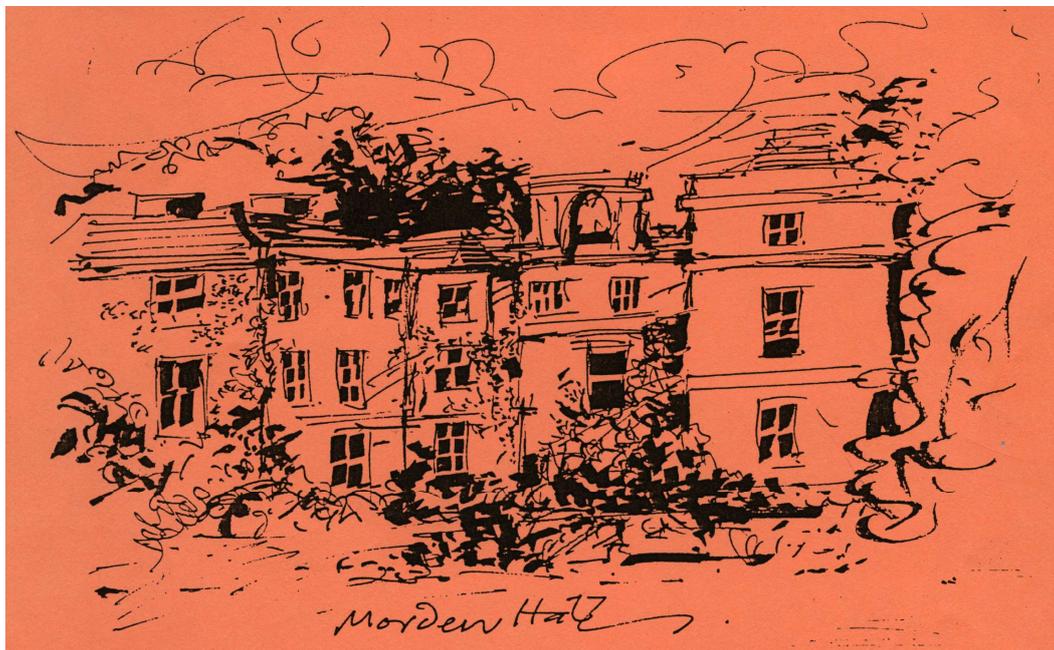


NEWSLETTER NO.13 • WINTER • 1996

THE WANDLE INDUSTRIAL MUSEUM

The Vestry Hall Annexe • London Road • Mitcham •
Surrey CR4 3UD • Telephone : 0181-648 0127



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

The museum also welcomes schools and groups by appointment

ADMISSION : ADULTS 20p CHILDREN & SENIOR CITIZENS 10p

MUSEUM NEWSDESK

We are pleased to report several school visits and workshops at the Museum during the Autumn term, all of which were very successful. Four classes from Malmesbury Middle School participated in Textile Workshops during October. We also had visits from Putney High School Junior School, St. Michael's School, Southfields, S.S. Peter and Paul R.C. First School and the Cricket Green School Mitcham.

In October we were pleased to entertain Jenny Ely and Liz Hulf from David Evans Craft Centre of Silk at Crayford Kent at the Museum. We were happy to loan them some of our William Morris materials for an Exhibition they are holding from January to March to celebrate the William Morris Centenary. On January 31st, Marguerite Lee-Delisle, our volunteer archivist, Peter and myself, visited their Exhibition and enjoyed a conducted tour of the Centre. It is certainly well worth a visit. We hope to improve and enhance our own William Morris displays at the Museum later in the year.

Also in October, we were invited to view a collection of material from a local peppermint and lavender oil producer John Jakson & Company, then in the care of Croydon Museum Services. They wished to dispose of the collection due to pressure of space and invited local interested Museums to bid for it. I am pleased to say our application was successful, and the collection is now in the process of being accessioned. (See Marguerite's article on Page1) We are pleased to welcome Judy Brody as a new volunteer archivist to help Marguerite in the task of documentation. Judy has worked in the Science Museum Library and also at Morden Library so should be well qualified to assist us.

MEMBERS EVENTS

PAST On Saturday, 20th January a group of 17 Members and friends spent an enjoyable day visiting Kelmscott House, home of William Morris for the last 18 years of his life.. Several Members started their outing with refreshments at "The Dove" public house - a seventeenth century riverside inn close to Hammersmith Bridge. Here it is claimed the poet James Thomson composed "Rule Britannia" in one of the upper rooms, and Charles II and Nell Gwynne are reputed to have drunk at the Inn together.

We then visited Kelmscott House built in the 1780's and now remembered as the home of William Morris from 1878 until his death in 1896. Morris renamed the house Kelmscott House after Kelmscott Manor his beloved home on the upper Thames near Lechlade, Gloucestershire. Here he began experiments in weaving, setting up carpet looms in the Coach House, until they were moved to Merton Abbey in 1881. In 1883, he became a Socialist and established the Hammersmith branch of the Social Democratic Federation in the Coach House at Kelmscott House, and many famous people lectured there including Bernard Shaw.

In 1891 he set up the Kelmscott Press at various houses in Upper Mall, and one of Morris's Albion presses can be seen in the printing room..

The William Morris Society was formed in 1953 to promote the life, work and ideas of William Morris. The Coach House, Library and display rooms in the basement of Kelmscott House are open to the public on Thursday and Saturday afternoons from 1.30 to 5.30 p.m. Admission is free.

PRESENT An illustrated slide lecture by Paul Rutter National Trust Warden at Morden Hall Park has been arranged for Saturday, March 2nd at the Snuff Mill Environmental Centre in Morden Hall Park starting at 2.30 p.m.

Paul will talk about Morden Hall Park its history, natural history, land use etc. and will provide us with an update on the recent pollution incident to the River Wandle.

Please try to support this event.

FUTURE So far we have been unable to arrange a site visit to the refurbished Ravensbury Mill, as we have not yet signed the Lease - see article on Ravensbury Mill update.

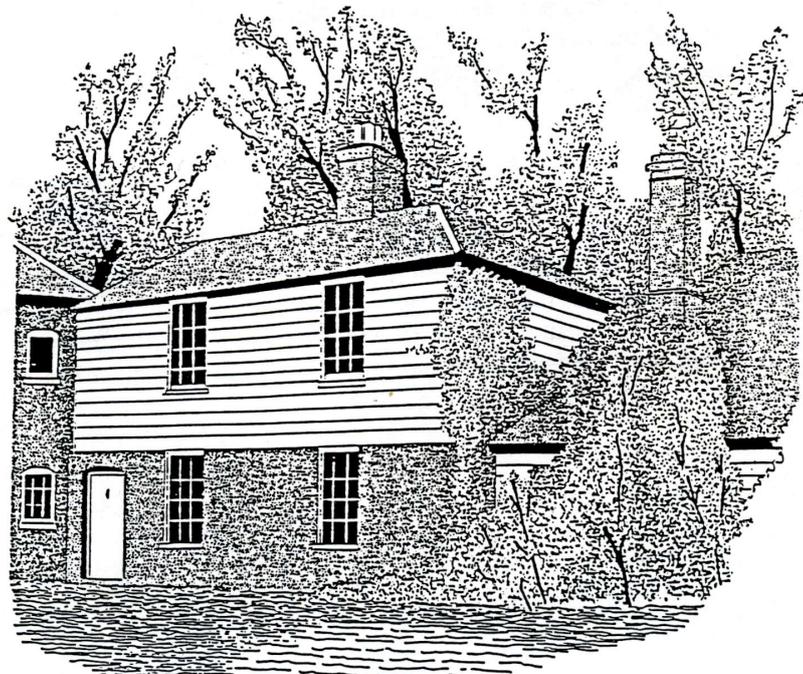
We hope to arrange this visit in the Spring

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

The National Trust Fair at Morden Hall Park. This year the dates are for Saturday, May 4th, Sunday May 5th, and Monday May 6th. We shall be having a stall once again and we shall be **needing your help**

Mitcham Carnival Help will be needed also for this event on Saturday 18th May.

Sheila Harris
Administrator



MILL COTTAGE.

NEWS FROM RAVENSBURY MILL

Anyone driving or walking past Ravensbury Mill can see that the new housing is now complete and we understand there is now only a couple of flats remaining which we understand have recently been sold. The sales have certainly proved this to be popular site.

The Grade 2 listed building which sits on Morden Road has now been beautifully refurbished by Fairclough Homes and is going to be our new home. The windows are still boarded up and need some work. We still have to fully resolve the disabled access within the building. We are now in the process of obtaining "as built" drawings and maintenance manuals, these will help us with the future maintenance of the building. We are now in receipt of the draft lease for our approval.

Whilst we are bringing these contractual matters to a conclusion, we are busy with the internal planning of the Museum Hall. Our fund-raiser, Sean Lovett, has recently submitted an application to S.E.M.S, the South Eastern Museums Association, to seek a grant to obtain a professional design for the fitting out of the new Museum Hall.

We have applied to The Bridge House Trust to secure funding for disabled access works. The grants officer has visited the site and it now looks hopeful that we can resolve the outstanding works with Fairclough Homes the Builder.

We have already submitted a grant application to the Government Office for London for the Single Regeneration Budget (S.R.B.) to seek a grant for the complete fitting out of the Museum Hall. We have been very fortunate to receive assistance from U.R.B.E.D. who have produced an excellent report to support our application. U.R.B.E.D. are an Urban and Economic Development Group and specialists in their field.

Although we have submitted a first class application, that has been fully supported by Merton Council as a Partnership Scheme and also Business in the Arts to draft a Business Plan, we have unfortunately been unsuccessful. However, we can now build on this experience and are to approach the Lottery Board.

Ravensbury Mill is a rich asset in Merton. Our aim is to produce a quality scheme in keeping with the rare opportunity this building offers.

R. Leyden
7.2.96

POLLUTION IN THE WANDLE

The River Wandle has recently suffered two devastating pollution incidents. **The** first occurred between the 18th and 29th October last year. Waste entering the sewage works at Beddington contained a large amount of ammonia, unfortunately, there was no mechanism in place to monitor such an occurrence so the ammonia rich effluent passed out into the Wandle. The incident only came to light when a member of the public reported a foul smell and dead fish in the river to the National Rivers Authority.

Although the N.R.A. then reported the incident to Thames Water there was a failure of communication between regions and it was a week before Thames Water began to tackle the situation. By this time the bacteria in the sludge tanks were dead, killed by the ammonia, and so semi treated sewage was still being released into the river.

In a river that has a healthy natural flow an incident such as this would have less effect upon the flora and fauna as the effluent would be diluted by river water. But the water in the Wandle from Goat Bridge on, is 90-95% effluent from the Beddington Sewage works, therefore, any failure at the sewage works has a tremendous effect upon the river. Although Thames Water are aware of these special circumstances they wanted to label this a minor incident.

To emphasise the level of local concern Merton's Environment Forum invited representatives of Thames Water and the N.R.A. to its January meeting. The members were very concerned about the lack of monitoring of the effluent and the woeful failure of communication within Thames Water. Neither Thames Water nor the N.R.A. were able to trace the source of the pollution due mainly to the delay in its being reported.

Thames Water have NOW installed a system to monitor chemicals in the effluent. But the question must be asked, if they had this apparatus to hand and its speedy installation indicates that it was already available, why didn't they install it before, as they do assure us that they are aware of the exceptional circumstances relating to the relationship between the Wandle and their effluent.

Thames Water were left in no doubt as to the dim view taken by the Forum of its failure to act promptly and its attempt to shrug off the incident. The Forum also made clear to Thames Water how much the Wandle is considered an important local amenity.

It will take some considerable time for the river to recover from the pollution, and the situation is not helped by another pollution incident in the first week of the New Year. In this incident diesel oil leaked from a contractors yard in Mitcham. Although the N.R.A. were quickly alerted and acted promptly by placing booms across the river to contain the oil, their speedy action was negated by the action of vandals who removed the booms, allowing something like 400 gallons of diesel oil to leak into the stretch of river running through Morden Hall Park.

The N.R.A. will be investigating the reason for the spillage before deciding whether to prosecute the contractors. It does seem rather sad that a river that once raced to the Thames turning dozens of mill wheels as it flowed along is now reduced to depending on a sewage effluent for its survival.

Meg Thomas
7.2.96

THE WANDLE TRAIL IN 1995

The following are my personal impressions of developments along the Wandle Trail during 1995, proceeding downstream.

London Borough of Croydon

The only Wandle Trail sign needed on Croydon's very short bit of the current route, at Waddon Ponds, has now been erected. The proposed extension of the Trail to East Croydon station, included in the UDP, is still on hold pending availability of funds.

London Borough of Sutton

A controlled crossing at the foot of Hilliers Lane was almost ready at the end of December - this is also part of a cycle route. An improvement to the crossing at London Road / Manor Road North is still needed. There is now a cafe and ladies' toilets (previously gents' only) in The Grove at Carshalton. There is no sign of progress on the burned out Upper Mill Housing is now being built on the former BP Chemicals site in Mill Lane, and a cycleway/footpath should be installed during 1996.

Adventurous spirits can now cross the side stream at the north end of Culver's Island using various bits of wood and metal installed by local children; this should be made official quite soon, probably with a footbridge, though stepping stones would be cheaper and look good. A new channel is being cut here to turn the northern tip into an island nature reserve. The former Mullards/Phillips site has been completely demolished, with housing development started. Signing of the northern part of Sutton's section (River Gardens northwards) is to take place in early 1996; further signing will depend on availability of funding.

London Borough of Merton

The Wandle Industrial Museum expects to move into its new home at Ravensbury Mill during 1996. Morden Hall is being converted into a Beefeater pub-restaurant, and is expected to open as such in Spring 1996. An information board has now been erected at "Paradise Merton" (by the Savacentre).

The lack of a controlled road crossing at Plough Lane is a dangerous nuisance for Wandle Trail walkers, and must now be considered the worst road crossing along the route, but the situation is unlikely to improve until redevelopment of Wimbledon Football Ground is under way. The "Earlsfield Gap" (north of Trewint Street bridge) is being worked on jointly with Wandsworth. Merton have in recent years made great strides on their section, which is still the most advanced of all four boroughs, but there is now a particular need for signage at the north end, and improvement of road crossings at Morden Road and London Road as well as Plough Lane.

London Borough of Wandsworth

Earlsfield Gap - see under Merton. The narrow bridge path at the north end of The Causeway is expected to be replaced in the near future, using an existing private bridge into the LEB property which provides a fine view of the Wandle Mouth. Signage is needed north of King George's Park, and we do hope that the Parks Department will relent on their refusal to show the waterwheel logo - they are now the only ones along the whole route not to include it on their Wandle Trail signs.

There was disappointing news on the council-owned land at Feathers Wharf, which we hoped would be opened to provide the missing link between The Causeway and the waste transfer station's raised walkway. Together with the Countryside Commission,

Wandsworth (continued)

who badly wanted to have this opened as it is also part of their Thames Path National Trail to be formally launched in 1996, we put pressure on the council to make a temporary path, but they have decided that it must wait until the land is sold for redevelopment, and even then they have doubts about safety aspects of the raised walkway. This land seems unlikely to hold much attraction for developers, but is a key site from several environmental aspects, so we hope that the council will eventually agree to apply for a "Millennium Green" grant.

The Wandle Delta Network, established in 1994 to encourage the maintenance and development of the Wandle Delta for the benefit of the community and the natural environment, has been flexing its muscles and making its presence felt in that area during 1995. They recently published a leaflet, "A Vision for the Wandle Delta", which sets out the Network's objectives. For further information call Steve Parry on 0181-672-1383.

General

All four boroughs have applied for funds from various grant schemes, which should help them to further improve their sections of the Wandle Trail. They include the EU Life and Millennium schemes. There is still a long way to go before the London Walking Forum's Seal of Approval can be gained, but progress is being maintained.

The Wandle Industrial Museum is working on an updated re-print of its Wandle Trail map/leaflet, which should be ready in Spring 1996; for further information call 0181-648-0127. The Wandle Group are working on a new edition of their guidebook to the River Wandle, to be published by the London Borough of Sutton's Heritage Service.

Waterboume Video is putting together a demonstration video, probably to be called "A Historical Walk Along the Wandle Trail" (I have been helping with the script). If backing can be found, it is hoped that this will be the first of a series covering all of London's rivers. For further information, call Craig MacCraiger on 0181-947-3692.

Annual Walk

Our annual Yuletide walk took place with 55 hardy souls in freezing temperatures but bright sunshine on Thursday 28 December - an event in the Ramblers' Association's Festival of Winter Walks. This year was north to south (Wandsworth Town station to East Croydon station). There was much excitement at seeing a kingfisher (we think, in the Goat Bridge area), a white (albino) squirrel (by the Hack Bridge), and a kestrel (by the great London plane tree at Carshalton). The heron and cormorant in the Wandle Mouth-are almost taken for granted - though they shouldn't be, of course. We were visited by a cameraman from Channel One (London cable TV news), and an item appeared on their afternoon and early evening news bulletins. It showed the party walking through the Wandle Meadows Nature Park, and interviews with me, Sheila Harris from the Wandle Industrial Museum, and another party member.

Co-ordination

Finally, during this year I resigned due to business commitments as Co-ordinator of the Wandle Trail Working Party, which is not meeting at the time of writing. I continue to hold a "watching brief" on developments, and to represent the Wandle Trail on the London Walking Forum, until a replacement comes forward. If anyone reading this report is interested in taking this on, please let me know (0181-686-0443).

Colin Saunders
Acting Co-ordinator, Wandle Trail Working Party
1 January 1996

THE JAKSON COLLECTION

Last October we received a donation from Croydon Museum Services of exhibits from John Jakson and Company, who were peppermint and lavender oil distillers of Mitcham. We were lucky to obtain them as several other museums were also very interested.

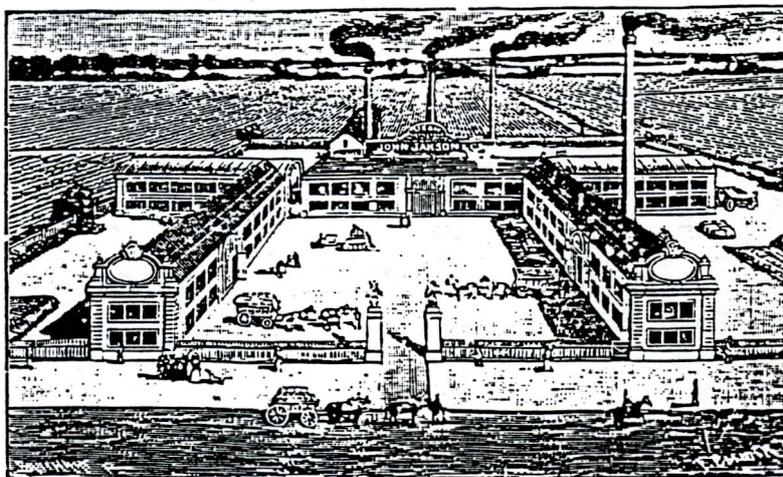
The Jakson collection consists of a still with its stands, pouring jugs, funnels, gas burners, weights, packing boxes, stencils and a large elegant glass storage jar. Also included is a history of the firm and tapes of an interview with Miss Turner whose brother worked for the firm.

John Jakson & Company was founded by a Frenchman, Philippe Lelasseur. He was a chemist and agriculturist who came to Britain in 1883, prompted by Parisian perfume manufacturers who complained that they were unable to obtain essential oils of a high quality Lelasseur wanted to choose a typically British name for the firm hence the curious spelling of Jakson, as he thought this was correct. In 1884 he leased the old peppermint distillery of Piesse and Lubin in Mitcham Road and rebuilt it as a steam-powered operation. He distilled other oils such as camomile and rosemary, first obtaining the herbs from local farmers and then establishing his own farms in Dorking.

Most of his product was exported and Mitcham peppermint and lavender oils became internationally famous.

The firm was wound up immediately after the second World War.

Marguerite Lee –Delisle



GEORGE PARKER BIDDER

For four weeks in November/December 1995 visitors to Merton Civic Centre, and then Mitcham Library, were able to see an exhibition about the life and career of George Parker Bidder. This great man of the 19th century had a special connection with the Wandle.

Born in 1806 in Moretonhampstead in Devon as the son of a stonemason, Bidder as a young child showed evidence of extraordinary mathematical ability. His father began to exhibit the boy as a prodigy who could perform in his head any calculation he was challenged with, and as 'The Calculating Boy' he became known throughout the country.

Unlike some exceptionally gifted children Bidder's abilities did not burn out, and he was fortunate in finding friends and patrons who enabled him to receive formal education. He went on to become one of the great engineers of his day, ranking with Rennie, Brunel and the Stephensons. In fact Robert Stephenson and he were close friends and professional partners.

Bidder built railways and docks throughout Britain, and was involved in the construction of London's sewers. His skill and experience also led to much work abroad, especially Scandinavia, and he was consulting engineer for projects in India.

In 1860 he was elected 10th President of the Institution of Civil Engineers, and it was in January of the following year that he took the chair to listen to Frederick Braithwait's paper 'On the Rise and Fall of the River Wandle; its Springs, Tributaries, and Pollution'. This famous account of the river had a special interest for Bidder, for, as he commented at the time, he lived nearby, and owned the lease of the Ravensbury Mill.

His home from 1846-64 was Mitcham Hall, which used to stand near Mitcham Station. He then had Ravensbury Park House built, in Morden, off Bishopsford Road. This became the home of his eldest son, G.P. Bidder Q.C., when Bidder senior retired to Dartmouth in Devon, where in 1878 he died in a house he had re-named Ravensbury.

Mr. E.F. Clark, a great-great grandson of Bidder and an engineer himself, helped two members of Moretonhampstead Historical Society to assemble the exhibition to mark the 75th anniversary of the Newcomen Society. It was displayed at Moretonhampstead and Dartmouth (Newcomen's birthplace) before being shown here. Fortunately the family has kept many of Bidder's letters, documents and photographs, and together with newspaper cuttings, and pictures from the *Illustrated London News*, most of his life and much of his work was covered. There was a portrait and a poster from his years as 'the Calculating Boy', letters from the young engineer determined to improve his handwriting and cut down his swearing (I), travel documents and technical notes from the middle years, and later glimpses of Bidder as president and family patriarch.

Mr. Clark's 1983 biography of his ancestor, 'The Calculating Boy', is in the local library, and is still in print.

WILLIAM MORRIS SOCIETY

HOUSES OF SPECIAL INTEREST WHICH ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

WILLIAM MORRIS GALLERY (Morris's home 1848-1856) Water House, Lloyd Park, Forest Road, Walthamstow, London, E17 4PP Tel.No.0181 527 3782

Tube: Walthamstow Central, 3/4 miles along Hoe Street and Ruby Road.

Buses 34, 97 or 215 from Walthamstow Central to The Bell.

Road: A503

Open Tuesday to Saturday 10.00-13.00&14.00-17.00

First Sunday in the month 10.00-12.00

KELMSCOTT HOUSE (WILLIAM MORRIS SOCIETY) (Morris's home 1878-1896) 26 Upper Mall, Hammersmith, London, W6 9TA Tel.No.0181 741 3735

Tube: Ravenscourt Park, 1/3 mile along Ravenscourt Road, King Street, Nigel Playfair Avenue, subway beneath A4 and Furnival Gardens.

Buses: 27, 91, 267 or 290 to Hammersmith Town Hall then along Nigel Playfair Avenue as for tube.

Road: A4, first turning on the left after Hammersmith Flyover.

Open Thursday and Saturday 14.00-17.00.

THE BASEMENT & COACH HOUSE ONLY ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

RED HOUSE (Morris's home 1860-1865) Red House Lane, Bexleyheath, Kent Tel No. 0181 303 8808

Station: Bexleyheath 1 mile along Avenue Road and Upton Road

Road: A2 or A207

Open February to December. First Saturday and Sunday in the month but ring or write to Mr. & Mrs. Hollamby beforehand.

KELMSCOTT MANOR (Morris's holiday home 1871-1896) Kelmscott near Lechlade, Gloucestershire G17 3HJ. Tel. No. 01367 252486 (Mr & Mrs. Chapman)

Station: Swindon, no public transport from the station

Road: A361 or A417 and B4449

Open April to September, Wednesday 11.00-13.00 & 14.00 -17.00

WIGHTWICK MANOR Wightwick Bank, Wolverhampton, West Midlands, WV6 8EE, Tel. No. 01902 761108

Station: Wolverhampton then buses 542/3, 890 or 499

Road: A454

Open March to January, Thursday and Saturday and BH Sun and Monday 14.30-17.30

STANDEN East Grinstead, West Sussex, RH19 4NE Tel. No. 01342 323029

Station: East Grinstead, Occasional bus from station - ring 0134 376886 for details

Road: A22 and B2110

Open April to October, Wednesday to Sunday and BH Mon 13.30 - 17.30
