



MUSEUM

NEWSLETTER

Issue 75

August 2011

1 NEWSDESK

There have been a consistent number of visitors to the Museum during the summer period, and people are gradually realising that we are now open every Sunday. A Sunday rota is now up and running but new volunteers are always welcome to join the list as vacancies often occur through holiday and illness.

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Outreach

Meg and some helpers represented the Museum at Merton's Heritage Day at Morden Baptist Church in May. Mary and her printing team of Michael, Alison and Auriol, were kept busy representing the Museum at the Wandle Weekend at Merton Abbey Mills in June.

On June 11th the new Museum Exhibition "The Wandle --Then and Now" was opened by the Mayor of Merton Cllr Gilli Lewis Lavender and was a great success.

Later in June members attended the Wimbledon



Figure 1 – The Mayor opening the Summer exhibition, supervised by Cll Stephen Alambritis, leader of the Council

Village Fair raising £117 for Museum funds.

In July the Museum had a stall at the Green Day Out in Morden Hall Park, despite the rain we managed to make £35. Later in the month the printing team were once again busy at the Chapter House for the Festival of British Archaeology. As we go to press the team were at Merton Abbey Mills as part of the bank holiday Kidsfest program, this time concentrating on the smaller sari blocks, which are easier for the children to handle.

Our thanks to all the members and friends who gave their time to help at all these events and to Meg and Michael who put together the exhibition of Photographs of the River Wandle past and present.



Figure 2 – A soggy Morden Hall Park, the Green Day Out

Future Events

The next Volunteers Lunch will be on Wednesday September 7th at 12 noon. We hope to see as many volunteers as possible on that day.

Once again we shall be having an Open Afternoon at the museum for the Festival for the over 50's "Celebrating Age". This will be on Thursday 8th September at 2.00 pm.

Open House Weekend this year is on 17th/18th of September and the printing team will be representing us at the Chapter House on both days.

Advance notice is given of the Annual General Meeting to be held at Raynes Park Library Hall on Thursday 17th November. This year the Speaker will be Chris Taft of the British Postal Museum and Archive in London. Chris who is our new Curatorial Advisor (now retitled 'Mentor') and who will be talking about his work. Further information will be sent out nearer the time.

We are sorry to announce the death of longstanding member and volunteer Marguerite Lee Delisle. Her obituary appears below. We will miss her.

Sheila Harris, Aug 2011

2. MARGUERITE LEE DELISLE

Marguerite, who died earlier this month, had been involved with the Museum for over 25 years, having originally joined us in 1985 when the Museum was at Hartfield Road.

At that time the Museum was funded by the



Figure 3 – Marguerite receiving her Honorary Life membership, 2004

Manpower Services Commission to employ people on a part time basis. Marguerite joined a team of 26 part-timers and 3 supervisors and worked as an archivist, having been a trained librarian in her youth. In 1989 the funding ceased, and the Museum's Hartfield Road premises sustained a fire and had to close.

Later on, when the Museum found its present premises at the Vestry Hall, Marguerite returned to work for us as a volunteer Archivist until her retirement from ill health in 2004, when she was made a Life Member . For long after this date, however, she remained in full contact with us, and was ever there when needed to support both the curatorial and the archive side with her detailed knowledge.

Without Marguerite we would never have acquired our status as a registered Museum 10 years ago, because the quality of the Archive, its organisation and indexing, was crucial to that process, and this was wholly created by her.

Despite her increasing frailty, Marguerite returned several times for Volunteer lunches and Christmas parties over the years when she could. We remember her for her cheerful personality which sustained her through her long battle with arthritis.

Eight members of the Committee past and present attended the



Figure 4 – Marguerite with the Mayor of 2004, our Chair, and Curator

funeral on 18 August at St John Fisher Church in Cannon Hill Lane, and afterwards. Among the reminiscences we were delighted to be told by Marguerite's grandson James that he remembered with pleasure days he had spent as a small boy at the Museum with Marguerite.

3. MUSEUM UPDATES

CURATORS REPORT

Along with other heritage organisations we were invited by to take part in the first Merton Heritage Showcase. It was held in the Baptist Church in Crown Lane. Most of the local heritage groups were there and during the day presentations were given by several of the groups. Sarah Gould had clearly worked hard to set up the meeting but sadly there was very little effective publicity and this meant that very few of the public, the people we really wanted to reach, visited the Showcase. One useful outcome was that we were able to meet Lucy Hares from the Lottery Heritage Fund whose role is to encourage lottery applications from Merton. Merton it seems has had less money from the fund than most other local authorities.

The new Heritage and Design Working Group had its first meeting on 5th July. It was well attended by heritage bodies and Merton representatives. The meeting was chaired by Maurice Groves. The meeting put forward two aims to work on, one was to prepare a list of Lottery bids and the other was to create links to all heritage groups on the council's website www.merton.gov.uk. The next meeting is 7th September.

We had a visit from Yvette Shepherd who is our new Museums Development Officer. Kate Hebditch who was such a support during our application for Accreditation has moved on to pastures new. For

small museums like ours the help given by the MDO has been greatly appreciated. With all the changes and the demise of the MLA we don't know how much support we will continue to have as Arts Council of England has taken over the role of the MLA. One immediate effect is the loss of the many free workshops and courses run by MLA. The most recent courses I have looked at cost between £200 and £300 even those that advertise courses to help small charities apply for grants!

The most visible changes to our displays over the Summer have been electronic. Not only do we have an electronic photo frame showing more of our Wandle photos in support of the new exhibition, but using the DVD player we are showing relevant educational films, including the one in which Eric Shaw appears in a piece about the Surrey Iron Railway. A small question of licensing caused a temporary panic, but this was kindly resolved by LB Merton's licensing department who confirmed the various exemptions that enable us to display these things without need for a premises licence!

Meg Thomas

ARCHIVES REPORT

We purchased the Royal Mail mint stamp set and accompanying postcards featuring the designs of William Morris and contemporaries, to commemorate 150 years of Morris & Co. Examples included a decorative panel (Webb), wallpaper (Dearle), tiles (Faulkner), and stained glass (Burne-Jones).

A new book also came out in the same month, written by Michael Parry, entitled "Morris & Co: a Revolution in Decoration" which was published by the company. It brings the company's portfolio bang up

to date with pictures of some of their “Archive Collection “ for 2011, within which is a design called “Orchard”, said to be inspired by the mediaeval tapestries woven at Merton Abbey.

A further book we purchased, published last year, is by Rosalind Ormiston, “William Morris, Artist, Craftsman, Pioneer”, and includes a wallpaper design not previously known to Mary Hart (how can this be ??) – namely “Merton” by Kate Faulkner.

We also obtained a copy of the entry for the Surrey Iron Railway in the latest edition of “Britain’s Historic Railway Buildings”, by Gordon Biddle. On showing this to our resident expert, Eric Shaw, we have some concerns as to the accuracy of a couple of statements, including an indication that examples of plate rail are in local schools and libraries, and Croydon Museum. No mention of our collection is made at all, which is disappointing.

Alison also attended a day course at the National Archives held by the Local Studies Group of CILIP (Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals). The theme was “Sustainability in the Digital Age” and demonstrated how outreach provision in Solihull and Hertfordshire is combining the resources of library, archive, and local studies units in creating community-based projects using various aspects of new media. The overwhelming messages were that volunteers are the main enablers of such projects, and that to be looked on favourably for any such funding, make sure your application includes the words “Big Society” and/or “Localism”. It also proved that librarians have embraced social media as a tool for continuing professional development . One new presentation medium, a Prezi, gave a welcome relief from “death by Powerpoint” and was headed by a Wordle (or word cloud) relevant to the theme. After a little practice, a “Wandle Wordle” now exists.

Alison & Jacqui

OTHER NEWS

Ravensbury. Still no news about how the Ravensbury saga will finish. Our Chair and I met with the LB Merton team last month for an update, and it seems there is still some way to go before the experts on both sides agree the factual position.

The bill to put the building into a fit state for us is climbing all the time, but we were able to reassure our Merton colleagues of our determination to take the lease if and when the building becomes fit for purpose.

HLF/Wandle Valley The Wandle Valley Regional Park is beginning to unlock HLF funding, from which we would all hope to benefit in due course.

Many of you will have seen reports in the newspapers that the WVRP is to get its share of a £1.8m fund to help develop the full application.



Figure 5 – the Excavations

Chapter House, Merton Priory. This really seems to be a year in which the Merton Priory trust kicks on. The land transfer is imminent (really!), the interior has been redecorated and the displays enhanced by materials provided by the William Morris Gallery, and, currently, the unsightly sand which has covered much of the archaeology is being removed.



Figure 6 – a close up showing the depth of the trench

Next public opening is the weekend of 17/18 September, and in the following week it is proposed that the Mayor hosts a medieval banquet there.

Lavender. Mary and Alison have been exploring ways to enhance our visitors appreciation of lavender. The idea of genuine lavender recipes ('genuine' because culinary lavender oil is used in the baking, rather than merely addition of dried lavender to the end product) led Mary and I to Lordington, near Chichester, which is the nearest supplier of those oils. This has also allowed me to publish another gratuitous photo, seen here. What the photo doesn't show is the brilliance of the lavender colour which glowed from this field, and took the breath away as we turned the corner and saw it through the trees for the first time. The colour made the Carshalton fields look quite dowdy!

Skylon. Further to Eric's article on the Skylon in the May newsletter, here is a picture of the famous letter openers, made from the salvage of the Skylon, and referred to in his article.



Figure 7 – Mary at Lordington Lavender



Figure 8 – Skylon paperknives

Twitter. Our Chair has become an energetic Tweeter. Although he does so wearing his hat as chair of the London Civic Forum, he takes care to ensure we get a regular mention - almost as many as 'darcydog' in fact! For those interested he can be found at @shapeyourcity where he has over 200 regular followers from across London, so very good PR for us.

4. A QUESTION

When was this written and to which 'those days' is it referring?

"Although there was a much greater amount of filial respect and obedience expressed in those days than now, human nature has differed but slightly in different ages of the world; and it is probable that sons went their own way quite as much as they do now, when there is very little talk either of obedience or respect. Indeed, the implicit obedience, and almost servile respect, which our forefathers expected from their sons, could not but in a great number of cases drive the sons to be hypocrites as well as undutiful; and our modern system of making our boys companions and friends, of taking an interest in all they do, and in teaching them to regard us as their natural advisers, has produced a generation of boys less outwardly respectful, no doubt, but as dutiful, and far more frank and truthful than those of the bygone times."

(Answer on p 14)

5. THE FIRST PUBLIC RAILWAY?

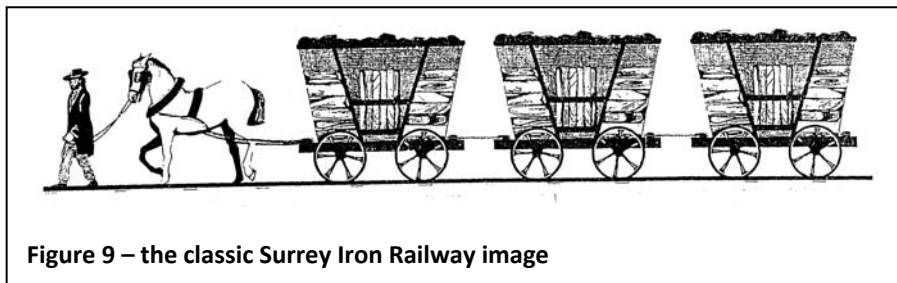
I have already posited that, in fact, the Diolkos of Corinth in ancient Greece was the first public railway, based on the proposition that

railways are developments of rutways, into which category the Diolkos fits. On this interpretation of 'railway', as this appears to be an original Phoenician 'invention', there may indeed have been an earlier version even than this.

More realistically, if by railway we mean 'iron railway' then we must really start in the 18th Century. I think it beyond question that our own Surrey Iron Railway was 'the first public railway sanctioned by Parliament, independent of a canal' (Lee, C E (1944). 'Early railways of Surrey', The Railway Gazette, p. 3.) .

Derek Bayliss, whose book on the Surrey Iron Railway has been our mainstay for years, has looked further into this in an article which can be found at www.greig51.freemove.co.uk/cnhss/bull102b.htm which I strongly recommend. If we take out the 'sanctioned by parliament' and 'independent of a canal' elements, he thinks we should seriously consider the merits of the Lake Lock Railway.

Wikipedia says of this: "The Lake Lock Rail Road Company was formed in 1796 with the capital being raised from 128 shares. These were purchased by a broad range of people including a lawyer, banker, doctor, clergyman, merchant and widow. The initial route opened to traffic in 1798 (predating the Surrey Iron Railway), and commenced at Lake Lock, near Stanley, Wakefield on the Aire & Calder Navigation and



ran broadly in a westerly direction to Outwood, a distance of approximately 3 miles.” and:

“The primary purpose of the line was the carriage of coal from the various coal pits surrounding the line to the Aire & Calder Navigation for shipment elsewhere. Other goods carried include roadstone, timber and burnt lime. The load of three waggons was hauled by one horse with an average gradient of 1 in 70 (1.43%) down to the navigation. The track used edge rails to a gauge of 3 ft 4 3/4 in (1,035 mm). Goods

were charged by toll, initially at 6d per ton, subsequently increasing to 10 ½ d per ton. In 1807 110,000 tons were being carried each year,..”

Although the talk here is of ‘shares’, this was really a partnership as limited companies did not then exist, and it is clear that, although mine owners could use the railway without being members of the company, so that the designation ‘public’ is not wrong, it had no function without the mines or the canal, and the main business was one way only, downhill, and for a mere 3 miles.



1978 photo by Walter Werner

Figure 10 – Remains of the Diolkos

The Surrey Iron Railway was 4 times that length, operated in both directions, open to a wide variety of goods, and had purpose for the communities along its route independent of the Thames at one end. If we consider that the original concept was to extend it to the coast, and it was only Nelson's inopportune victory at Trafalgar in 1805 that made that extension unviable, then I think we can still call it the first, and that the Lake Lock railway was merely a previous Darwinian evolutionary stage.

But what do you think?

Nicholas Hart, August 2011

6. And Finally: the answer to A Question

GA Henty, writing in the 1860's about the days of Queen Anne.

STOP PRESS 1) – The Wandle was named as one of the most improved Rivers in England by the Environment agency, on nation TV news, and in most newspapers.

STOP PRESS 2) Kidsfest – The annual bank holiday Kidsfest at Merton Abbey Mills turned into a long and rewarding



Figure 11 – Cllr Nick Draper at Kidsfest

day for the Print team, this time Mary and Alison.

The team chose to use Mary's Sari blocks, printed on paper, for the children to use, as opposed to our traditional Liberty style blocks on fabric, and this certainly speeded up the process. We think that over 160 prints were made, and proudly removed by the little printers, including one by past Mayor Nick Draper (see photo).

Alison was inexhaustible as the printer, with Mary as her tierer, and yours truly trying to keep up with them in hanging up the prints to dry.

A great spot just outside the wheelhouse, but the shouting needed to communicate over the noise of the disco on the band stand was a trial – I think the museum owes Alison some throat pastilles!

Definitely an outreach we should repeat in future



Figure 11 – Alison and Mary at Kidsfest

INVESTING IN VOLUNTEERS
IN THE WANDLE VALLEY



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Company No 01792482, Charity No 288655.

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OPEN: Every Wednesday 1 ~ 4 pm;  
Every Sunday (except Bank Holiday weekends) 2 ~ 5 pm.

The Museum is also open to schools and groups by appointment.

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Admission: Adults 50p, Children & Senior Citizens 20p

The Wandle Industrial Museum would like to point out that the views of contributors to this
newsletter are not necessarily the views of the Museum. We would be happy to give the right to
reply to anyone who finds the content contentious.

All contributions and news items gratefully received and
appreciated - please feel free to let us know at any time -
telephone or write or email to ndhart@wandle.org