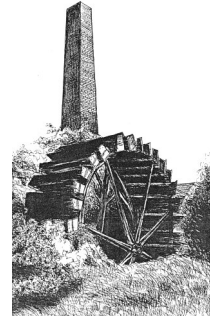


WANDLE INDUSTRIAL MUSEUM



BULLETIN



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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

The Operations Team report and the Dates for the Diary section in this edition of the Bulletin refer to our new exhibition, *Our Leather Industries*, due to open to the public on 9 June. We hope you can get along to see it. The centrepiece will be the decorated and gilded Moroccan hide which featured in Bulletin 119. Since then we have had the hide cleaned professionally and mounted. In the meantime there is still time to see the *Sport along the Wandle* exhibition before we take it down.

We were honoured to receive the certificate pictured on page 3 from the outgoing mayor, Cllr Gill Manly.

We are missing Mick Taylor during his enforced absence from the Museum, but are glad that he continues to work from home, and we wish him a speedy full recovery.

John Sheridan

Cover picture: Detail of a tablecloth made by Thomas Welch of Merton Abbey Printworks in the 19th century. Photo: Sue Pietersen.

Photos: page 1—Auriel Glanville; page 3—Mick Taylor; page 4—Christine Pittman, Sue Pietersen; page 5—John Sheridan, Sue Pietersen; page 6—Alison Cousins; page 9— Mitcham Cricket Green Community and Heritage.

Operations Team Report

Our Spring schedule started well – we cleared everything from the “Offsite Archival Storage” and deposited the silk print screens pro tem in the Chapter House, courtesy of John Hawks. But we must now urgently find a suitable repository for the majority of unidentified items. Those with a clear connection to Osborne & Little have now been photographed thanks to Auriel Glanville and it is hoped that the company will show some interest in archiving them. One such is shown here.



The sections of a nineteenth century metal still from John Jakson & Co have been deposited in what we are told will be a “Zen” garden at the back of the Vestry Hall beside lavender planting (even though we cannot be sure if the equipment was used for lavender or peppermint distilling!) We also rescued a sign from Whitely’s at Ravensbury Mill and a couple of sieves used in the local snuff industry.

A couple of special needs sixth form boys from the Cricket Green School did attend for some work experience, but whereas we had expected at least half a day from them in the morning they turned up for only an hour in the afternoon. Their mathematical skills were put to good use in helping create statistical returns for us and they were encouraged to do tea duties but the school was wary of them using some equipment so their experience may have been limited. We may invite them again nearer the end of term.

But just as everything was flowing well towards Easter Mick Taylor was diagnosed with Postural Hypotension. Having passed out due to a drop in blood pressure he sustained a broken leg and spent several weeks in hospital while the cause of the hypotension was investigated. Thanks to our WhatsApp we have kept in touch regularly and even had a brief meeting around his hospital bed! He is now home but has been advised not to attempt extensive mobility for a few weeks yet. We all wish him a speedy recovery. His absence has inevitably meant a huge disruption to our activities. One or two talks have had to be postponed but John Sheridan has nobly agreed to deliver two of them and Auriel Glanville and John Hawks have agreed to be drafted in to help at events as we are also coming up to volunteers' pre-booked vacations.

Despite being depleted the remaining members of the team have done their best to refresh most of the displays we had planned. The empty fish tank is now full of lavender-related artefacts and appropriately glowing purple. Mick had prepared a new display on Snuff which we duly mounted, and a new display of Liberty & Co's textiles is now in the place of the former lavender area. The display on brewing has also been updated and slightly reduced.

We have been advised that work on the front doors was awaiting the new Council budget so now that we are 6 weeks in we are hopeful that something will happen soon. We had a visit from our Accreditation Mentor, Emma Harper, for which we were joined by our Trustees. Emma is always encouraging and supportive.

To mark the end of her colourful year as Mayor, Councillor Gill Manly created awards to note her gratitude to a variety of people and organisations, and yes, we received one at a reception in Vestry Hall on May 10th. And hot off the press is the news that our Bulletin editor John Sheridan has also won an award. This is from the British Association for Local History for his article on The Origins of the Wandsworth Technical Institute, which appeared in the Autumn edition of *The Wandsworth Historian*. Well done John.

Up and Coming – the opening of our next exhibition on June 8th will feature our local leather industries, but unlike most past years will not be held on the same day as Mitcham Carnival. We attended the UK River Summit held at Morden Hall and are due to attend Croydon Green Day at the Clocktower.

No significant acquisitions were received but we were alerted to an article in the National Railway Museum Review (no. 186 Winter 23/24), seemingly shedding new light on the Surrey Iron Railway. Watch this space!

Alison Cousins



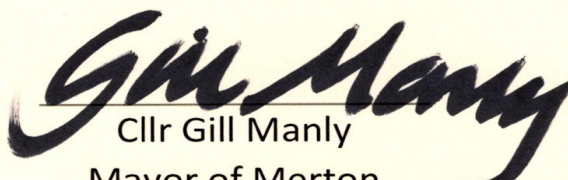
The Worshipful, The Mayor of Merton

This Certificate of Gratitude is awarded to

Wandle Industrial Museum

On May 10th 2024

In recognition of the wonderful work by the members and volunteers of the Wandle Industrial Museum to preserve, store and interpret the heritage and history of the industries and people of the river Wandle.


Cllr Gill Manly
Mayor of Merton

Thomas Welch Tablecloth

Someone who came to one of our industrial heritage walks was a descendant of a calico printer whose works were on our route, and she brought along a tablecloth he made in the 19th century.



The walk was a short one on 19 April from Colliers Wood station, through Wandle Park via Millers Mead, round the back of the former Merton Mill which became Connolly's leather works, back to the High Street along Wandle Bank, then the Morris & Co site and Merton Abbey Mills. There was much to discuss over a short distance.

Before William Morris moved in, Thomas Welch and his sons printed textiles on the Merton High Street site now occupied by Trellis House and Sainsbury's. They were there between 1846 and 1881 and they printed colourful tablecloths, winning an award for their work at the Great Exhibition of 1851. Sue Pietersen, the great great great granddaughter of Thomas Welch, and her husband came from Bristol to see the site of the Welchs' workplace, and to show us the tablecloth and some family papers which authenticate it.





Sue and her husband hold up the tablecloth for inspection by the group in the covered area outside the William Morris pub at Merton Abbey Mills.



The Illustrated Exhibiter and Magazine of Art (1852) contains a description of Welch's process. Vegetable dyes were prepared in large coppers. The cloth was dipped in a mordant solution of tin, stretched on a frame and placed on a table for printing. The table was of stone and was covered with blankets and an oilcloth. Printing was done by hand, using wooden blocks, each block engraved with part of the design and inked with one colour. The printer placed the block carefully on the cloth and tapped it with a "maul" to transfer the colour. One tablecloth (perhaps this one?) was printed using 175 blocks, some used repeatedly so that 1,018 impressions of blocks were required. Once dry, the cloth was taken out of its frame, placed in a steam vat, then washed in the Wandle by means of a rinsing spool. It was then passed through a mordant solution again to fix the colours, rewashed, placed in a hydro-extractor

(a steam-powered spin dryer), stretched out on a frame and hot-pressed to "bring up the face". Welch also produced tablecloths with less complex repeating patterns and only two colours by printing nine yards at a time from a 40 yard length on a long table, rolling the cloth up on a large perforated cylinder to be steamed, then washed and dried as before, and

finally cut to tablecloth size. Welch also produced embossed tablecloths. Morris kept some of Welch's plant and equipment but not the embossing presses, nor the printing blocks: he wrote to his wife that he considered Welch's designs to be "hideous"!

John Sheridan

Volunteer Focus: Alison Cousins



This "wee tyke" (thank you mother!) in a kilt is Alison Margaret Banks aged 4. A show-off even back then. I was born in Merton Park but my father wanted to escape from London so off we went to Sussex where I subsequently went to Rye Grammar School where my moniker was "Banksie" or "Banksey" which I should have copyrighted!!

My mother was a teacher (from Scotland, hence the kilt) and I originally planned to follow suit but chickened out and joined the Civil Service in London, there being limited employment opportunities in Rye. So I worked "up the borough" for about a year but hated it and applied to be a library trainee with the Inner London Education Authority. I soon found myself working in Manresa House, (now Parkstead), on the edge of Richmond Park, which some of us visited a few years ago. But I had to get professionally qualified so enrolled on a brand new course at what is now the Robert Gordon University (back then RGIT) in Aberdeen. I loved the city (pre-oil boom) and it's so sad to see it these days.

On return to London I was appointed to take charge of a small home economics library in a college of education on the edge of Clapham Common. Sadly no culinary skills rubbed off on me and eventually we were forced to close and "merge" with what was then the Polytechnic of the South Bank. Along the way I had got married to an architect and after a few years in Putney and Teddington we moved down to Brighton to a massive Victorian pile with great plans to renovate it. A few years of commuting to Clapham followed but once I had transferred to the Elephant and Castle site this became quite exhausting when I had to do

late duties or teach part-time students until 9pm. My husband eventually decided that an attractive immigrant from Rwanda was around in Brighton more than I was so we parted company and I was left with the (unfinished) house, two cats and two Jack Russell terriers. I had also inherited part of a detached house in Dunfermline, Fife, built by my grandfather, but sadly had to sell.

I had known Peter Cousins for a few years as he had deputised for me on my half days when at Clapham so few people were surprised when we got together and eventually married. We moved back to London – back to Merton Park, in 1986 and would drive in together to the Elephant and Castle every day.

I started off being responsible for library services for all the education courses, then added to which were social sciences, careers guidance, international studies, literature, modern languages and psychology, but mostly law, which was a real learning curve. This involved sitting on course and faculty boards, providing teaching support for student projects, writing endless help sheets and even contributing to a book on study skills (still in print out there on Amazon!!) We progressed from dial-up database searching for journal articles, dependent on live links from the USA, to multiple CDROMs for each subject but for law, a massive immovable metal chest with a built in printer for the first legal database called Lexis. I was also asked to be responsible for supporting disabled and Access course students, doing research for the Vice-Chancellor's department and was elected to become the GMB non-teaching representative on the Board of Governors. As a result I can dish some dirt on a member of the House of Lords and a former member of Kensington & Chelsea council!

I retired in 2007 with great plans to do research into the history of children's literature, but somehow got sidetracked to WIM (just to catalogue the books) and the committee and now co-chair of the John Innes Society in Merton Park. I would like to list my hobbies but volunteering seems to be the main call on my time although gardening is a necessity. Escaping to Edinburgh to our flat (ironically on the site of a former water mill which produced Scott's Porage Original Porridge Oats) is always something to look forward to and indeed is the only time I catch up on anything cultural. I now have a new hip and can cope with all the cobbles along the Royal Mile.



Wandle NEWS

Wandle News is a website dedicated to the River Wandle. It includes information about local wildlife, history, walks, fishing, and places to eat along the river. The idea came about during the pandemic when people were looking for outdoor activities, and businesses were struggling to stay afloat. I wanted to create a website that would help support local businesses along the river whilst providing an easy way for people to find walks and outdoor activities in our local area.

The website has the river Wandle at its centre, and includes detailed descriptions of the 14 mile Wandle Trail, with a map, to help people plan their walks. It also has information about local shops, cafes, pubs and businesses along the river.

We are extremely lucky to have a chalk stream flowing through our area. I hope the website will help to foster a sense of pride in our local river, and encourage people to do what they can to protect it. Since community is very important to me, I also wanted the website to be a place where locals could find meet-ups and activities. It has an events section which advertises river clean-ups, volunteering opportunities, festivals, tours, talks, walks and pub events.

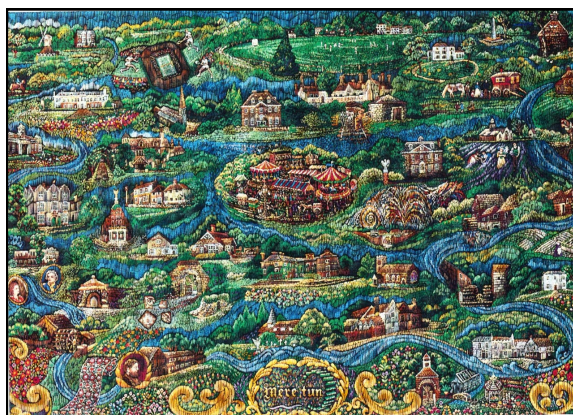
Over the past year, the website has gained a significant following, with over 30,000 visitors in the last month. Wandle News also won the award for Best Start-up Business of the Year at the Wandsworth Business Awards in 2023. I am hoping that it will continue to grow, and raise awareness of the environmental issues affecting our river.

If anyone wants to follow Wandle News, I encourage them to sign up to the newsletter through the website: wandlenews.com

Olivia Herlihy, Editor, Wandle News

Note: views expressed in Wandlenews.com are not necessarily those of the museum.

John Strover



The Merton Tapestry

We were sorry to hear of the death in March of John Strover, Mitcham resident and founding spirit and Chair of Mitcham Cricket Green Community and Heritage. He was a longstanding member and supporter of the museum, and he enjoyed coming to our annual New Year lunches. He commissioned the Merton Tapestry, postcards of which we sell in the museum shop. The original is in the Mayor's Parlour.



Dates for the Diary

Saturday 1 June: Croydon Green Day, Croydon Library. We will be running a stall and distributing leaflets.

Sunday 2 June: Merton Priory Chapter House Museum to reopen. Sundays 11am-4pm to end of October.

Sunday 9 June: The museum's summer exhibition, "Our Leather Industries" opens to the public.

Saturday and Sunday 3-4 August: Deen City Farm 30th anniversary event. We will offer a display.

Until 9 June: The Wandsworth Heritage Festival. Programme here: https://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/media/dj0pclpz/wandsworth_heritage_festival_programme_2024.pdf

Sunday 23 June, 10.30am-5pm: Mitcham Carnival, Three Kings Piece, Mitcham CR4 4HB.

Wednesday 31 July, 6.30pm to dusk: Community on the Green - stalls, a guided walk, refreshments on Mitcham cricket ground.

Saturday 17 August, Merton Discovery Day, Morden Library.

Saturday 14 September, Mitcham Heritage Day.

Saturday 14 to Sunday 29 September, Wandle Fortnight.



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

You can find us on:

