

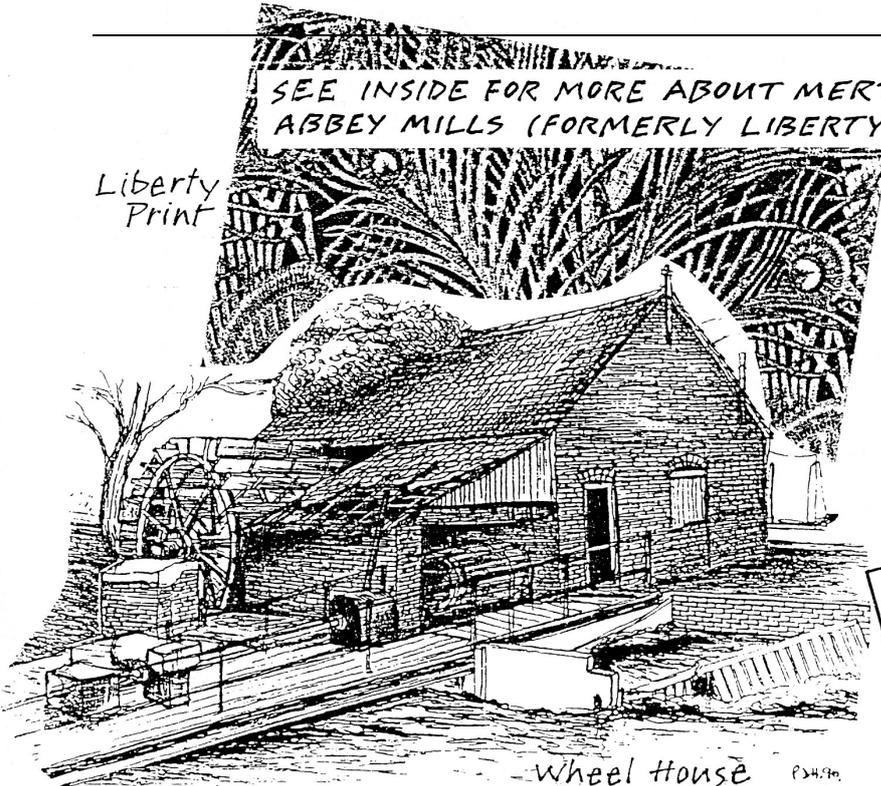
# THE WANDLE INDUSTRIAL MUSEUM

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

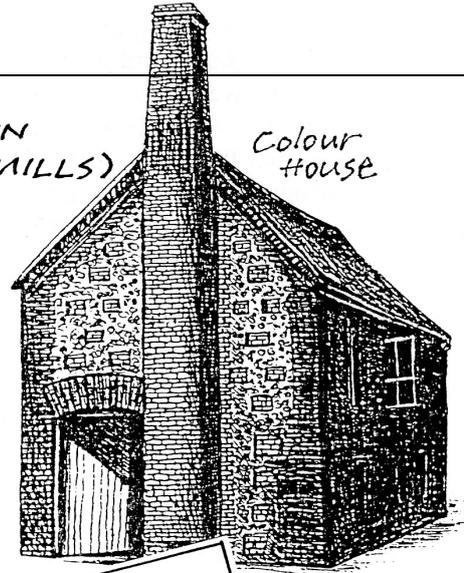
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SEE INSIDE FOR MORE ABOUT MERTON  
ABBAY MILLS (FORMERLY LIBERTY MILLS)

Liberty  
Print



Wheel House P249m



Colour  
House



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

## SCIENCE WEEK - S.E.T.'95

This year, Science Week arranged by the British Association for the Advancement of Science, consisted of seven days exploring science, engineering and technology from March 17th.

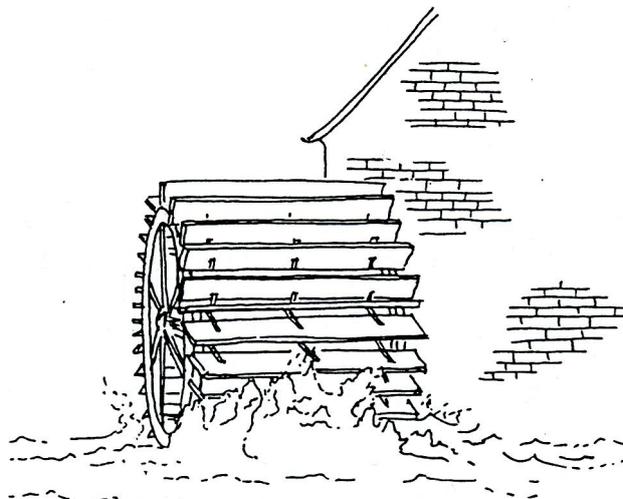
The Wandle Industrial Museum was pleased to participate in this event at the invitation of Merton Scientific Society who organised a week of scientific activities, culminating in a special Science Day at Merton Abbey Mills, aptly named MORE THRILLS AT THE MILLS on Saturday, 25th March.

We were placed in the Wheelhouse and mounted a display of drawings of local Mills by Peter Harris and also sold Museum publications and Mill cut out models. This fitted in well with the main activity in the Wheelhouse which was led by Steve Smythe of the B.A.A.Sc. and consisted of a children's workshop where they could construct their own waterwheel out of a plastic bottle, cotton reel, bendy straw and corrugated plastic. Children then had the thrill of filling the bottle with water and watching the "wheel" turn. This event proved extremely popular with children and there was a constant stream of eager participants until the materials ran out. We managed to secure an example so that we might use the idea for children's workshops in the Museum.

Other activities also took place in the Colour House, along with displays from Merton College, Eve Construction plc, Racal Avionics Ltd. and Paar Scientific Ltd.,

This Science Day also coincided with Merton Scientific Society's 50th Anniversary as they were founded in 1945. After the exhibition closed we were invited to attend a 50th birthday party in the Wheelhouse with Members and their guests. There was wine and refreshments and a huge birthday cake. Fellow Member of Wandle Industrial Museum, Norman Fairey and his wife Avril were also invited so it was a pleasant end to a very interesting and informative day and also a chance to gain publicity for our Museum.

Sheila Harris  
April 1995



## MUSEUM NEWS DESK

In February we were pleased to welcome to the Museum, Dame Angela Rumbold, M.P. for Mitcham and Morden, with her Agent, Karl McCartney. Dame Angela had not visited the Museum in its present site at Vestry Hall Annexe before and she was very impressed with all the exhibits. She wished us well with the move to Ravensbury Mill.

**In March** the Museum was busy with five textile workshops with William Morris Middle School, which proved very successful. We also had two workshops with pupils from Garth High School, who were keen to use our three dimensional map of the Wandle Valley as part of their geography curriculum.

### **Museum Volunteers**

We are shortly to lose the services of Len Sorrell, a Volunteer for the last three years and Shop Manager for the last year. Our thanks to Len who has so ably run the shop and been a loyal and reliable volunteer. He will be much missed. Len and his wife Irene will be moving down to Sussex shortly and we wish them well.

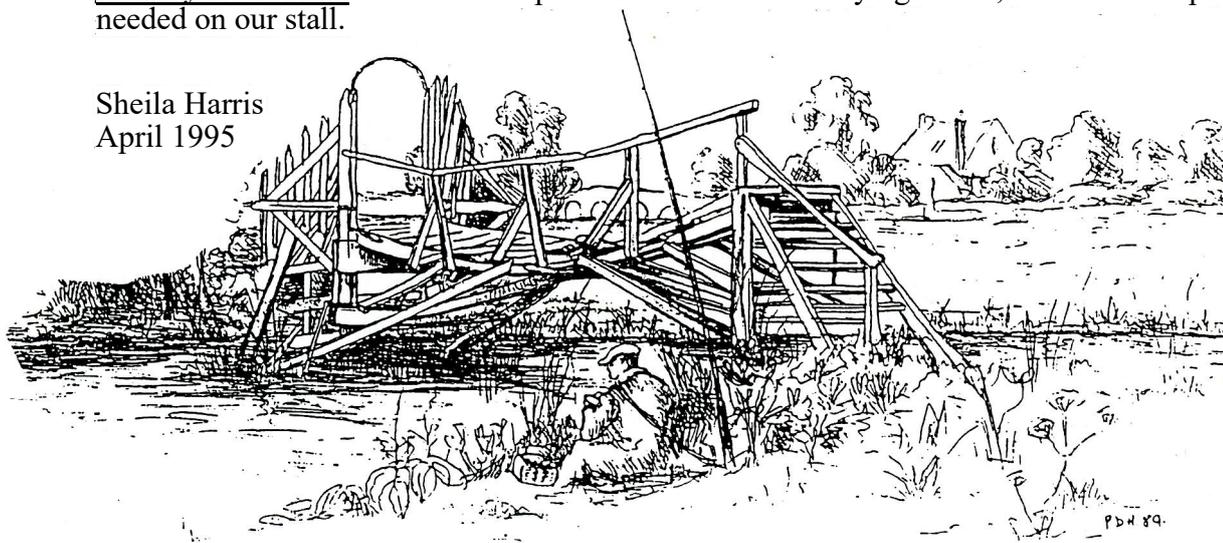
We are pleased to welcome two new Volunteers who will run the Shop together. Eric Trim is a Member of the Merton Historical Society and Derek Huxtable comes to us from the Merton Volunteer Bureau.

We are still actively seeking a volunteer to help with **Fund Raising** but have had no luck so far. If any member could help in this field, even for a few hours a week, please telephone the Museum. Some of this work could be done at home if you have your own typewriter / word processor.

### **Advance Notice; Merton Green Fair**

**Sunday 25th June** - 2.00 to 6.00 p.m. at London Road Playing Fields, Mitcham. Help needed on our stall.

Sheila Harris  
April 1995



'THE ANGLERS' BRIDGE ON THE WANDLE.'  
FROM AN ETCHING BY - SIR FRANK SHORT R.A. P.R.E.

## **OLD TIMER FINDS NEW FRIENDS**

As generations come and go, and the pace of change quickens all around us, it is reassuring to know that some things in life are as dependable as they were centuries ago. The River Wandle is one such enduring feature of the landscape of South West London and one of the Borough's finest natural assets.

There are records of cornmills on the river as far back as 1086 and the Domesday Book lists at least thirteen at that time. However, it was during the 18th and 19th Centuries that the river really came into its own, as its fast flowing waters provided the power for a number of industries including oil, leather, paper, snuff and printed textiles. Another product of the Industrial Revolution - the Surrey Iron Railway (the first public railway in the world), operated from 1803 until about 1839 transporting goods along the Wandle Valley, to and from the Thames at Wandsworth.

However, towards the end of the 19th century, the proliferation of industries meant that the river had become badly polluted and its springs were being depleted by increasing water extraction. Locally mounting public concern led to the formation of the River Wandle Open Spaces Committee with the object of encouraging conservation of undeveloped land on the river banks. Eleven acres of land known as The Watermeads were purchased and presented to the National Trust in 1913, and further areas of land have since been secured for public open space, such as Ravensbury Park.

Today, there are still many opportunities to change the Wandle for the better and hence the creation of Wandle Heritage Limited. The company has been formed with Dr. David Bellamy as President with the principal objective of securing the enhancement of the river environment and amenity value of the Wandle. To this end, the company has the full support of the local Authority and other interested bodies such as the National Trust and National Rivers Authority.

The company is concentrating on specific priorities this year. Firstly, an interesting and informative permanent exhibition will be established in the Wheelhouse, one of a number of historic buildings on the banks of the river at Merton Abbey Mills. This exhibition will illustrate the rich historical past of this area of London, and will include not only static displays but interactive exhibits which will bring to life the activities that took place in these buildings in the past.

The Wheelhouse will have dual role - not only will it accommodate the exhibition, but will also become the Wandle Conservation Centre from where an ongoing programme of practical conservation and improvement tasks will be coordinated. These will range from modest activities like the planting of native wildflowers in suitable areas to more ambitious projects such as the opening up of more stretches of the riverside walkway.

There is a great opportunity for local people to get involved in all aspects of this worthwhile work, and Wandle Heritage Limited is actively seeking volunteers who would be prepared to assist with staffing the exhibition as well as helping with practical conservation activities. If you would like to help or would like more information, please contact Wandle Heritage Limited on 0181 543 6656, or write to the following address - The Wheelhouse, Merton Abbey Mills, Watermill Way, London, SW19 2RD. The company will be producing a quarterly Newsletter outlining their work, so please contact us if you would like a free copy.

Tim Norris-Jones  
April 1995

**THE CONSERVATION CENTRE** will be open to the Public from Saturday, 27th May when there will be a special programme of activities planned over that week-end.

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## **MEMBERS EVENTS**

**Past:** On Thursday, March 23rd, 15 Members and friends enjoyed a video presentation "One Day on the Wandle" by Craig MacCraiger at the Vestry Hall.

This proved a popular event and a copy of the new edited version of the video was purchased for the Museum for £20.

**Present:** Friday 2nd June is the date for the guided walk round Ravensbury Park led by Eric Montague. There is much to learn about the history of the Manor and the Mill so come along and find out. Meet outside the Wandle Road entrance at 7.15 p.m. for 7.30 p.m. start.

**Future:** A guided Tour of Deen City Farm in its new venue of Bunces Meadow by the River Wandle is planned for Saturday, 9th September at 2.30 p.m. More details in the Summer Newsletter.

Sheila Harris  
April 1995

## RAVENSBURY MILL - APRIL 1995

Initial inspection of the Mill last December had found that one of the sluice gate mechanisms had a broken cast iron rack. This was removed and, with the assistance of Merton Technical College, repaired by fitting two steel teeth.

During a site meeting on Saturday 4th March, the rack was refitted and the sluice gate raised. However, this operation caused the guide bars to move up with the gate. This was found to be due to severe rotting of the large timbers to which the guides are fixed. The steel beam spanning the mill pond by the bridge was also badly rusted and needs replacement.

Fairclough Homes have removed the old rubbish collecting grids and bridge and cleared the pond in the area in front of the Mill. The brickwork thus revealed looks to be in good condition, but the walls may need refacing. An inscription inside the spillway suggests that this work was done in the 1850's. Interestingly, the bolts removed from the sluice gate were of a non-standard thread, also indicating pre-1860 vintage - we don't build like that any more!

Fairclough Homes are engaged in replacing the rubbish collectors and are to produce quotes for the repair of items noted above.

Once the sluice gates are operating it should be possible to turn the water wheels, enabling a complete inspection of the steel paddles and main bearings. Some of the sluice gate operating gears are worn and have missing teeth, and these will be re-cast when funds are available.

Norman Fairey  
12th April 1995



## **MUSEUM REGISTRATION**

The Wandle Industrial Museum was very pleased to be informed by the Museums and Galleries Commission that it had been granted provisional registration from February 1995.

With the advice of our Curatorial Adviser, Simon Lace, Curator of Richmond Museum, we have been working towards this registration for some time.

The Museums and Galleries Commission demand a set of standards for Museums to become registered; the chief one being the documentation of all the Museum's artifacts. This documentation has to be done in a set procedure which must be strictly adhered to. To gain provisional registration a Plan of Action for this and an Acquisition and Disposal Policy needed to be written and approved and then we had to be seen to be putting it into practice.

Leigh Lampard, the Registration Adviser for the South Eastern Museums Service, visited the Museum in January and saw the Museum and its exhibits with which she was very impressed. She then saw the documentation already started and approved of our procedures.

For this documentation we have to thank our Volunteer Archivist and long time Member of W.I.M., Marguerite Lee Delisle. Marguerite worked for 10 years in the Wandsworth libraries. She has taken a course run by the Society of Indexers. For 2 years she was the archivist for W.I.M. and also did a year of research. She is also a Member of the Management Committee of W.I.M. Marguerite has been very ably assisted in this task of documentation by Volunteer helper, Emma Hicks. Emma is waiting to do a Post Graduate course in Heritage at Kingston University. She is a Volunteer at Kingston Heritage Centre and comes to W.I.M. every Wednesday morning to help with the documentation.

Now that we have provisional documentation, we have to continue to uphold these standards by providing a three year plan of action for our documentation. We have to prove that we have a professionally run Museum by holding quarterly Management Committee Meetings and by showing that we are providing a service to the community.

With our impending move to the Ravensbury Mill site, it is important that we continue to uphold these ideals so that we gain full registration of the Museum in the near future.

With the registration of the Museum we become eligible to apply for grant-aid from the Museums and Galleries Commission and the Area Museums Council and other sources previously denied to us.

I am sure that if we all work together and with the help and support of Simon Lace, we should attain full registration in the near future and will be able to put the Wandle Industrial Museum firmly on the map.

Sheila Harris - April 1995

ADVANCE NOTICE

Special Event

# *Wandle Industrial Museum Fund Raising Day*

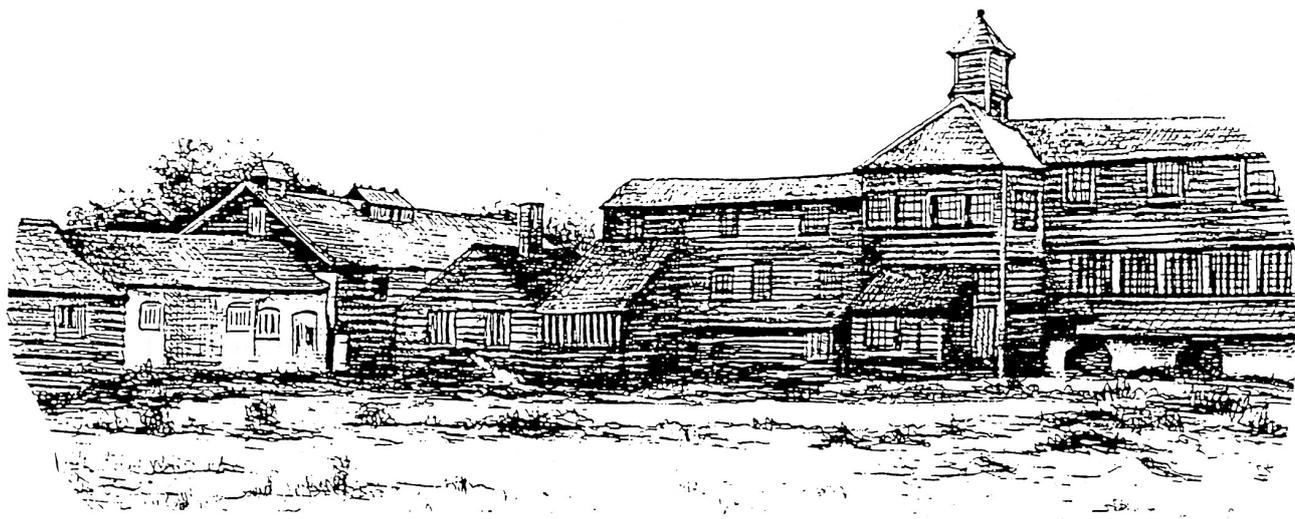
at MERTON ABBEY MILLS  
SATURDAY, 10<sup>th</sup> JUNE 1995

12.00 noon - 5.00 p.m.

Music provided by "Terrapin Station"  
Kindly donated by Norman Fairey

DISPLAYS : PUBLICATIONS : MUSIC  
COMPETITIONS : RAFFLE

Members - please come along and help raise funds  
For the restoration of the water wheels at  
Ravensbury Mill.



Thomas Bennett's former Calico Printing Works, Merton Abbey - 1894.