



MUSEUM

NEWSLETTER

Issue 85



February 2014



FUNDRAISING DONATION

CHARITY: 288655

★ ★ THE WANDLE
★ INDUSTRIAL MUSEUM

DONOR:

A ~~SECRET~~ SECRET DONOR

AMOUNT: £ 10.00

PAYMENT DETAILS

CASH DATED
£10.00 note x1 8 Dec 2013

TOWARDS

MUSEUM UPKEEP
GENERAL FUNDS.

I found Wandle Museum from an advertisement in Pollards Hill Library.



I had an enriching learning experience from my visit to Wandle Industrial Museum. Please accept my small gift to continue your work.



1 A brilliant thank you letter from a pupil who came on a Sunday visit. Meg had a long and enjoyable chat with him and his companion, little expecting this spontaneous response.

Contents

Newsdesk	3
2. Archivists	5
3. Other Museum News	5
Wandle Trail improvements.....	5
Picture the Past.....	7
Rivers of London Soundmap	8
4 Merton Priory and Merton Abbey Mills.....	9
5 Iron Smelting along the Wandle.....	10
6 From Bleaching to Watercress	12
7 Can the Wandle Valley claim the Tram?	13

Newsdesk

Visits to the Museum

A group of 35 walkers visited us in January – thanks to Melanie for organising this.

Education

Two school visits during February, one more as we go to press and 2 more sessions in March.

Talks

We have provided one talk to a group, and have received requests for talks later in the year, including one for Meg to give a talk to the SERIAC2014 (South East Region Industrial Archaeology Conference) in April, as well as a talk to Retired Unison, and talks at Mitcham and Ashburton libraries.

Volunteers

There have been difficulties finding volunteers for the Sunday Rota, so all offers of help will be gratefully received. Even if you have never done this before, you would always be teamed up with an experienced volunteer, and it is a great way to spend a Sunday afternoon.

Outreach

For the second year we decorated a Christmas tree (kindly donated by Jacqui, decorated by Meg and Helen) to be included in the Morden Hall Community Tree Festival. Mary and Alison were also involved in giving a printing demonstration to a group of Morden Brownies, and we hope for more interest from the Guiding movement.

Christmas and New Year

A very successful Christmas volunteers' lunch, with 28 present, and catering provided by Mary to her usual high standard, including a magnificent chocolate Yule Log cake, and, as a special treat, everyone had one of Mary's special Christmas stockings full of mini gifts. Then in January, another successful New Year's lunch at the carvery.

Subscriptions 2014:

Subscriptions are now due for 2014. Thank you to all of you who have renewed. If you haven't yet renewed, and we hope you do, there is a membership form enclosed with this newsletter. Should you not renew this will be your last newsletter. We hope you will continue to support our work.

Dates for your diary:

Spring Volunteers lunch 19 March,

Merton Memories Discovery days – launch 22 March, full day 26 April

May Fair 2/3/4 May

Early summer Volunteers lunch 21 May.

19 March to 14 June, our exhibition in Merton Library 'Shared Space'.

14 June Summer opening to be, continuing link with Mitcham Carnival.

Open Day/Recruitment Day, 21 June (at the Museum)

See also the home page of our website at www.wandle.org

May Fair Volunteer Form

On p15 of this newsletter you will find a volunteer form for helping with our stall at the Annual May fair in Morden Hall Park. Please help us by manning

the stall for a session, with the added bonus that entry to the fair is free for volunteers (or at least has been in the past).

Feb 2014

2. Archivists

With volume 14 of the excellent Mitcham Histories series the collection is now complete. “Upper Mitcham and Western Road” also contains an invaluable research tool in the shape of an extensive index to the entire series. We have therefore purchased two copies so that one can be used just for this purpose and so will NOT be for loan. Peter Hopkins of the Merton Historical Society is to be congratulated on undertaking this massive task which will make answering enquiries so much easier.

Our thanks also go to Judy Goodman for her donation of a beautiful copy of the 1872 edition of Alfred Smee’s book - “ My garden: its plan and culture, together with a description of its geology, botany, and natural history”. Not all of us have the luxury of being able to design our gardens around the meanderings of the River Wandle and he certainly made the most of this. The book describes in incredible detail the plants and shrubs he chose

AC/JT Feb 2014

3. Other Museum News

Wandle Trail improvements

After a very wet January, construction will soon begin to improve the stretch of the Wandle Trail between Trewint Street and Plough Lane in Merton. The project, which has been led by Sustrans in partnership with the London Borough of Merton and the Wandle Trail Improvement Programme Board, aims to make this stretch of the Trail more accessible by widening the



**Figure 2 The Trail
'Before'**

path to 2.5 metres (where possible) and resurfacing it in a more durable sealed stone gravel finish.

Anyone who has been down this stretch of the path recently may be aware of how some sections have become very muddy and flooded – the improvements will help to combat this by providing a smooth surface that will blend into the natural surroundings. A new pond area part way along the path will also help to combat flooding either side of the path and will provide a new resource for local wildlife habitat. Log piles will also be created alongside the path for insects and invertebrates.



Figure 3 and 'After'

The work will take place over a maximum of 10 weeks, and during this time the footpath will be closed to all users. Although this will be an inconvenience it is necessary to ensure that the works are carried out as efficiently and safely as possible. A diversion for both pedestrians and cyclists will be signed, and maps have been put up at key access points to the path to assist users.

The work will be carried out in two stages – the first will be the widening and initial surfacing of the path in tarmac. This is an essential base for the natural stone finish. The second stage will be in April/May when the weather is warmer, when the natural stone surface will be laid over the top of the tarmac. This will help the new path to blend in to its surroundings and will be less intrusive than the initial tarmac base, which will not be visible once the new surface is laid.

German Dector-Vega, Sustrans' London Director, says, "We are delighted that almost a year of planning this project is coming to fruition. When finished the path should look fantastic and will enable people of all abilities to use the Trail, including wheelchairs users, families with pushchairs or people on

hand-bikes, who may previously have not been able to enjoy this stretch due to the narrow aspect of the path and the muddy, uneven surface. We have been extremely attentive to environmental issues and are keen to ensure that the trail maintains its vital role as an area of natural beauty and habitat for wildlife”

Contractors will be on site from the 3rd of February to undertake the first stage of works. An update will be provided when the likely start date for the final surfacing work has been scheduled.

Picture the Past...

What do Mitcham Fair, Merton Priory; bomb damage on St.Helier estate and shops on Wimbledon Broadway have in common? They are just some of the topics covered on the new Merton Memories website, due for launch on March 22nd.

Supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, Merton Memories is an initiative run by Merton Heritage & Local Studies Centre. Volunteers have been working on the project for over a year, scanning, cataloguing and researching 15,000 historic images of Merton dating from 1869 to the present day. The images will now be made available online and will reflect a century of Merton history, providing search options by location, subject area or keywords. It will also be possible to purchase prints of various images.

Since it started in July 2012 the project has been supported by heritage and community organisations including Merton Historical Society, the Museum of Wimbledon, Mitcham Camera Club, the Wandle Industrial Museum, and Mitcham Cricket Green Community & Heritage. Many of these organisations will have stalls at the two Discovery Days taking place at Morden Library on March 22nd (1.30 – 4.00) and April 26th (10.30 -4.00)

Admission is free and there should be something for everyone – from children’s craft activities and storytelling, to photographic displays, local history talks, including a short presentation by Mary Hart, and guidance on how to use the new Merton Memories website. There will even be workshops on how to take a decent digital photograph and how to preserve your family photos for the future.

For more information:

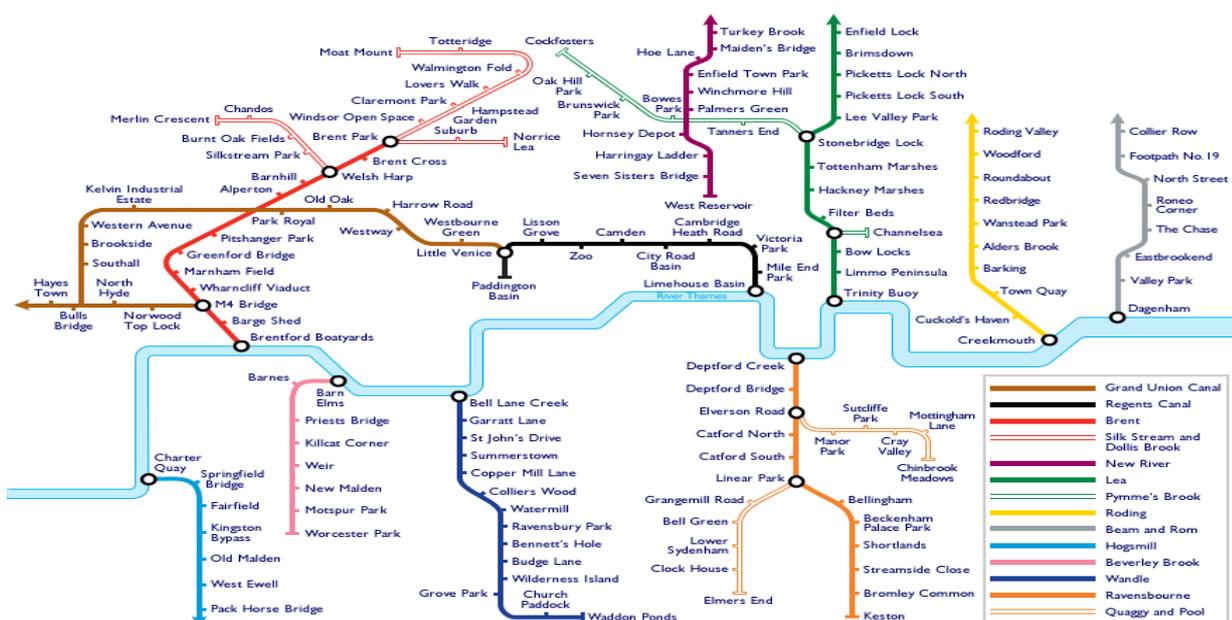
Contact: Merton Heritage & Local Studies Centre,
 2nd floor, Morden Library,
 Merton Civic Centre,
 London Road,
 Morden. SM4 5DX

Tel. 020 8545 3238 Email: local.studies@merton.gov.uk

Rivers of London Soundmap

For anyone who has wondered how all the rivers of London fit together, a new map from the London Sound Survey, drawn on tube map lines – see below- is a must. It (with its attendant sound recordings) can be seen at

<http://www.soundsurvey.org.uk/index.php/survey/waterways/>



4 *Merton Priory and Merton Abbey Mills*

MAM – we are pleased to see the waterwheel is back and working, with its new paddles made from the expensive wood described in our last issue. The continuing maintenance work carried out by Steve and Norman on this wheel shows what we will have to be ready for when we move to Ravensbury, albeit the paddles there will be of metal, so less likely to have the same kind of ongoing maintenance needs.

Also at the market, two new developments. Firstly, on the first Sunday of each month there will now be a ‘Sunday Sound Lounge Festival’, with free entry. The first took place at the beginning of February and was a great success. The second new event is the instigation of a new ‘Spring AbbeyFest’ based in the Colour House, and running from 2 to 30th March. For both events checkout www.mertonabbeymills.com

Merton Priory - courtesy of the National Trust who own the adjoining land, a long stretch of the surviving Priory wall has been opened up with the clearance of the undergrowth from the West side of the Pickle ditch. National Trust has great plans to landscape this area, add a new bridge, and open it to the public. Now all we need is for Sainsbury’s to clear the undergrowth from their side, and we will have a physical relic of the great priory to enjoy.

Less appealing is the proposed development of the corner site at Runnymede/Christchurch Road. The foundations of the old Priory wall run across this site, but the proposed developer has shown little sign of trying to check what remains are left, and the exploratory trenches are wide of the



The expanse of ground cleared by the National Trust showing the Priory wall between Sainsbury and the Priory Retail Park.

mark. Let us hope the planners at LBM are on the case, and will make them do this properly.

Provisional Chapter House opening days for 2014: 26/27 April, 1st 2 weekends in May, 1st 2 weekends in June, last weekend in July and third weekend in September.

5 Iron Smelting along the Wandle

Recently a Museum visitor was discussing with Mick Taylor iron smelting along the Wandle. (we usually engage with visitors and hope that it helps them feel welcome). Iron smelting along the Wandle came as a surprise to me – iron working, yes, iron smelting , no.

Mick produced several references on the subject, but I have my doubts. The only iron bearing material that I am aware of locally is the iron rich clay found in the Ashdown Forest area. Was this the ‘iron ore’ mentioned in the references?

What fuel was used? I assume charcoal as coal is unsuitable for iron smelting, and coke wasn’t used until Abraham Darby developed it for that purpose in Colnbrook Dale. Limestone was used as a flux, again obtainable fairly locally, but what about transporting these materials? Though ‘local’, we are talking about 20 or 30 miles.

How much iron was produced? Even if it was a relatively small amount compared to the normal iron production areas, quite a large quantity of raw material would have been required. Was it stored in quantity, or only used as and when it was available? For production purposes it is sensible to store in quantity, but, if so, what quantity and where?

What happened to the resulting slag?

I know that in Bristol area slag from brass production, called ‘scoria’, was used as a building material, but as far as I am aware there is nothing like that in our area.

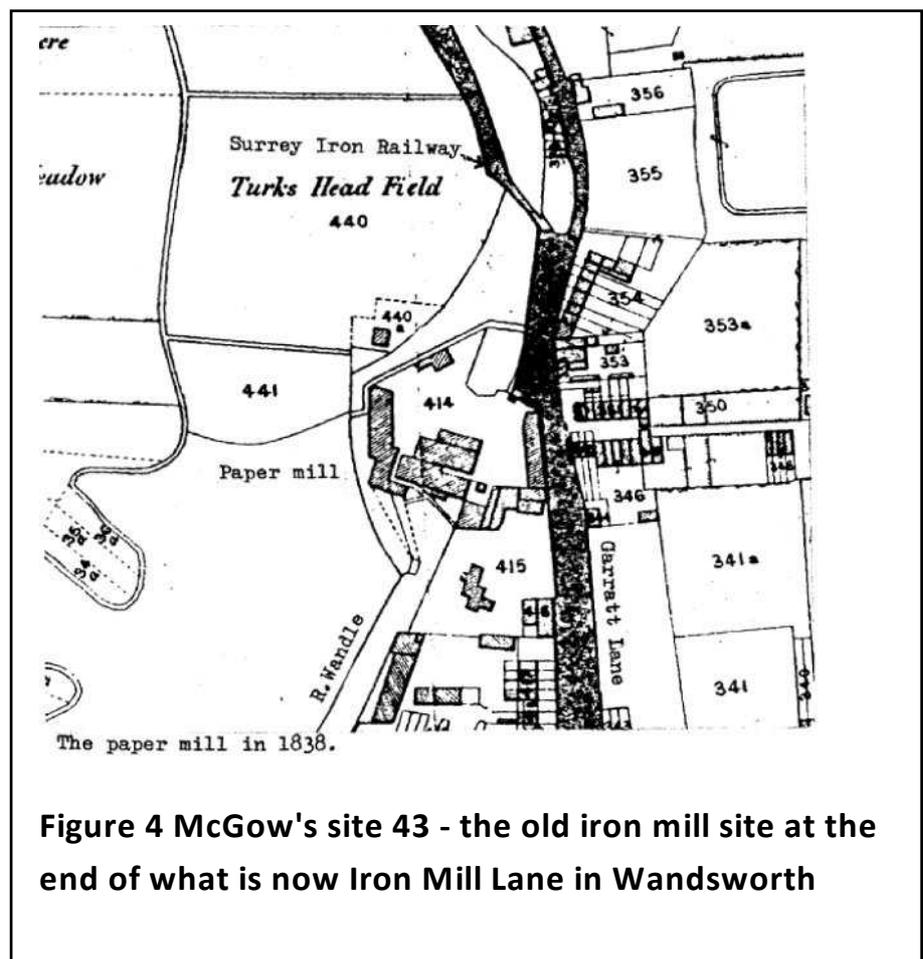
I think we must conclude that, if iron was produced along the Wandle, the quantity can not have been great, for all these reasons, and if it was, was it worth the effort?

I still have my doubts.

Having said that, I admit that smelting was carried out in the Wandle area – not iron but tin/lead alloys. Fry's Metals Ltd at Tandem Works were smelting until 1990, when they ceased operating at that site (and hence my knowledge of the difficulties of slag disposal).

Eric Shaw, Feb 2014.

Editor's Note – in support of Eric's surmise that iron smelting was often a misused expression for iron working, McGow's notes on Adkins Mill (No 43) show a 18th Century period of ironworking, not smelting, at Iron Mill Lane, just south of Mapleton Road, in between its copper mill and papermaking periods, which was clearly not iron smelting despite local references to the contrary



6 From Bleaching to Watercress

The history of the River Wandle is always full of stories and to me surprises.



Figure 5 The Willows in c1900

As some of you may know I have been working as a volunteer for Merton Heritage Centre on the Merton Memories Project. This is a project to digitise the photographic archive that the centre holds. One set of photos included in the archive is of 'The Willows'. This included Willows Farm which was used by its last owner Louis Dutriez as a pig and watercress farm. He was a local butcher with a shop in London Road, Mitcham. Hopefully the meat was always fresh!

It was only after researching for the notes and history section of the various photographs, that information will appear with the photograph on the public web site, that I discovered that this hadn't always been a farm. The 60 acres known as 'The Willows' had only been used as farm land from the time an Edward Cox took it over in the mid-1800s. The fields extended from the Wandle to Mill Green. The fields he took over were divided into a network of watercourses and these proved ideal to use for the growing of watercress. The watercourses were there because they served the mill and the bleaching grounds that were previously on the site. The mill was associated with the textile industry that had existed at 'The Willows' from the 1700s when it

started life as a Calico Printing Works. The mill itself was unusual as it was not directly placed on the River Wandle but served by cuts taken from the river. This approach did lead to a number of disputes with other mills as owners fought for the water to use in the process of calico bleaching and washing of prints as well as working the mills.

So what was the reason why the land changed over to farming? One reason could well have been the disputes over the water rights. However the natural bleaching of textiles declined in the 19th century with the increased use of synthetic chemicals. It is these two factors that may have caused the last textile printer Samuel Makepeace to leave the site. A waterwheel and an associated chimney still remained on the site for sometime after the mill was demolished. The chimney was used by a coal fired boiler. The chimney and waterwheel were finally removed in 1949. As to watercress it continued to be grown until the 1930s. The reason for its demise was that the water from the Wandle became too dangerous to use.

You can find out more about this mill by looking at Peter McGow's notes on the Mills of the Wandle on our web site or reading Eric Montague's book on 'Willow Lane and Beddington Corner'.

Mick Taylor

7 Can the Wandle Valley claim the Tram?

Previously I have claimed the origins of the word 'bunce' as in free or something for nothing as having originated here in Morden.

I now think we can claim the word 'tram' as referring to railed passenger transport.

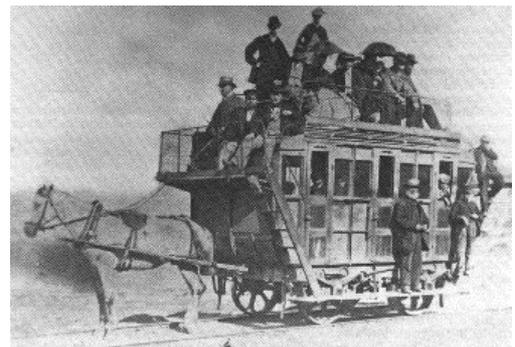


Figure 6 An early passenger tram

If you look at any dictionary, or on Wikipedia, you will see the most commonly assumed origin of the word is the similar word as applied to coal trucks in old northern mines. The derivation given is from a Flemish word which refers also to the pole to which the horses were hitched.

However, writing at the turn of the 19th/20th centuries, a journalist of the Wandsworth Gazette states categorically that is this an abbreviation of the name 'Outram'.

The logic is that Mr Outram, as a prime mover of the Surrey Iron Railway, had his name so firmly associated with it and its origins that it was locally known as Outram's Way, and, although not recorded in this context, it is easy to see the shortening of this to Tramway in everyday parlance.

The factual support comes from the change of name of roads such as Outram's Way Terrace and Outram's Way Footpath, in Mitcham, to Tramway Terrace and Tramway Path.

By comparison, the earliest written reference to the word tram, meaning a railed vehicle designed for passenger transport, comes from the Swansea and Mumbles Railway in Wales. That railway was opened in 1807, some 4 years later than our Surrey Iron Railway, and, almost certainly, it was built and operated using the lessons learned from us.

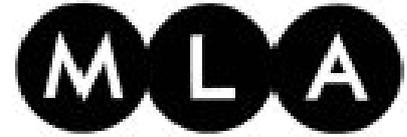
So, I claim for the late Mr Outram, the Surrey Iron Railway and the Wandle Valley that they are the true source of the word 'tram' in connection with public transport.

NH Feb 2014

	Friday 2 nd	Saturday 3 rd	Sunday 4 th	Monday 5 th
Morning 10 to 1..00				
Mid day 1) 1.00 to 2.15				
Mid day 2) 2.15 to 3.30				
Afternoon 3.30 to 6.00				
setting up/taking down/money				

VOLUNTEER FORM FOR THE MAY FAIR THIS YEAR.

These are the slots we have to fill, so please let Meg know which ones you can help to fill, either by emailing her (meg@wandle.org) or by leaving a message on the Museum phone (020 8648-0127)



Accredited
Museum

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

The Wandle Industrial Museum, the Vestry Hall Annexe, London Road, Mitcham, Surrey CR4 3UD. Tel: 020-8648-0127

Company No 01792482, Charity No 288655.

~~~~~

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.

~~~~~

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