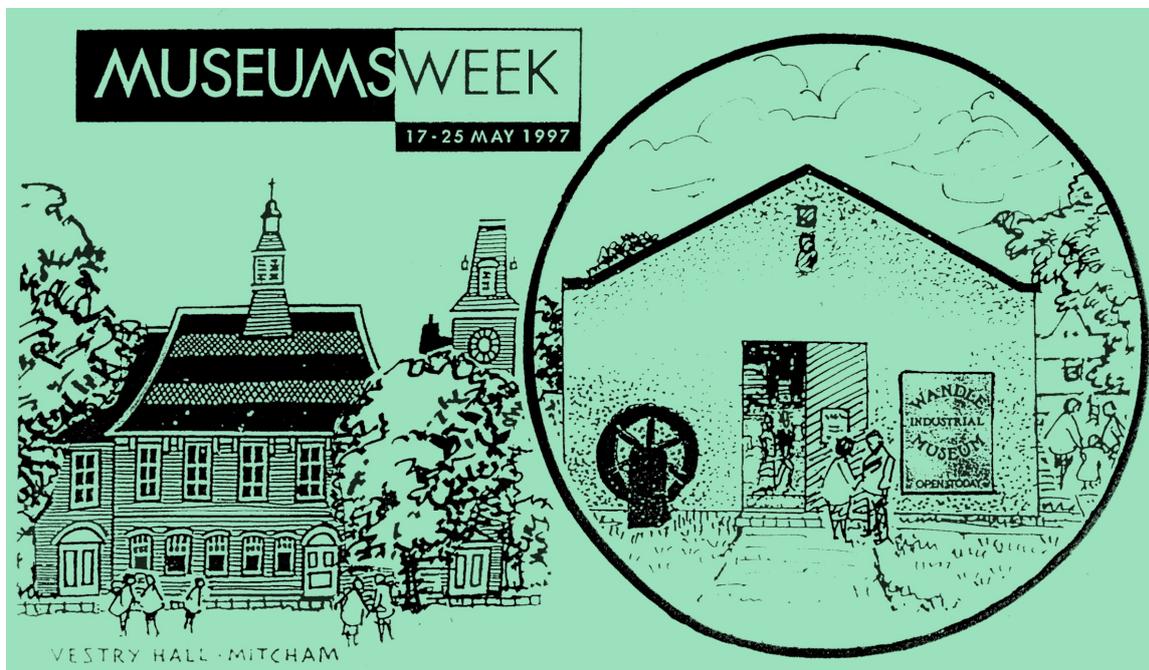


NEWSLETTER NO.18 – SPRING – 1997

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

School Visits and Workshops

We are pleased to report six school workshops since Christmas, three from Malmesbury Middle School, two from Benedict First School and one from Willington School making their first visit. All these schools are Museum Members. We have been pleased to welcome Museum Visits from Merton Adult Education Centre and Croydon Natural History and Scientific Society - see notes on Community Development Foundation "Linking Communities Project"

Outreach

Lectures on behalf of the Museum have been given to a variety of societies including:- Leatherhead Community Association, Chapel Orchard Day Centre, Putney Methodist Church and the Arthritis Care Association.. Members of staff visited Godalming Museum in Surrey as part of the "Linking Communities Project"

Members Events

Past

On Saturday, 22nd March, Members visited the new Wandsworth Museum, see article on separate page.

Present

On Thursday 12th June at 7pm Member Judith Goodman, author of "Merton & Morden a Pictorial History" will lead us on a walk around the John Innes Conservation Area in Merton Park Meet outside the John Innes Park, Mostyn Road, Merton Park. Walk will last about two hours and will finish at the Leather Bottle, Kingston Road, for liquid refreshments.

Dates for Your Diary

Once again we shall be participating in the National Trust Fayre in Morden Hall Park from Saturday, 3rd May until Monday 5th May inclusive, from 10 a.m. until 6 p.m. We shall be glad of any help Members and friends may be able to offer to man our stall. Included with this Newsletter is a reply postcard for you to return to the Museum with your offer of help which will be very much appreciated. Mitcham Carnival. Saturday 7th June from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Three Kings Piece Mitcham, We shall be having a stall here and would be glad of help on this day.

Museum's Week (see separate article) Saturday the 17th May, to Sunday 25th May, events and extra openings of Museum.

Wandle Industrial Museum Membership

Most Members have now renewed their annual subscription for 1996-97. Renewal Forms are enclosed for those Members who have not yet responded.

SH/ms/1/4/97

MUSEUM'S WEEK 1997

17TH -TO- 25TH MAY 1997

We are pleased to participate for the first time in Museum's Week 1997. Museums Week was started three years ago by well known television personality and keen Museum's supporter Lloyd Grossman, Chairman of the Campaign for Museums, with the backing of the Museums and Galleries Commission and the Department of National Heritage. It is supported by the Radio Times and this year is sponsored by Vauxhall Motors. The idea of Museum's Week is to promote the work of Museums countrywide. Museums Week organisers are hoping that as many Museums as possible will participate in this project; in 1996 there were 670 Museums actively involved. Thanks to Vauxhall Motors sponsorship this years Museum's Week will have colourful and attractive publicity material, with 100,000 leaflets to be distributed with every participant listed. Information will be posted on to the Internet and advertised in the Radio Times. There is no specific theme to the Museum's Week and individual Museums are free to promote their facilities in any way they choose, however, the London Borough of Merton, Libraries and Heritage Department, will be launching a special Leaflet listing all the Heritage sites in Merton including the Wandle Industrial Museum during Museum's Week. There is also to be a Merton Museum's Quiz. Participating Members of the public will be asked to answer 20 questions to which the answers will be found in the Merton Heritage Centre, the Wandle Industrial Museum, the Wimbledon Society Museum and the Wimbledon Windmill Museum. There will be a prize for the best correct entry.

Our special event for Museum's Week will be a River Wandle Walk on Saturday, 17th May meeting outside the Wheelhouse at Merton Abbey Mills at 1.00 p.m. We shall walk through Morden Hall Park and Ravensbury Park to Mitcham and the event will culminate in a visit to the Museum. The Museum will be open from 2.00 p.m. to 5.00 p.m. on this date. (At the time of planning this event we had not realised that this was the date for the Football Final!!)

The Museum will also be opening on Saturday, 24th May from 2.00 p.m. to 5.00 p.m. as an extra opening and to accommodate the Museum's Week Quiz Entrants.

The Museum will also be participating in a Borough Tour of local Museums on Saturday, 24th May. The group will be travelling by coach and visiting the Wandle Industrial Museum at 11 a.m., followed by refreshments at Merton Heritage Centre, and visits to the Wimbledon Windmill Museum and the Wimbledon Society Museum. Details will be in the local press and local libraries.

SH/ms//4/97

THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION
LINKING COMMUNITIES LOCAL GRANT

We recently heard that we had been awarded a small grant of £250 from the Community Development Foundation, funded by the Department of National Heritage as part of the "Linking Communities" Local Grants Programme. The aim of the "Linking Communities" Project was to enable us to work with other community groups. The programme was designed specifically to assist community groups to cooperate and learn from each other, and was specifically geared to small organisations with no paid staff, so that volunteers and members of staff could expand their skills, strengths and abilities by exchange of information. The information exchange would be practical such as hints on how to raise money, how to recruit new volunteers, or how to plan a specific event. The grant money was to be spent on travelling expenses and hospitality. Several hundred local community groups were successful in their application for funding for this project and the Wandle Industrial Museum was one of the Heritage organisations whose application was successful.

The group that was selected as our host group was Godalming Museum in Surrey and Members of the Museum staff and volunteers spent a very enjoyable and helpful morning with Members of the Godalming Museum staff. Godalming Museum is housed in an interesting timber framed building in the main street opposite the old Town Hall called the "Pepperpot". It is run by a professional curator and a team of volunteers and part funded by Waverley Borough Council. The Museum was founded in the 1920's and has many interesting exhibits about the life and industries of Godalming, including a very informative display on the life of Gertrude Jekyll, who lived outside Godalming. During discussion we obtained much helpful information about organising a team of volunteer helpers, Godalming Museum has fifty volunteers who man the shop and cafe five days a week run by a Volunteer Coordinator. This valuable information will be of great assistance to us when we move to Ravensbury Mill and will need to recruit a large volunteer force.

On a separate occasion we were hosts to the Croydon Natural History and Scientific Society, who visited us to benefit from our knowledge. They own a large collection of artifacts housed in a temporary building which is not open to the public but are looking at ways of getting a permanent building which would be open to the public. Six of their members visited us and were most interested to see our display at the Vestry Hall Annexe. They were very impressed with our recently completed Business Plan and Feasibility Study, which is to be part of our National Heritage Lottery Application for funding for Ravensbury Mill. They were also interested in our Education Services to Schools as they are not able to offer this facility at present but are anxious to do so.

Now that the exchange of visits has been completed we can see that they have been of great value to the small -volunteer run community groups for which they were intended. The purpose was to help these groups to get access to some basic help by putting them in touch with other similar groups so that they could all learn from each other, and gain support which would last well beyond the visits.

Sheila Harris 1/4/1997

News from Ravensbury Mill

THE CROWN JEWELS OF THE RIVER WANDLE

A survey and report of Ravensbury Mill has been carried out by J. Kenneth Major, B.Arch., R.I.B.A., F.S.A., dated the 29th November 1995. It can be found in the report that the sites like Ravensbury Mill which survive show the variation of usage, and their protection is important. The former mill building has been reserved for the museum expansion. He reports:

"The centre of the mill space contains the two water wheels. The west waterwheel is 14'6" (4.42m) in diameter and 4'6" (1.40m) wide. The waterwheel is mounted on a cruciform cast-iron shaft which goes into the room on the west side of the separation wall. The water is delivered on to the waterwheel in the low-breast shot position. The wheels are a dramatic feature, the key element. "

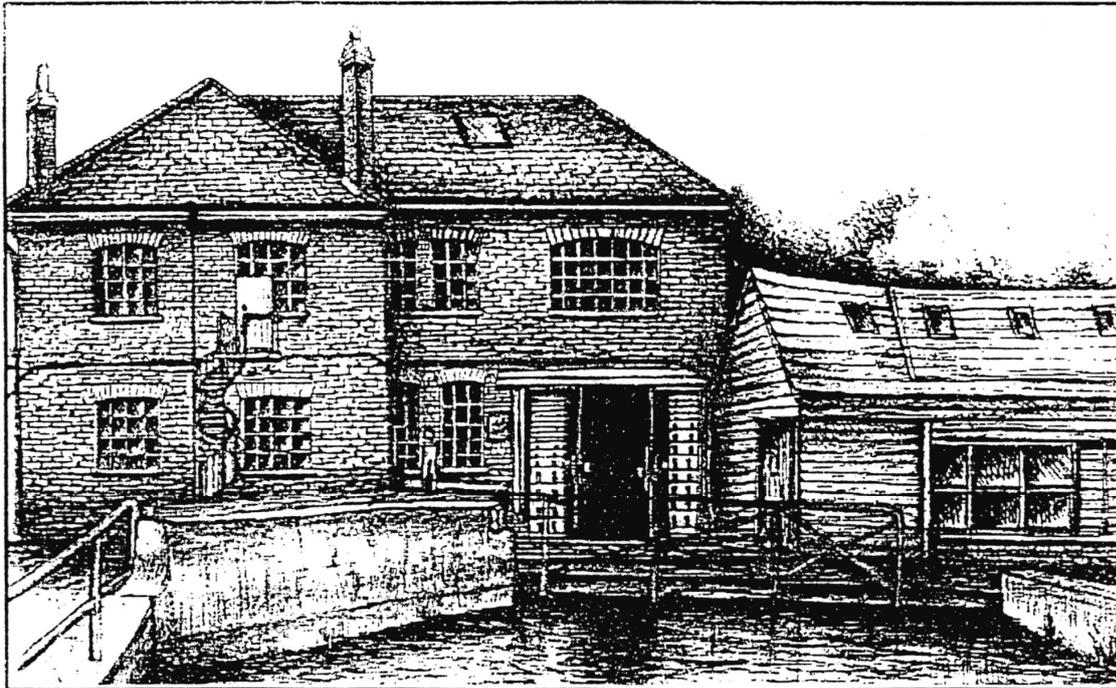
On the basis of this report we invited a specialist contractor, "The Chiltern Partnership" to inspect the waterwheels and they have produced a schedule of repairs to the two waterwheels and associated gearing. They have been intimately concerned with directing and carrying out repairs to 88 wind and water mill projects, several of which have received major awards. The budget cost of the restoration of the waterwheels pending a full investigation is assessed at approximately £28,000 plus V.A.T. They agree with the report by J. Kenneth Major that when the waterwheels are restored they will be very imposing when turning under water. They also agree the wheels are a dramatic feature, the key element. To any Wandle historian they are indeed, "The Crown Jewels of the River Wandle".

To incorporate these precious waterwheels a local design company, Brennan & Whalley, have produced an outline design for the Museum's new home at the old snuff mill at Ravensbury Mill. Brennan & Whalley have been based in Merton for over 25 years and are specialists in the design of Museums, Visitor Centres and Theme Parks. 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.

Brennan & Whalley have also been successful in their last three National Heritage Lottery Applications on behalf of their clients. In conjunction with the Design Proposals by Brennan & Whalley we have now produced a comprehensive Business Plan and have now successfully completed an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund. We have secured in principle the 25% partnership funding that is required by the Lottery Board and we now await the outcome so that we may restore the waterwheels and secure a quality scheme for an opening display to ensure that we achieve the highest standards of excellence which this Grade I listed building deserves. We are also pursuing alternative means of funding, for example, in partnership with Merton Council and in consultation with Merton's Economic Regeneration Board on proposals for S.R.B. Round IV.

In 1995, we appointed a well respected local solicitor, Gregsons of Wimbledon, to act on our behalf to complete lease facilities. For reasons beyond our control it has been a time consuming process but in the very near future we hope to complete this process and become residents at Ravensbury Mill. The new residential homes at Ravensbury Mill are part of this industrial complex which has been skillfully replanned for this new housing complex and we look forward to **Meeting Our New Neighbours**

Ray Leyden



Ravensbury Mills (rear, c.1965)

VISIT TO WANDSWORTH LOCAL MUSEUM

My companion and I arrived at the meeting place, "The Brewery Tap" only to find it was closed for restoration. We wandered over to the "The Spread Eagle", no sign of anyone else, do we wait here or search elsewhere? We decided to make ourselves known at the Museum and then returned to the "Spread Eagle" to await reinforcements. We were soon joined by two more, when we were sure no one else was going to join us we strolled around the corner to the Museum.

The Wandsworth Museum is housed in the old Courthouse at the end of Garrett Lane opposite the Arndale Centre.

We were met by Pat Astley-Cooper, the Museum Curator and she explained that as the Museum had originally been in Putney Library it came under the umbrella of Library Services and was, therefore, wholly funded by Wandsworth Council. There are twelve members of staff, this did include quite a few part-time staff. Like the Wandle Industrial Museum, this Museum is used extensively by the local schools. The Museum has, therefore, been set out with children very much in mind and has quite a few "hands on" exhibits. It also has a large fully equipped Education Room. I particularly liked a cut out model, like those set up at the seaside for fun photos, the child or adult puts their head through the head hole and there is a mirror opposite so that they can see how they would look as a Celtic warrior. There was a working model of the Surrey Iron Railway, the children turn a handle and one of two trucks moves along the line. Another interesting feature that I think children (and others) would enjoy, was a set of keyholes set at various heights, through which you peeped to see different areas of a Victorian room revealed.

This is a local Museum and reflects the changes in the area. The exhibits have been arranged chronologically telling the story of Wandsworth from very early times to the present day.

While we were at the Museum, we were interested to see that the visitors included a selection of people of different ages. At the end of the visit we went into their shop, many of the publications on sale were familiar to us but there were others new to us. We were pleased to see "The Map" was on sale.

This is certainly a Museum well worth a visit. It was an interesting and informative afternoon and gave us much to think about as we look forward to our own move.

Wandsworth Museum is open Tuesday-Saturday 10.00 am. - 5.00 pm. and Sunday 2.00 pm - 5.00 pm.

Meg Thomas 9/4/97

WHEN ARTHUR RULED THIS LAND

The miller's reputation, as noted in the last issue, was not an enviable one through much of our history, but he was not alone in this.

The tailor was regarded as a thoroughly unheroic character. "Nine tailors make a man" said the proverb. This may well have originated in a reference to the strokes (tellers) on the parish bell which announced a death, but people were quite happy to apply the phrase to makes of clothes. Elizabeth 1, meeting a deputation of eighteen tailors, greeted them "Good morrow, gentlemen both", and the folk story "Nine at One Stroke" leans heavily on the fact that its protagonist is a tailor and therefore a coward.

Weavers fared no better. Anyone who has read "Silas Marner" will recall Eliot's description of the weaver whose pallor and isolated work habits made him seem like an alien among the bronzed, teamworking farm labourers before the Agricultural Revolution.

Perhaps the fact that all three worked alone and indoors is enough to explain the unpopularity of millers and tailors as well as weavers.

The folk song "When Arthur Ruled This Land", rather incredibly, makes all three of these "thievish rogues" sons of King Arthur.

It is a popular song found in many versions (not all with the reference to Arthur). This one was collected by Alfred Williams from Edmund Jefferies of Highworth, Wilts, and published in "Folk Songs of the Upper Thames".

When Arthur ruled this land
He was a mighty king;
Three sons he swore he'd turn out of door
Because they could not sing.

The first he was a miller,
The second was a weaver,
The third he was a little tailor -
Three thievish rogues together.

The miller he stole corn,
The weaver he stole yarn,
The little tailor stole a piece of broad cloth
To keep these three rogues warm.

The miller was drowned in his pond,
The weaver was hanged with his yarn,
The devil ran away with the little tailor,
With the broad cloth under his arm.

STEPHEN ASHCROFT