

THE WANDLE INDUSTRIAL  
MUSEUM

**NEWSLETTER**

Issue 88



Nov 2014

## Contents

Newsdesk .....	2
Museum Update .....	4
Volunteers .....	4
Bill Rudd, 1925-2014 .....	5
Archive, Research and Library .....	6
Merton Priory Chapter House .....	7
Merton Abbey Mills .....	8
The Great Smog of 1952 - Bill Rudd Remembers .....	9
Tracing the stream from Wimbledon Park to the River Wandle at Earlsfield. 10	
Bourne Again !! .....	14

**NB: All photos by Nicholas Hart unless otherwise stated.**

~~~~~

### Newsdesk

We have had two school sessions and a group of senior citizens from Celebrating Age who have had block printing sessions. The grant that allowed us to offer free sessions to schools has now finished so we are charging the groups. There have been a number of visitors who have visited the museum when we were open on Sundays and Wednesdays.

We are taking part in the Living Wandle project. Meg visited St Faith's school in Wandsworth, taking part in a walk along the Wandle in Wandsworth and then returning to the school to carry out some practical work. The group involved displayed their work at Abbey Mills Craft Centre in September. The Museum should receive a copy of the book and the collage.

We have welcomed four new or potential volunteers.

The proposed group visit to the National Portrait Gallery exhibition 'Anarchy & Beauty: William Morris and His Legacy' was not well supported so was cancelled but individuals who had expressed an interest were offered vouchers from the Morris gallery at Walthamstow for half price admission .

The Reaccreditation application has been prepared and sent to the Association of Independent Museums for assessment. We thank our Mentor Chris Taft for his help.

Michael and Alison gave a talk to a small group in Mitcham Library on November 27th. This consisted of an overview of what the museum has to offer, and a selection of Michael's "before and after" photos.

On November 28th, Roger, Helen, and Alison entertained two groups from the Secret London organisation at the museum, including a fabric block printing session. The organiser expressed the wish that their remaining eight groups could also visit next year. This would be a very welcome source of income and publicity, but would call for considerable input from volunteers.

### **Dates for the Diary**

#### **Members and Volunteers New Year Lunch**

This will be taking place on Tuesday 20th January 2015 at Park Place, 54 Commonside, Mitcham, Surrey CR4 4HB.

Please see separate booking form enclosed with this newsletter.

#### **Annual General Meeting**

The 2014 AGM will take place on Thursday 15th January 2015 at the Vestry Hall, London Road, Mitcham, Surrey.

Invitations and details are enclosed with this newsletter.

#### **Christmas and New Year Opening**

The museum will be closed on the following dates over this period:

24th December 2014

28th December 2014

31st December 2014

Admin team

## **Museum Update**

### ***Volunteers***

The museum is manned entirely by volunteers. This includes our Trustees, Operations Management Team and key staff members. All who give up their time to ensure the museum operates and work towards the move to Ravensbury Mill.

A recent survey by the museum identified that volunteers are willing to give half or a whole day to the museum each week. This is very much in line with other organisations that have volunteers e.g. Merton Library and Heritage Service. The majority of our volunteers are happy to work front of house and help to man events. This means we can continue with our Sunday opening.

There are however gaps in roles that need to be covered. We particularly lack volunteers to help with marketing, publicity and PR. Getting knowledge of the museum out to a wider audience is very important. It helps to increase visitors and membership.

We would like to increase the number of events we attend during the year, finance measures permitting, and our involvement with schools and other groups. All of these activities require management and organising.

The museum was hoping to introduce a series of talks on various subjects around the River Wandle, its industries and people. We need speakers with the right knowledge and skills to enable this to happen.

A number of volunteer roles are advertised on the Do-It-Volunteering website and we have a good relationship with the MVSC who point potential volunteers in our direction.

You can see that there is work to be done to continue to make the museum a success. This can only be done with help. If you are able to give us your time to help with any of the work/roles highlighted above

or know someone who could help us then please contact the museum – 020 8648 0127 or e-mail: office@wandle.org. We look forward to hearing from you.

## Bill Rudd, 1925-2014



Although Bill Rudd's main heritage activities were conducted through Merton Historical Society of which he was, almost, a founder member, he had through the years been a valuable source of information, both written and oral, to our archive on the Wandle's industrial history, as well as an occasional

volunteer in our outreach activities.

David Luff's brilliant impromptu address at Bill's funeral made the point that, all across Merton, references to 'Bill' would be accepted as references to Bill Rudd, without further qualification, and the whole borough is the poorer for his demise. Our library is the richer for his booklet on the works at Liberty during the war, not so much for the personal side, but the details of actual practice and procedure in the fabric printing works there which would otherwise have been lost.

Later in this Newsletter we



reprint an article I first ran in 2003, 50 years after the great smog, when I caught a chance remark by Bill about his memories of that time, and had the good sense (for a change) to follow it up.

Bill became a newspaper celebrity in the early 1960's, when news of his journeys to the abbeys of Great Britain seeped out, and the image here is of a couple of those articles. Copies are at the museum. The other image shows Bill in 2008 with 'the' bike, lovingly restored. Thanks to the team at Merton Historical Society these journeys have been condensed into a book, now ready for print if the funding can be found.

More recently, when the Time Team came to Merton Abbey Mills, he was passing by when Mary was trying to help the team sort out a block printing problem, and pitched in when grabbed by Mary and thrust into the limelight. That part of the program worked only because Bill gave of his time and knowledge unstintingly, as always.

We will miss him.

Nicholas, November 2014

### ***Archive, Research and Library***

Much of our time has recently been spent on urgent administration covering for staff shortages.

However, thanks to Eric Shaw, we acquired some interesting photos of staff at work in the labs at Fry's Metals, along with supporting booklets of the company. We passed most of these to Merton Heritage and Local Studies but kept a duplicate set of the photos. We have also been sent a selection of photographs of original paintings done by Paul Moore, a notable and very prolific artist who has painted over 800 pictures, about 25 of which depict the Wandle, mostly Deed's Mill, painted between 1957 and 2000. Sadly we were unable to take up his offer of any originals, being unable to do justice to them without suitable wall space at present. He has also sent us details of each of his

Wandle works, including the dates, sizes, and the medium in which each was produced.

Having attended Sarah Gould's excellent talk for the Merton Historical Society on "Housewives and Heroines of Merton" we persuaded her to let us have a copy of her notes, and now have a few new additions to our names file.



**Figure 1 Deed's Mill by Paul Moore**

**Stop Press:** We have just received a DVD copy of cine films taken in the 1930s and 1950s of various outings, sports activities, and the factory staff, from a company called Hugh Stevenson & Sons Ltd. of Summerstown. This is topical given the current interest in the London-wide Bigger Picture project and the Kinovan which recently visited Morden.

Full details of the content will appear in the next newsletter.

Alison & Jacqui

### ***Merton Priory Chapter House***

Although taking longer than expected to reach this stage, it looks like works will start in 2015 to create a usable space for the new Chapter House exhibition centre. Stage 1 works are fully funded, and, once set in motion, the committee can turn its attention to the fitting out stage.

Hopefully most of you will have taken the opportunity to come and see the plans, and the results of the recent excavations within the Chapter House during 2014, but there should be an opportunity in 2015 for one further Open Day weekend for a final look before it is closed down for the works to start.

For those who didn't manage to come this autumn, here is a picture of Dave Saxby standing alongside an end wall – no longer ankle height but now a proper wall. The excavations have created a real sense of the space and shape of the original building.



**Figure 2 Dave Saxby by the excavated wall**

### ***Merton Abbey Mills***

All the new floats are now in place on the waterwheel, which looks wonderful. The team there are now turning to a new project – the Marmalade Window!

When the wheelhouse was first restored Steve and Norman built a new 'temporary' wooden wall to separate the wheels from the interior of the building. Now they intend to install windows in the wall so the wheel can be seen by visitors from inside the building, and bring much needed light to the interior.

Finance is being raised for this, but fundraising sales of Mary's marmalade have meant that they are well on target, hence 'Marmalade Window'!

Work will probably start in late spring/early summer.

In the meantime, for Christmas events at Merton Abbey Mills, visit their website at <http://www.mertonabbeymills.org.uk/>



## **The Great Smog of 1952 - Bill Rudd Remembers**

I had two objectives when I went on the Wandle Industrial Museum visit to the Public Record Office: To reacquaint myself with the layout, since I had not done any research there for some time; and to renew my Readers Ticket.

In the stroll round the PRO Museum, with its ancient documents, I came across a small exhibit which displayed the London Smog of December 1952. This recalled a memory of one particular foggy Thursday night, at about that time.

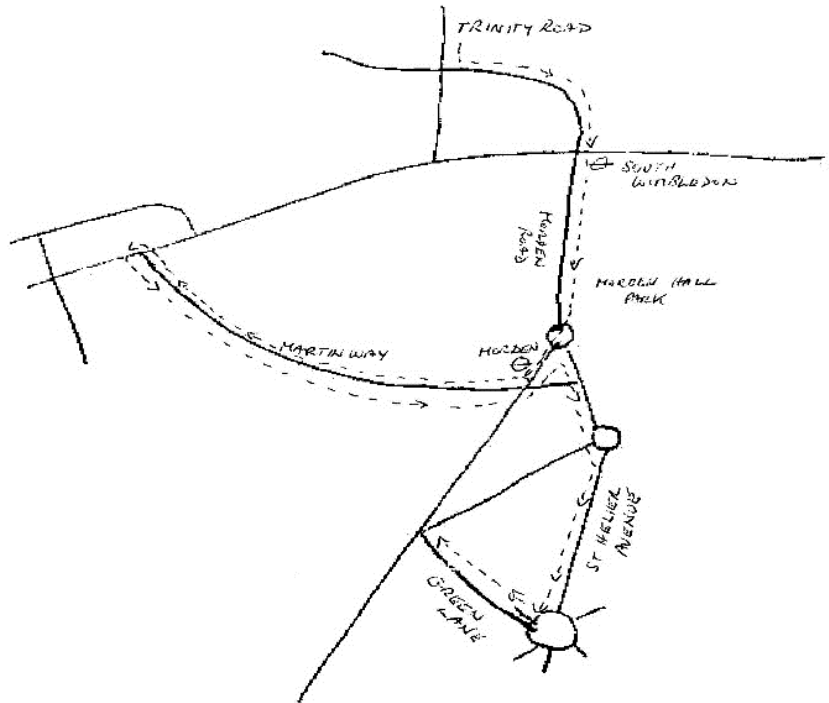
It was already a bit thick when I cycled to the weekly meeting of the Wimbledon Local Group, YHA, which met in the ground floor of Queens Road School, at 8.00 PM. It was an illustrated talk on Touring Grounds in Europe.

When I left at 10.00 PM, I cycled with care down Trinity Road, left into The Broadway, Merton Road and the South Wimbledon crossroads. Then on to Morden Road. Up to that point there was no problem.

Then, approaching Morden Hall Park, the fog thickened. Great billowing clouds of it rolling over the boundary fence. Vehicles had been passing me slowly on my offside; now, I was being followed. My bicycle had a 6 volt dynohub which gave a good light, and they were using my rear light as a guide.

I turned into London Road shopping centre, and the strangest thing happened. Instead of following through on the journey home, I turned into Crown Lane, which was 2 way traffic then, as if I was compelled. I had little choice but to keep leading the traffic. So it was on down Martin Way. When I reached Bushey Road, I decided not to go any further, turned round for the ride back, and picked up another convoy to Morden!

Through the shopping centre I picked up a bus, or, rather, he picked up me. Along Morden Hall Road I could see his spotlight following my every move. When I swerved round a manhole cover, the lights behind would repeat the movement - my rear light was all the driver could see, and he wasn't taking any risks. I was beginning to wonder when I would get home. There was a very cautious, rather wide ride round St Helier roundabout (I had to take into account the bus turning circle - I couldn't have him jamming on the curb!), then a steady ride up St Helier Avenue (no traffic lights then). At the Rosehill Roundabout, where we had risen somewhat above the smog, I felt I had done more than enough, so broke off and went down Green lane, bound for home. By then it was 11.00 PM, and bed time.



W. J. Rudd, April 2003

### **Tracing the stream from Wimbledon Park to the River Wandle at Earlsfield.**

A chance remark in a conversation with Joyce Bellamy made me realise that I did not know about this stream and I decided to have a look for myself.

Wimbledon Park was landscaped by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown in the C18<sup>th</sup> for the Lord of the Manor, Earl Spencer, and the lake was

formed. It is fed by streams from high ground towards Wimbledon Common.



The Ordnance survey 1<sup>st</sup> edition 1865 map shows the possible line of a stream running from the east side of the lake, but it's not very clear. I entered the park by the Home Park Road entrance and went down the steps into the park. Walking

**3 - stream appears (lake to the right)**

northwards towards the lake, I soon came across a stream emerging from a pipe, flowing northwards. The stream must make a sharp left turn to reach this point from the lake, but it is not possible to see where it leaves the lake as the lake-side path veers away from the water's edge and it is obscured by vegetation.

The stream passes under a bridge, then turns sharp right under another, to flow north-eastwards. At this point it is joined by a smaller stream flowing from another outlet from the lake directly to the west. This flows steeply under the lake-side path and through an ornamental rock garden, named Waterfall Garden where there is a stone plaque commemorating its re-opening in 2010. The stream continues through a small environmental garden and vanishes underground just before the pavilion. I assume that it flows under the pavilion as it emerges on the other side before passing under another couple of foot bridges.

It then flows through a grating and into another pipe to cross beneath the District Line railway embankment.

On the other side of the embankment in Melrose Avenue there is a gap in the terrace of housing between numbers 107 & 109, and in the road

at this point is a pair of unusual manhole covers with open gratings. Running water can clearly be heard flowing in the conduit beneath, so I assume this is the stream. I visited the adjacent parallel roads, namely Braemar Avenue, Normanton Avenue, Alverstone Avenue and Wolseley Avenue and found no similar manhole covers, but each street dipped towards its middle possibly indicating a tiny valley running at right-angles to the roads. In the next street, Durnsford Avenue, there was another manhole cover of the same unusual design as that in Melrose Ave, and on about the right line, but there was no sound of water flowing below.



**4 - course of old river bed at Ravensbury Terrace**

in Ravensbury Terrace. All were approximately on the correct line of the stream.

On the east side of Ravensbury Terrace, near the Haslemere Industrial Estate, there is a large blue hoarding next to a gate into a yard, and opposite this is a strip of rubbish-strewn waste ground which dips down into what looks like an old river bed. This seems to run for some distance between Haslemere Avenue and Ravensbury Road. I had seen this feature before and wondered what it could have been.

I referred to Google Earth and found that there was a stream flowing into the Wandle at this point, and it must have been behind the blue hoarding - in fact you can just see its concrete retaining walls from the

Across Durnsford Road in Mount Road there was another manhole cover of the same design. The next one I found was in Acuba Road near the junction with Mount Road then 2 more in Haslemere Avenue and one on the curve

gate of the adjacent yard. This is exactly on the line of the old river bed mentioned above, which lies on the other side of the road. I have assumed that this is the former course of the stream, which has now been diverted into a pipe under the streets, then released into its former course for the last few yards. The boundary between the parishes of Wimbledon and Wandsworth, and the boundary between the boroughs of Merton and Wandsworth follow the stream at this point between Ravensbury Road and Haslemere Avenue.



**5 - stream joins the Wandle**

By chance I had printed a Sustrans map of the Wandle Trail where it was diverted along Weir Road to avoid the resurfacing work on the riverside path. I noticed that a drain was marked between the end of Dawlish Avenue and

the allotments in Brooklands Avenue,

and I wondered if this could be related to my stream. I established its whereabouts from a local resident, but I was not able to see it. While in Dawlish Avenue, I came across a house in the alley at the end (it is no. 40a) which has been modified for sustainability and which appeared soon afterwards on the list of properties open for London Open House. Unfortunately I was not able to pay a visit on Open House weekend. I had feared that the confluence of the stream and the Wandle would be inaccessible in the surrounding industrial area, but then I realised that the outfall of the stream could be seen from the other side of the Wandle, as Thornsett Road and Groton Road (off Garrett Lane opposite Earlsfield Station) go right up to the river at the precise point where the stream emerges.

I have only referred to a few resources, and I am sure that more can be found to confirm the course of the stream where it is now underground e.g. in the Borough sewer plans, and I have not attempted to trace the stream before the park was landscaped, or indeed the watercourses that feed the lake from the Common. I don't think the stream has a name.

All in all it was a very satisfactory exercise – I did not expect to find as much as I did, but it did take 3 visits to find everything.

#### References

Milward, Richard. Historic Wimbledon, Fielders, 1989

Steiner, N. (2012) Friends of Wimbledon Park project plan detail DRAFT02. Available from: [www.friendsofwimbledonpark.org.uk](http://www.friendsofwimbledonpark.org.uk) (Projects/FOWP Project Plan page 2) [Accessed 20 November 2014]

SITA Trust. (2009) Wimbledon Park Waterfall Garden. Available from: [www.sitatrust.org.uk/projects/waterfall\\_garden](http://www.sitatrust.org.uk/projects/waterfall_garden)) [Accessed 20 November 2014]

Photos: Peter Cousins

Peter Cousins, November 2014

### **Bourne Again !!**

If you recall January and February this year, you will recognise the names of Whyteleafe, Kenley, and Purley. You might even remember why these names are familiar.

The reason why is of course the flooding that occurred because of the flooding of the local Bourne. This rises in the Woldingham Valley during periods of heavy rain, said to occur every seven years and to foretell some catastrophe, thus called the Woe Water.

There are some other Bournes with a similar name and also for the same supposed reason.

Excavation has since been conducted in the Woldingham Valley to create a holding area to reduce flooding in a future event. We have to wait until the next time to find out if it works.

Seven years?

If you know where to look, the route can be seen in the valleys leading



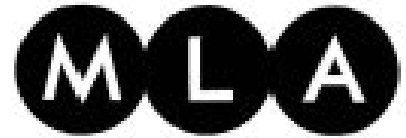
to Purley, and when the Croydon Council refuse depot at Purley Oaks is reached, you will find a deep pond next to it that fills up during periods of heavy rain. In the period to which we are referring a fire tender was used to pump water from this pond to prevent flooding there.

Once beyond the pond there is no more evidence until Wandle Park, where it appears again, this time as the Wandle River.

In chapter one “Introducing the Wandle” of the River Wandle Companion, much geological information is given. Copies of this book can be obtained from the museum. End of the commercial!

My records show that during December 2013, and January and February 2014, there was a total of 554 mm of rain in my garden, admittedly, Selsdon, where I live, is not Woldingham, but it gives some idea of the rain over that period. I only cover the previous eighteen years, but I have never recorded any three month period with such a high rainfall.

Eric Shaw, November 2014



Accredited  
Museum

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

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

**Company No 01792482, Charity No 288655.**

~~~~~

OPEN: Every Wednesday 1 ~ 4 pm;  
Every Sunday 2 ~ 5 pm.

(The Museum may be closed some Bank Holiday weekends)

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

~~~~~

Admission: Adults 50p, Children & Senior Citizens 20p

The Wandle Industrial Museum would like to point out that the views of contributors to this newsletter are not necessarily the views of the Museum. We would be happy to give the right to reply to anyone who finds the content contentious.

All contributions and news items gratefully received and appreciated - please feel free to let us know at any time - telephone or write or email to [ndhart@wandle.org](mailto:ndhart@wandle.org)