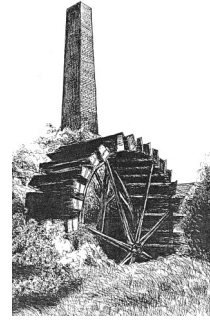


# WANDLE INDUSTRIAL MUSEUM



## BULLETIN

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Textile printing blocks recently acquired by the museum: see Operations Team report.

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## WANDLE INDUSTRIAL MUSEUM

### PRESIDENT

Harry Galley

### TRUSTEES

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

### OPERATIONS TEAM

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

# Editorial

This edition contains news of recent developments, some ancient history, and advance notice of our new exhibition.

The recent news is the granting of planning permission for the redevelopment of the old Wandsworth Gasworks site, which should eventually (this decade?) result in an improvement to the lower Wandle trail; the *Morris Mania* exhibition at the William Morris Gallery; and finally the new footbridges in Morden Hall Park.

The ancient history is a fairly long read about the facts and myths of Domesday Book and earlier mills along the Wandle.

We also feature a full page notice by Mick Taylor of our forthcoming new exhibition *Women of the Wandle*.

We hope you enjoy this edition of the Bulletin.

John Sheridan

**Cover Picture:** Mick Taylor

Photos:

Page 1; Merton Council

Page 2: Mick Taylor

Page 3: John Sheridan's Google My Maps

Page 4: Ashurst Communications Limited

Page 10: Nicholas Hart

Page 11: (1-3) John Sheridan

Page 11: (4) Nicholas Hart

Page 12: Mick Taylor

Page 13: Norma Cox



## Operations Team Report

On April 26th we joined Merton's "@60" celebrations with a stall in Abbotsbury Road, Morden (photo below: from left, Roger Steele, Alison Cousins, Mayor of Merton's wife and consort Kamila Dyczko, Mayor of Merton Cllr Slawek Szczepanski, Mick Taylor and Auriel Glanville.)



Our talks and walks are still very much in demand, especially the newer topics. We have had an interesting variety of visitors this Spring. As reported last time, the new Director of the William Morris Society, Gabriella Esser, was due to visit in March but due to an IT blip (what would Morris have made of that?!) she had to postpone and she eventually came on May 14th. She was looking to see if we might help with some information for their new exhibition. She was impressed by our model of the Morris works.

Merton Council's Manager of Mitcham town centre, Mark Warren, called in to introduce himself and we discussed supporting his regeneration plans by having a stand at a town centre event in the future. He is very enthusiastic, well qualified, and has some good and practical ideas.

We also had a visit from a husband and wife team researching a possible new book on Extraordinary Women of Wandsworth, having already published one covering Lambeth. Of course we found her quite a few. A small group from Wimbledon U3A came specifically to see the leather display and the Railway and Canal Historical Society came to see Peter McGow's research on the Croydon Canal but were more impressed with

his “notes” on the mills and like many before them, asked why he had not published them.

We Zoomed with Irida Ntalla from the University of the Arts London in respect of a possible involvement with an AHRC project investigating the narratives and legacies of our industrial heritage, John Sheridan linked up to a refresher session on Accreditation, Alison Cousins attended an excellent webinar on safeguarding from the NCVO and Mick Taylor joined a Zoom call with the Industrial Heritage Group.

On May 9th we drove out to an architectural salvage company in Oxfordshire called Lassco, which had acquired a collection of wooden printing blocks apparently stored in Gomshall Mill for the last 40 years or so. We had missed out on a previous collection but were able to cherry-pick from a further batch awaiting cataloguing. Two have the Liberty “L” prefix to the number, and judging by Liberty’s system it would appear that one is from the 1910s and one later, from the 1940s. One with an E (Egalite) for whom Liberty printed scarves during World War 2 depicts a selection of slogans of the time. Of the remainder, one has a W prefix and one no prefix at all. Despite the proximity of the famous Manoir aux Quat’ Saisons restaurant we resisted its charms and had a cup of coffee in a garden in Thame where 5 red kites swooped overhead.



Close-up of the printing blocks



We purchased a new printer to save Steve's sanity and in time to prepare quality display material for the new exhibition.

it to the Thames should be regarded as industrial archaeology of medium significance. A “two-stage condition” should be adopted to provide a safeguard. The report summarised this as “Trenched geoarchaeological evaluation and watching brief/excavation or no further work.” In other words, the two stages are first, evaluation, and secondly, any ensuing excavation. The aim would be to identify any remains of interest and to determine appropriate management of construction and mitigate disruption.

The SIR canal opened in 1802 and was a quarter of a mile long. Associated features included lock gates and a lock-keeper's house, a wharf, a counting house, two dwelling houses with offices and gardens, warehouses, cranes, and the SIR track and sidings. The canal was later extended to the rear of the Ram Brewery. Following closure of the SIR the complex was bought by Watney and Wells in 1848, and by 1865 the canal and wharf were in use by McMurray to land esparto grass for his Royal Paper Mills on Garratt Lane. The canal was acquired by the Wandsworth, Wimbledon and Epsom Gas Company in 1930, and they filled it in in 1932.

The two-stage condition also applies in the case of any earlier archaeology. The report suggests that there was no settlement or development of the gasworks site before the SIR was constructed. (There were two watermills in the vicinity dating back to the Saxon period or



Artist's impression of part of the new development, looking south from the proposed new footbridge.

earlier, but these were not on the Gasworks site.) Although there have been isolated finds of ancient artefacts on the site, the area was marginal marshland and was prone to flooding. It was on the periphery of the Saxon settlement in Wandsworth and was probably used for pasture and meadow.

Moreover the construction of the canal, the SIR and the railway viaduct (in 1846) would have disturbed at least some of any earlier

archaeology. Later, the construction of the giant gasholder and its associated services in the 1950s probably further compromised the earlier archaeology as well as the industrial archaeology. The gasholder

was 67 metres in diameter. Its deep foundations are to be repurposed as the foundations of new towers to be built on the gasholder's footprint.

If the archaeology reveals any stone features of the canal, the wharf and associated structures, it would be nice if they could be incorporated in the linear park.

The development will be undertaken by Mitheridge Capital Management and SGN Place, along with development manager Common Projects. Their communications team at Ashurst Communications Limited have seen and are content with this article.

John Sheridan

## Domesday Book Mills on the River Wandle

There is a commonly held view that there were thirteen Wandle mills recorded in the Domesday Book. This article challenges that view.

The Domesday Book was the outcome of the national survey of land holdings in 1086 undertaken for William the Conqueror. The Book was organised by county, and within counties by regions known as “hundreds”, and by landholders, manors and villages. The Wandle was situated in the areas of two hundreds, Brixton and Wallington. The survey recorded mills, which we can safely assume were water-powered corn mills at that time (the first recorded windmill in England dates from 1185). Locating the mills is tricky because the Book did not give precise addresses, and landholders' and tenants' holdings and assets could have been split between locations.

Where did the figure of thirteen come from? J M Hobson's *The Book of the Wandle* (1924) stated on page 101 that “By 1086, the date when the Domesday Survey was completed, there were at least thirteen corn-mills on the Wandle”. Hobson went on to list ten, in Croydon, Beddington, Carshalton, Morden, Merton and Mitcham, and added that at least some of the seven mills in Battersea were probably on the Wandle in Wandsworth.

Later, W H Prentis claimed in his *The Snuff-Mill Story* (1970) (page 75) that the Domesday Book stated baldly that there were “13 corn mills on the River Wandle”. As we have seen, the Book was not organised in a way that it would have made such a statement. Indeed the Domesday Book did not even mention the River Wandle. Prentis repeated the figure of thirteen on pages 78 and 132, but added on page 132 that there were

other mills which brought the total up to about twenty! Later authors have repeated the figure of thirteen.

A number of translations of the Domesday text for Surrey have been made, and the list below draws on those in the Victoria County History for Surrey, Vol 4, and in the Surrey volume of the Phillimore Domesday Book series edited by John Morris. The valuations of the mills in shillings (with the exception of Battersea where the mills are valued in pounds, shillings and pence) allow their relative importance to be estimated. It is worth noting that virtually all of the landholdings containing mills also contained meadow, suggesting the presence of the Wandle.

### Wallington Hundred

*Croydon: held by the Archbishop of Canterbury. One mill at 5s.* Croydon Palace was built for the archbishop but not until after the Domesday Survey, and the mill there did not come into existence until after the palace was sold in the late 18th century. Peter McGow believed that the site of Waddon Mill was the most likely location of the Croydon Domesday mill.

*Beddington: held by Robert of Watteville. Two mills at 40s. Beddington: held by Miles Crispin. Two mills at 35s.* Peter McGow believed that one of the four Beddington Domesday mills was on the site of Beddington Mill. There are several mill sites in Beddington and Beddington Corner, mostly with records dating from the 18th century. The absence of earlier records does not necessarily mean that earlier mills did not exist. At least some of those mills could have existed since medieval times.

*Carshalton: held by Geoffrey de Mandeville. One mill at 35s.* McGow suggested that this might have been on the site of Upper Mill, Carshalton.

*Wallington: held in lordship. Two mills at 30s.* Of the four mills McGow described in Wallington, the two with the earliest records were the mills at Mill Green and Wallington Bridge. It is not unreasonable to speculate that the Domesday mills might have been the ones associated with place names and bridges, and mills that are known to have been corn mills in the past.

*Mitcham: held by William son of Ansculf. Half a mill at 20s.* It may be assumed that there was a mill here, and that half of its revenues went to



someone outside Surrey and possibly even in France. Eric Montague (Mitcham Histories No. 6, page 29) thought this mill was located at Phipps Bridge. The earliest known record of the “Pippesmoln” at this location dates from 1263, when it was held by Merton Priory. The priory may have closed it when they constructed a monastic mill elsewhere in their precinct.

*Whitford: held by William son of Ansculf. One mill at 20s.* This was in the vicinity of Lower Mitcham. The name survives in the form of Whitford Gardens, a street in Mitcham. Eric Montague (Mitcham Histories No. 6, page 30) thought this mill was on or near the site of Grove Mill at Mitcham Bridge.

*Morden: held by Westminster Abbey. One mill at 40s.* Peter Hopkins of the Merton Historical Society suggests that this might have been close to the site of the snuff mills in Morden Hall Park. David Saxby of MOLA took part in an archaeological watching brief in 2012 when the National Trust installed a turbine a short distance upstream of the former western snuff mill, and found evidence of a Saxo-Norman ditch or channel, which might have been associated with a mill and supports the notion that a Domesday mill might have been situated here.

## **Brixton Hundred**

*Merton: held by the King. Two mills at 60s.* These mills might have been on the Pickle Ditch, then the main channel approaching Colliers Wood. The Domesday Survey predates the excavation of the present main channel which flows past Merton Abbey Mills and alongside Merton High Street. A monastic mill belonging to Merton Priory has been excavated in the vicinity of Bennett's Court, to the north of Runnymede. The priory post-dates Domesday, but the canons might have made use of an existing mill site. The other mill might have been close to the bridge where Merton High Street crosses the Wandle - a longstanding crossing dating from the Roman Stane Street.

*Mortlake: held by the Archbishop of Canterbury. Two mills at 100s.* Wimbledon was assessed in the Domesday Survey under the manor of Mortlake, and the eastern boundary of Wimbledon manor was on the River Wandle. Eric Montague (Mitcham Histories No. 9, page 81) traced the history of Merton Mill, at the junction of Byegrove Road and Wandle Bank, and concluded that one of the Mortlake Domesday mills was almost certainly located there. The other might have been on Beverley

Brook, but it might equally have been on the site of Wimbledon Mill, which is close to the Plough Lane bridge over the Wandle.

*Battersea: held by St Peter's of Westminster. Seven mills at £42.9.8.*

Battersea's western boundary at that time was the Wandle and the manor had the benefit of tolls from Wandsworth, presumably from a ferry or a bridge across the Wandle. The mills were worth more than the rest of the manor and were some of the most highly valued mills in the whole survey, indicating that the lower Wandle was a powerful river which generated substantial commercial activity. The toll might have been a charge on the output of the mills en route to the London market. The seven mills would have been situated on the four sites known as the Lower, Middle, Upper and Adkins Mills in Wandsworth. It is most unlikely that any of the mills were on the Falcon Brook or the Heathwall River, which nowadays flow underground through Battersea. The fact that no Domesday mills were listed in Wandsworth lends further weight to the argument that the mills on the lower Wandle were assigned to Battersea manor.

It is worth noting that there is circumstantial evidence of even earlier mills on the lower Wandle. First, the Domesday mills did not suddenly materialise on the day of the survey: they clearly existed before then. Secondly, a charter dated AD693 granted 68 hides of land in Battersea to Barking Abbey. The charter also referenced the Wandle (then called the Hidaburna). We know that Barking Abbey had a mill on the River Roding by the later 8<sup>th</sup> century (it was excavated by Pamela Greenwood, then of Passmore Edwards Museum and now of Wimbledon Museum and the Wandsworth Historical Society). We know that there was an Anglo-Saxon settlement in Wandsworth which needed feeding, that the Wandle was ideal for watermills, and that milling know-how could have transferred quite easily between Barking and the Lower Wandle. So we may conjecture that there were Anglo-Saxon mills on the lower Wandle.

Going back further in time, we know that the Romans made use of watermills. There were Roman settlements in Putney and Battersea which would have been connected by a bridge over the Wandle, probably at Wandsworth. Roman remains have been found in Wandsworth but there does not seem to have been a substantial settlement there, possibly because the land was marshy and prone to flooding. It is possible, however, that Roman mills made use of the powerful flow of the lower Wandle to supply flour to Londinium, supplementing the supply from mills on the River Lea. There was also Roman activity higher up the Wandle. For example, Stane Street crossed the Wandle at Colliers Wood,

and there was a Roman villa at Beddington. It is possible that mills were in operation at these sites.

It has to be acknowledged, though, that no definitive physical evidence has yet been discovered of Anglo-Saxon or Roman mills on the Wandle. Nor indeed is there firm evidence of Domesday mills sites, because there have not been systematic archaeological excavations looking for such evidence. Where archaeology has occurred, it has tended to be watching briefs at redevelopment sites with limited time and resources.

Adding up the potential Domesday Survey mills listed above gives a maximum of 21, or 22 if we include Wimbledon Mill. Perhaps the authors who perpetuated the view that there were thirteen assumed that the mills in Battersea and Mortlake would not have been on the Wandle.

While we can be certain that Domesday mills in manors along the Wandle were Wandle mills, we are less clear about the exact locations of those mills. Calico printing works tended to spring up in the 18<sup>th</sup> century at locations that were not necessarily former mill sites. Sites known to have housed corn mills before the 18<sup>th</sup> century are candidates for Domesday mill sites. Domesday mill sites were selected because they were suitable for mill purposes; any site moves over time are likely to have been over short distances for purposes of expansion, reusing man-made channels and building materials from the original sites. If readers have relevant information or ideas that are not covered in this article, please send it to [office@wandle.org](mailto:office@wandle.org) and we will publish it in a future edition.

John Sheridan

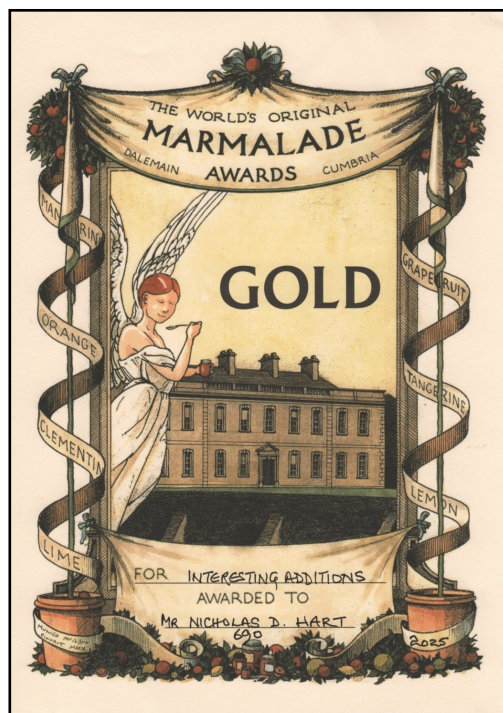
## **Keeping it in the Family**

In 2009, Mary Hart, who was our Membership Secretary, caterer extraordinary, expert block printer and colour chemist and massive supporter of the museum, won “The World’s Original Marmalade Competition” at Dalem in Cumbria. At 20/20 her Tangerine Marmalade was deemed the Best in Class and eventually the Best in Show, for which she won a cup and silver marmalade teaspoon.

Since Mary’s sad passing the mantle has been taken over by Nicholas Hart, who has himself enjoyed some success, originally in the “Man Made” category but this year received a gold award for his “Marmalade



with Interesting Additions”. For this reason and because the organisers wanted to celebrate 20 years of the Festival with a photo of past champions, Nicholas went up there to represent them both. For everyone who can recall Mary’s fertile mind, the “interesting additions” were, and still are, varied and unusual. Congratulations to Nicholas.



A jar from the winning batch and the Gold Award certificate.

Alison Cousins

## Morris Mania

“Morris Mania” is the title of an exhibition currently at the William Morris Gallery in Walthamstow. It showcases the use of Morris designs in a wide range of everyday objects, such as mugs, shopping trolleys, glasses cases, purses, card holders, Nike trainers, wellington boots and biscuit tins. Some of the objects have been donated or loaned by members of the public, and the gallery say they will continue to accept objects until the exhibition closes on 21 September.

The exhibition aims to compare the status of Morris designs in William Morris’s time and the present. The objects in the exhibition are affordable and have been mass-produced in an environment of global capitalism and computer-aided design. Morris, on the other hand, was an enthusiast for medievalism who valued craftsmanship and wanted his employees to be skilled, proud of their work and well paid. He insisted

on the use of natural materials to make high quality products, and he hated industrialisation, mass-production and capitalism.

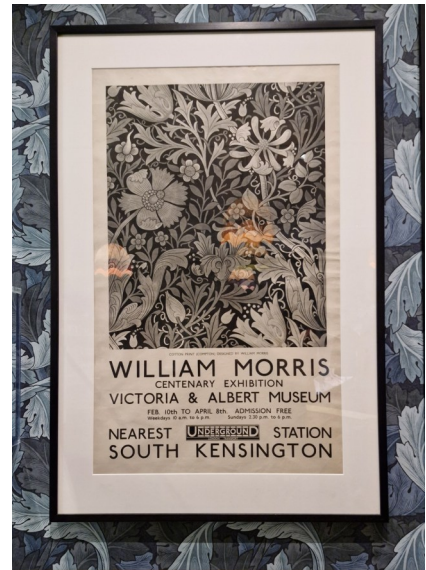
Morris regretted that his products were not affordable for people who were not well off. He famously said “Have nothing in your house that you do not know to be useful, or believe to be beautiful”. So he might have had mixed feelings about the present popular appropriation of his designs.



A Brompton bike with the Willow design on the frame



A jacket worn by the Beatle George Harrison



A poster advertising the 1934 William Morris Centenary Exhibition

John Sheridan

## New footbridges in Morden Hall Park



The Mayor of Merton and the National Trust presided at a ribbon-cutting ceremony in March to open two new footbridges connecting both sides of the Rose Garden in Morden Hall Park. Thanks to a generous donation and fundraising, people will be able to experience the garden as Gilliat Hatfeild, the last owner of Morden Hall Park, had intended.

John Sheridan



# New Exhibition

## Women of the Wandle



From Queens, innovation, mill ownership and the heroine of Manipur. This exhibition looks at women who were connected to the industries, homes and history of the Wandle Valley.

Opens to the public Sunday 15th June

Private for Members/Volunteers Saturday 14th June

Venue: The Wandle Industrial Museum, Vestry Hall  
Annexe, London Road, Mitcham, Surrey CR4 3UD  
Open Wednesday 1-4 pm and Sunday 2-5 pm





## Phase Eight Skirt

This illustration was inadvertently omitted from Norma Cox's article in Bulletin No. 125 entitled *Phase Eight Ltd at 55 Kimber Road SW18*.

It is the "Phase Eight" skirt which should have been at Figure 3 in Norma's article. The skirt shown at Figure 3 should have been at Figure 5.

Apologies for the confusion!

John Sheridan



## Dates for the Diary

**Sunday 15 June, 2pm:** new exhibition at the museum opens.

**Wednesday 25 June, 6.30pm:** "The Wandle Portrayed". Art and literary works relating to the River Wandle selected and presented by Alison Cousins. Location: Wandsworth Town Library, 9 Courthouse Way, SW18 4QG. Free admission but booking is required via [heritage@gll.org](mailto:heritage@gll.org).

**Saturday 28 June: 11am-4pm:** Croydon Green Day 2025, at Croydon Library. The museum will give a talk and demo on the textile industry of the Wandle Valley in the afternoon. More information to follow.

**Thursday 3 July, 12 noon:** free guided walk by John Sheridan, Earlsfield station to the mouth of the Wandle. To book email [john.sheridan08@gmail.com](mailto:john.sheridan08@gmail.com).

**Tuesday 8 July:** River Summit at Morden Hall. <https://www.theriversummit.com/welcome-to-the-uk-river-summit-2025>

**Wednesday 30 July:** Mitcham Community on the Green, 6pm until dusk, Mitcham Cricket Green.

**Saturday 16 August:** Merton Discovery Day.



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

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

**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](mailto:office@wandle.org)

You can find us on:

