

*Summer 93*

*No 4*

# THE WANDLE INDUSTRIAL MUSEUM

## Newsletter



Ravensbury Mill

**The Vestry Hall Annexe, London Road,  
Mitcham, Surrey CR4 5UD Tel: 081 648 0127**

**OPEN : Every Weds 1 - 4 pm,**

**First Sun of each month 2 - 5 pm,**

**The museum is also open to schools and groups by appointment.**

**Admission: Adults 20p, Children & Senior Citizens 10p,**

## NEWS FROM MERTON COUNCIL

The Museum has been pleased to welcome two new initiatives from Merton Council: Their Heritage Strategy, and their Wandle Strategy.

The **Heritage Strategy for Merton** seeks to preserve and promote the borough's heritage. It includes an action plan, much of which will be of interest to Museum members. Projects envisaged include:

1. The establishment of a Borough Heritage Centre in the basement of the Canons House in Mitcham, and the appointment of a Heritage Officer.
2. The establishment of an ecology/environmental centre, possibly based at the Mitcham windmill.
3. Promoting the length of the Wandle Valley within Merton as the "Wandle Valley Park".
4. Encouraging private sector initiatives, including expansion to form restaurant, garden centre and temporary leisure facilities at Merton Abbey Mills, encouraging the opening up of Morden Cottage and the grounds of Morden Hall, and support for the restoration of Ravensbury Mill, including room for a cafe and a permanent home for the Wandle Industrial Museum.
5. A Mitcham Improvement Scheme to encourage investment in that part of the Borough.
6. Upgrading the Tourist Information Centre in Wimbledon.
7. Producing new audio-visual presentation on the archaeological remains of the Merton Priory.

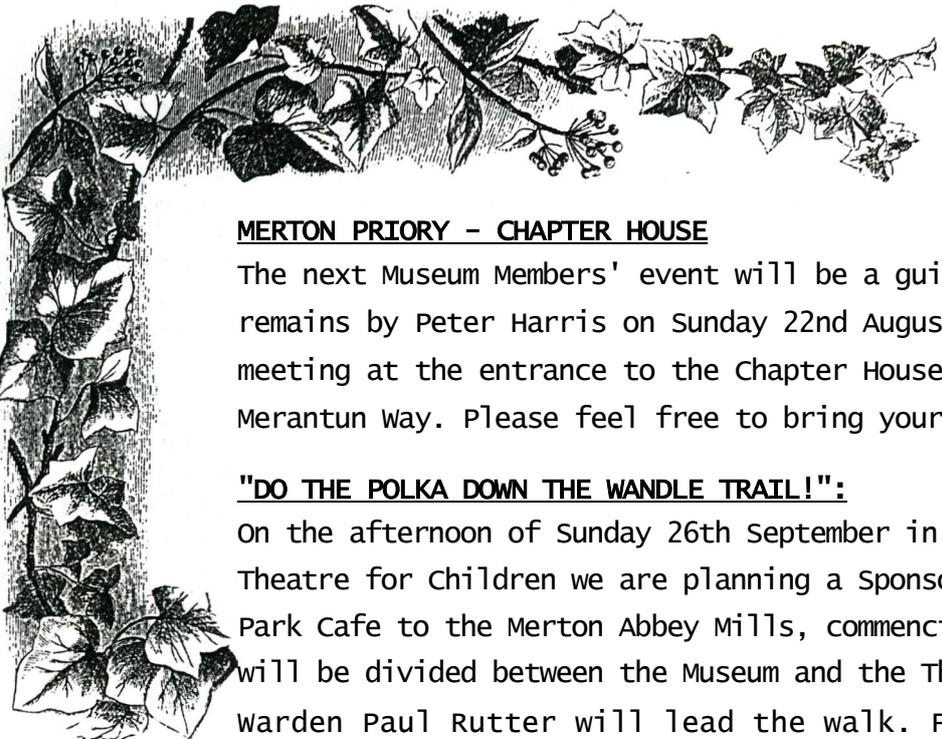
The **wandle Strategy** was prepared as a planning document for the development of recreational facilities along the River Wandle, within the London Borough of Merton. The strategy includes a schedule of improvements, including 92 site specific proposals! The general objectives include the creation of a continuous stretch of riverside walkway along the length of the Wandle known as the Wandle Valley Park, and encourage other boroughs to do the same, to conserve and enhance the principle historic features along the river, develop leisure and educational attractions, and conserve and enhance the Nature Conservation value of the river

The more major site specific proposals include a footbridge across the river from Bennett's Hole to Poulter Park, a new walkway alignment behind Riverside Drive, past Grove Mill, restoration of Ravensbury Mill, including provision for the Wandle Industrial Museum, relocation of Deen City Farm to Bunces Meadow, new pedestrian bridge at Pickle Ditch to access Wandle Bank, restoration of Merton Priory wall, provision of walkway on Thames Water site north of Byegrove Road and provision of a footpath from Plough Lane to Wandsworth, and a bridge into Garratt Park. Other proposals include better fencing, signage, access for people with disabilities and general environmental improvements.

The Museum sent detailed responses to both documents, welcoming them in principle and making more specific comments on the detail. Both strategies were approved at the Leisure Services Committee meeting on 16th June, and have thus become Council policy.

ANDY VAIL, Museum Administrator/  
Co-ordinator.

## *Forthcoming Event*



### MERTON PRIORY - CHAPTER HOUSE

The next Museum Members' event will be a guided tour of the Chapter House remains by Peter Harris on Sunday 22nd August 1993 at 1.45 for 2.00 pm, meeting at the entrance to the Chapter House in the foot-tunnel under Merantun way. Please feel free to bring your family and friends!

### "DO THE POLKA DOWN THE WANDLE TRAIL!":

On the afternoon of Sunday 26th September in co-operation with the Polka Theatre for Children we are planning a Sponsored walk from Morden Hall Park Cafe to the Merton Abbey Mills, commencing at 12.00 Noon. Proceeds will be divided between the Museum and the Theatre. National Trust warden Paul Rutter will lead the walk. Further details from Judy Vereker, the coordinator on 542 4258.

### WANDLE HERITAGE LTD

For those who don't know the Wandle Working Party, it is a group of local organizations which has been set up by Merton Council to co-ordinate activities along the River Wandle.

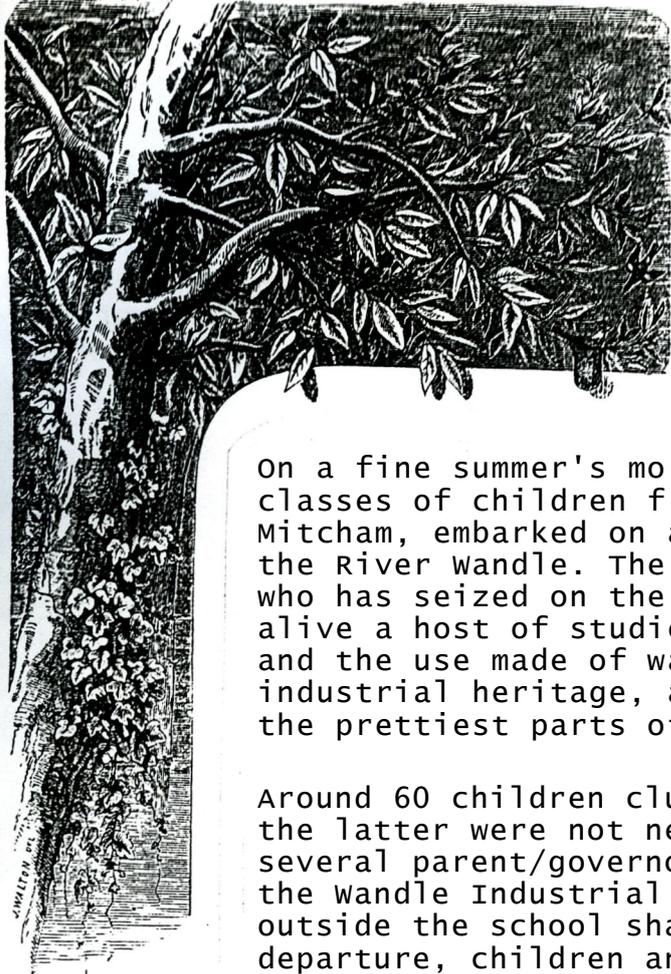
The working party agreed that further consideration would be given to the setting-up of a more formal organizational structure through which "good intentions could become reality".

We can now report that "Wandle Heritage Ltd" (of which we are now a founder member), has been formed by the good offices of Merton Council. The River Wandle, with its proud history, is perhaps one of the greatest attractions in Merton and this new Trust will go a long way in developing the quality of attractions, such as the museums proposed future home at Ravensbury Mill, Mitcham and to link them more effectively. It will also target the needs of visitors and promote the area in general.

We are pleased to advise that **David Bellamy** has agreed to be President of this new Trust and it is hoped to raise commercial and public sponsorship to meet these aims and objectives.

It's very exciting and we look forward to announcing later the future programme of activities of this new Trust.

RAY LEYDEN.



LONESOME FIRST SCHOOL "WALK THE WANDLE".

On a fine summer's morning - Wednesday 23rd June to be precise two classes of children from Lonesome First School, Grove Road, Mitcham, embarked on an expedition of discovery along the banks of the River Wandle. The genius behind the project was Alan Pagden, who has seized on the river's potential as a medium for bringing alive a host of studies, from map reading, the nature of rivers and the use made of water, the evidence which remains of our industrial heritage, and the fun of a nature ramble through one of the prettiest parts of our Borough.

Around 60 children clutching lunch boxes and waterproofs (happily the latter were not needed), four teachers including Alan, plus several parent/governor helpers and two "consultant guides" from the Wandle Industrial Museum piled into a double-decker bus outside the school sharp at 9.30a.m. Well briefed before departure, children and adults were already assigned to two parties, the first of which was off loaded at "The Goat", Mill Green, shortly before 10.00. Their objective was to walk downstream to the Snuff Mill Environmental Centre at Morden Hall by lunchtime, where they would meet the second group, who would be walking upstream from the site of Merton Priory.

The river was first studied below Goat bridge, where water from the Carshalton ponds meets the treated outfall from the Beddington sewage works, and flows rapidly northwards. Maps and clip boards duly marked, the children noted the factories of Willow Lane (lovely smell of baking bread), deplored the wrecked car dumped in the river, and reached the bend in the river at Bennetts Hole (or hollow), where another tributary from the higher ground of Poulter Park could be seen joining the river.

Maps marked, the new nature reserve noted and crushed dock leaves handy for nettle stings, the party next entered the solitude of the watermeads. Here was a silent pool, fished by anglers, and a deep mill cut ending at the tumbling bay of a long-gone paper mill (at which one little girl claimed her great-great-great-great grandfather had worked!) The National Rivers Authority's sluice gates (for flood control) looked dramatic, and then weather-boarded mill cottages appeared, and had to be sketched. Another mill site, and an old mill stone were further reminders of industry, and the road bridge gave an opportunity to talk of the ford that was once there long ago. Sharp eyes spotted a depth gauge - "just like a ruler!" as the party left the watermeads and prepared for the crossing of the busy A217.

A grassy hillock on the riverside path provided a vantage point for sketching a cedar the children had seen in a picture of "Mitcham Grove". Nature study now took over, with first a coot's nest in the centre of a lake, and then 12 ducklings with their mother to get excited about. Massive plane trees demanded a photo of the whole party clasping hands around one huge trunk before Ravensbury Mill was reached. Unfortunately scarcely visible through the trees, it could nevertheless be sketched from the other side of Morden Road, noting the hoist high up on the wall.



Morden Hall Park found the party visibly tiring, and one of the helpers almost invisible beneath a pile of anoraks declared too hot to wear. The iron bridge across the river, with everyone looking over the balustrade made a perfect subject for further photos, and was then sketched. Finally the Snuff Mill (what a pity the wheels don't have paddles) was reached, and welcome cafe. Everyone seemed to have made it - several declaring they had *never* walked so far in their lives. Nettle stings were forgotten, and no-one seemed to have blisters - in fact the only mishaps were one or two pencils that floated down the river, and a clipboard which survived short immersion before being swiftly retrieved by Alan Pagden.

The Merton Abbey party appeared within ten minutes. "Goodbyes" and "Thank yous" followed the two Museum guides as they made their way back to the car park, while 60 young minds turned to lunch boxes, awaiting their claimants in the bus.

Eric N. Montague

On the day of the proposed walk Eric Montague and myself went to the school to join the children on board a hired double decker bus. Predictably, they were all extremely excited over the "adventure" they were starting out on but also very well behaved, which made it a pleasure to work with them.

After dropping the first party at Mill Green, my own group were driven right through the Borough to Plough Lane and disembarked just past what used to be Wimbledon Football Club's ground.

We started our walk by finding the river track on Plough Lane, lined with trees and greenery on both sides, we particularly noticed the willows which are such a feature of the Wandle throughout its length.

Following the track we emerged at the northern end of the old sewage works where we were able to see the reconstruction currently being undertaken in this area. We all saw the newly created ponds and wild habitats. Large areas of land had been cleared of rubble and weeds and in their place trees and shrubs planted. The children had fun spotting different kinds of butterfly and those armed with cameras tried to capture them on film.

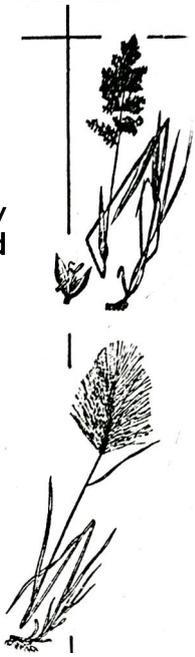
Our walk continued across North Road, past Connolly Leathers Ltd and on down Wandle Bank towards the Savacentre. Here the site of the old William Morris Works was pointed out before we followed the river to the arch on Old Station Road and over the new road, Merantun Way. Here under the fly-over, the children had the opportunity of seeing the remains of the old Chapter House.

Our next port of call was the nearby former Liberty Silk works where John Hawks was able to set in motion, for the children's sake, the great waterwheel in the historic Wheel House. This was a great success with the children.

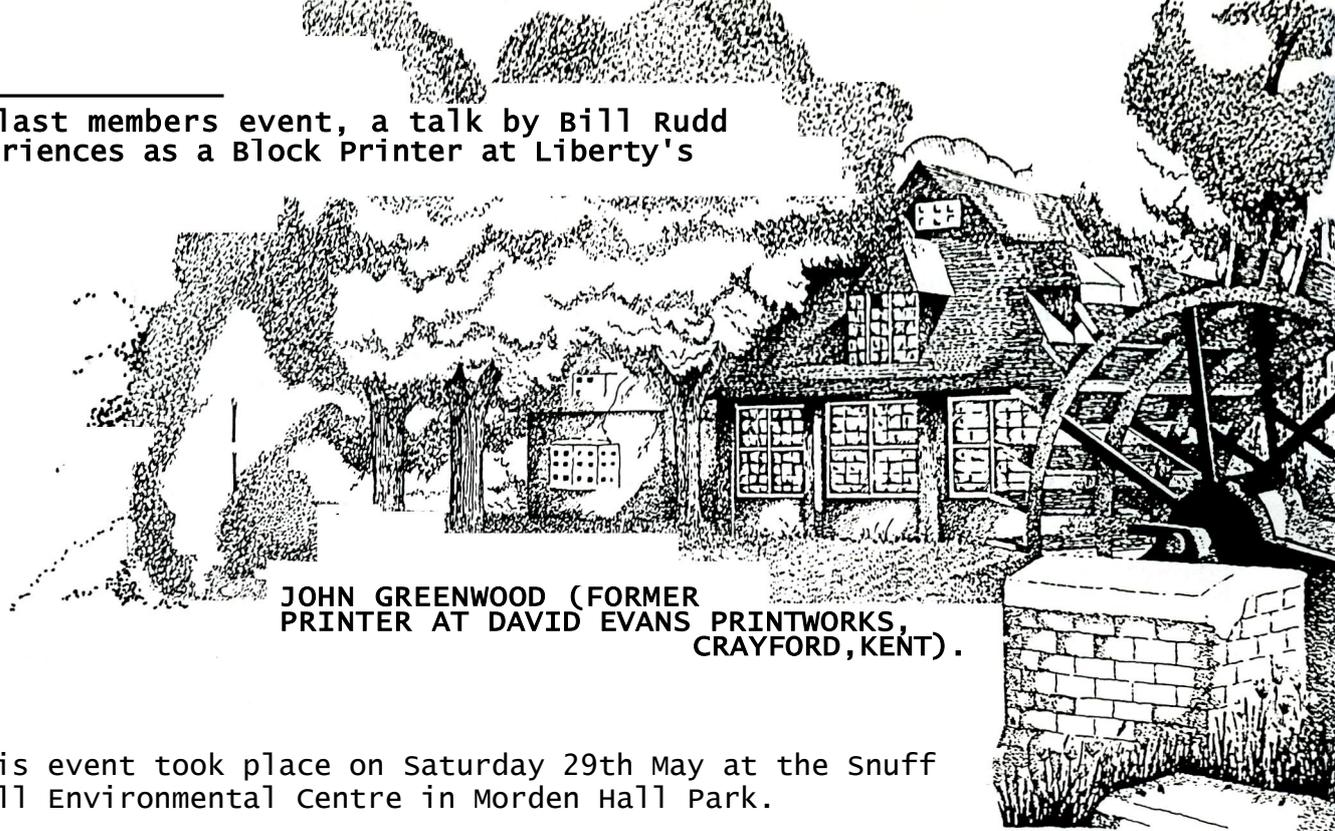
Leaving the site, the next part of our journey took us along the right hand flank of the river, through Phipps Bridge and into Bunce's Meadow. Butterflies and dragon flies were everywhere and the children got very good at spotting them. Through Bunce's Meadow and over the railway bridge, we finally entered the Norden Hall Estate.

We walked across the park, headed towards the Snuff Mills, and met up with the other party, who had arrived there just ten minutes before us - not bad timing!

Peter D. Harris.



Review of last members event, a talk by Bill Rudd on his experiences as a Block Printer at Liberty's Works.



JOHN GREENWOOD (FORMER  
PRINTER AT DAVID EVANS PRINTWORKS,  
CRAYFORD, KENT).

This event took place on Saturday 29th May at the Snuff Mill Environmental Centre in Morden Hall Park.

The pre-publicity to this event stated that Bill would be speaking on his experiences working as a block-printer at Merton Abbey. With this in prospect, and as a block-printer myself for twenty years, I set off on a beautiful sunny Saturday morning full of enthusiasm and anticipation.

Walking through Morden Hall Park for the first time, I discovered the small craft workshops which exist there, and also what a really picturesque stretch of the River Wandle exists in that particular location.

The talk began at 2.30pm and our hosts had prepared an illustrated display panel linked to the theme of the talk, and there were also printing blocks and tools of the block-printer for us to examine.

I was however a little disappointed when during the talk I learned that Bill Rudd was not really a block-printer in the true sense of the word, but had worked in that department for a short period of time.

However once Bill began to speak aided by a series of most interesting slides my initial sense of disappointment subsided. He gave a most entertaining talk which charted the atmosphere of working at the Merton Abbey print works, and additionally mirrored the many changes which took place in the buildings on site, culminating with their restoration into their current condition.

In conclusion Bill gave a talk of quality, delivered in a nice easy informal style, illustrated it well and gave the members a great deal of pleasure and a most enjoyable afternoon.

## Any Suggestions?

What events would you like arranged for Museum members?

If you can suggest speakers to invite or places to visit, or if you know of organisations whose aims are similar to our own (or, come to that, if you can offer something yourself), please let us know.

## INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE YEAR AND CANALS 200

The English Tourist Board has published an Events List for Industrial Heritage Year covering the whole country and also five regional maps showing industrial attractions Cumbria and N.W. England, Yorkshire and N.E. England, Central England, East Anglia and S.E. England, and South and West England. Copies can be obtained from;  
– Experience the Making of Britain, P.O. Box 151, London E15 2HF.

British Waterways has published an information pack covering the events in Canals 200 celebrating the 200th anniversary of 'Canal Mania'. Copies can be obtained from:- Customer Services, British Waterways, Willow Grange, Watford, Herts, WD1 3QA.

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## COURSES

INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY Surbiton Hill Centre, Tuesday evenings until Easter, SAE to Miss M. Renshaw, Flat 8, Wyburn Court, 22 Ewell Road, Surbiton, Surrey, KT6 6HX. Tel; 081 390 2998.

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# William Morris Society 1993

## PROGRAMME

**Saturday 16 October, 2.30pm**

ART NEEDLEWORK: THE REVIVAL OF EMBROIDERY IN  
THE 19TH CENTURY

Illustrated talk by Barbara Morris, formerly Assistant Keeper at the Victoria and Albert Museum, who has written extensively on Victorian design. Books include 'Victorian Embroidery' and 'Inspiration for Design: influence of the Victoria and Albert Museum'.

At Kelmscott House, 26 Upper Mall W6  
*Tickets £2 from the Society*

**Saturday 6 November, 2.30pm**

THE MACDONALD SISTERS

A talk by Sally Baldwin, whose family connection has given her special insight into the lives of those talented and entertaining Victorian sisters:

Louisa Baldwin, Georgiana Burne-Jones,  
Alice Kipling, Agnes Poynter.

Sally Baldwin took part in the Radio 4 programme on the Macdonald Sisters, and is at present editing her family's papers.

At Kelmscott House, 26 Upper Mall W6  
*Tickets £2 from the Society*

**Thursday 18 November, 6 for 6.30pm**

1993 KELMSCOTT LECTURE

given by Fiona MacCarthy

TELLING THE TALE OF TOPSY:  
WILLIAM MORRIS'S BIOGRAPHERS

Fiona MacCarthy is a well-known writer and critic. She is an authority on the visual arts. Her books include 'A History of British Design', 'The Simple Life' (a pioneering work on Ashbee and the Guild of Handicrafts) and latterly 'Eric Gill' (a brilliant, revealing biography). At the moment she is completing her biography of William Morris due to be published shortly.

At the Art Workers' Guild, 6 Queen Square WC1

*Tickets £2 (including tea) from 6pm  
+ Supper after lecture, additional £5.*

*Tickets from the Society*

# Morley College

The Greater London Industrial Archaeology Society  
in conjunction with Morley College presents, for  
Industrial Heritage Year 1993

## Iron and Steam

A Celebration of Victorian Engineering in contemporary music, literature and  
art compiled and presented by Denis Smith

**Live Music: Brass Ensemble, Scottish Country Dance Band,  
Mechanical Music, Two Narrators, Slides, Chorus Songs**

**Saturday 9th October 1993**

at 8pm in the Emma Cons Hall  
MORLEY COLLEGE  
61 Westminster Bridge Road  
London SE1 7HT. 071-928 8501

*nearest tube station Lambeth North  
on the Bakerloo Line*



Tickets £6

*cheques. with SAE, to:* This is a charity concert  
GLIAS, *to benefit independent*

31 The High Street, *Industrial Site Museums in London*  
Farnborough Village,  
Orpington, Kent BR6 7BQ.

*or phone: (0689) 852186*



## WHAT'S ON

DON'T FORGET

Guided walk at the  
Chapter House,  
22nd August, and  
Sponsored Walk,  
26th September,  
see inside for  
details..•

**SATURDAY 28th AUGUST 1993**

**NATIONAL ARCHAEOLOGY DAY - 10.00am to 5.00pm.**

The Ragged School Museum. Greater London  
Industrial Archaeology Society events to encourage and  
explain Industrial Archaeology.

**SATURDAY 4th SEPTEMBER 1993**

**TOWER OPEN DAY - at KEW BRIDGE STEAM MUSEUM**

Green Dragon Lane, Brentford, Middlesex.

Tel: 081 568 4757.

**CROYDON AIRPORT WALK Sunday 5th Sept. 93**

Meet 10.30am outside Terminal Building, Purley Way.

Cost £1.75. Tel: 081 660 8821 (Croydon Airport Soc.)

**THE SURREY IRON RAILWAY Thursday 16th Sept. 93**

Talk by Dr. G. Moss, at 8.00pm at St Matthew's  
Parish Rooms, Station Rd, Redhill. Cost £1.