

NEWSLETTER NO.16 • AUTUMN • 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 Summer Newsletter we have had six more school visits and workshops at the Museum mainly in response to a Merton Schools Curriculum Project about William Morris. This project challenged all schools to participate in the programme of commemorations in Merton, by producing work based on the life of William Morris. The work could take the form of artwork inspired by Morris designs, creative writing and poetry, or historical work based on the life and times of Morris at Merton. We were happy to participate in this project. Schools visiting the Museum were S.S.Peter and Paul First School, St. John Fisher First School and Wimbledon House School. All these schools are members of the Museum. We also presented a textile workshop at Merton Abbey First School.

The William Morris Mobile Exhibition has been out again at the Merton Lions Club Fair at Morden Park on Bank Holiday Monday where it attracted much interest among the crowds. From September 9th - 13th it was on show at Merton Civic Centre. Each lunch hour we sold Museum publications and raised £130 for Museum funds. Once again it created much valuable publicity for the Museum. Finally, by request, the Exhibition was on display at The Wheelhouse at Merton Abbey Mills over the weekend of 5th-6th October. Thanks to all those volunteers who helped man the Exhibitions and stalls at all these events.

Members Events

PAST On Thursday, September 12th, about forty members, friends and interested members of the public enjoyed a lecture by Peter Harris on The Life of William Morris illustrated from his extensive collection of slides, many of which belong to the Wandle Industrial Museum collection.

Annual General Meeting Tuesday, October 1st. See separate report by Ray Leyden.

Proposed Change of Name of Museum - See A.G.M. Report and letter to the Editor.

If you would like to write your opinions regarding the proposed change of name of the Museum please write to the Editor at the Museum for inclusion in the Winter Newsletter.

PRESENT - It has been decided to hold a Museum Christmas Party in the Vestry Hall on Thursday, December 5th at 7.30 p.m. A special Invitation to this event is enclosed with this Newsletter. Refreshments will be available and during the evening there will be a chance to see the video "Topsy" about the life of William Morris, which includes footage of the Museum's model of the Morris Workshops at Merton Abbey.

We do hope as many Members and Volunteers as possible will come to this social event. It will be by way of a "thank you" from the Management Committee to the Volunteers who give their time to the Museum for free.

FUTURE No new ideas emerged for future Member's Events at the last Member's Meeting. If any Members have any ideas for events for 1997 could they please telephone me at the Museum.

WANDLE INDUSTRIAL MUSEUM MEMBERSHIP

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR 1996-7 became due from 1st October 1996. For your convenience a renewal form is included as part of this Newsletter. Members who joined from 1st July 1996 need not renew till next year.

We hope to see you all at the Museum Christmas Party. Please send your reply slips in so that we have numbers for catering.

A very happy Christmas to all our Members, friends and Volunteers.

Sheila Harris
20/10/96



Plaque recently unveiled to the memory of William Morris on the Riverside Path Near Merton High Street.

WILLIAM MORRIS EVENTS IN MERTON 1996

During this year 1996, the Education, Leisure and Libraries Department of the London Borough of Merton have organised a whole Programme of Centenary Commemorations in memory of William Morris who died on October 3rd 1896 at Kelmscott House, Hammersmith.

The Museum was happy to be asked to participate in the Morris Borough Tour on 22nd October led by member Judith Goodman. Approximately 30 members arrived by coach specifically to see the Museum's unique model of the Morris Merton Abbey Workshops. The tour started by the River Wandle near the Savacentre and Trellis House (The Shaftesbury Housing Association) the site of the original workshops, of which nothing now remains. It was, therefore, helpful to the tour members to see the model and so to get an image of the past when the workshops in their rural setting were at the height of their power. The tour members were then proceeding to four Merton Churches which own stained glass windows made by Morris & Co.

On Thursday 3rd October on the anniversary of his death, staff attended the unveiling of a plaque to William Morris at the site of his Merton Abbey Works. The plaque was unveiled by the Mayor, Councillor Slim Flegg O.B.E. and can be seen on the river bank midway between the Savacentre and Trellis House and opposite to the Interpretive Panel which explains the history of the whole area. It is headed "Site of William Morris Printworks". It is good that William Morris is at last recognised in Merton in an appropriate place.

After the unveiling ceremony tea was provided in Trellis House by kind invitation of the Shaftesbury Housing Association. We were happy to see that the sheltered housing complex is named after the "trellis" design by Morris, as it was built on the site of part of the Morris Merton Abbey Workshops. In their hallway and corridors are information panels about the life of Morris, wall mounted Morris designs and Morris pattern curtains.

In the evening of the 3rd October we attended the opening of Merton Heritage Centre's Exhibition "The Creative Spirit - William Morris in Merton". The highlight of the Exhibition is the two roundels designed by Burne-Jones and made by Morris Marshall Faulkener & Co. in 1870, donated to the Wimbledon Labour Hall in 1930 by the daughter of the architect Chambrey Corker Townsend, and kindly loaned to the Exhibition. The roundels are delightful and depict Helen of Troy and Geoffrey Chaucer.

Do go and see them at this interesting Exhibition open every Friday and Saturday 10.00 to 5.00 p.m. at The Canons, Madeira Road, Mitcham. The Exhibition is on until January 1997.

Sheila Harris
14.10.96



The Earthly Paradise ·

Forget six counties overhung
with smoke,
Forget the snorting steam
and piston stroke,
Forget the spreading of the
hideous town.
Think rather of the pack-horse
on the down,
And dream of London, small
and white and clean,
The clear Thames bordered by
its gardens green.

WILLIAM MORRIS 1834 - 1896

"TOPSY" - ALIAS "WILLIAM MORRIS"

"Topsy" - video tape, recently produced by the Victoria & Albert Museum in support of their Exhibition on Morris and his work.

As is my usual practise, I go down to Merton Abbey Mills on a Thursday morning to the Antiques Fair which is held in the Long Shop. I met down there Norman Fairey who works on the site as an engineer. He informed that John Hawks had taken two men over to the Chapter House and would be pleased to see me when he came back with them. They were two television men from a private company who had been employed by the Victoria and Albert Museum to make a film of Morris & Company for sale at the V&A Museum Shop in connection with the Morris Exhibition that they had staged to commemorate his centenary.

When he returned with them he introduced them to me and informed them about our Museum, and the fact that we possessed the only model of the Morris Works that exists. They reacted with great enthusiasm and requested that they be allowed to come down to the Museum and film it. This request I agreed to and made arrangements to meet them at the Museum at 12.00 noon the same day. They were very enthusiastic about coming into the Museum and filming our model, so we made arrangements that they would come in to do this the following week.

They arrived on Thursday morning with full equipment - a large camera and stand to attach it - they also brought a lighting man with them. It was fascinating to watch the lighting man at work, it was very sophisticated and professional the way that he worked, cancelling out every little shadow that he could see. They had a small monitor screen so the very picture that the camera was focused on, showed on this little screen. By this means the lighting man did his work by eliminating all the shadows that he could locate. It was very sophisticated. It took them most of the morning to get it just right. I provided them with a large sheet of grey foam material which I happened to have in store, and masked off the whole of the Exhibition area behind the model - they approved of this.

When they left us they were going on to Walthamstow to carry on with their filming there at the William Morris Gallery.

The Museum was presented with two complementary copies of the final end product. We have been acknowledged on the tape, which is very good for our image as a Museum.

Peter D.Harris
Trustee - W.I.M.

NEWS FROM RAVENSBURY MILL

As the Merton Messenger announced in the October 1996 edition, The Wandle Industrial Museum is on the move and local design company, Brennan & Whalley, have been appointed to help draw up plans for the Museum's new home at the old snuff factory, Ravensbury Mill. Brennan and Whalley have been based in Merton for over 25 years and are specialists in the design of Museum, Visitor Centres and Theme Parks.

We are pleased to announce that the appointment of Brennan & Whalley has been made possible by the generous support and sponsor partnership of the South Eastern Museums Service (S.E.M.S.) and A.J.Bull, a very well known and respected local Company.

The master plan for the internal planning of the Museum Hall is to produce a quality scheme for an opening display to ensure that we achieve the highest standards of excellence which this grade 2 listed building deserves. This policy will ensure that we obtain the maximum benefits for our local community and at the same time protect the long term future for the Museum. Brennan & Whalley are one of the top designers in the country. They have a long history of successful projects with their design award winning schemes, for instance, their Chatham Historic Dockyard in Kent won the 1992 "Come to Britain Award" which is also known as a "Tourism Oscar" and was presented by the British Tourist Authority. They have also been successful in their last three National Lottery Applications on behalf of their clients; this expertise will help us.

We are now in the process of compiling an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a new opening display and to restore the two waterwheels back into working order. We have already made a similar bid to the Government Office for London Single Regeneration Budget Challenge Fund, Round 3. Bidders will be informed of decisions by the end of 1996. For us to be successful with our bids it is essential for us to have a professional design and expert project management.

All of these vital skills can be found at Brennan & Whalley. We are pleased to advise that they have now completed their outline scheme and these drawings which have been so finely produced can now be viewed in the Museum at the Vestry Hall. It is recommended to Members that they take the time to view these drawings as all comments will be taken on board for the final design. All the elements are now in place for a successful National Lottery Application_ We have now turned the corner in our quest to see the Waterwheels working at Ravensbury Mill again.

Ray Leyden
November 1996

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

Proposed Change of the Museum Name

As one of those who spoke against the above proposal at the A.G.M., I have been asked to reiterate the views I expressed against change, which, on a vote being taken, seemed to be shared with a majority of members.

Over the 12 years or so since it was proposed that a Wandle Industrial Museum should be established at Liberty Mill, the Museum has succeeded, against considerable difficulties but with some success, in securing a recognised niche for itself amongst the several museums, interpretation centres, heritage centres and so on which exist in the Wandle Valley.

Based, so it happens, within the London Borough of Merton, the W.I.M. is strategically placed to present an overview of the river's industrial heritage. This was recognised by those who first launched the idea of an Industrial Museum, and although it has not evolved quite in the form originally envisaged, the Museum has demonstrated its potential for becoming a centre for the display and dissemination of information on the water-based industries for which the Wandle became famous.

In this context, one could hardly imagine a better location than the new premises in the Ravensbury Mill.

With so many museums now there is bound to be some over lapping, and I would certainly not argue against other museums up and down stream mounting displays concerned with their own industries. By their very nature and origins, however, each has local history as a principal theme. Although laudable attempts are made, again from a local viewpoint, space invariably precludes full justice being given to the great range of "Wandle" subjects which are desperately in need of proper and lively presentation to the general public.

The aim of Wandle Industrial Museum's founders back in the early 1980s was the presentation of the industrial history of the Wandle, and this is now widely recognised as its function. The museum has achieved a definite identity, which would be lost if the name were to be changed. Quite apart from the implication that the new "Wandle Valley Museum" aspired to dealing with all aspects of the river - a gigantic task if it were to be done properly - the premises at Ravensbury have obvious spacial limitations, and the problem of long-term funding has yet to be resolved.

At present many of the former industries on the Wandle, amongst which one might mention, in the London Borough of Merton alone, flour milling, copper working, paper and board making, the manufacture of flock and filling materials, leather working and so on (the list is almost endless) are not dealt with at all. To present even these would surely be challenge enough for the Wandle Industrial Museum in its new home.

The term "Wandle Valley Museum" would also be misleading to the public, and might well cause offence to the other museums, each of which could claim to be a "Wandle Valley Museum"

It was for these reasons that I felt bound to vote against the suggestion.

Yours sincerely,

Eric N. Montague

14.10.96

REPORT OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

We had our Annual General Meeting at Chapel Orchard Day Centre on Tuesday, 1st October 1996 at 7.30 p.m. This has become a popular venue as it has wheelchair access.

A special welcome was given to the Rt. Hon. Dame Angela Rumbold, D.B.E. our local M.P. There were a number of apologies, due to other meetings taking place that evening but thanks were given for everybody attending.

It was noted by the meeting that we have had a very busy year preparing for our move to Ravensbury Mill. It was recorded that Members had a special opportunity to visit the site on 8th July 1995.

After the meeting, a special display of Ravensbury Mill was on view for the Members, together with a copy of our official programme which had been produced by our Design Consultant and shows the various activities which had to be carried out for the new Ravensbury Mill project.

A lively debate took place on a proposed change of trading name from The Wandle Industrial Museum to The Wandle Valley Museum. It was thought this might broaden the scope of the Museum and more accurately reflect the aim of the Museum to interpret the heritage of the Wandle Valley. Marguerite Lee de Lisle, our Archivist, had written in and was against the motion and John Viner, our Commercial Artist, had also written in and he was in favour of the motion. This was much the mood of the meeting and the Chairman took a vote for retaining the same name which was six in favour and five against.

With our future move in mind it was a good opportunity to discuss any change of name. With a close vote, the meeting agreed to carry out further consultation.

Ray Leyden

November 1996

Membership Plus (and Minus)

MEMBERSHIP YEAR 1996-97

Q. What do I get when I become a Wandle Industrial Museum Member?

A. As a Member of the Museum you enjoy the following benefits.

- Free entry to the exhibition
- Regular Newsletters
- Annual reports on the Museum's progress from Trustees and Management Committee
- An invitation to regular events featuring aspects of Wandle history or related matters. These could include guided walks, expert lectures, visits to places of interest, slide shows, Wandle quizzes and anything else members can suggest.
- A 20% discount on the cover price of the Museum's own publications.

Q. How much does all this cost?

A. £8.00 a year for individual Membership

Family Membership costs £12.00 a year. Family members are asked to share a Newsletter. Other benefits of Membership are available for up to two adults and two children under eighteen, all living at one address.

School Membership costs £30.00 a year. Schools are entitled to two free visits at year and free loan of Museum materials. School visits now cost up to £30.00 a visit depending on numbers and facilities required.

PLEASE PRINT.

MEMBERSHIP YEAR 1996-97

NAME ADDRESS.....

.....

.....

.....TEL. No:

SIGNATURE 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.

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