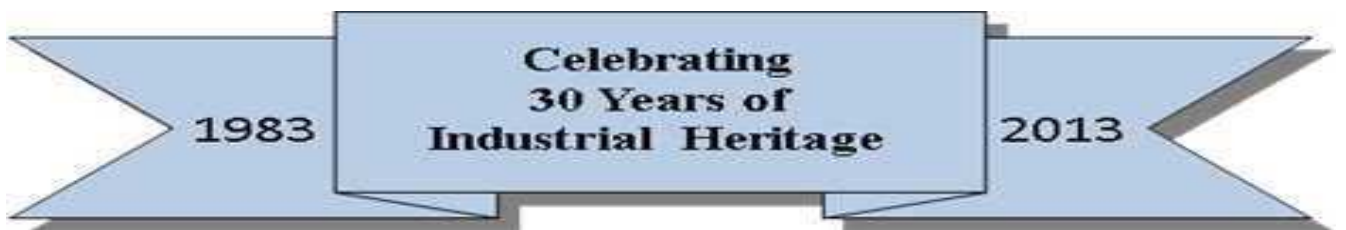




MUSEUM



NEWSLETTER

Issue 81

February 2013

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1 Newsdesk

Visitors to the Museum were very poor in December, but have picked up in January despite the cold weather. We welcomed Liberty Primary School for 2 free visits here on 7th February. They were the first school to take up our offer of free school visits during 2013 thanks to our Grant from the Ernest Cook trust. More schools are expected during the Spring and Summer terms.

Events –Past: Volunteers and friends enjoyed our Christmas Lunch Meeting, and this year in February our first Volunteers Lunch of 2013. Our thanks once again to Mary Hart for providing the wonderful refreshments. In early January 20 members and friends enjoyed a New Year Lunch at the Toby Carvery, Mitcham.



Figure 1 members and volunteers at the New Year's lunch

Events- Future

- Our next Lunch Meeting will be open to MEMBERS, VOLUNTEERS and FRIENDS of THE MUSEUM and will be on **Wednesday, 22nd May**. So that the catering can be organised Mary will need to know who is coming. Please telephone her on 02084527534 or email us at the Museum or telephone WIM on 0208 648 0127 by 14th May We hope to see some of our

Members who are not actual Volunteers at this lunch.

- Members Volunteers and Friends are invited to join us on **Friday 12 th April** for a visit to the newly refurbished William Morris Gallery in Walthamstow nearest underground station Walthamstow Central on the Victoria Line. We shall meet at the Gallery at 12.30pm where there is a cafe and displays about the life and work of William Morris. Admission is free. Please ring Alison Cousins on 02085426727 or email Alison Cousins @googlemail.com if you want to come.

Other Dates for your Diary

A stall has been booked at this year's Morden Hall Country Show on **May 4th 5th and 6th** so we hope that some of you will be able to join us there.

Saturday **June 15th** will be the opening of the new museum Exhibition-more details to come later.

Saturday **June 22nd**: A stall has been booked for the Wimbledon Village Fair. Helpers needed please.

Volunteers: Unfortunately two Sunday volunteers have recently left us so we really need a few more people to come forward to join the Rota. You would not be required to do more than one duty per month and would always have an experienced person on duty with you.

Please let us know if you can help.

Membership: Thank you to all those members who already renewed their membership of the Museum. Subscriptions for 2013 are now due and a renewal form is enclosed with this newsletter. Prompt payment would be appreciated.

We hope to see you at some of our future events.

Sheila Harris

Feb 2013

2. Museum Update

Curators Report - 30 years of the Wandle Industrial Museum

This year we are celebrating our 30th Anniversary. The fact that we have managed to survive is due to the hard work and devotion of the volunteers and the continuing support of LB Merton. When the museum was formally set up in 1983 the Manpower Services Commission was still in place with special emphasis on youth employment. The museum was therefore able to offer some training in research and art skills, backed by government money. During this time many of the booklets that we still sell were produced. For more about those early years, see the report on Harry Galley's talk to Unison in this newsletter.

Having no premises that allowed the public to visit the museum, the museum became 'a mobile museum' taking displays out to schools, libraries and the civic centre.

The MSC closed down in 1987 so in one fell swoop the museum lost its paid staff and the government funding dried up. This reduced the staff to two volunteers, and it has been run by volunteers ever since.

The museum had several venues over the first eight years but in only one, at Hartfield Rd were we able to open to the public. This was cut short by a fire in the boiler room rendering the building unusable.

Luckily for us the annexe to the Vestry Hall was empty and the LB Merton allowed the museum to take over the premises, with a small grant for administration purposes. The Mayor opened the museum on its new site in 1991 and we have been there ever since. Since 1994 we have been hoping to move into Ravensbury Mill, and this meant that little was done to change the displays in the museum. But then what could have been a disaster, the kitchen boiler sprung a leak, became an opportunity! The whole of the heating system had to be replaced and thankfully Merton agreed to carry out the work. This meant that all the displays had to be replaced, thus giving us an opportunity to update them.

Since then, as our premises are very small, we have worked to maintain interest in our museum by ensuring that every year we have a new display. This year will be no different, but we will be combining the new display with a celebration to mark our anniversary.

We hope that as many of you as possible will join us on the 15th of June.

Meg Thomas

Archive Report

Archivists' Report

The publication of the penultimate book from Eric Montague in the Mitcham Histories series has kept Jacqui busy finding more new names. This title is "Willow Lane and Beddington Corner", and covers the development of textile bleaching and printing, and a whole chapter on the Surrey Iron Railway. The final book is eagerly awaited, in which a complete series index is promised. Joy to the hearts of librarians everywhere!

Alison attended the AGM and a training meeting of the Records Management section of the Archives and Records Association at RBS in Southwark Street. The presentations started with "The personalisation of recordkeeping" and the concept of 'bringing your own device'.

It is believed that the number of mobile devices on Earth now exceeds the human population, leading one way to refer to the “planet of the apps”.

It’s now a widespread practice for consumers to use their own devices in the workplace, officially or otherwise, resulting in records management being decentralised and a loss of control by the parent organisation. There are compliance and security implications if users are left to their own devices (so to speak!!), so a clear agreement of data access is recommended. In respect of our museum, in view of our limited opening hours we all work extensively from home, so maybe we should consider a risk assessment to cover ourselves – a Social Media Policy?

The other presentation covered a debate on the term “Records Management” and a proposal to consider “Information Management” as a more accurate description of the activity, i.e. the medium and not the message.

Networking at such events is always rewarding, and I found myself seated next to the Senior Archivist at the V&A who is also currently acting as a curator. I have subsequently sent him details of a piece of post-graduate research of which he was not aware, which we had in the museum, plus of course a link to our website. Aim high, I say.

Alison & Jacqui

General

Ray Leyden’s Christmas Single

Long standing volunteer Ray Leyden fulfilled a dream last year, and with the help of a local group of musicians released a recording of a song he had written – ‘Peace at Christmas’. I believe this is the first time any museum member has entered Tin Pan Alley, and we wish him all the best for its future.

Members who would like to hear it can access it on YouTube - search for “Morden Doves - Peace at Christmas”, or go their website



Figure 2 The CD cover

<http://www.mordendoves.co.uk/> if you would like to buy a copy through Amazon or iTunes.

Ravensbury

Observant members will have noticed a planning application by LB Morden to put in place the disabled access missing from Ravensbury Mill, which should get the go-ahead by Easter. It is still not possible to give any more detail of our proposed taking up of the lease, as nothing has yet been put in writing, but we remain confident that our friends in LB Merton are beavering away on our behalf in the meantime.

Merton Priory/HLF

As we circulate this newsletter the HLF Landscape Partnership bid should be going in, with an expected announcement date towards the end of June. Although this no longer directly affects us, it will place the Wandle Valley firmly in the list as a worthwhile area for support for when we are ready to make our own bid in the future.

Merton Memories.

Michael Taylor is continuing to work hard with the other MM volunteers under Sarah Gould, and we hope to hear from him that the site has started to go live in the near future. In the meantime this involvement has helped him in his collaboration with Alison over the digitisation of our own photographic archive, and his collaboration with Merton Historical Society with theirs. Talking of which, he and David Roe of MHS gave an interesting talk on the 16th February, going through the MHS photos of events in the borough for 2012 - rightly underlining that today's events are tomorrow's history, and, if



Figure 3 Michael in full flow.

these photographic records are not assembled as we go along, many of the sights and landmarks of Merton will have disappeared before we can do so.

Wandle Trail Map

After some false starts, progress has been made in moving towards a new Wandle Trail Map. With the help of Jonathan Spearman Oxx a new digitised version of the map has been created, which will enable us to have it produced as a high quality print in whatever format the editorial team decide is best going forward. The current plan, while the words are being updated, is to have limited run of the new map in similar format to the old (A2 folded) but with a more detailed booklet format to follow, following appropriate market research.

3. Merton Abbey Mills and Merton Priory updates

The Chapter House will be open to the public on 23rd March as part of the Colliers Wood arts month, then on Easter Saturday and Easter Monday, also on 1st/2nd June, 8th/9th June, last weekend in July, possibly on August Bank Holiday, and finally the 3rd weekend in September. If you haven't been in to see the plans, please do take one of these opportunities, and also see the Museum block printing team at work.



Figure 4 The Honesty Bus

At the Mills, the Honesty Bus has arrived after 2 months in Docklands. Small craft items are for sale, and you are trusted to put your money in an envelope and leave it as you go out.

4. New Year's Day Parade.

With over half a million spectators lining the West End streets, the annual London New Year's Day Parade is one of the capital's most amazing events, and for an amazing fourth time in seven years Merton - yes, Merton - beat



Westminster - yes, Westminster - to win first prize in the London Boroughs' competition for best float, and a £7,500 cheque for the Mayor's charities.

Admiral Lord Nelson himself stood on the bridge of HMS Victory as it sailed down Piccadilly, Haymarket and Whitehall attended by young dancers, brilliantly dressed Victorian ladies, period airmen, vintage bicycles and a 50-year old Morris Minor truck, to the

Figure 5 - the Merton float accompaniment of a song celebrating "My Fair London". At the climactic moment her mainsail, a huge bag containing 1,000 helium-filled balloons, released its load which swarmed spectacularly around Big Ben. The judges simply had no choice!

The winning float was built and propelled by a team from Wimbledon College of Art, but it couldn't have moved an inch without our resident genius Norman Fairey, who constructed the special wheeled trolley on which it rested. This is typical of the ever modest Norman, very much an unsung hero, whose metalworking skills have done so much for Merton Abbey Mills and all its sister projects. Here he is getting his gong and being congratulated by the Mayor Cllr David Williams for his vital contribution to the parade.



Figure 6 Norman Fairey receiving his medal

John Hawks, Jan 2013

5 Importance of Community

The museum was pleased to receive an invitation from the Mayor of London Boris Johnson to attend an event at City Hall. The reception in January was held to celebrate the importance of community and to recognise the contribution of people and organisations to the fabric of community in Merton and Wandsworth. Whilst I didn't count the numbers at the event which Andrew Wakefield and I attended on behalf of the museum, I would estimate it in excess of 200. The individuals who attended come from many walks of life including the health, voluntary and commercial sectors as well as trust and church organisations. The mayor in his speech spoke highly of volunteers an area that has great importance to us as a museum as we are totally manned by volunteers.



Figure 7 The Mayor, Boris Johnson, addressing the community groups.

Mick Taylor

6 Harry Galley talks to Unison, the public service union for retired members, Friday 1st February 2013.

Deen City Farm



Figure 8 Our President, Harry Galley, with Maureen Willett.

Harry explained he was one of the founder members of Deen City Farm ; at the projects first meeting in Feb. 1979, Harry was elected Chairperson, and remained at the forefront of the Farm's development until 1985. His involvement started when he was approached by a Community Worker, Trevor Watling to help with funding as Harry had built up a reputation with successful funding applications. Major funding was obtained from the Manpower Services Commission which had been set up by the

government of the day to help unemployed back into work. Under the daily management of Maureen Willett, the then Farm Manager it went from strength to strength. He was involved in the initial negotiations to re-site the Farm on to the new site at Bunce's Meadow, National Trust, Morden Hall Park.

WIM

Harry also explained he was a Founder member of the Museum, a project he set up in 1982 with Trevor Watling and Kevin David Leyden, a fellow Merton School Teacher who shared a vision with regard to the then neglected industrial history of the Borough of Merton. The Museum was formally established in 1983, with Harry once again being elected Chairperson. Harry was able to use the same contacts with the Manpower Services Commission and as the Farm had been so successful, the Museum project was quickly accepted and over a 4 year period employed up to 40 people. After the 4 year funding programme was complete the Museum had not only helped people back into employment but had produced the first ever Wandle Trail Map bringing alive the Wandle's rich industrial past. The Museum then moved to The Vestry Hall in Mitcham where Maureen Willett had moved on from the Farm to become Centre Manager and she was happy to welcome the Museum to Merton's unique Voluntary Sector building. In recognition of Harry's contribution to the setting up of the project and as the only sole surviving Founder Trustee Harry was made President of the Museum in 2009 and he concluded his talk by acknowledging it was a great honour.

Harry and Maureen had brought along some scrap books of press cuttings for both projects and answered many questions from interested Unison members

Ray Leyden, Feb 2013

7 Ravensbury Mill Eel Pass



Figure 9 The new eel pass at Ravensbury

Following the success of the eel pass at Merton Abbey Mills, the Wandle Trust commissioned another at Ravensbury Mill to facilitate eel movement upstream. This is the result of an EU directive requiring rivers in the UK to install eel passes to allow easier eel movement, and the Environment Agency faces a large fine because so many rivers in the UK are now impassable to eels by virtue of manmade obstructions to their passage.

The new eel pass at Ravensbury was made by Norman Fairey and Stephen Llewellyn (who are gaining a national

reputation in this field for their innovative design) and installed by Wandle Trust (Tim Longstaff and his volunteers) after many delays as they sought the necessary permissions from the Environment Agency and LBM.

The pass is a trough bridging the top of the weir with the water below, lined with purpose made bristles and with water flowing through from above. At the top of the trough the pass ends with a tank so that the eels may be counted, measured and returned to the upstream side of the weir.

Last year the eel trap at Merton Abbey Mills yielded over 100 eels of assorted size and age. The work was carried out by Jiamin Xu, a Kings College post graduate student, as part of her PhD project and she spent many months monitoring eel behaviour. Over the year many more eel movements were



Figure 10 the subsidiary eel pass, showing the bristles used by the eels to push against the water pressure

detected by her, using an infra-red camera, but not all eels decided to take the plunge into the tank – many merely turning round and sliding back into the river below the weir.

Eels seem to be playful and gregarious, so although there is no current scientific explanation for this behaviour, a reasonable supposition is that this activity is, maybe, simply for fun.

It seems the more we find out about eels the more mysterious they become: nobody has seen them mate, nobody has identified their spawning grounds in the Sargasso Sea, nor how they find their way back to where they came from – but they do, and have been doing so for millennia. Their presence is a sign of the health of the river, and it is a privilege to be able to help them back into the upper reaches of the Wandle.

The traps at Ravensbury and Merton Abbey Mills will be working from April to October this year for counting, measuring and releasing.

Stephen Llewellyn and Claire Bradfield, February 2013

8 Chuter & Son Limited



Figure 11 The Mill in the 1960's

Reading a copy of the Guardian newspaper from December 1999 that my mother-in-law gave me I come across the name of Chuter & Son linked to the River Wandle. This wasn't a name that jumped out at me as do the names of Connolly Brothers or William

Morris. So I set off to find out what I could about them.

The museum held some interesting documents about the company including an interview with Malcolm Pummell by Judith Wearing and Alan Strugnell.

There is no date on the papers but I would guess the interview took place

sometime in the 1980's. Malcolm Pummell had been the Site Manager and then the Managing Director of the company from 1935 until 1968.

Chuter and Son took over the site of Garrett Copper Mill in Copper Mill Lane just off Plough Lane in 1889. Charles Chuter lived until 1916 however his son Edward had died aged 33 in 1900. Despite this the company continued until its closure in 1968. The mill had the second largest waterwheel in the country and the last that was used on the River Wandle. The wheel was over 200 years old when it was finally scrapped. It measured 20 feet in diameter, had 42 paddles each of which was 15 feet long by 22 inches deep. This undershot wheel turned four revolutions a minute and produced 75 horse power. It required 400 square foot of space.

The company produced chamois leather. This is made using sheepskin, the best of which came from New Zealand. The sheepskin was split into two parts. The inside half called the fleshing and the outside half known as the skiver. Chamois leather was used in a number of products including suede shoes and during World War Two for filtering fuel. The size of the leather varied but it was always sold whole. Ten thousand skins were processed a week.



Figure 12 Stretching hides

Main buyers for the leather were Argentina and Cuba. To begin with the skins were washed in the river. This was until it got to the stage where the skins were coming out black. Malcolm Pummell was never sure where the dirt and muck that caused this came from other than it was more likely the Merton Board Mills than Liberty's.

In 1935 when Pummell started at the company they employed 50 people. Certainly the workers were poorly paid and it was unpleasant work. In the 1930's the workers were paid 5p an hour £2.40 a week. The workforce started to reduce in the 1940's at the time of the Second World War. This happened with the introduction of

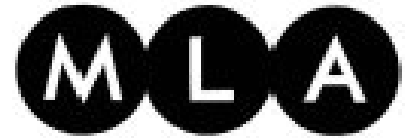
machinery that could do the work of six men. These machines were also driven by mains electricity and the waterwheel powered the slower machines the company had. In fact in the 1950's the company was paid compensation for not using the waterwheel. This helped pay for electric motors. When the company closed in the late 1960's they employed just 12 workers.

There are some points of interest, not just about Chuter & Son, but the site in general. A mill on the site was included in the Domesday Book. The main road from Wandsworth to Wimbledon crossed the River Wandle here and there was a toll house and a wooden toll bridge. The bridge was demolished in the middle of the 19th century and the house was still there in the mid 1930's. In Copper Mill Lane there are some existing mill cottages built around the turn of the 20th century. One of the mill buildings used by Chuter & Son still exists on the site until this day. The building has a plaque on it labelled 'The Old Coppermill' however it was never used by Garrett Copper Mill or Pontifex before them. The upper floor of the building had timber louvres that were probably used for leather drying.

When the mill was demolished in the late 1970's early 1980's the original river channel, part of the mill race and mill stream were filled. There were a number of sluice gates on the site. Certainly at times the site could flood. This didn't affect the factory but did affect the Mill House that Malcolm Pummell and his family lived in. On one occasion the water reached the keys of his piano. At other times there was not enough water in the river to drive the waterwheel. In the end the electricity board bought the site and the rights to the waterwheel. It is at this point that the electricity wires drop down from the pylons and go into the ground.

One final piece of note. For many years a whalebone was located on the site. I wonder what happened to it.

Mick Taylor



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.

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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