



# MUSEUM

## NEWSLETTER

Issue 76

November 2011

### 1 NEWSDESK

We have continued to welcome visitors to the Museum on Wednesdays and Sundays during the autumn months with people gradually appreciating our extra Sunday openings. Thanks are due to all those volunteers who are on the Sundays List and we would always welcome hearing from other members and friends who are able to join us on Sundays especially

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Figure 1 – Printing in the Chapter House

during the winter months.



**Figure 2 – The Mayor joining the top table for the AGM**

Outreach The Museum Printing Team has been out and about at the Chapter House at Merton Abbey Mills for the Open House Weekend in September. Volunteer Curator Meg Thomas has been busy representing the Museum with a Talk

to the Sutton Mariners about William Morris and leading a River Wandle Walk with St Michael Steiner School from Wandsworth.

#### Visits to the Museum

We were pleased to participate once again with Merton's Festival for the Over 50's in September with an Open Afternoon at the Museum which proved very successful. In October Benedict Primary School visited the museum for a Printing Workshop and later in the month Age Concern Craft Club made their first visit to the Museum.

#### Events

Past The last volunteers lunch Meeting was in September which once again was well attended and very successful.

The Annual General Meeting on the 17th November at Raynes Park Library Hall was opened by the Mayor of Merton Councillor Gilli Lewis- Lavender and after the business meeting members enjoyed a presentation about the Post Office Underground Railway by our Museum Mentor

Chris Taft. The excellent refreshments were once again provided by Mary Hart who had baked 2 Xmas cakes for the Raffle and a selection of her prizewinning jam as another prize.

#### Future

The next Volunteers lunch is on December 7th and will be a Christmas Party, to which all volunteers and friends are invited.

#### The Annual Members New Year's Lunch January 12th 2012

It has been decided, as an experiment, to have a lunch this time instead of a dinner. Many of our members have difficulty getting out in the evening with poor transport facilities and would prefer to have a lunch. The lunch will be at Park Place Toby Carvery, Mitcham at 12.30 pm for 1.00pm on Thursday January 12th 2012. A booking form for this event is included with this Newsletter. There is a set price for the Carvery Meal (with Vegetarian options). Please get bookings in by



**Figure 3 – Our Chair, Andrew Wakefield, welcoming Christ Taft at the AGM**

December 21st at the latest. As before a selection of wine and soft drinks will be available on your table. The price per carvery meal is £6.00. This does not include a sweet. We do hope you will be able to join us.



Figure 4 – Park Place Carvery

**Membership**  
Subscriptions for the year commencing 1st January 2012 are now due and a renewal form is enclosed with this newsletter. As agreed at the AGM the annual membership fee has now increased to £10 for individual members and £15 for family membership.

We hope to see you at some of our future

events. Meanwhile we wish all our members and volunteers a very happy Christmas

Sheila H. November 2011

## MUSEUM NEWS

**2 Curators Report** We have opened every Sunday since the end of May and although we have not been snowed under with visitors we have had a few most Sundays. I would like to express my thanks to all of you who have volunteered so far. But we would really appreciate a few more volunteers on the rota, remember the chocolate biscuits!

## William De Morgan

Claire Longworth, Curator of the De Morgan centre visited us, on a Sunday!

The De Morgan Centre has had a lottery grant and one of the conditions was that they worked with another local group. They nominated us. They will visit us to have a printing workshop with Mary. They will then create a topic work box that we can use with schools and would like to put up a display in the museum. I have managed to free an area that they can use, by juggling some of our boards; at least Eric did, with a hand from Michael. We look forward to this cooperation.

In case any of you didn't know De Morgan was an associate and lifelong friend of William Morris. His pottery was at Colliers Wood.

Some of you may have visited the ladies loo. Well one or two of our visitors have found it awkward to use as the inner door opens into the closet. Therefore to comply with access rules Eric has removed the inner door and put a lock on the outer door so giving us ladies more room. The downside of this is it has revealed that a little tarding up is necessary.



Figure 5 – Part of the William de Morgan exhibition on West Hill

Meg Thomas

### 3 Archivist's Report

Following the BBC programme on the Wandle in August, we received several photographs from Tony Ponsford, whose grandfather was James Allsop, the owner of Allsop's Wharf.

One is a copy of a rather hazy painting depicting the area which James Allsop himself describes as "where the silvery Wandle flows into the Thames". Other photos show the construction of the wharfside buildings, a portrait of James Allsop himself, some of the barges serving the wharf, and one of a brickmaking contraption actually on site.

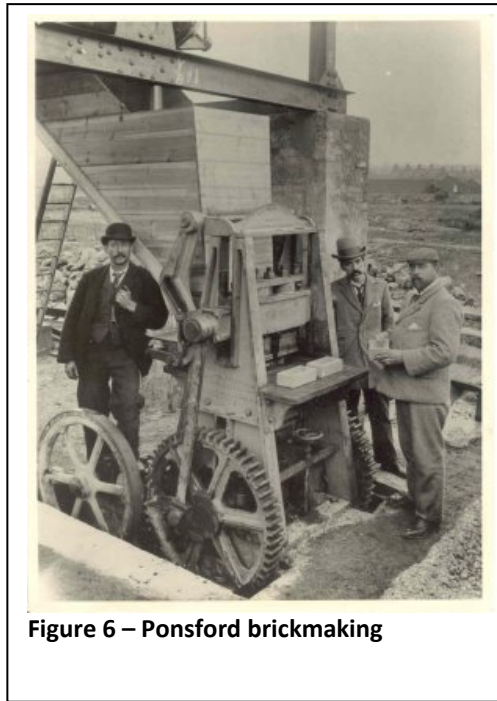


Figure 6 – Ponsford brickmaking

As a boy, Tony remembers the steam cranes they had, but in particular the canteen hut, which was near the confluence of the two rivers. He reports that around 1950 a compulsory purchase order was made for the wharf, to allow a gas company to build storage tanks to connect to their depot across the river. However, after the sale had gone through this plan was found to be impractical.

When he worked in Wandsworth, Tony was chatting one day to Alf Gover, owner of the famous cricket school on East Hill who told him

that their Georgian house allegedly had a secret tunnel to the Wandle, but they had never found it. (Another Wandle myth?)

Jacqui and I have now spent many (happy?) hours going through the slide collection in an attempt to distinguish one view of a stretch of grassy river bank from another. The collection will now be catalogued and digitised as many of the slides are of excellent quality, thanks to Peter Harris.

Another useful seminar on "Mapping the Past" was held by the CILIP Local Studies Group at the Hampshire County Record Office in Winchester, and Peter Cousins was persuaded to attend.

This included a report from the Surrey Tithe Records project on the digitisation of the tithe maps, and an update from Middlesex University on the compilation of a database of information on the first edition of the 6" OS maps. Portsmouth University is also hosting a website – "Vision of Britain through Time" which brings together census information, descriptive gazetteers from the nineteenth century, as well as historical maps, and which will early next year link to an academically funded search portal. The final session noted the development of the Historypin website which will soon enable the posting of photographs on a website to invite identification. (Anyone recognise this grassy river bank?) (<http://www.historypin.com>)

#### 4 OTHER MUSEUM NEWS

As signposted in the Meg's curatorial report, the team from the William de Morgan museum has now visited and were entertained by Meg, Mary and Alison. A very lively group, they seemed to enjoy themselves as well as appreciating the wholly different experience offered by a museum such as ours as opposed to their own well-



Figure 7 – the new rear signage...

funded displays.

We look forward to working with them long into the future.

Visitors to the Museum will have noticed new external signage appearing over the last year. For many years we were under the impression that the situation of the Annex within a conservation area meant we were unable to make any great external display without first

obtaining a raft of permissions, and had an added anxiety about publicising the contents of the building which was unoccupied for such long stretches of the week.

However comments from volunteers and visitors about the need to make its presence known, and guidance from Vestry Hall that, so long as in keeping, we could erect signage without any further permissions, changed all that. These photos from Michael Taylor show the more recent additions to the rear of the building.

The slow and steady upgrades we are making both to the Museum displays, and to the building itself represent our pragmatic approach to the proposed move to Ravensbury Mill. Up until the



Figure 7 – ...and a close up

flood in 2004 we had taken the view that the imminent move absolved us of that need. The rethink forced by the flood has paid off over that prolonged period of waiting and, I believe, has made us all the more prepared and fit for the move when it comes.

Which brings me to Ravensbury. The litigation between LB Merton's enforcement team and the freeholder continues. Originally, as previously reported, the judge ordered that the parties should agree as

much as possible of the outstanding works by 31 October, and go through mediation to try and resolve the rest. Because no date could be found for the joint inspection which was part of that process, that date has now been put back to 31 January.

In the meantime the freeholder's casual approach to his obligations in respect of this listed building has been further evidenced by the repointing work he seems to have commissioned to the roadside elevation of the building. This was carried out without any prior consultation with LB Merton, and with modern cement and not the prescribed lime mortar that was appropriate.

Nobody knows what his final bill to comply with his obligations will be, but it is likely to be between £60,000 and a multiple of that figure. As mentioned in our



**Figure 8 – Pointing at Ravensbury**

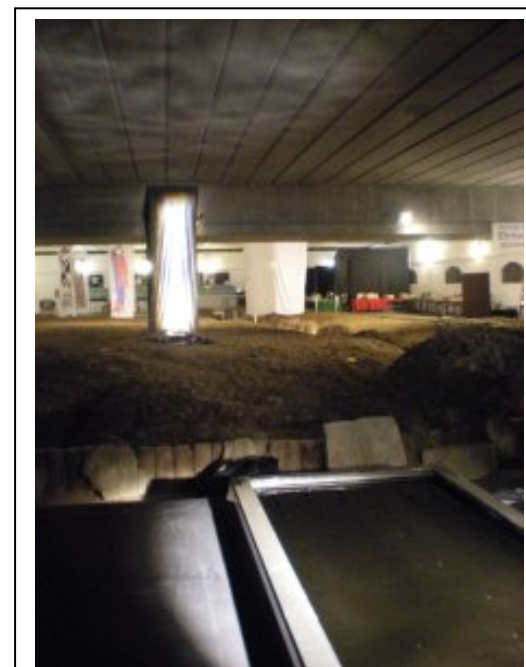
Chair's address to the AGM, we remain enormously grateful for the effort and resources being put into this by Tim Catley and his team at LB Merton.

2012 looks to be an interesting year. The Ravensbury litigation must end, and our lives at the museum will change enormously as a result. Despite this we must continue to ensure we deliver our activities, with new displays, a summer opening, outreach and school visits. No doubt

the Queen's Jubilee and the Olympics will confuse the calendar, and the accelerating progress of both the Merton Priory project and the Wandle Valley Regional Park will provide many more opportunities.

## **5 MERTON ABBEY MILLS and MERTON PRIORY NEWS**

On the Priory site, a busy series of public openings this autumn, including an exhibition as part of the Merton Arts Trail, culminated in a double high point over the last month. First, the great news that, at last, and overtaking Ravensbury despite its head start, the s106 transfer of the Merton Priory Chapter House land to the London Borough of Merton has now taken place, together with a sum of a little over £400,000 for the purposes of preserving and displaying the Chapter House remains and for 'ancillary purposes'.



**Figure 10 – One of the Arts Trail installations**

Second, as a result of that news, a small party, intended merely as a thank you for the Chapter House volunteers for their hard work during 2011, became transformed into a big celebratory lunch on 26 November, attended by most of the great and the good from Merton. Mary, as is her wont, was able to upgrade from the 10 or so lunches she had planned to the 65 who turned up, with the help of all concerned, and, as they say, a good time was had by all. A particular feature of this lunch was the use of the heritage set of bowl and goblet created by Steve Llewellyn, with guests being invited to purchase the set they had used to take home for a nominal £5. The fact that 40 or so



Figure 10 – Celebratory lunch in the Chapter House

much talking over the next few months. As WIM representatives Mary and I are committed to promoting the idea that the ‘ancillary purposes’ include reference to the great industrial history of this site and in particular the works of William Morris and Arthur Liberty.

Any of you visiting the Chapter House over this year will have seen the progress now being made in clearing the builders sand from around the archaeological remains. Carol Houghton and her team of work in the community helpers have been a consistent source of muscle power helping Dave Saxby ensure this is done responsibly. The importance of this has been underwritten by the discovery that a crypt grave had been left intact under the sand, and which is being carefully excavated now.

In Merton Abbey Mills, we are happy to report that Steve Llewellyn has now successfully undergone the shoulder surgery he has needed for some time, and, although this means he will not be throwing pots for a couple of months now, he should be back to his own productive self soon.

The market seems to have gained new life as a result of the continued promotion by Peter Wallder, and by the continued attention of Terry Buckland and his team and it is to be hoped that this Christmas season will be as productive for the market as it deserves.

Although its recent upgrade has meant that much of the physical evidence which showed the Colour House theatre’s origins as an essential part of the Liberty works is now concealed, Linda Kirby and her team have ensured it thrives as a venue, and is well worth a visit for those who haven’t been inside to see it yet.

Finally - nature notes. It seems clear that the new Eel Ladder design created by Norman Fairey and Steve Llewellyn has been successful. Not only are elvers being identified as a result as they climb through on their way upriver, but Norman and Steve’s enthusiasm in turning that project round has meant that this stretch of the Wandle is being used

by the combined London Zoological Society and Environment Agency team for wider research work. The picture here shows two chub barrels in the mill race. These are home to chub fry, and their job is to monitor chemical pollution in the Wandle, and the level of absorption into the fish stock. Recently, a £600,000 ultrasound camera was installed for a few days to monitor adult eels returning down river on their way to the open sea.

Norman's growing engineering expertise in this niche field is increasingly recognised, and he is now being asked to consult on similar projects elsewhere.

#### PS

In another example of a developer's cavalier approach to fact, 2000 years of history has been ignored by the new owners of the Beverley pub in Lower Morden. Now renamed as the 'Morden Brook' pub – a river name previously unknown to anyone, the accompanying info text then gives a potted history of the Beverley Brook. It will be interesting to see how soon, if at all, the adjoining roundabout loses its common name of the Beverley roundabout and becomes the Morden Brook roundabout!



Figure 10 – Chub barrels in the mill race at Merton Abbey Mills

INVESTING IN VOLUNTEERS  
IN THE WANDLE VALLEY



**MLA**  
Accredited  
Museum

A full colour version of this newsletter is available online at [www.wandle.org](http://www.wandle.org). If any subscriber is happy to receive the newsletter by email, could you please send a request to [office@wandle.org](mailto:office@wandle.org). This helps us to reduce our costs.

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**Company No 01792482, Charity No 288655.**

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OPEN: Every Wednesday 1 ~ 4 pm;  
Every Sunday 2 ~ 5 pm.

(The Museum may be closed some Bank Holiday weekends)

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](mailto:ndhart@wandle.org)