

**NEWSLETTER NO. 7 - SUMMER - 1994**

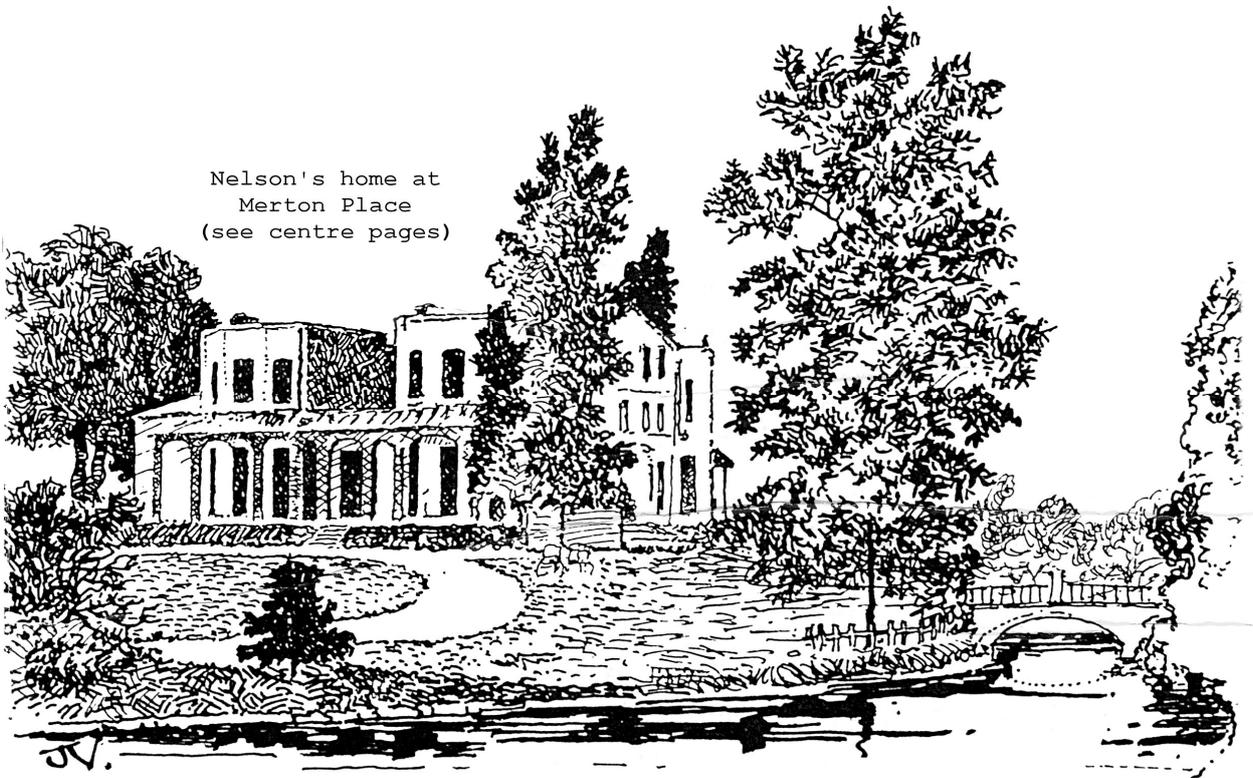
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# **THE WANDLE INDUSTRIAL MUSEUM**

**The Vestry Hall Annexe – London Road – Mitcham –  
Surrey CR4 3UD – Telephone: 081-648 0127**

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Nelson's home at  
Merton Place  
(see centre pages)



Museum open every Wednesday 1 – 4pm  
and first Sunday of each month 2 – 5pm

The museum also welcomes schools and groups by appointment

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ADMISSION: ADULTS 20p, CHILDREN & SENIOR CITIZENS: 10p

Activities Day

On Tuesday, May 24th, Wandle Heritage Ltd. organised an Activities Day for Merton School Children. This was in response to a challenge issued by their President, famous botanist David Bellamy, when he launched Wandle Heritage Ltd., last year. David Bellamy posed the question:-

"How would you tell people what the River Wandle means to you?"

To help the children meet this challenge The Wandle Industrial Museum, together with Deen City Farm, The Snuff Mill Environmental Centre and Platform set up a whole range of activities in Morden Hall Park. These activities were to make the History, Ecology and Farming of the Wandle area apparent and meaningful to the children.

Four different activities were planned and the Museum was responsible for two of them. Peter Harris undertook to explain the process of snuff milling, showing the children examples of snuff boxes, pipes, tobacco leaves and a cigar making mould. He showed them how snuff was taken and the highlight of the event was a tour inside the furnaces where the tobacco leaves were dried.

I took on the task of taking the children on a tour around some of the buildings on the Morden Hall Park Estate to see how the River Wandle was used and how its many channels and streams enhanced and beautified the Park. We had permission from the National Trust to walk round the outside of the Hall where the children were especially interested in the Ice House which they were convinced was a prison!

Seven schools responded to the Challenge so during the day we took the seven classes in rotation round our activities together with Margaret Gordon of Deen City Farm who brought a selection of farm animals along and Julie White of the Snuff Mill Environmental Centre who introduced them to the delights of river dipping and finding examples of life in the river Wandle.

All the different schools seemed to enjoy their activities very much; some extending their time with a picnic lunch by the river Wandle. We enjoyed our day very much and I was certainly very fit after walking round the Park seven times! We at the Wandle Industrial Museum were pleased to be able to participate in this special event.

Now it is up to the children to produce some pictures or writing about the river to send to David Bellamy who will judge the best entry and award a prize. It is hoped to display the work produced at Merton Abbey Mills at a later date.

The winning school will be awarded free visits to the Wandle Industrial Museum, Deen City Farm and the Snuff Mill Environmental Centre for the next school year. So we look forward to welcoming them in the near future.

## FORTHCOMING EVENT

Last August, Peter Harris gave a talk and guided tour at Merton Priory Chapter House Precinct at Merton Abbey Mills, outlining the history of the Priory and subsequent excavations on the site.

Because of its success, we have decided to hold this event again and Peter has kindly agreed to give, as it were, a repeat performance. The tour will begin at about 2.00 p.m. on Sunday 21st August. One advantage of course is that we do not have to add the proviso "weather permitting", as the precinct is situated under Merantun Way! It is easily accessible by public transport and there is ample parking space literally on the doorstep. Buses, 57, 200, 152 and 155 all stop at the Savacentre complex nearby, and Colliers Wood underground station is about 15 minutes walk distant. Obviously, it is hoped that as many Museum members as possible will attend but leaflets are also to be produced for display at local libraries etc. to attract members of the public.

### News Desk

A special thank you to all members who came along to help at the National Trust "Countryside Comes to Town" Fayre at Morden Hall Park over the May Bank holiday weekend. » Our stall attracted a lot of interest and we took over £200 in sales of publications, postcards, snuff and lavender goods. A lot of valuable publicity for the Museum was obtained at this event.

### Opening of the Vestry Hall Garden and Mayor's Visit to Museum

On Saturday, May 14th, former Mayor of Merton, Cllr. Marie Louise de Villiers, formally opened the Vestry Hall Garden which was the culmination of a year's project by Environmental "Action in Merton.

The Garden can be used as a picnic area by groups visiting the Museum. As, part of the project the Museum received a coat of paint donated by Dulux Paint, the work actually being done by the Community Service Unit. All the exterior painting was completed by May 14th, so the Mayor was able to visit the Museum after opening the Garden. It is now looking very smart indeed with cream walls and green paintwork with climbing plants around the perimeter.

### Lonesome First School "Walk the Wandle"

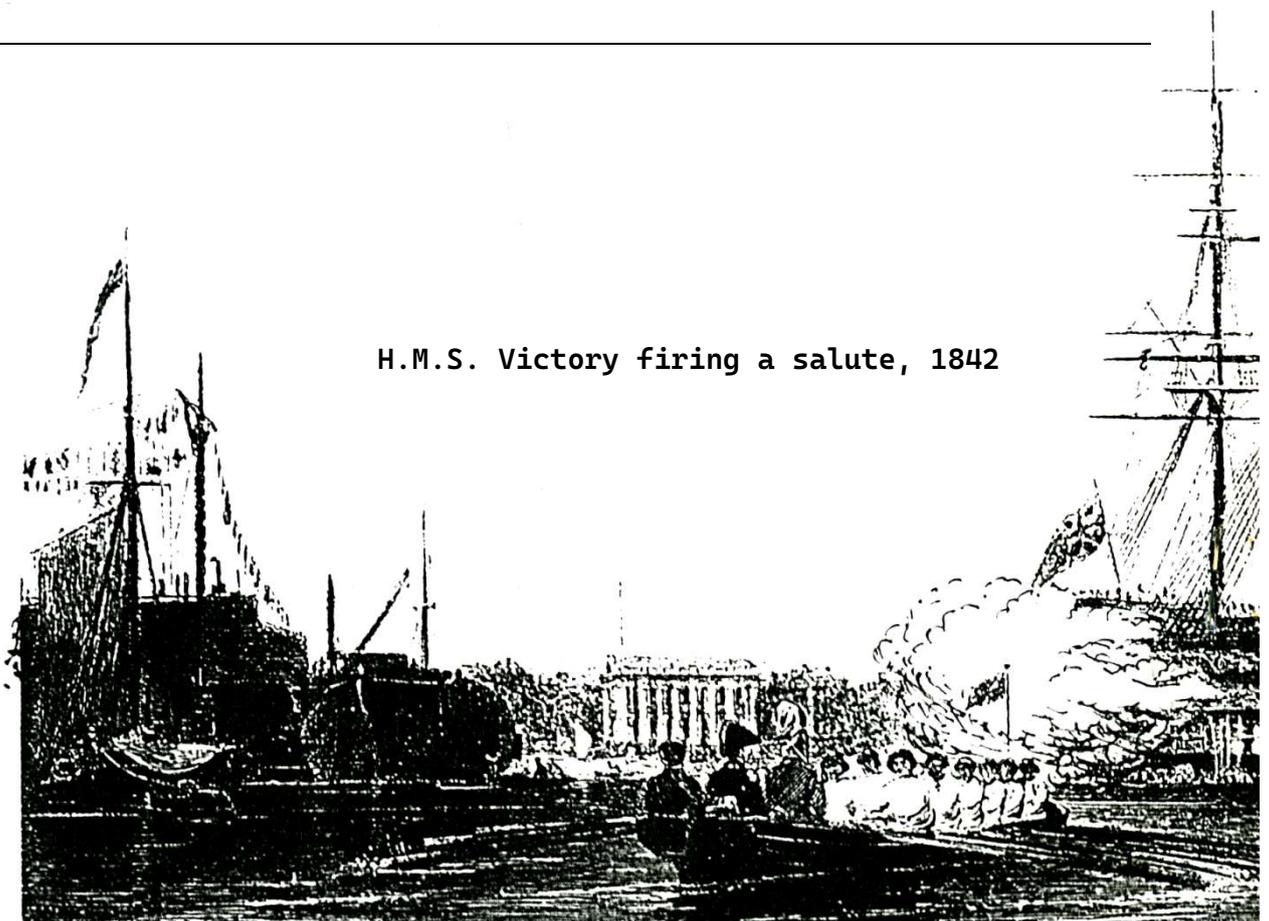
On June 8th, a repeat of last year's two way walk along the Wandle took place. This year I undertook to be the guide for the section from the Goat to Morden Hall Park and Peter Harris repeated his walk from Plough Lane. In spite of a very wet start the weather gradually improved as we progressed. As the children were suitably attired in wellingtons and anoraks, the wet weather conditions hardly concerned them and a great time was had by all, especially in the Watermeads where we were lucky enough to see a heron.

## NELSON

Matters are now in hand at the Museum to assemble an exhibition commemorating the life and times of England's most distinguished naval hero. It was from his estate at Merton Place, in what was then rural Surrey, that Admiral of the Fleet Lord Nelson set out, on the evening of the 13th September 1805, to join his flagship H.M.S. Victory at Portsmouth. His final fatal command at Trafalgar, and his defeat of the combined French and Spanish forces there, are a well documented chapter in the annals of British naval history. It is this history that we hope to bring alive with our exhibition.

Centre-piece of the display will be a full mast arrangement, to scale, of a typical ship-of-the-line of Nelson's day. Also on show will be a scale model of H.M.S. Victory, painstakingly constructed from the 353 separate components of a model kit; the Museum is much indebted to Peter Harris for assembling these items and for his considerable efforts in collecting and arranging all the other pieces on display.

Other features will include a marine painting of a battleship at sea of that era by an unknown artist, a ship's wheel (from a car boot sale!) and various memorabilia acquired as a result of a visit to the Royal Naval Dockyard Museum at Portsmouth. A framed print of an oil painting of Lord Nelson has kindly been lent by the National Trust from the property at Morden Hall, a loan which was negotiated with Paul Rutter, the National Trust Warden at Morden Hall Park. It is intended that most of the exhibition will be in place by the end of June, and it should provide a fascinating contrast to our other displays at the Museum, which span the history of the Wandle Valley from twelfth century Merton Priory to twentieth century Liberty Mills.

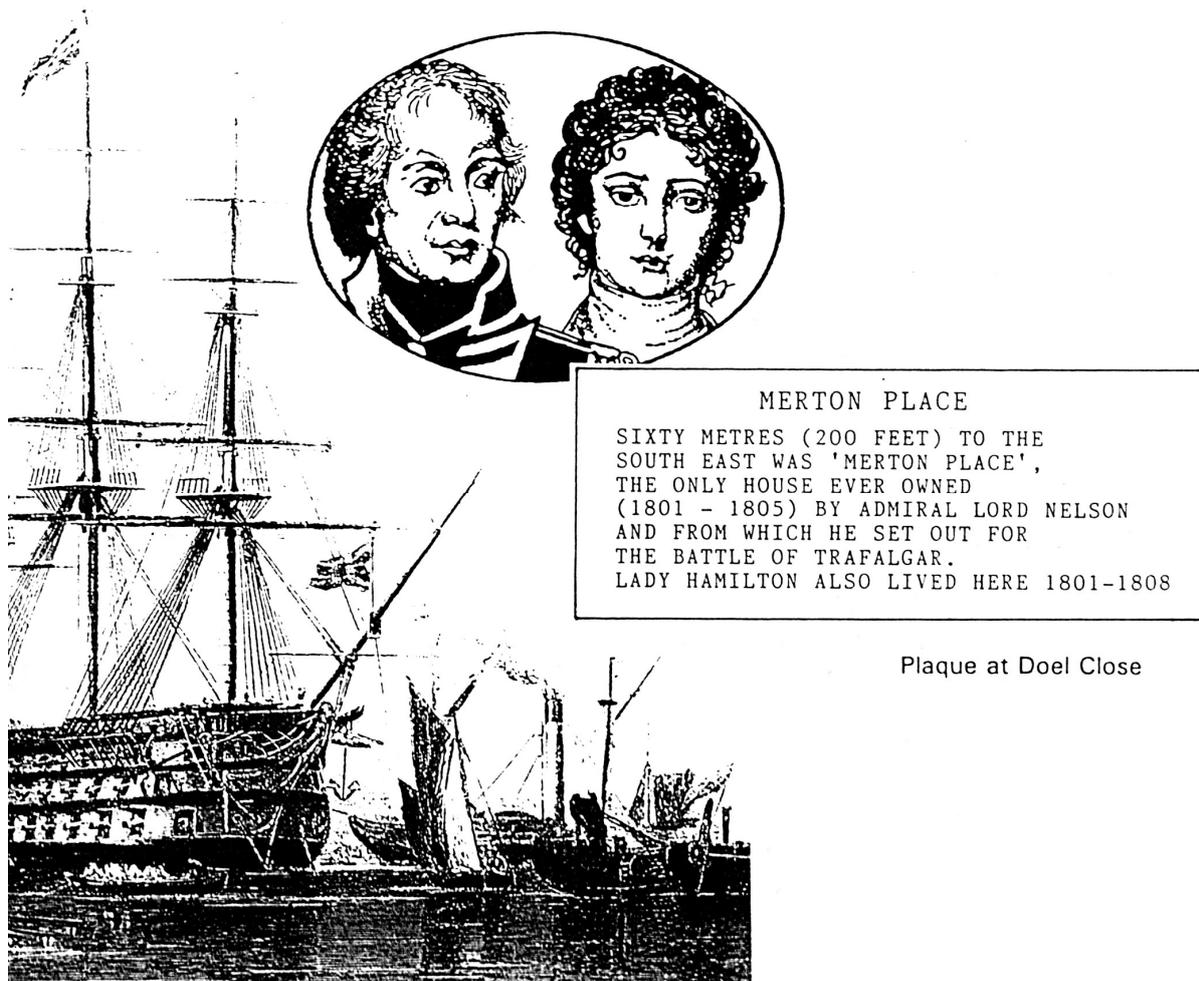


H.M.S. Victory firing a salute, 1842

As to the estate at Merton Place, once the abode of Lord Nelson, his mistress Emma Hamilton, and her husband Sir William Hamilton, Emma was obliged to sell the property in 1808 in an attempt to settle her considerable debts. The once lavishly decorated house, with its landscaped gardens enhanced by a tributary of the Wandle - she and Nelson called it the 'Nile' - fell into disrepair, and was eventually broken up and submerged in a flood of housing development which engulfed the area in the 1840's. Emma herself, 'widowed' twice over and unable to come to terms with her reduced circumstances died, virtually in exile, in Calais on the 15th January 1815.

The area of the estate, which stretched from Quicks Road to a spot south of Liberty Mills (now Merton Abbey Mills Craft Village), bounded by Abbey Road and Morden Road, is nowadays occupied by housing estates. Only a rather inconspicuous plaque at Doel Close, facing Merton High Street, and the names of various roads in the area commemorate the fact that on this site once stood Nelson's only home and Emma's beloved 'Paradise'.

\*Historical sources from the biography 'Emma Hamilton' by Norah Lofts .



## RAVENSBURY MILL, MORDEN, SURREY

As some may recall, the original discussions took place in May 1989 that the "Wandle Industrial Museum" would, conditionally, accept the running of the Museum requirement in the proposed redevelopment at Ravensbury Mill.

This was a commercial scheme which accommodated the Museum and a restaurant in the existing Grade 11 listed building. The rest of the site was to be redeveloped with business units.

However, this was not to be, due to the recession, and this scheme was replaced with a residential scheme in 1992, which was still to accommodate the Museum but without a restaurant.

On first looking at the plans there also appeared to be over development of the site. After much discussion the residential units were reduced from 41 to 36 and the scale of the buildings was much reduced. In early 1993, we were advised by the London Borough of Merton that the Council's Development Control Sub-committee had granted planning permission for a redevelopment of Ravensbury Mill, subject to the prior completion of a Section 106 Planning Agreement.

The approval included the provision of a Museum element in the Grade 11 listed mill building. Within this mill building are included two unique quarter-shot water wheels, This will fulfil the ultimate aim of the Wandle Industrial Museum.

However, this was still not to be, as the Developer was unable to implement the scheme until the financial situation improved.

It is now 1994 and the Developer has now submitted a modified scheme which is still residential in nature and still contains the Museum element but a new architect has been employed to produce a new scheme. At the present the Developer has not involved us in any of the preliminary redesign and our views have been invited from the Director of Environmental Services for Merton. John Foley, our Architectural Co-ordinator, has responded and stated that the new application appears to provide a poorer quality scheme than that established by the approved planning proposal, Ref.92/PO 237 in terms of its appearance, the associated residential amenity of the overall scheme and the setting of the listed building.

The wheels are still turning!



## PUBLICATIONS

### **Merton Priory Book**

This long awaited book has now been published jointly between Merton Library Service and the Museum of London. The book is on sale at all Merton Libraries, and the Museum has a limited stock for sale.

The book is priced at £3.95.

### **The Wandle Trail Map**

The Museum is still being asked for this very popular map, however, we are considering another reprint of this in the very near future. We have had three reprints of this so far, an indication as to how popular it has been. It is probably the best publication the museum has ever produced. We hope to have this made available again shortly.

### **The Historic River Wandle - The Mills in Pictures**

Following the success of this book on the market, which has proved to have been very popular, it is hoped this year to produce two more in the same format which will cover the remainder of the stretch of the River Wandle through the Borough of Merton.

### **Cut Out Mill**

A simple shaped cut out mill has recently been produced with children in mind. As we get a fair number of children at the Museum it is strategic to produce items of this nature that the children like. It is proving to be quite popular with them. We have been thinking of other items of this nature aimed at the children, for example, we were thinking in terms of a book with simple drawings that the children could colour in for themselves.

### **Museum Publications.**

Our own four Museum 16-page illustrated booklets, "An hour passed at... Merton Abbey, Morden Hall Park, Ravensbury Park and Mitcham Grove", are still selling extremely well, and are available at the Museum shop, at local libraries, and at other selected outlets, such as the National Trust shop at Morden Hall Park.

## FUTURE IDEAS

### **Education Pack**

Another idea that we have in mind is the production of an Education Pack for schools, with illustrations and written scripts.

As we now have Sheila Harris as our new Administrator, a former Merton School Teacher, she will be able to advise us soundly on what is required for schools.

## WANDLE WALKS

We have received a leaflet from Sutton Leisure Services giving details of two walks along the river Wandle, programmed for July.

- (1) Wednesday, 20th July : meet at 7 p.m. at Waddon Ponds' and walk to Carshalton.
- (2) Wednesday, 27th July : meet at 7 p.m. at Carshalton Ponds ('Leoni' Bridge) and walk, via Hackbridge to Beddington Corner.

Tickets: £2.00 (D.C.£1.80) (Heritage Friends £1.70) from any Sutton Library or Heritage buildings, or ring 081 770 4738.

Please note that the walks do not finish at the points where they start. Arrangements for transport should be considered in advance.

# William Morris Society

**Sunday 31 July, 3pm  
HAMPSTEAD WALK**

The parish church contains a bust of Keats and the Kelmscott Press printed the invitations for its unveiling, some of Morris's socialist meetings were held in the area. Edwin Walters guides an afternoon of Morris interest in one of London's most attractive spots. Meet Hampstead Parish Church, Church Row NW3 (near Hampstead Tube).  
Ticket: £2 (tea extra)

**Saturday 17 September, 2.30pm**  
MORRIS PAPERS: POEMS BY ARNOLD RATTENBURY  
INSPIRED BY MORRIS WALLPAPERS AND WRITINGS  
Illustrated reading for 2 voices with  
Arnold Rattenbury and Edward Blishen.  
Arnold Rattenbury: writer, editor, designer and poet, recent work includes 'Mozart Pieces' and 'The Frigger-Makers' (in memory of E. P. Thompson).  
Edward Blishen is a writer and the presenter of BBC Radio 4's Book Programme.  
At Kelmscott House, 26 Upper Mall W6  
Tickets £2 from the Society

Kelmscott House  
26 Upper Mall, Hammersmith, London W6 9TA  
Telephone: 081-741 3735

**Saturday 8 October, 2.30pm**  
MORRIS, MARXISM AND UTOPIA  
A talk by Ruth Levitas, Senior Lecturer in Sociology at the University of Bristol and convenor of the Utopian Studies Society. Her books include 'The Concept of Utopia' which includes a substantial section on interpretations of Morris's utopianism.  
At Kelmscott House, 26 Upper Mall W6  
Tickets £2 from the Society

**Saturday 29 October, 2.30pm**  
KELMSCOTT HOUSE LIBRARY DAY  
An opportunity to hear about the Society's Library see some of the original Kelmscott Press books, Morris & Company catalogues, socialist pamphlets etc. Followed by readings from some of the works.  
At Kelmscott House, 26 Upper Mall W6  
Tickets £2 from the Society

