

NEWSLETTER NO.14 – SPRING – 1996

---

# THE WANDLE INDUSTRIAL MUSEUM

The Vestry Hall Annexe – London Road – Mitcham  
Surrey CR4 3UD – Telephone : 0181-648 0127



Museum open every Wednesday 1 – 4pm  
And first Sunday of each month 2 – 5pm

The museum also welcomes schools and groups by appointment

---

ADMISSION : ADULTS 20p CHILDREN & SENIOR CITIZENS 10p

## MUSEUM NEWSDESK

Once again we are pleased to report more school visits and workshops at the Museum. Three classes from Benedict School, Mitcham, participated in Textile Workshops in March, and one class from Riversdale School in Wandsworth came in February. Also in February we had an evening workshop session with the 20th Mitcham Cub Group. It is good that the Museum education facilities are being used. Several lectures have been given on behalf of the Museum to various societies including one on the Work of William Morris to Banstead University of the Third Age.

Peter Harris has recently mounted a mobile exhibition about William Morris which will be displayed at various venues throughout this year - the William Morris Centenary year. We exhibited it at this year's "Science Day" at Merton College on 23rd March, as part of S.E.T.'96, the National Week of Science, Engineering and Technology, organised by Merton Scientific Society. Our Exhibition promoted a lot of interest in the Museum and the sale of publications raised money for Museum funds. On March 18th, we were visited by Peter Champness of Boxwood Productions who was making a video about the work of William Morris to be shown on B.B.C. television. He filmed our model of the Morris Workshops at Merton Abbey. The video will be on sale at the Victoria and Albert Museum to coincide with their Morris Exhibition starting in May. We will be presented with a complimentary copy of the video so we hope to have a Members evening to view it in the future.

We hope to expand and enhance our Museum display about William Morris, opening in July and to have a recent donation of a piece of needlework with Morris connections, on display.

### Members Events

PAST            On Saturday 2nd March, members enjoyed a fascinating talk by Paul Rutter about Morden Hall Park (see John Viner's article)

PRESENT        There will be a guided walk round Morden Hall Park led by W.I.M. Member Bill Rudd on Thursday 20th June. Meet in the National Trust Car Park at 7.00 for 7.15 p.m. start.

### FUTURE EVENTS PLANNED

A viewing of the William Morris video.  
Lecture on William Morris by Peter Harris.  
A visit to Ravensbury Mill.

## TALK BY PAUL RUTTER, NATIONAL TRUST WARDEN

### AT MORDEN HALL PARK

Morden Hall Park, an area of about 125 acres including its northern extremities at Bunce's Meadow, was bequeathed to the National Trust in 1941 by Gilliat Hatfeild. Having made his fortune by the manufacture of snuff, Mr. Hatfeild was able to indulge in the pursuits of a country squire on this considerable estate, although he chose to live in Morden Cottage rather than the more grandiose establishment of Morden Hall.-

The park was the subject of an absorbing talk, illustrated by slides, given by Paul Rutter on Saturday, March 2nd, at the Snuff Mill Environmental Centre. After briefly outlining a history of the National Trust, its founding in 1895 by Octavia Hill, Canon H.D.Rawnsley, and Sir Robert Hunter, and its role in preserving much of Britain's countryside, coastline and historic buildings, Paul then focused on his own responsibilities and those of his staff in the upkeep of Morden Hall Park.

The preservation and restoration of its old buildings has always been of paramount importance, and rather than maintain these as picturesque museum pieces, much has been done to open them up to the public. The Snuff Mill itself, for instance, has been adapted as an Environmental Centre and has proved very popular with parties of children from local schools. The old cow house and nearby farm buildings have been restored to provide an exhibition on the history of the Estate, together with workshops demonstrating the skills of local craftsmen. It is intended that the old stables - a quadrangle of buildings built around a cobbled courtyard - will in the near future be opened up as an equestrian history centre and possibly, if circumstances permit, to carry out its original function of stabling horses. The clock over the handsome main gateway has been magnificently restored - it is Paul's perhaps unenviable task to wind it up manually - none of your new-fangled quartz movements here!

Morden Hall itself is shortly to be converted - and probably will have been by the time this Newsletter is published - as a Beefeater Restaurant. Refurbishment both of the interior and exterior has been in progress for some time; one of the features of the outer walls which will definitely be removed is the over-abundance of ivy which at one time covered them so thickly that not an inch of wall was to be seen! This restaurant, and the attractive new Garden Centre run by Capital Gardens plc, are something of an innovation for the park, both being leased out on National Trust property to privately owned companies.

This complex of buildings near to the main entrance at Morden Hall Road is, of course, in terms of acreage only a tiny portion of the park itself. The rest is picturesquely occupied by a diversity of meadowland, marshland and woodland which support a wide variety of bird and insect life. It is one of Paul's responsibilities to ensure that this natural habitat is encouraged to flourish as abundantly as possible, alongside the more sophisticated requirements of the visiting public. The meadowland is unique because the grass has never been ploughed or sprayed with

artificial fertilisers. Although the course of the River Wandle has over the years been diverted by various artificial culverts from its original course it is still an attractive feature of the landscape. Heron and kingfisher can be seen along its banks, and its marshlands are a veritable paradise for bird-watchers and naturalists. Peculiar to the park, however, because of its proximity to areas of urban and industrial development, is the constant threat and present reality of river pollution - a subject which was adequately described in the last issue of our Newsletter - and which continues to threaten the survival not only of the river's fish stocks but also of the many creatures which depend upon it for their survival.

Paul's talk touched upon many other facets appertaining to his varied responsibilities as Warden of a place that, albeit one of the National Trust's lesser -known properties, is nevertheless one of its most remarkable.

**John Viner**

26.3.96

---

### **Dates for Your Diary**

#### **Help will be needed at one or more of these events:**

National Trust Fair at Morden Hall Park, Saturday May 4th, Sunday May 5th, Monday May 6th, 10.00 a.m. - 5.00 p.m. each day. We will be setting up a rota of helpers. Please telephone the Museum if you can offer your services.

Mitcham Carnival Saturday, May 18th at Three Kings Piece from 1.00 p.m.- 5.00 p.m.

Museum Fund Raising Day at Merton Abbey Mills, Bank Holiday Monday 27th May, from 12.00 - 4.00 p.m. With music by Terrapin Station courtesy of Norman and Avril Fairey.

Merton Green Fair Sunday, June 23rd at London Road Playing Fields, Mitcham from 12.30 - 5.00 p.m.

We shall be taking our mobile William Morris Exhibition to this event and holding a textile printing workshop for public participation.

At all these events we shall be continuing with our "Buy a Brick" campaign, selling Museum publications and postcards and promoting our "Find the Wandle Trout" competition. All activities are for fund-raising for the move to Ravensbury Mill.

\*If anyone has any more fund-raising ideas let us know!

Sheila Harris

26.3.96

## NEWS FROM RAVENSBURY MILL

The new residential homes at Ravensbury Mill are not only completed but sold and occupied in record time. An endorsement indeed for the popularity of this highly creative and imaginative project. This was a redundant industrial site which has been skillfully replanned to house a new housing complex comprising 34 new built flats and an existing grade 2 listed building has been sensitively restored to serve as a landmark for the local community, with part of the premises being chosen as a new Museum Hall for the Wandle Industrial Museum.

Although the builder, Fairclough Homes have achieved practical completion stage with the Museum Hall, some outstanding works are still being addressed before the fitting out of the new Museum Hall can proceed. The mill building still houses two existing low breast-shot water wheels, which when refurbished will form an important part of Merton's living past. We have been fortunate in having a survey report being carried out by J. Kenneth Major B.Arch., R.I.B.A., A.S.A. an expert in his field which will greatly assist in the costing of refurbishment and the obtaining of a grant. On the basis of this report the National Rivers Authority has already agreed to offer us technical support in the carrying out of these repairs. We are grateful to Merton Abbey Mills who funded this very important survey.

The master plan for the internal planning of the Museum Hall is to produce a quality scheme for an Opening Display to ensure that we achieve the highest standards of excellence which this listed mill building deserves to ensure the maximum benefits for our local community and thus protect the long term future for the Museum. To these ends we are now in the process of compiling a grant application to the National Lottery Board for these works to be carried out. We are pleased to report that we have received letters of support and advice in our bid for the National Lottery from the Leader of Merton Council, Councillor Anthony Colman and our local M.P. Rt. Hon. Dame Angela Rumbold, Member for Mitcham and Morden. This support is most welcome and invaluable in our bid to be successful with our application.

Merton Council operates a biennial local Design Award Scheme with the intention of encouraging good design in all new developments. We have had no hesitation in nominating Fairclough Homes. We are pleased to advise that our nomination for Ravensbury Mill in the 1994-95 Merton Design Award has been accepted and the development complies with the criteria of the Design Award Scheme. We expect to hear of the outcome in about June of this year.

Ray Leyden  
1.4.96

## A RECENT ACQUISITION WITH WILLIAM MORRIS CONNECTIONS

Mr. Victor L. Haines of 216 Merton Road, Wimbledon has recently made an interesting donation to the Museum. It is a piece of needlework in petit point and cross stitch and is a faithful copy of an early 18th century screen panel.

It was the work of Miss Rose Ward of Mill Road, Colliers Wood, who was for many years a member of the firm of A. Haines & Son of 216 Merton Road, Wimbledon, still the home of Victor Haines today.

It measures 90cm by 60cm and is a pattern of flowers and leaves. The fine yellow centre has 400 stitches to the square inch. The work was completed in 1935-6.

Mr. Victor Haines is the son of William Haines who was once employed by William Morris at Merton Abbey in the tapestry workshops. William Haines was trained in tapestry weaving at the Royal Windsor Tapestry Works before working for Morris in 1881. When he left Morris he set up his own tapestry restoration business run from his home in Merton Road.

After his death in 1916, the business was continued by his wife Annie until her death in 1949. Her son Wilfred was in partnership with her, but not Victor his brother who was employed in the works cleaning the tapestries.

In 1980, Victor Haines gave many of William Haines' tapestries to the Victoria and Albert Museum. He gave the loom that William Haines had used to the Textile Conservation Centre at Hampton Court Palace. We are indeed fortunate, therefore, to be the recipient of this piece of needlework.

As we hope to enhance our William Morris Exhibition in the summer, we hope this exhibit can be put on display bearing in mind its Morris connections. We have sought advice from the Textile Conservation Centre as to its framing and presentation and hope to show it at the William Morris Exhibition opening in the Museum on July 10th.

### Source of Information:-

"William Morris Textiles" by Linda Parry

Publisher: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, London

Sheila Harris 20'3'96



## THE MUSEUM AT HARTFIELD ROAD, WIMBLEDON

Almost opposite Wimbledon Station a large new office block, Hartfield House, white as a wedding cake and indeed not dissimilar in structure, dominates the entrance from the Broadway to Hartfield Road. A short distance further along on the right hand side is a more modern red brick office building, next door to a defunct warehouse, which now houses the Citizens Advice Bureau. From 1984 to 1988 these were the premises occupied by the Wandle Industrial Museum.

On the face of it, these newly leased premises - the move had been made necessary by redevelopment of the Hartfield Crescent site - might have seemed eminently suitable for use as a Museum. There was a basement, useful as a storehouse and work place, a spacious and well-lit ground floor as a display area, and a first floor for offices and extra work space. However, one of the prerequisites of a Museum, i.e. that it should be open to the public, was not available, presumably for safety reasons. At that time the Wandle Industrial Museum was financed by the Manpower Services Commission, and the staff, mostly on a part-time basis, were recruited through the now defunct Community Programme. The only dilemma was how to maintain an interest in the Museum's cultural and historical associations, indeed how to justify its very existence as a Museum with no access for the public - rather, one imagines, like a pub with no beer!

It says much for the ingenuity of management and staff that this period of time subsequently proved to be one of the most creative and innovative in the Museum's existence. There was still much to be done behind the scenes in collating and cataloguing the many items in its collection. New items were still being donated, the most remarkable of which was probably a length of silk given by Liberty & Co. showing the various colour stages of block printing, culminating in the elaborate full colour completed design. The photographic and art departments were meanwhile kept busy recording the many changes in the landscapes of the Wandle Valley. Mobile exhibitions were organised, and conducted walks arranged for members of the public. During this time also, three-dimensional models were constructed of the Liberty Buildings at Merton, now the Merton Abbey Crafts Centre, and, on a larger scale of the William Morris Workshops which straddled the River Wandle further down stream.. Bearing in mind that no traces remained of the Morris Buildings, and that the model had to be constructed from photographs, plans and descriptive matter in the archives, the model bears impressive witness to the patience and technical expertise of the half dozen people involved in creating it, and is still one of the Museum's principal attractions.

Necessity is the mother of invention, and the necessity to help publicise the Museum's activities gave rise to the idea of producing four illustrated booklets as informative guides to the Merton Abbey, Morden Hall Park, Ravensbury Park and Mitcham areas associated with the Wandle Valley. Also produced was a two-colour fold-out map of the Wandle Trail, which proved so popular that two further printings have since been necessary, the costs of the third printing having been generously sponsored by Messrs. Young & Co. plc, the Wandsworth brewery. All except the map are still in print; strenuous efforts are being made, however, to bring it up-to-date in preparation for a further reprint.

With the scrapping of the Government Community Programme Scheme in 1988, and the subsequent withdrawal of funding by the Manpower Services Commission, the Museum at Hartfield Road was reduced to operating with a skeleton staff of two!

Not until June 1991, when, with funding from Merton Council, new premises were opened at the Vestry Hall Annexe, Mitcham, did the Museum obtain literally a new lease of life. If hopes and ambitions are to be fulfilled, and negotiations successfully completed to lease premises at Ravensbury Mill, perhaps a happy ending might be that the Wandle Industrial Museum at last finds its permanent, spiritual home by the Banks of the Wandle.

## ODD FELLOWS

The Odd Fellows, or to give them their full name, the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, Manchester Unity Friendly Society, developed during the first part of the nineteenth century.

Before the creation of the welfare state with its National Health Service, National Insurance, sick pay and so on, there was no-one ordinary people could look to for help beyond their own resources. The answer was for people to club together so that the healthy could support the infirm. Members of these clubs, which came to be known as friendly societies, paid subscriptions which, through careful investment, slowly grew to sometimes considerable proportions.

Membership of these societies tended to go with the job of the main wage earner. The Foresters and the Shepherds Societies are examples. This left a pool of people who had no one to club with because there was only one of them in each village - the blacksmith, for instance, the wheelwright, the miller. The "odd fellows" clubbed together - hence the name. In time the separate village societies joined into national "unities" such as the Manchester Unity.

Unfortunately for the friendly societies, other more sinister organisations were growing in the same sections of the population at the same time. The Combination Acts, passed against trade unionists, caught the friendly societies as well. As a result friendly societies became secret societies with pass words, signs and ritual resembling that of Freemasons. Some of the societies, including the Odd Fellows, keep up the ritual, to which many members are deeply attached.

The friendly societies came to be the health and welfare service for their members, as they still are in, for instance, the Channel Islands where Odd Fellowship is particularly strong. When the National Health Service was set up after the war, it was to the Odd Fellows that the Government looked for expertise in health administration. But the pattern of the friendly societies was not used as a model for the Welfare State. It could be argued that this was a mistake.

Not surprisingly, fewer people feel the need to join friendly societies now than once did. The movement (not helped by recent EU-inspired legislation) has contracted. Some societies have disappeared.

The Odd Fellows, however, continue to exist, offering various benefits such as assistance with optical and dental costs, legal assistance and so on. Various charitable causes are supported like the RNLI and research into Alzheimer's disease. For those who wish for them, social activities are also offered.

These take place through the districts and lodges. Mitcham District stretches from Balham to the M25 and includes Wimbledon, Croydon and Sutton. Seven or eight lodges meet regularly, including two in Mitcham itself. Mitcham District also supports good causes locally. Most notably from the Museum's point of view, it has made a donation towards the cost of restoring the wheels at Ravensbury Mill.



So, if **you see someone wearing a** gold - or silver-coloured badge in the shape of three links of a chain, remember the wheels and be nice to him or her.

Stephen Ashcroft  
Immediate Past Provincial Grand Master, Mitcham District, 100F

(To find out how you can benefit from becoming an Odd Fellow, contact Colin Worley. 64 Tamworth Park, Mitcham, CR4 1HY, phone: 0181 640 5002

1.4.96

---

### THE LAVENDER INDUSTRY

A scheme to revive the cultivating and processing of lavender and other plants has been started. It is run by the Bioregional Development Group which is based at Sutton Ecology Centre. The project is backed by The Body Shop and the Department of the Environment.

They have obtained from local residents some original Mitcham lavender bushes and from these they have cultivated small area in Downside prison which they are trying to increase.

The project hopes to expand to include a national lavender collection, physic and forest gardens, a shop, and possibly a lavender museum. They are very interested in the Wandle Industrial Museum and what we have to offer on this subject in the way of exhibits, photographs and information. If this project develops we may be invited to work with them on exhibitions and displays. It may be possible for us to mount a display in the window of The Body Shop in Centre Court in Wimbledon Broadway.

We are very much in need of a volunteer to help with exhibitions as Peter and Sheila Harris who are responsible for all our displays are heavily occupied with William Morris because of the centenary.

Also needed is an artist to work under the direction of John Viner who could do with some assistance.

Anyone with exhibition or artistic skills who is willing to help should ring the Museum.

Marguerite Lee-Delisle  
1.4.96

## FUNDRAISING NEWS

The fundraising programme has recently had a major boost with a successful application to the Bridge House Estates Trust Fund. The Fund has offered us the sum of £15,456 towards the provision of access at Ravensbury Mill. The offer is conditional on the overall museum project receiving support from the National Lottery or similar, and we have two years in which to take it up. This is one of the biggest single grants ever awarded to the Museum and is a concrete sign of how far we have come in recent times - registration with the Museums and Galleries Commission and the support of the South Eastern Museums Service (SEMS) were crucial to the success of our application.

Although some might regard the provision of improved access as a peripheral issue, it is in fact an essential element in the Museum's plans for several reasons. Firstly, there is an increasing recognition of the need (where practical) to design buildings open to the public in such a way as to make them as accessible as possible to all sections of the population. This can mean looking at wheelchair accessibility but also means considering the needs of people with limited mobility who may need to rest frequently, or the needs of parents with small children and prams. Secondly, the funding of a project by the National Lottery quite rightly requires an organisation to give consideration to accessibility in the design of an exhibition. Finally, it makes commercial sense to have your building open to and enjoyable for as many visitors as possible. We are soon to receive a report on access carried out by an independent consultant and largely funded by SEMS which will examine in detail what improvements can reasonably be made, and this will form part of the supporting evidence for a Lottery application.

We have also recently received an offer of grant from SEMS towards the costs of engaging a professional museum design firm to produce a costed outline design for the new building. Unfortunately the amount on offer is greatly scaled down from what we actually asked for and we will need to make up the difference by finding other sources of sponsorship for this particular item. The significance of an outline design is that it gives potential funders or other supporters something tangible to help them visualise the project, and it is essential for a National Lottery application both for its detailing of the likely cost of the museum and in giving confidence to the assessors that the design will be a high quality one on which it is appropriate to spend public money. Bearing all this in mind, it is obvious that the securing enough money to proceed with the design work is the main area on which we need to focus our current fundraising efforts.

Finally, the National Lottery. In order to have a successful Lottery application, an organisation must demonstrate that its project is financially viable, technically feasible, and that there is an element of partnership funding (money or goods or services put up by the organisation itself or others). With the contribution from the Bridge House Estates Trust Fund we now have a substantial portion of partnership funding in place, and this will make it easier to gain the support of other funders for the remaining sums that need to be raised. I am confident that as soon as we have produced a costed design outline Web will have all the elements needed for us to submit a Lottery application which will be well argued and convincing, and have a good chance of success.

Sean Lovett  
25.3.96