

NEWSLETTER NO.15 – SUMMER – 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

Since the last Newsletter we have had three more school visits and workshops at the Museum. Highfield School from Wandsworth visited in May and Sherwood and Holy Trinity First Schools from Merton came in June.

The William Morris Mobile Exhibition has been out and about at several Fetes and Fairs, including the National Trust Three Day Fair. Merton Abbey Mills Fund-raising Day, Mitcham Carnival and Merton Green Fair. The exhibition has proved most successful and created a lot of interest in the Museum. Thanks to all members and friends who helped man the stalls at all these events, at which we have raised over £500 for Museum funds.

A new activity was introduced at the Merton Green Fair when we held a textile printing workshop for public participation. Using original Liberty printing blocks and block printing colour, the public were invited to "have a go", and this proved very popular. We are indebted to The Friends of London Playing Fields who sponsored this event by paying for the cost of the paint and material.

We now have two copies of the video "Topsy" about the life of William Morris and featuring our model of the Morris Workshops at Merton Abbey. It is an hour long very informative account of the life and work of William Morris. We hope to arrange a viewing in the Autumn/Winter season. It was made for sale at the Morris Exhibition at the V & A.

Our recently expanded and enhanced exhibition about William Morris is now on show in the Museum, containing the mounted needlework donated by Mr. Victor Haines, so do come along and see it.

We are sad to lose our volunteer student helper Zubi Mahmood who has helped in the office every Wednesday afternoon for the past two years. He has been a very helpful and popular member of the team and will be much missed. Zubi has finished his University degree now and has started full time employment.

We need more volunteers to help with general office duties, fund-raising and book keeping and accounting. Please telephone the Museum if you can offer any help or know anyone who could offer a few hours help a week.

The new updated Wandle Trail Map was launched at the recent Merton Green Fair and is now on sale at local libraries and in the Museum Shop, price £2.00 plus 30p postage and packing. Please telephone the Museum if you would like us to send you a copy.

Also on sale is the new Pitkin Guide William Morris an Illustrated Life £2.50 plus postage and packing. Members are entitled to a 20% reduction on all Museum publications.

MEMBERS EVENTS

PAST On June 21st members enjoyed a guided walk round Morden Hall Park led by local historian Bill Rudd.

PRESENT Thursday, September 12th, at Morden Library, the Civic Centre, Morden at 7.30 p.m. "The Life of William Morris" illustrated lecture by Member Peter Harris.

This will be backed up by an exhibition about William Morris in the Civic Centre Foyer from Monday 9th to Friday 13th September.

FUTURE Wandle Industrial Museum Annual General Meeting - Tuesday October 1st at Chapel Orchard Day Centre, Church Road, Mitcham. at 7.30 p.m. Speaker - David Rainger - Chairman of the William Morris Society

Any member who would like to know more about the activities of the Museum Committees or who would like to volunteer to help directly in the running of the Museum should contact our Museum Administrator on 0181 648 0127

Proposed new name for the Museum

Committee members are considering a future possible change of name for the Museum, from the Wandle industrial Museum to the Wandle Valley Museum. It was thought that this name might be more appropriate and would broaden the scope of the Museum. Members will be asked to consider this proposal and to vote on the issue at the Annual General Meeting. There will be a chance for discussion on this matter as it will be an Agenda item. Members not able to attend the meeting will be asked for their opinion in writing, or to telephone the Museum with their comments.

So if you feel strongly about your Museum please let us know your views.



VISIT TO MORDEN HALL PARK

We gathered in the, what had been, old walled garden of Morden Hall Estate looking at the lovely old walls. Devotees of the Victorian kitchen garden could easily imagine rows of beans and peas, lettuces, onions and humps of potatoes in place of the tarmacked car park.

Fifteen of us, led by Bill Rudd the well known local historian, set off through the gate leading to the working area of the estate, the place where the cows had been housed and where the potting sheds would have been found. The buildings remain as they were but have now been put to different uses, they contain a wood turner and a chair caner, and the cow shed displays the history of the estate.

We walked on towards the snuff mills, the first of which is now an Ecology Centre, where the school children of the borough can learn about the flora and fauna of the park and some of its long history. Next to the mill are two small dwellings, Mill Cottage and the Bothy, these used to be lived in by mill workers now they are used by The National Trust Warden.

There was at first only one mill in the Park. This was the one nearest Morden Cottage but at the beginning of the nineteenth century snuff taking was so popular that another mill was built alongside the first mill, this mill is now the Ecology Centre.

The mills must have been very unpleasant to work in especially during hot weather, what with the noise of the machinery and the snuff filling the air. The mills continued working until the 1920s, when sadly for us all the machinery was removed, though not all the snuff as Mark Hillier discovered when he was setting up the Ecology Centre and found that the beams in the mill were still covered with a layer of snuff. Clearing it away gave them some idea of what the atmosphere in a working mill was like.

Bill then directed our attention to the stables opposite the mills. He pointed out the weather vane in the shape of a trout, testament to Gilliat Hatfeild Snr's passion for fishing. Both the Hatfeilds were conservative men, the house was not supplied with gas or electricity and Gilliat Jnr. never owned a car, using carriage and horses to the end.

We walked across the bridge over the Wandle, stopping to look where the mill wheels had been. We then passed on to view Morden Cottage, where Gilliat Hatfeild Jnr had lived in preference to the Hall. It is now the delightful home of the local Registry Office.

We then walked on past the Hall itself, from which came the most appetising smells. The Hall has recently been converted into a Beefeater Restaurant, though much of the internal character has been left untouched. Bill led us on through the park towards the gate near the Surrey Arms. We passed the very old hedge and the ginko tree and the site of the May Craft Fair, its amazing how quickly the park recovers!

Bill pointed out the old Surrey Arms preserved on the pub sign and went on to tell us how he remembered the parties given by Mr. Hatfeild for local children. Although he was a shy man, Mr. Hatfeild enjoyed mixing with the children and personally presented each child with a gift as they left.

We turned back to retrace our steps through the Park. We passed the old Mulberry tree that had been damaged in the "Great Storm". The National Trust had wired it up to try and save it which has obviously worked as it was sporting a fine growth of leaves.

We ended our walk back in the walled garden (or car park) having enjoyed a very pleasant and interesting evening.

Meg Thomas
30.7.96

THE NEW WANDLE TRAIL MAP

We have just released a new Wandle Trail Map. The map is an update of the very popular walking guide which many local people have enjoyed using over the years, and is the result of painstaking research and a lot of walking!

As well as being the product of original research the map is unique in being the only map of the entire length of the river from its source in Croydon and continues through Sutton and Merton to its mouth where it joins the Thames at Wandsworth, and thus has a very wide appeal.

Its production has been made possible by the generous support of Brown & Root, Surrey Scanning and the London Borough of Merton.

The Wandle Trail Map was officially launched on Sunday, June 23rd at the Merton Green Fair at The London Road Playing Fields, Mitcham, by the Mayor of Merton, Councillor Slim Flegg at 3.00 p.m.

Colin Saunders of the Ramblers Association says of the new production that we have made a very good job of the present one and is sure it will sell well. In the future we intend to work with the Ramblers Association to produce a map to comply with standards which would gain approval from the London Walking Forum.

Ray Leyden
July 1996

NEW ECONOMIC LIFE IN THE WANDLE VALLEY

A major initiative has been launched to rejuvenate the Wandle Valley.

The Wandle Valley Partnership comprises Merton, Wandsworth, Sutton and Croydon Councils, AZTEC, SOLOTEC, Croydon Health and Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth Health Authority.

This major Partnership will strive to create jobs and training opportunities, improve the quality of life, improve transport and encourage businesses to locate in the Wandle Valley area.

Merton Leader Councillor Tony Colman said "This is a very exciting project and I have no doubts that the Wandle Valley has the potential to become a thriving economic area. A large part of Merton is in the Wandle Valley so it is important for local people to realise that they will benefit from the measures the Partnership takes. The Partnership will seek to attract funding from the Government and Europe for a range of measures throughout the Valley and with the backing of a strong set of Partners, the area can become even more attractive to business investors. This means the potential for more jobs, better training and improved transport networks. Wandle Valley is set for major economic expansion and we will make sure we involve the community at every stage."

The Partnership was recently launched by Government Minister Sir Paul Beresford in the heart of the Valley beside the River Wandle at Merton Abbey Mills.

As a new initiative, the Wandle Valley partnership has now created a new Community Group which was officially launched on Monday 10th June 1996 at the Civic Offices of the London Borough of Sutton. We have become Founder Members.

The Objectives are:-

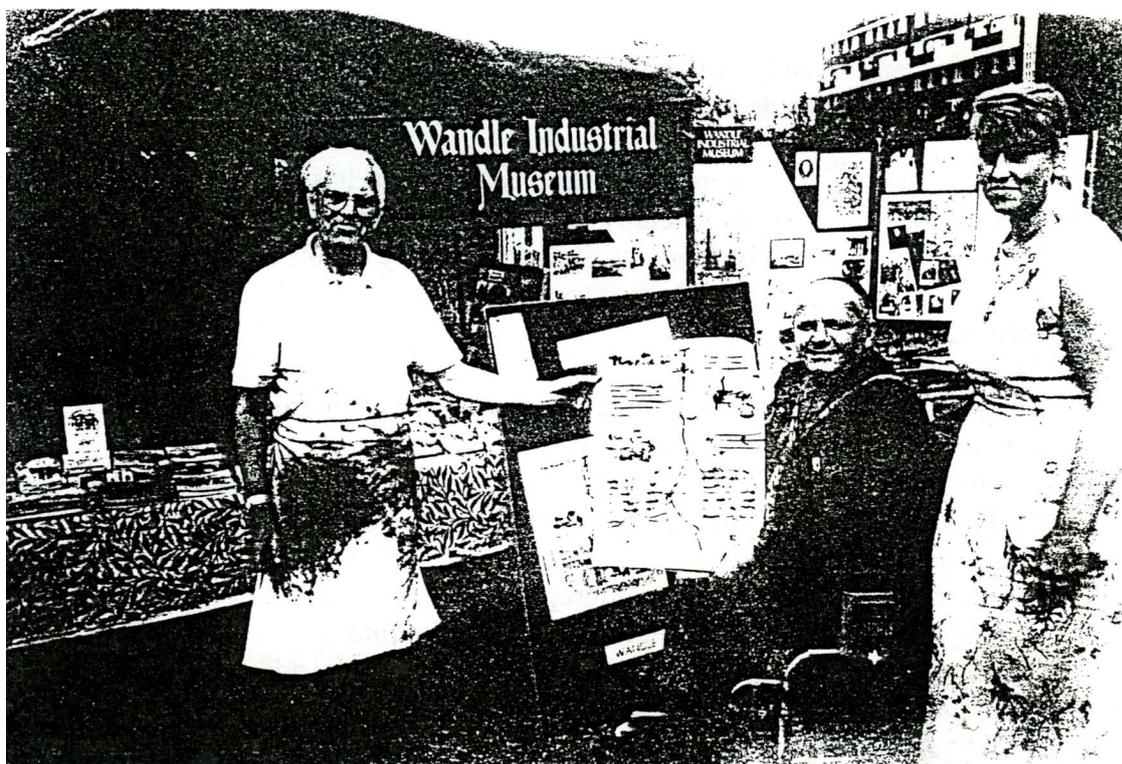
- * To participate in the decision making processes of key groups and organisations having a role in the Wandle Valley
- To participate fully and effectively in the Wandle Valley Partnership. This will include having formal representation on the Partnership's main strategic decision making body.
- to identify and research where appropriate, the opportunities and challenges facing the community both currently and for the future
- to identify how the needs of the community can best be addressed in partnership with other agencies
- * to attract resources for the voluntary and community sectors from the government, EU, the private sector, trusts and charities and other sources as appropriate
- to develop further links and partnerships with agencies in the four boroughs
- to share and co-ordinate information and best practice
- to ensure that the Community Group's work respects the equal opportunities policies operation within the constituent member bodies.

We also view this new Community Partnership as a very exciting project and as we are the only Museum to represent the Wandle Valley we will have a great deal to offer. We are also in the process of moving to new premises at Ravensbury Mill, Morden which is a Grade II Listed Watermill Building in the heart of the Wandle Valley.

With the arrival of these new opportunities we are now considering the proposal to change our trading name from "The Wandle Industrial Museum", to "Wandle Valley Museum". With the increasing public recognition of the Wandle Valley, this would focus our identity with the development of the Wandle Valley and create new opportunities with future funding.

We would like to hear from any of our members or readers concerning this new proposal and would welcome any comment.

Ray Leyden
26.7.96



THE MAYOR OF MERTON LAUNCHES THE NEW WANDLE TRAIL MAP AT MERTON GREEN FAIR

NEWS FROM RAVENSBURY MILL

Merton Council operates a biennial local Design Award Scheme. We nominated Fairclough Homes the developers for the Ravensbury Mill project. Merton Council confirmed that this development complies with the criteria for this award and it was entered for the 1994-95 scheme.

Whilst the judges thought that the scheme at Ravensbury Mill was generally good, unfortunately, they did not think that it was worthy of an award. Nevertheless, it was felt that the development had been sensitively carried out, especially in terms of the layout of the development and the relationship between the various buildings. The refurbishment of the mill and the relocation of the Wandle Industrial Museum to this more appropriate setting was particularly welcomed.

The overall winner of the award was for a development of a sports hall at King's College. We were surprised at this choice as it can only be seen from a public footpath running through the school grounds. This does not appear to fully satisfy the design criteria with respect to public access and we shall make further enquiries.

The residents have expressed concern with the condition of the mill pond. We have had discussions with the Environment Agency, formerly the National Rivers Authority and a proposal has been put forward to modify the middle sluice gate which would allow a controlled overflow to keep the mill pond fresh and clean. We have arranged a meeting on site with all the relevant parties to resolve this matter.

With regard to our sponsors we are pleased to announce that Tyndale Carpets have agreed to supply and install floor covering throughout the Museum Hall, thanks to a recommendation by our member Meg Thomas. They have recently carried out a survey and they have brought to our attention that the sub-floor appears to be damp. As a precaution we have arranged for a damp test to be carried out.

We are still in discussions regarding outstanding works with the developer which we hope to bring to a conclusion soon. We have also engaged a solicitor to complete the lease formalities. With our long term aim in mind to produce a quality scheme for the opening display we are now in the process of compiling a grant application to the National Lottery.

Ray Leyden
July 1996

THE WAY OF THE WANDLE

How does the Wandle its turbulent course
Pursue to the Thames from its source?

Past meadow and pastureland, factory, mill
It flurries and scurries and never is still,
Many a dyke and a ditch does it fill,
Over many a weir and a watercourse spill.

Shimmering, dithering, fussing its way
In slivers of sunshine and rainbows of spray,
Or suddenly settling from sprightly display
Into some silent pool for a moment to stay.

It sparkles and glistens then slips out of sight
Into overgrown places as gloomy as night,
Where stately grey heron and kingfisher bright
Unseen and mysterious briefly alight.

Neath the flight of the swan and the swoop of the swallow
The river meanders past thicket and hollow,
Where mallard and moorhen indulgently wallow.
And dragonflies hover o'er glistening shallow.

Through landscapes of history shifting and turning,
Snuff and tobacco mills, waterwheels churning,
Textiles and silks for the rich and discerning
Craftsmen, apprentices, teaching and learning.

Through parklands at Beddington pleasantly scrambling,
In ponds at Carshalton drifting and ambling,
By Watermeads, Ravensbury, Morden Hall shambling
Past precincts of Merton's old Priory rambling.

Caught in a culvert, still looping and bending,
Past offices, tower-blocks, wistfully wending,
From country to town it has finished descending
The river flows on, but its journey is ending.

Thus does the Wandle its turbulent course
Pursue to the Thames from its source.

John Viner ----ooooOoooo----

THE MILLER AND HIS THREE SONS

Broadly speaking, folk songs about millers fall into two classes. In one the miller celebrates his contentment with his lot. In the other, the miller is represented as a rogue and swindler. At one time people had little choice but to take their corn to the mill attached to the manor on which they lived. The temptations of a monopoly are strong and even if the local miller did not give way to them, his customers naturally suspected him of doing so.

A good example of the latter kind of song is "The Miller and His Three Sons". The version below was collected by Alfred Williams from Jesse Eldridge of Highworth in Wiltshire, and published in "Folk Songs of the Upper Thames", ed. Williams, Duckworth & Co., London 1923. Williams gives no tune for it but a very similar set of words is sung by Fr. Kenneth Loveless on a cassette tape (MR1) issued by The Morris Ring in 1992.

1. It's of a crafty miller, and he
Had able sons one, two and three;
He called them all and asked their will,
If that to them he left his mill.

2. He called first his eldest son,
Saying, "My life is almost run,
If I to thee this mill do make,
What toll dost thou intend to take?"

3 "Father", said he, "my name is Jack,
Out of a bushel take a peck,
Of every bushel that I grind,
That I may a good living find"

4. "Thou art a fool!" the old man said,
"Thou hast not learned well thy trade,
This mill to thee I ne'er will give, For
by such toll no man could live."

5. He called for his middlemost son,
Saying, "My life is almost run,
If I to thee this mill do make,
What toll dost thou intend to take?"

6. "Father" says he "my name is Ralph,
Out of a bushel I'll take half,
Of every basket that I grind,
That I may a good living find".

7. "Thou art a fool!" the old man said,
"Thou has not learned well thy trade,
This mill to thee I ne'er will give, For
by such a toll no man could live".

8. He called then his youngest son,
Saying "My life if almost run,
If I to thee this mill do make,
What toll dost thou intend to take?"

9. "Father" said he, "I am your boy,
For taking toll is all my joy;
Before I will good living lack
I'll take it all and forswear the sack".

10. "Thou art my boy", the old man said,
"For thou has learned well they trade This
mill to thee I give", he cried,
And straightway after this the miller died.

Stephen Ashcroft
July 1996