021) contained an article by John Sheridan about the Summerstown boxmakers' strike.

Judith Goodman – 1938 - 2023



Judy and her husband Michael were members of our museum for many years and her diligent and far-ranging research is well-known across the borough.

She worked as a forensic scientist prior to raising her family and she clearly took a rigorous approach to all her research as a result. Although her interests were varied her investigations were very thorough and colleagues would turn to her for any additional facts which they had not been able to

retrieve using the usual channels.

Her most significant contribution to the museum in recent years was the inspiration for our exhibition “The Wandle Portrayed – Art and

Literature of the River Wandle” based on articles she had written for the Merton Historical Society’s newsletter. This in itself has now grown into one of our regular talks. Perusal of Judy’s research reveals that she had been preparing many more literary “Wandle” links.

She was responsible for several booklets for the Society as well as organising local exhibitions, and produced “Merton and Morden : an illustrated history” in 1995.

The entire collection of Judy’s research is in theory now split between the John Innes Society and The Merton Historical Society, but access will be straightforward due to the excellent links between those organisations and our museum, where some of the files will eventually be deposited. Her work will enrich several local collections and be of immense value to future researchers.

Alison Cousins

Volunteer Profile – Mick Taylor



I was born and brought up in South Harrow north of the Thames. On marrying in 1976 I moved to Merton Park and the south of the Thames. People say there is a north/south divide and it is true!

Working for Post Office Telecommunications at the time I was lucky that I was able to secure a transfer from the South Harrow office to Wimbledon. Not that it was easy and I had to prove I was worthy of the transfer! This is when I became aware of the history of Merton. My boss at the time in Harrow, Eddie Black, was good friends with the person, Bob Hill, who was

going to be one my bosses at Wimbledon. Bob wanted to know about Merton Priory. So, even before my transfer could go through, I spent time in Wimbledon Reference Library looking at the various papers and articles, etc on the Priory. The result was a paper on Merton Priory. Nothing fancy but at least my transfer request went through. Sadly, looking back, I don't have a copy of it.

I worked for Post Office Telecommunications/British Telecom until 2006. I worked in the sales and service organisation and undertook many different and varied roles including customer service, direct sales and marketing before settling into a role in learning and development. I was covering the country managing people in locations in England, Wales and Scotland and providing training to over 10,000 people. We also had to provide training to the call centre staff in India.

I also led on the introduction of the largest e-learning initiative undertaken by any company. By the time I left BT the people working there had a culture of wanting to learn and improve. It was something that didn't exist in my next job!

Leaving BT I took a break before looking for another job in L&D. I ended up on a six-month contract working for the corporate learning department at London Borough of Merton under a lovely lady, Kim Brown. The culture was very different to that of BT and seemed well away from the drive and initiatives we had there.

At the end of the contract and after looking at a couple of jobs in L&D I decided to start looking at volunteer roles in history and photography. I visited the volunteer centre in Worple Road, Wimbledon and as a result was told about the museum and a photographic charity in Clapham – Zoom In. As a result, I applied to both and by 2007 was working at both. Sadly, Zoom In folded after moving to premises that they had to fund themselves. Lesson for the museum here should we move to Ravensbury. Since starting at the museum as front of house my role has grown and I hope my contribution has made the museum better placed for the future.



Eric Shaw (left) receiving the Eric Leppard Silver Award 2023, in recognition of his long service as a volunteer at the museum.



Dates for the Diary

Mitcham Heritage Day, Saturday 9 September:

<https://mitchamcricketgreen.org.uk/mitcham-heritage-day/>

Includes block printing demonstrations and talks on the textile industry at the museum at 10.30, 12.00 and 2.30pm. Email Office@Wandle.org to book.

Open House Festival, Wednesday 6 to Sunday 17 September.

Wandle Fortnight, Saturday 9 to Sunday 24 September. Includes an industrial heritage walk from Morden Hall Park to Merton Priory Chapter House on Sunday 17 September. Email John.sheridan08@gmail.com to book.

Lambeth Heritage Festival, September 2023: <https://www.lambethlocalhistoryforum.org.uk/>

AFC Wimbledon Foundation's [Wombles Walk](#), 30 September.



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:

