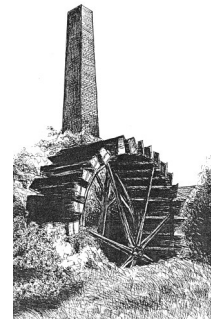


WANDLE INDUSTRIAL MUSEUM



BULLETIN



The Wandle in Morden Hall Park, after the diesel spillage on 18 February.

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WANDLE INDUSTRIAL MUSEUM

PRESIDENT

Harry Galley

TRUSTEES

Chair: Fr David Pennells, John Harding, Nicholas Hart and John Hawks.

OPERATIONS TEAM

Alison Cousins, John Sheridan, Roger Steele and Michael Taylor.

Editorial

The recent shocking spillage of diesel into the River Wandle has received extensive coverage in national, local and social media. In this edition of the Bulletin Mick Taylor draws on his local knowledge and his passion for the Wandle to analyse the event, covering the source of the diesel, how it reached the river, the responses of the authorities, the impact on wildlife, and accountability for the spillage and its consequences. The South East Rivers Trust (SERT) and the Wandle Valley Forum have been admirably proactive in their different ways, and Mick's article contains a link to the SERT Crowdfunder appeal. Readers are urged to take a look at the appeal and consider making a donation.

This edition also contains an article by Norma Cox, reminding us that industrial heritage is not only about watermills. We encourage and welcome contributions to the bulletin by our readers.

John Sheridan

Cover picture: Ray Leyden

Photos:

Page 3: "poulterparkrevesby woodfriends.org"

Page 5: Norma Cox

Page 6: Norma Cox

Page 8: John Sheridan

Page 9: Layers of London, National Library of Scotland.

Operations Team Report

We started 2025 with our usual New Year lunch at Park Place in Mitcham – much enjoyed by everyone and organised smoothly as ever by Roger Steele. We were slightly depleted in numbers and in particular missed being joined by Eric and Jean Shaw, both of whom are in poor health. We keep in regular contact with Eric and send them both our very best wishes.

The likelihood of having to renew our Accreditation status before the end of this year has nudged us into revising our policies and Forward Plan. Yvette Shepherd, our Museum Adviser from the London Museum, visited us to discuss the follow-up comments from the last Accreditation award and to see what changes we had made to our museum displays. She also gave us the opportunity to get free advice from specialist conservators Spencer and Fry for a few of our artefacts and this is looking to be very useful as they are able to advise on recommended suppliers and services.

The demand for our talks continues apace with new titles and locations. One such was Mick Taylor's talk at Deen City Farm in order to raise funds on their behalf, for which they were most grateful. We hope that the Farm can become a regular venue for some of our public talks. John Sheridan is giving a talk for GLIAS (the Greater London Industrial Archaeology Society) – an example of our events getting wider publicity.

We reported in the last Bulletin on the offer of advice for a possible revamp of our website from The Surrey Industrial History Group (SIHG). They have also announced that they are considering awarding grants to organisations for major projects connected to their local industrial heritage. We are trying to get costings and advice for enclosing our embellished goat skin in Perspex to this end.

New acquisitions are few and far between for us so the offer of a model collier, the SS Wandle, from Bexhill-on-Sea Museum, and constructed for the Wandsworth Gas Company, got us looking at the logistics of somehow storing a 5 foot long ship. Their museum's Board of Directors has now agreed to its transfer as they need to free up display space and we are grateful to Julie Noel for her offer to provide temporary storage in the Vestry Hall.

One recent request from the HQ of Helm Royal Chocolates in Holland has asked for details of their former factory at Wallington Mill owned by the Turner family. Sutton Archives was unable to provide much

Information, and because the mill building was demolished in 1966 we could not help either. If anyone reading this knows of a former employee who might have some memories please could they get in touch with the museum.

The new Director of the William Morris Society is due to visit us in mid March. We are hoping this link will be mutually beneficial.

Alison Cousins

Diesel Spillage in the River Wandle

“This damage is not just measured in days or weeks but potentially years.”

This is what Dr Jack Hogan from South East Rivers Trust said after the diesel spillage that hit the River Wandle at round midday on Tuesday 18th February 2025.

The cause wasn't at that time very clear. It was known to have been from a bus depot. Could it have been one of the two in Beddington Lane? These border the Beddington Treatment Works managed by Thames Water. These two bus depot are used by Abellio and Go-ahead. Go-Ahead also operate from Merton Bus Garage, Merton High Street.

In the end the spillage came from the Arriva bus depot at Thornton Heath. This is a distance of about three miles from the Wandle. Arriva mainly operate electric buses from this depot and buses requiring diesel have been filling up at their South Croydon depot. The diesel storage tanks at Thornton Heath were being decommissioned and a temporary storage tank had been installed. This was to avoid the buses having to travel to South Croydon to fill up until they were replaced by electric buses.

On the morning of the 18th February the temporary storage tank was filled with 4,000 litres of fresh diesel. Shortly after the delivery lorry left the tank burst at the bottom rear releasing the diesel. This then entered the storm and highway drains to travel through the drainage pipes to reach the Wandle. To do this it did go, probably via the drainage pipes, through the Beddington Treatment Works. This should call into question why more is not done to prevent any potential road wash off, which is normal, reaching the river. The diesel finally appeared in the channel that travels across Mill Green, near Beddington Corner. Sewage has

often been reported in this channel. Also it is likely that it is here that some road wash enters the river.

Very quickly the various services including Merton Council, with advised people to stay away from the river, went into action. The Environmental Agency and South East Rivers Trust dealt with the diesel on the river. Thames Water dealt with cleaning the drainage pipes. The Swan Sanctuary was involved in trying to help those birds affected by the diesel. It was reported that birds were moving away from the river.



Booms were set up within the Watermeads south of Mitcham Bridge. The main one was near to the Miranda Hill memorial. These booms consisted of electrostatically charged pads which help to extract diesel from the water. To quote Dr Jack Hogan again this “Is mitigation rather than clean up”. He has also said that “It’s devastating, but we won’t know the extent of it yet. Judging by what we have seen, this is potentially the worst incident since 2007”. In 2007 there was a leak of bleach from the Beddington Treatment Works. This resulted in thousands of fish being killed.

All of the work undertaken didn’t stop the diesel being seen and smelt at Merton High Street and the diesel being seen on the River Thames on the following Saturday.

As well as the birds staying away from the river the spill will affect the fish, invertebrates and plants. Diesel is one of the worst, if not the worst, oils to get into any river or stream. Diesel is highly toxic and as it breaks up it gets into the water column (from surface to riverbed). A previous spill into a stream in Wiltshire found that up to 90% of the invertebrates were lost straight away. These invertebrates are the basic fabric of any river.

Who will be brought to account over this spillage? Should it be the bus company, the makers of what turned out to be a possible faulty storage tank, the diesel delivery firm or Thames Water for not having a defence mechanism to prevent the diesel reaching the river? It is likely to take months if not years to apportion the blame.

Currently the South East Rivers Trust has a crowdfunder running to provide support for the river's recovery. The link to this is:

<https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/p/save-the-river-wandle-after-diesel-spill>

As a museum we hope that the river recovers in the shortest possible time.

Mick Taylor

NB: Dr Jack Hogan has a great passion for the River Wandle. As a child he lived in one of the cottages at Mitcham Bridge. He spoke at our 2024 AGM about the work that is being done by the South East Rivers Trust on the Wandle. He is also a signed up volunteer of the museum and has used the resources we have in his personal research.

Phase Eight Ltd at 55 Kimber Road SW18

During the Covid pandemic of 2020-2022 people were advised not to walk far and to stay local. The author devised a short walk in Southfields which included Kimber Road which crossed the River Wandle. Along the walk was a building at 55 Kimber Road which was an interesting modern industrial unit, grey in colour and square in design. It had columns at the front which to the author resembled the lotus-flower columns of ancient Egypt. The building carried the name Phase Eight.

Introduction

Kimber Road is a straight road in Southfields SW18 and runs eastwards from its junction with Merton Road to its junction with Garratt Lane. It is about 760m long. Kimber Road was not named on local maps of the area until the 1930s.

Earlier in 1895 Kimber Road wasn't seen on an O/S map nor was there a bridge over the River Wandle; the route eastwards was shown as unnamed narrow tracks. In 1904 the Kimber Baronetage of Landsdowne Lodge Wandsworth was a title in the Baronetage of the United Kingdom created on 24 August 1904 for Henry Kimber, 1834-1923. He was founder of the legal firm of Kimber and Ellis and also sat as Conservative Member of Parliament for Wandsworth 1885-1913. Kimber Road was probably named after him.

Discussion

The Phase Eight unit was detached and the front of the building faced the Nuffield Health building in the third section of King George's Park SW18, which was to the south of Kimber Road. There were windows at the front of the Phase Eight building, also at the side and the rear of the building and in addition there was one door at the front and two at the rear. The east of the premises was within its own boundary fence which ran northwards beside the straight footpath on the edge of the second section of King George's Park. The western edge was contained within the boundary fence. The size of the Phase Eight building was 45m by 31.6m as measured on a Bing map. **Figure 1** shows the front of the building. Phase Eight is the name of a ladies' fashion business which started in 1979 in a small boutique in Belview Road, Wandsworth



Figure 1

Common, SW18. The founder was Patsy Seddon who devised the name from a combination of P Hayes, Patsy's maiden name, and the number eight which was the street number of her Belview Road boutique. She sold

stylish clothing and bridal wear and accessories. Patsy's idea was to offer attractive clothes to sophisticated young mothers who felt stranded in the suburbs. The company Phase Eight became a Private Limited Company incorporated on 29 June 1983 and in 2015 it was purchased by the South African retailer Foschini. There were 106 stores and 207 concessions of Phase Eight in the UK and 18 stores and 128 concessions internationally in 2014. Locally there was a store in Putney Exchange shopping mall. The author remembered another shopping mall location

for a Phase Eight store in the shopping mall named “Wimbledon Centre Court” now renamed the Wimbledon Quarter. Other shops in 1997-8 *Yellow Pages* were at 31 High Street Wimbledon, 288 Chiswick High Street, 23 Hill Road Richmond, and 14 Thames Street Kingston upon Thames. The Kimber Road unit was the HQ of the business as well as a storage warehouse, according to the staff at the Wimbledon Centre Court premises. The garments were not made in Kimber Road but were sourced from elsewhere maintaining the company ethos of sustainability. Fortunately the author had purchased a Phase Eight skirt from an Oxfam charity shop in Morden several years before the Covid Pandemic. The author had been drawn to the high quality of the cotton fabric and the garment’s edging of satin-like material which gave the skirt a superior finish. The Phase Eight label and skirt are seen in **Figures 2 and 3**



Figure 2



Figure 3

Interestingly the author remembered seeing another name on the Kimber Road Phase Eight building a few years earlier and instead of Phase Eight there was the name of East. East was also a ladies fashion chain, founded in 1994 by Penny Oliver and two other business associates named Clive Pettigrew and Jonathan Keating. Oliver was the product director until 2008. East, however, had made an operating loss in 2016. East fell into administration in 2018. A declaration was Published, stating that the company East was to stop trading in 2018 after administrators failed to secure a buyer in time. Nearly 300 employees would be made redundant once the company East closed down on 4 May 2018. In June 2019 the East website said the company was reincarnated and the brand had been rooted in Indian history. Evidence of East in Kimber Road can be found in the online site of quada.com.uk.

The author remembers buying a large oversized grey jumper made by East in around 2017 and it was made of silk, wool and angora and was beautifully soft but she no longer has the garment. Fortunately the

author does have an East skirt which she purchased recently from the Cancer Research shop in Wimbledon Village. The skirt fabric is very light and soft with a stretch and was perhaps a mix of cashmere and elastic. The East skirt has narrow repeating vertical fabric strips of colours blue, grey and black and the skirt's lightness gives the skirt a swing. The East skirt and label are seen in Figures 4 and 5.

The Phase Eight building was in fact built for East by the firm Quada, an award winning developer who specialised in high-end residential and business properties in the years 2002-2005. Their office was at Riverside Quarter, Eastfields Avenue SW18. There is an online portfolio of Quada which shows the industrial building at 55 Kimber Road. The description of the company's projects said the Kimber Road Wandsworth building was a new-build 16,000 square foot distribution centre, with an ancillary office and factory outlet centre constructed in 1998 for East, the ladies fashion retailer who previously traded as Anokhi.

Interestingly the River Wandle flows under Kimber Road about 150m eastwards from the Phase Eight building. The River Wandle has an historic connection with ladies fashion because around 265 years earlier in 1760 there was a calico printing business located south of (today's) Kimber Road, on the east side of the River Wandle and in the fields there. Calico is a simple rough cotton cloth from India and it was bleached by washing the calico in the River Wandle and allowing it to dry and bleach in the sunlight as it lay spread out over the field. Calico would then be decorated with block printing designs of flowers by a printer such as William Kilburn of Wallington. The fabric was then used to make ladies dresses, among other things.

Conclusion

Taking a short walk in Southfields had revealed details of two ladies' fashion businesses still active today with origins in 1979. Nearby was the historic site of another ladies' fashion business which was in use in the 1760s. Initially the author had been attracted to the intriguing design of the Phase Eight building which had been constructed by the award winning company Quada in 1998. The fact that there was a connection in the location of Kimber Road with modern twenty-first century ladies' fashion and calico printing from 1760s makes this history amazing.

Norma Cox

Ironmongers Hall



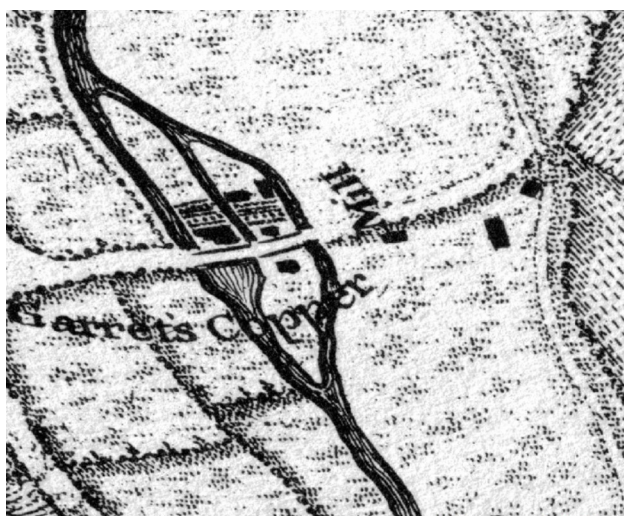
The Ironmongers' Company claims that the drawing room at its Hall contains the largest William Morris tapestry in the country, hung in place of wallpaper. The tapestry of woollen double cloth furnishing fabric in Morris' *Bird* design was woven at Morris & Co's Merton Abbey workshop on Jacquard looms. Ironmongers Hall is located in Aldersgate Street in the City of London, next door to the former London Wall site of the Museum of London (which closed in December 2022 ahead of a planned move to West Smithfield in 2026). The present hall was built in 1925 by Holland, Hannen and Cubitts in Arts and Crafts

style. It survived the Blitz. The first hall was built in Fenchurch Street in 1457 and rebuilt in 1587. The third hall, built in 1745, was damaged in a German bombing raid in 1917, following which the company decided to relocate and build the present hall.

John Sheridan



AFC Wimbledon stadium (continued)



John Rocque's *London 10 Miles Round Map* (1746) shows a channel of the Wandle curving to the east of the manmade main channel, corroborating Jack Hogan's point reported in Bulletin 124 that the natural course of the river would have been close to the site of the football ground. The Ordnance Survey map of the 1890s shows watercress beds in the vicinity, a sign of waterlogged ground.

John Sheridan



Dates for the Diary

8 March: John Sheridan talk to Merton Historical Society, St James' Church Hall, Martin Way SM4 4AR: Liberty Mills - The History of Textile Printing at Merton Abbey Mills 1664-1982. 2.30pm. All welcome.

22 March: Mick Taylor talk at Croydon Library. Apprentices, children and labour. 2.30pm. All welcome.

23 March: John Sheridan guided industrial heritage walk. Colliers Wood Station to Merton Abbey Mills via Wandle Bank. 12.00. Book by email to John.Sheridan08@gmail.com.

27 April: John Sheridan guided industrial heritage walk. Morden Hall Park to Merton Abbey Mills. 12.00. Book by email to John.Sheridan08@gmail.com.

22 May: Alison Cousins talk at Honeywood Museum, Honeywood Walk SM5 3NX. The calico printer and designer William Kilburn. Book via website: <https://libraries.sutton.gov.uk/digital-content/sutton-heritage/honeywood-museum>

28 May: John Sheridan talk to GLIAS, 75 Cowcross Street, Farringdon EC1M 6EJ. Calico printing along the Wandle. 6.30pm. All welcome.



Accreditation Mentor: Emma Harper Charles Dickens Museum Service.
Museum Advisor: Yvette Shepherd, Museum of London (Docklands).

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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 is closed Bank Holiday weekends)

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

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Free Admission. Donations welcome.

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 office@wandle.org

You can find us on:

