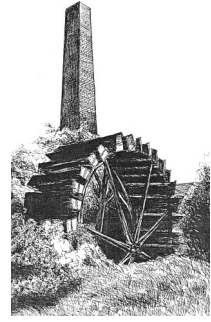


WANDLE INDUSTRIAL MUSEUM



BULLETIN



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WANDLE INDUSTRIAL MUSEUM

PRESIDENT

Harry Galley

TRUSTEES

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

OPERATIONS COMMITTEE

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

Editorial

Welcome to our latest issue of the bulletin. We don't seem to have stopped at the museum. There is always something to do and something to plan. We currently have bookings for our talks into 2023.

Some of this is of course down to our volunteers. In this issue we are introducing a new feature "Volunteer Focus" where we asked Fiona McKelvie to tell us all about herself.

We've included some history, stories and tales for you to enjoy and lastly don't forget to check the dates for the diary page.

Best wishes,
Mick Taylor (Guest Editor)

Cover Picture:

This picture was shared with us by Annemarie Roche, she is the young girl in the picture. It was taken in 1983-4 when she lived in the Fisheries Cottages at Mitcham Bridge. Note that they are looking at the river flowing under the cottage.

Operations Team Report

It was a relief to be able to hold our AGM again in the Vestry Hall on November 18th. It was well attended, although due to a clash with official events, no-one from the Council was able to attend. A significant item of the official business was the motion proposing that fixed entrance charges should be dropped in favour of suggested donations and this was duly passed. Our new Accreditation Mentor, Emma Harper, gave us a presentation on the 2 heritage locations for which she is responsible, namely Mill Green Museum and Welwyn Roman Baths.

In December the whole team joined the meeting of the South East London Museums Group at the museum. This is such a useful group for volunteer-run museums such as ours that it was a pity it was not better attended.



Emma Harper, our Curational Advisor, delivered a talk on her work at the Welwyn Hatfield Museum Service at the AGM



John Hawks thanked all those who attended our New Year lunch at Park Place, Mitcham in January

It was also good to be able to have a “gathering” at the Park Place carvery on January 12th for our New Year lunch with our members and volunteers as well as 2 of our Trustees. Thanks to Roger Steele for impeccable organisation, as ever.

At the end of last year Alison Cousins subscribed to a series of talks on good practice in the collection of oral histories organised by the Archives and Records Association. Adding more such recordings is also part of our long-term aims.

Mick Taylor started this year with a talk on “The Calico People” to 66 members of the Dorking Local History Group and to the Wimbledon WI on the work of the museum. This subject is fast becoming one of our most popular.

The Operations Team is already updating the documentation required for this year's Accreditation renewal. One of our aims in its Forward Plan is a promise to improve the exterior of the museum. Following "Changing the View" in 2019, we now have 3 new panels (see picture below) for the north side, consisting of our logo, edge runners, and a swathe of lavender. This being the side nearest the road, we hope they will provide a good impact.



Our newest Trustee was officially appointed. He is John Harding, who is a resident of Merton Park and who has worked in museums prior to retirement and who currently volunteers at Hampton Court Palace. He will bring considerable expertise to the museum.

Yet more equipment needed repairs – the boiler needed a pump replaced and so we had to rely on borrowed space heaters for a couple of weeks. Many thanks to John Hawks for his help. The external security light also failed to work properly and needed adjustment.

We added a copy of "Liberty: the architect's edit", thanks to volunteer Fiona McKelvie who alerted us to it and facilitated its purchase, for which we are very grateful. The importance of an archive such as Liberty's is immense as it dates from 1875 and has been the inspiration for many modern designers. We shall no doubt make frequent reference to this lovely book.

We also received a donation of "Robert Sadler and the Copenhagen Running Grounds, Garratt Lane." – a very specific account of a local athletics facility.

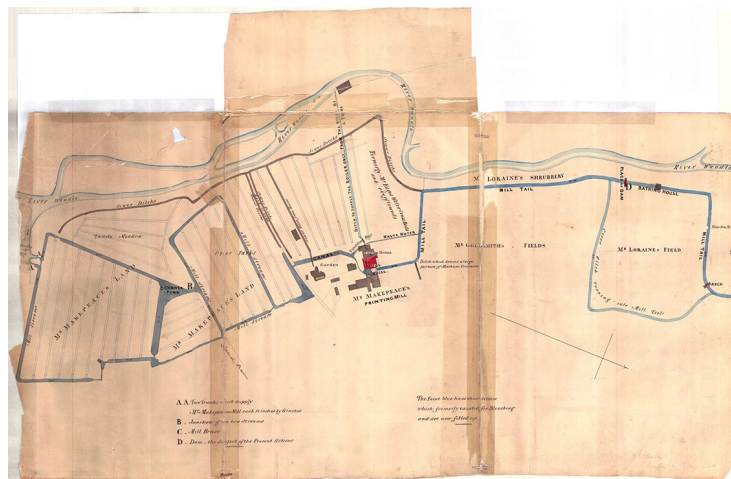
We have added some Paisley pattern face masks to our merchandise at £4 each which are selling well.

We have just received Mary Hart's collection of printing blocks which she has bequeathed to the museum. More unexpectedly, many beautiful Liberty scarves have also been donated. Further details will be in the next bulletin once this collection has been catalogued.

Child labour in the Wandle Mills

A calico printing works in Mitcham formed part of the evidence base for the passage of the 1847 “Ten Hours Act”, which regulated the employment of children in textile mills.

Child labour was routine in the poorer population in the 19th century. In the 1840s a royal commission investigated children’s working conditions in mines, factories and mills. The commission’s representatives visited workplaces and conducted interviews nationwide. One such workplace was Makepeace’s calico printing works at Willow Lane, Mitcham. The map below shows the Makepeace works at the time of one of his many disputes with neighbours.



The commission’s representative, Mr R D Grainger, interviewed Edward Merritt, aged 11, William Fletcher, 13, and Elizabeth Fletcher, 12. He did not interview Mr Makepeace.

The children were “tierers” - wood block printers’ assistants, who smoothed the cloth and the surface of the dye, which had the consistency of soft mud. The dye was held in a tray with a sieve or mesh on the surface, on a trolley. Tierers walked alongside the printer up and down the printing table with the trolley, as he applied his block to the dye and printed a repeated pattern on the cloth.

The children’s normal shift was 6am to 6pm, with breaks of half an hour for breakfast and an hour for dinner. If the workload was pressing they would work overtime, occasionally until midnight or even all night. The business was uncertain, and the children could be extremely busy or laid off for weeks at a time.

Edward did not find the work tiring, although the printing room became very hot in the summer. William said it was hard work for the arms. Elizabeth found the standing very tiring. On the day of her interview she had a severe inflammation of the eye, made worse by her having rubbed it with dye-stained fingers.

The children were employed by the printers they assisted, with the exception of William who was paid by Mr Makepeace. Their basic pay was 5 shillings per week which went to their parents. The boys were allowed a few pennies spending money, but Elizabeth's father gave her nothing.

Mr Grainger established that the children could read and write very little. They attended Sunday school sporadically.

None of the children had been beaten at work, although Edward said he might get a box on the ear if he neglected his work.

Mr Grainger concluded that on average children started work in factories in London aged eleven and worked for 12 hours a day, although overtime was common. Ventilation was generally neglected. A few brief holidays were allowed, at Christmas, Easter, Whitsuntide and possibly for local fairs. Most occupations did not impair health, although lucifer match making was cited as an exception.

The 1847 Act was passed despite opposition from some mill owning interests. Fears that the 10 hour daily working limit would reduce competitiveness proved groundless.

A longer version of this article is available upon request.

John Sheridan

Notes:

1. The word 'Tierers' is French and may have originated with the Huguenots who brought their printing skills to England.
2. Makepeace was at "The Willows" between 1824 and 1845. Our logo is of the chimney and waterwheel that existed at the works.
3. Edward Merritt along with his children went on to work for Morris & Co at Merton Abbey.

Volunteer Focus



I'm Fiona McKelvie and I worked for Liberty of London Prints Ltd., the wholesale division of Liberty plc for 15 years until the late 1990s. I was Export Sales Manager, selling Liberty's range of fabrics and accessories all over the world. I have always had an interest in textiles; my particular passion is for Irish Linen and today I deal in antique and vintage fine linens via my website www.mcburneyandblack.com.

Living in Wandsworth I have always been interested in the rich history of the textile industry along the River Wandle and, after attending a block printing demonstration at the Wandle Industrial Museum some years ago, I decided to offer my services as a volunteer for the museum.

With my textile background, particularly with Liberty, I knew that I would be able to lend my textile knowledge to the important work of the museum. The Merton printworks was no longer owned by Liberty by the time I joined the company, but many of my colleagues had connections to the printworks going back generations, so I was always aware of the importance of the river to the community in the area.

As well as being a WIM volunteer I enjoy sharing my interest in textiles through talks to groups both locally and internationally. More recently, since the beginning of the pandemic, I have been delivering these online.

You'll find me in the museum on Sunday afternoons once a month or so and, whilst I can't claim to be hugely knowledgeable about snuff mills or the Surrey Iron Railway, I'll am always happy to welcome visitors and share my textile knowledge with them. I'll be the one sitting on the William Morris fabric covered stool in the shop area stitching a William de Morgan needlepoint.

Planned Visit to Welwyn Hatfield Museum Service Mill Green Museum & Working Mill

The museum is organising a visit for members and volunteers to this working mill in Hatfield. We are looking to make the visit during May 2022. The exact day and date is dependent upon how many wish to attend.



If you would like to join us please email office@wandle.org or telephone the museum on 020 8648 0127. Please state the names and contact details of those who wish to join us.

A Lifeboat Story

How can a lifeboat be linked to the River Wandle? We were contacted by a John Vistuer. He was researching the history of the lifeboat named Jane Hannah MacDonald III which saw service in North Devon from 1910 to 1922. In May 1940, along with many other small boats, it helped rescue troops from Dunkirk.

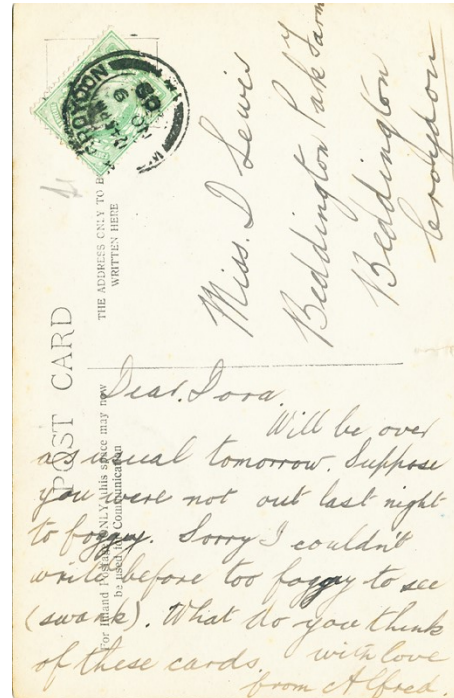
The boat is named after Jane Hannah MacDonald who was the wife of Friend Williamson. He was a partner in the Morden Hall Snuff Mills with William Tomlin and Alexander Hatfeild hence the link to the River Wandle industries.

Find more about this story at

[Dunkirk 'little ship' returns 'home' to North Devon - BBC News](#)

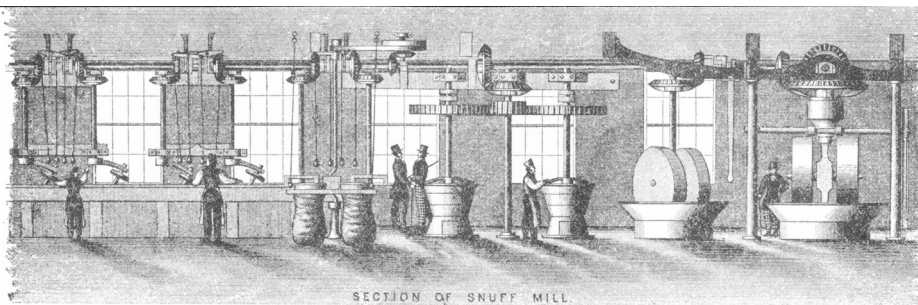
A Delightful Ending

As many of you are aware we use Social Media to promote the museum. Currently on a Thursday we share one of the many postcards we have. In January we shared this postcard:



The card is written by Alfred to Dora. Kelly Jones, one of our followers, tells us that Dora and Alfred married on 30th November 1912. Dora, in 1909, was working as a servant in a small household at Beddington Park Farm. Kelly would like to know the location of the farm. Any idea?

The Snuffers



The sale of nearly Four Hundred Tons of Richardson's Rappoe, within a few years, has induced us to build a new Snuff Mill at Spylaw, Colinton, combining the most improved methods of snuff grinding both on the Scotch and English systems. Our Rappoe is manufactured from a selection of Tobacco grown in every quarter of the world, and will be found an agreeable pungent pinch.

Manufactory
105 West Bow
Edinburgh

Richardson Brothers
Snuff Manufacturers in Scotland,
to Her Majesty Queen Victoria
and His Royal Highness Prince Albert

How would the inside of any of the snuff mills along the Wandle compare to this version of a snuff mill in Edinburgh?



Dates for the Diary

Open Talks:

24th March 2022 at 7:30pm

Mills of the River Wandle

Venue: Honeywood House, Carshalton

Booking needed see <https://friendsofhoneywood.co.uk/events.html#>

There is a charge for this event.

17th May 2022 at 10:30am

The Changing Face of the Wandle

Venue: West Barnes Library, Motspur Park

Booking needed via [Eventbrite.co.uk](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk)

Free

30th May 2022 at 6:30pm

The Wandle and Its Sporting Links

Venue: Earlsfield Library

This is part of Wandsworth Heritage Festival

Free

Walks:

8th June at 2pm

Earlsfield Station to Wandsworth

Meet at the station.

Booking email john.sheridan08@gmail.com

This is part of Wandsworth Heritage Festival.

Free

Celebrating Frank Kitz, Socialist and friend of William Morris

18th March 2022 at 2pm

Follow in Kitz's footsteps in London

Meet Leicester Square Station

See <https://summerstown182.wordpress.com/> for details

9th April 2022 at 2pm

Made in Merton will lead a procession which will end with an unveiling of a plaque for Frank Kitz

Meet Colliers Wood Station

See <https://summerstown182.wordpress.com/> for details

Exhibitions

Until 16th April 2022

The Wandle Mills: changing industry and technology 1650-1850 and The Wandle Wardrobe

Venue: Honeywood House, Carshalton

See <https://friendsofhoneywood.co.uk/index.html>

Free

2nd/3rd April and 9th/10th April 2022 11am-4pm

River Culture Art Exhibition

Venue: The Chapter House, Chapter Way, SW19

Free

Merton Abbey Mills Waterwheel

The museum received the following email from Stephen Llewellyn at the end of January:

Very happy to let you know that our great waterwheel is turning at last, pensioner-power at it's best! After some hours in the water and a lot of heaving and struggling and bruised fingers the sluice is fully repaired allowing the wheel to turn. The public have enjoyed hearing it turn at last, it has been much missed. So, all round good news.

Best wishes Steve and Claire (Wandle Heritage and Wheelhouse Potters.)



Claire can be seen here clearing the broken wood of the sluice gate from the waterwheel.



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

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.



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.



Free Admission

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:

