

NEWSLETTER NO. 11 - SUMMER - 1995

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# THE WANDLE INDUSTRIAL MUSEUM

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

*The Museum is shortly moving to  
Ravensbury Mill ~  
Help us make the wheels go round!*

SEE BACK  
PAGE FOR  
MEMBERSHIP  
APPLICATION  
FORM



**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**

# *Ravensbury Park walk ~ with Eric Montague*

We began our walk by looking at the possible site of an old well, as it is now concreted over we shall never know. Nearby was the enormous trunk of a sycamore tree that had been blown down in the great gale, one of a pair, the other one still standing by the river. Here Eric gave us a brief but informative history of the various owners and tenants of the Ravensbury estate, much larger in those days, of course, than what is now Ravensbury Park. As we walked through the Park it was difficult to imagine how large the estate had been. At the end of the 15th Century it had covered seven hundred acres, an area it virtually retained until the beginning of this century. Although owned by the Carew family until 1907 it nevertheless passed through the hands of many tenants.

The existence of several houses had been recorded on the land but the only physical evidence left is three fragments of brick walling showing where Ravensbury House, sometimes called Ravensbury Manor had stood until about a century ago.

The serene stretch of the Wandle we now walk along belies the feverish image of its past. Where Council housing now covers the ground, sheets and sheets of calico once lay bleaching in the sun, this industry flourished for nearly 200 years, until the northern mills proved too strong a competition for the smaller Wandle mills. The varied growth of the grass still shows where the watercourses ran, supplying water to the bleaching fields.

As we walked on beside the river, Eric pointed out the many exotic and unusual trees that had been planted in the Park during its long history as private property.

We ended our walk at the site of what had been one of Mitcham's finest houses, the only indication that a large house had once stood there was the magnificent cedar tree still standing close to the water, a sure sign of a sizeable private house we were told by Eric. The house itself had gone by the 1840s but the area remained open space until taken over by Hovis as a Sports Ground. In the 1970s Merton Council acquired the land and built a housing estate, a very pleasing estate with the most delightful aspect.

We strolled back through the Park to the gate where we had met having passed a very enjoyable and informative evening's walk thanks to Eric's interesting talk and the pleasant weather.

MEG THOMAS



## **RAVENSBURY MILL PROGRESS REPORT** by John Foley

Well its more or less finished and it looks stunning. On Saturday morning the 8th July, Peter and Sheila Harris, Ray Leyden and John Foley met Simon Brown and Fred Stutchbury of Fairclough Homes on site to inspect the Ravensbury Mill Wandle Industrial Museum premises.

Although there is still work on-going to complete the paving and the car parking areas around the mill pond, the restored mill, mill pond and former workshops present a stunning picture. It is both an idyllic historic setting and at the same time striking and exciting setting of warehouse style housing to the historic watermill.

Fred Stutchbury, in particular, is to be congratulated on his ingeniously carried out repairs to the mill pond, the metal rubbish collector grills fixed to the mill pond walls to protect the water wheels and to the sluice gates structure. When the mill pond had been drained as part of the housing construction programme, it became apparent that two of the oak post runners holding the central sluice gates were rotten and the R.S.J. across the mill pond supporting the gears which operate the sluice gates had rusted through. The repairs to these items had to be undertaken while the pond was empty and also these works were too heavy for volunteer labour to undertake. Fred was delighted by this "once in a life time" challenge and agreed to undertake the work. He provided the Museum with a quotation for the work which was readily accepted and completed the works in an astonishingly skilled manner.

Also, another example of Fred's extraordinary inventive skills is the wonderful slated roof to the Museum wing. Although you can view this fine roof from Morden Road, it is only when you see it from the mill pond side that you can appreciate the complexity and beauty of it as a restored industrial building that clearly had a fragmented evolutionary life!

The interior of the Museum is equally stunning, offering a variety of spaces evocative of the building's historic industrial past. The most unusual and inventive aspect of the architect's design is the water wheels viewing gallery. The water wheels are protected by newly restored tall wooden doors which can be opened up to reveal and provide access to the two water wheels. For visitors to be able to view these historic items, a covered metal bridge has been slung across the mill pond linking the two sections of the Museum so that in due course, the highlight of visiting the Museum will be to see these magnificent wheels turning - from a safe and dry distance. Again Fred's ingenuity and resourcefulness was needed to get this steel structure in place.

We were very impressed and delighted with the Museum and its very unique and special setting. We are now negotiating the lease and a handover date. This will mark the culmination of around 15 years of effort by the Wandle Industrial Museum to influence and bring into being the Wandle Heritage Conservation Area. The efforts of officers and councillors of the London Borough of Merton, in particular, Gillian Hein should be noted in this process. Now an important part of the Wandle's industrial heritage will soon be available to the public to enjoy as part of what has become a very impressive Wandle Heritage Area.

## HELPING HANDS AT THE MUSEUM

Without the willing help of the many volunteers listed here, the Museum would not now exist at all, let alone be in a position to move to new premises at Ravensbury Mill. Fund raising events, guided walks, supervision of school visits, administration and accounting responsibilities, creating new exhibitions and up- dating old ones - these are but a few of the activities which have been undertaken by our 'task force' at the Museum.

Mention must also be made of the considerable help we have received from the Merton Voluntary Service Council staff at Vestry Hall. Without their advice and co-operation, and the fact that we have also been able to use their office facilities such as photocopying, our stay in Mitcham at the Vestry Hall Annexe would have been a much more difficult task.

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**JOHN FOLEY**: Adviser to Wandle Industrial Museum on Town Planning and Historic Building Matters and became involved with the then Wandle Industrial Museum team during 1983-85 when employed as a Town Planning Officer with London Borough of Merton. On leaving Merton in May 1985 joined the Wandle Industrial Museum Management Committee, participating in the famous complex public inquiry into the Savacentre Planning Application in 1986 and subsequently advising on the many schemes and planning applications with which the Wandle Industrial Museum and London Borough of Merton became involved in seeking to establish the Wandle Industrial Museum in historic premises on the River Wandle.

**SIMON LACE** is our Curatorial Adviser. Simon is the Curator of the Richmond Museum. He has given us much valuable advice with our application for registration with the Museums and Galleries Commission.

**LEN SORRELL** has run the Museum Shop for the last three years. He hopes to retire to Sussex in the near future.

**ERIC TRIM** helps in the Museum Shop each week. He is a retired cabinet maker and member of the Streatham Society and Merton Historical Society.

**ANDREW XAVIER** is our volunteer accountant. Each year he comes in to prepare our accounts for the Auditor.

**NORMAN FAIREY** is a site engineer at Merton Abbey Mills. He has done some repairs to the sluice gate mechanisms at Ravensbury Mill and will be a great help to us when we move to the new Museum site.

**STEPHEN ASHCROFT** has been involved with the Museum since 1982. He was a Trustee for seven years and his wife Val was once Treasurer and Company Secretary. He set up the present Membership Scheme and is now a Member of both the Members Committee and the Fund Raising Committee.

**SHEILA HARRIS** has been the Museum Administrator for just over a year. Before joining the Museum Team she was a Merton school teacher for 25 years. She has always been interested in local history and shares an interest in the River Wandle with her husband Peter.

**PETER HARRIS** has been involved in the Museum since 1982. He is a Trustee of the Museum and was responsible for designing and building the Nelson Exhibition. A trained artist and historian he lectures to many local societies about the history of the River Wandle.

**MARGUERITE LEE DELISLE**, Marguerite worked for ten years in the Wandsworth Libraries and has taken a course run by the Society of Indexers. For two years she was the archivist for the Wandle Industrial Museum and also did a year of research. She is also a Member of the Management Committee of the Wandle Industrial Museum.

**EMMA HICKS** is waiting to do a Post Graduate course in Heritage at Kingston University. She is a volunteer at Kingston Heritage Centre and helps out with documentation work and compilation of material for the Museum archives.

**RAY LEYDEN** was invited to join the Museum in 1989 by his brother Kevin David Leyden, who was a Trustee at that time. Ray is a design engineer with considerable contract law experience. When he became a Member, the Museum was in dispute with a photocopier company and he was able to resolve the dispute. He has since gained an interest in local history and with his design and management experience has contributed to the running of the Museum and the planning of Ravensbury Mill.

**MARGARET STANNERS**, who is a retired secretary, has been helping us with our typing for just over a year, she came to us from the Merton Volunteer Bureau. She types our letters and helps to produce the quarterly Newsletter.

**JOHN VINER** has been associated with the Museum for several years. As a graphic designer, he was largely responsible for producing the popular "Wandle Trail" fold-out map and also helped to produce a variety of illustrated booklets and publicity material on behalf of the Wandle Industrial Museum.

**ZUBAIR MAHMOOD** is at present studying sociology and geography at the Roehampton Institute. He helps out with photocopying, postal duties and with many other administrative activities.

**MEG THOMAS** joined the Members of the Museum in 1990 when Stephen Ashcroft co-opted her onto the Members Sub-Committee and has remained on the Committee since then helping to produce the quarterly Newsletter. Meg is a local School Teacher and is also closely involved with local environmental issues.

*More volunteers in our next issue!*

## MUSEUM NEWS DESK

Very many thanks to all those Members and friends who helped man our stall at the **National Trust Three Day Fair** in Morden Hall Park, May 6th-8th. We raised over £300 this year which was a record amount.

Also thanks to the stalwart band of helpers who supported us at **Merton Green Fair** on 25th June at London Road Playing Fields. It was a beautiful sunny day and £50 was raised towards the move to Ravensbury Mill.

A special mention must be made of our **Fund Raising Day** at Merton Abbey Mills on June 10th. With music kindly donated by Norman and Avril Fairey with members of their group "Terrapin Station", we spent a very pleasant afternoon and raised nearly £100. Our new game devised by Peter Harris "Find the Wandle Trout" attracted much interest and helped the money roll in. We were very pleased to be visited by Dr. Charles Goodson-Wickes M.P. for Wimbledon and Wandle Industrial Museum Member, who tried his hand at funding the trout and made a donation to our Appeal. We hope to arrange further Fund Raising Events in the future.

The Museum will be having a stand again at **Sutton Environmental Fair** in Carshalton Park on Bank Holiday Monday, 28th August from 11.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m. If any Members can offer help on that day for an hour or two please telephone the Museum - 0181 648 0127

## MEMBERS EVENTS

**Past** On Friday, 2nd June, 27 members and friends enjoyed a very interesting and informative walk around Ravensbury Park led by well-known local historian Eric Montague.

**Present** The guided tour of Deen City Farm has had to be postponed. Instead Peter Harris will lead a walk round **The Carshalton Sources of the River Wandle** on Saturday 2nd September. Meet outside The Greyhound Pub at 2.00 p.m.

**Future** **The Annual General Meeting** - Tuesday, 26th September at Chapel Orchard Day Centre, Church Road, Mitcham, at 7.30 p.m. There will be a presentation by Tim Knight of the National Rivers Authority following the Business Meeting.

S. Harris 11/7/95



## FUND RAISING IDEAS

The Fund Raising Committee held its inaugural meeting on 19th June. the Committee, consisting of Stephen Ashcroft, Peter Harris, Sheila Harris, Sean Lovett and Meg Thomas, was set up in line with recommendations from the Museums and Galleries Commission Curatorial Adviser, Simon Lace The Committee's work is concerned with obtaining funds and/or goods and services, through Trusts, the National Lottery and individual and corporate donors.

A key underpinning to the fund raising effort is the development of a long—term Business Plan, which is being put together with the assistance of Bill Visick, an experienced businessman who has been placed with the Museum through Business in the Arts. The Business Plan will provide a major enhancement to the Museum's credibility, particularly when seeking long-term support from the London Boroughs Grants Committee and the Museums and Galleries Commission.

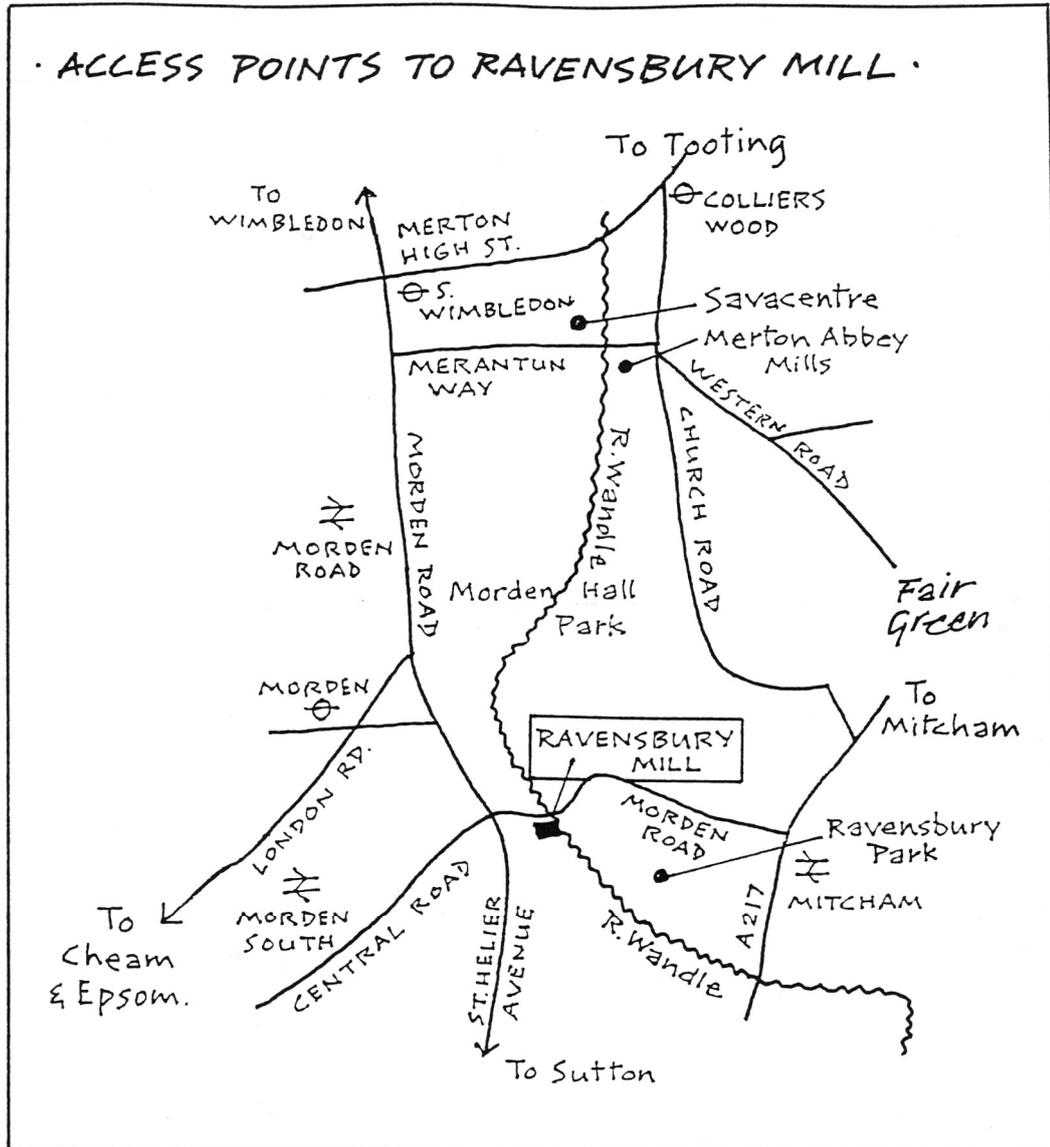
Two organisations have recently made generous donations which we would like to acknowledge here, 'Whitely Products Ltd (former occupants of the Ravensbury Mill) have kindly donated £200, and we are also very pleased to have received £300 towards the restoration of the waterwheels from the Mitcham District branch of the Independent Order of Oddfellows. To both organisations, much thanks.

If any Members or Friend of the Museum can make any contribution through their work place, or has any ideas for fund raising, please call on 0181 -648 0127 and leave a message on the answerphone.

SEAN LOVETT  
11.7.95



*Fund-raising in a bygone age!*



· Application Form for new members ·

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PLEASE PRINT.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_ TEL NO \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

I/WE WISH TO JOIN THE WANDLE INDUSTRIAL MUSEUM AS : (please tick)

- AN INDIVIDUAL MEMBER      £8.00
- FAMILY MEMBERS                £12.00
- SCHOOL MEMBERSHIP            £30.00

Please make cheques payable to THE WANDLE INDUSTRIAL MUSEUM and send this form to: THE VESTRY HALL, LONDON ROAD, MITCHAM, SURREY, CR4 3UD.