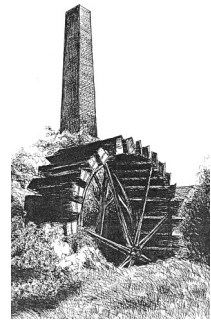


WANDLE INDUSTRIAL MUSEUM



BULLETIN



Contents

Operations Team Report	1
George Bidder—The Calculating Boy	2
The Summerstown Strike	3
Photographic Competition	4
Mary Hart	5
Charles A Toase	6
A Welcome Return	7
Wandle Art Festival	8
Greeting Cards	
Dates for the Diary	9

WANDLE INDUSTRIAL MUSEUM

PRESIDENT

Harry Galley

TRUSTEES

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

OPERATIONS COMMITTEE

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

Editorial

Summer is here or at least it was for a week! Welcome to this next copy of our bulletin. We look at the contribution that Mary Hart made to the museum and at that of local historian Charles A Toase.

John Sheridan gives us an insight into the fight for women's rights in the Summerstown Strike of 1908 and we have all the usual news for you.

Check out the *Dates for the Diary*. There are a number of things happening in August and September that you may well enjoy. Of course don't forget that the Chapter House at Merton Abbey is now open on a Sunday so why not get along and find out what has been going on.

Best wishes,
Mick Taylor (Guest Editor)

Cover Picture:

This is John Hawks' tribute to the late Mary Hart and her contribution to the Merton Priory Chapter House. As John puts it "She was in her element in this unique, decidedly wacky place, and will always be remembered as the Priory's Mother Superior! ".

Operations Team Report

Since reopening on May 19th visitor numbers have been fairly disappointing, with the exception of course during the Wandle Art Festival when it had never actually been the intention of opening up the museum. But having opened the double door to facilitate exhibitors transporting their crates, and with the mayor showing considerable interest, who were we to deny subsequent footfall. (More of the Festival elsewhere in this Bulletin)

Mick Taylor gave Zoom talks to the Friends of Honeywood on May 27th, covering the Calico industry and the Huguenot connections, and to the Wandsworth Society on June 25th, on the People of the Wandle. He also spoke to the Wimbledon Guild on July 7th, giving them a general background to the Wandle industries. Alison Cousins also gave an online talk to the Friends of Honeywood, this time on The Wandle Portrayed (art and literature) , on July 22nd.

The annual Community on the Green evening event on July 28th was limited to stalwarts such as the organisers (The Mitcham Cricket Green Community and Heritage) plus The Canons Project, and us. The planned cricket match was cancelled and the wonderful Morris Dancing was curtailed due to what the MCGCH described as “the odd downpour”. We got soaked to the skin – never mind Covid-19, a bout of pneumonia seemed more likely.

Members of the Dorking Historical Society visited the museum on July 29th (Roger and Mick had more or less dried off by then) and afterwards walked to Morden Hall Park, through Ravensbury Park, taking in the “improvements” at Mitcham Bridge.

Alison Cousins took part in the latest South & East Museums Group meeting – sadly only 2 other museums joined in. There was a presentation by Mirka Kotulikova of Arts Council England on project grants. It was clear that ACE is looking at museums to widen their existing ideas of cultural activities in outreach, which is exactly what we are trying to do.

We are also planning for the return of the Discovery Day event at Merton Civic Centre, on Saturday August 21st. We shall have our usual stall, and offering block printing as well. Please come and support this annual event.

We have a school block printing workshop and visit booking for next term from Date Valley School, on the edge of the Cricket Green, the first of such for many months.

Our shop is looking well stocked with wonderful new face masks in various Liberty fabrics, donated by Portia Dadley and her colleagues and a selection of new cards taken from the unique illustrations of Victor Hine.

Alison Cousins

The Mirror of Literature, Amusement, and Instruction: containing Original Essays.....etc. Vol. 7. London : J. Limbird, 1826.

This book is too delicate to subject it to a scan and the page in question a bit foxed. It was found among the gems of the collection of the late Peter McGow.

George Bidder, the Calculating Boy.
(To the Editor of The Mirror)

SIR, - I was in company a short time since with Mr. Bidder, the celebrated calculator, when a gentleman who was present, willing to give his extraordinary powers an opportunity of displaying themselves, put the following question to him : - How many pinches of snuff have I taken within the last twenty years of my life, supposing I have taken a pinch every five minutes ? After about the same period of time had elapsed as the gentleman had occupied in stating his question, Bidder gave him the answer, which consisted of not a few places of figures.

He was then requested to name the quantity taken, supposing every pinch to weigh a grain, which he did on the instant, to the great delight and astonishment of his auditory. Several very intricate questions were then put to him, which would require an immense number of figures in their solution, in the common mode of reckoning, all of which were answered immediately without the slightest hesitation; and all found on trial to be *quite correct*.

This extraordinary personage is now grown up to manhood, with his astonishing gift rather increased than diminished.

Alison Cousins

The Summerstown Strike



In the summer of 1908 some 44 women and girls employed at the Corruganza Box Works, Summerstown, went on strike over an imposed reduction in their pay. After a month of stalemate, an agreement was reached and the strikers returned to work. Their story was one of the successful use of industrial strength, public relations and leadership, and of a management which was taken by surprise by its young, uneducated female workforce and forced to back down – or so it seemed. The dispute began in July 1908 in the tube rolling, cutting and gluing department. Mr Stevenson, the new manager, ordered a cut in wages for the rolling, cutting and gluing piecework undertaken by the women and girls who worked in the department. His justification was that the price of cylindrical cardboard boxes for incandescent gas mantles had fallen by 75%.

The forewoman of the department protested and was summarily dismissed. The workers went on strike, demanding her reinstatement and withdrawal of the pay cuts. Mary Macarthur (1880-1921), secretary of the Women's Trade Union League and founder and leader of the National Federation of Women Workers, arrived to support the strikers. She organized peaceful picketing of the works, publicised the dispute in her monthly newspaper *The Woman Worker*, arranged sympathetic coverage in the national and local press, and organized a procession and demonstration at Trafalgar Square on Saturday 22 August to raise strike funds.

After a period of stalemate, a conciliator appointed by the Board of Trade secured an agreement to end the dispute. The Times reported on 3 September that both sides had made concessions. The firm disputed this, claiming that they had secured the pay cuts they had originally intended

for the manufacture of boxes for gas mantles, and had not proposed any other pay cuts. Mary Macarthur responded (*The Times*, 22 September) that the strike had succeeded in resisting pay cuts for other work.

The fullest published account of the settlement appeared in the *London Daily News* on 3 September. Pay cuts would only apply to gas mantle box-making, gluing piecework was to be discontinued and a new system of gluing adopted, pay for other work would remain the same as before, and workers would be given a fair proportion of higher paying work. There was no mention of any cuts in the workforce.

The firm might have regarded its assertion of control over the organisation and management of the work as a victory in itself. It is not clear what proportion of the department's output was gas mantle boxes, or by how much pay changed in practice, but at all events the reporting of the dispute indicates that "spin" is not a modern invention, and that Mary Macarthur had the last word.

The Corruganza name was discontinued in 1920. The company in various forms following mergers and acquisitions remained on the site until 1989.

The centenary of Mary Macarthur's death fell in January 2021. A downloadable pdf exhibition of her life and work, curated for the TUC by her biographer Dr Cathy Hunt, is available here:
<https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-12/LifeofMaryMacarthurTUCLibraryExhibition.pdf>

Illustration courtesy of TUC Library Collections at London Metropolitan University.

Photographic Competition

The Historic Photographer of the Year competition may be of interest. "Historic Photographer of the Year calls on photographers from around the globe to explore and capture the very best historic places and cultural sites that the world has to offer. "
More info at: <https://www.historicphotographeroftheyear.com/>

Mary Hart 1948 - 2021



Many of us will have been touched by the sad passing of Mary Hart in May. Introduced to the museum by her neighbour Meg Thomas in 1997 Mary went on to play an active and important role at the museum.

When Andrew Wakefield took over the role of Chair from the late Peter Harris in 2000 Mary was invited, and accepted, the role of membership secretary. With her background in fashion and textile chemistry she was also able to fill the role of Museum block printer. A role Peter had also fulfilled until his passing in 1999.



Over the next 15 years she made changes that improved the workshops that were held for schools and other groups. This involved moving away from the children and others bringing along their own material to be printed on to providing simple polycotton sheets provided by the museum. She also sourced smaller blocks from the V&A that were based on William Morris patterns. These replaced the larger blocks that the children, as young as 5 or 6, found difficult to hold. At first the printed material had to be left to dry before it could be taken away. Mary came up with a method that enabled the printed material to be taken straight away much to the delight of the children. All of these changes are still in place today and used by the museum printing team.

In her role as membership secretary, she also looked after our volunteers. Mary would arrange the food at our Christmas party, the AGM and our volunteer lunches. She would call round to the volunteers to ensure they would get something that they would enjoy eating. At our annual exhibition opening she would make a cake to present to the Mayor of Merton for a topping based on the theme of the exhibition. She also ensured each volunteer would receive a birthday and Christmas card.

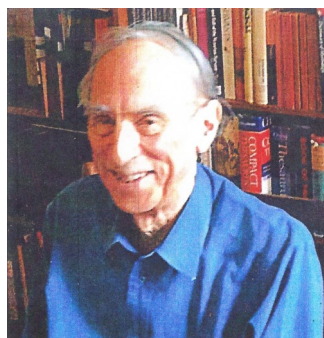


Despite making the decision to step back from a full role at the museum in 2016 she still continued to operate in the background offering support and advice.

A full article, written by her husband Nicholas, will appear on our website and you can also learn more about Mary by visiting a tribute page to her at:

<https://mary-hart-2021.muchloved.com/>

Charles A. Toase 1927 – 2021



We have lost another local historian with the death on 5th July of Charles Toase, who was for many years the Reference Librarian at Wimbledon Library. He was also one of the longest serving members of

the Wimbledon Society and Chairman of its Local History Group as well as being on the committee of the Museum of Wimbledon.

His most recent book was published in 2018 - "A-Z of Wimbledon", his other main work being "Wimbledon : a historical glimpse". He also edited a few county guides for the British Library, for whom he was also an advisor, and edited a bibliography of British newspapers.

He leaves behind a huge collection of files which will no doubt provide valuable sources for future local historians and researchers.

However, for ex-librarians such as myself, he will forever be associated with a series of guides to reference books to alert the busy professionals to new publications they may have missed. These contributions ran from 1980 to 2003. His approach was very critical and he felt very strongly about works which he considered added no new material or fell well below an acceptable professional standard. In 1981 he even produced a list of those as "some you may have been glad to miss". He had an eye for detail but always seemed to find an element of humour in his reviews.

Charles was originally chartered in 1955 and was later given an Honorary Fellowship of the Library Association (now CILIP).

We now know that his wife Mary has also recently died, and so our condolences go to their daughter Alison.

Alison Cousins

A Welcome Return

Harry Galley, and I made a special visit to the new home ground of AFC Wimbledon in Plough Lane for a pre-season friendly against Brentford in July. It was a lovely sunny day and we parked the car in nearby Weir Road which has access to the Wandle Trail. We walked along the shady path of the Wandle Trail until we reached Plough Lane.

As most local people will know the former Dons home was on the corner of Plough Lane and Durnsford Road. In fact there was an illustration of the old Plough lane ground on the original WIM Wandle Trail map first produced in 1988. (Time to update the map !!!) On the day Dons lost 0-1 but it didn't matter. It was just good to be home again. COYD (Come on you Dons)



Ray Leyden

Wandle Art Festival

Having lost the opportunity in 2019 and 2020 for our annual event we wanted to be able to hold something in 2021. Of course, we were still in the middle of the pandemic with restrictions in place. To play safe, hopefully, we opted for an outside event and decided to hold an art festival. The government timetable for lifting of restrictions meant it looked good for July. Having gone for the 10th and 11th July we asked for anyone who was artistic to express an interest in taking part. A number came forward and some decided after speaking to us to take part.



The Mayor receives the traditional cake from our chair Father David Pennells.



The Mayor with the “The Dreaming River Band”

The festival was opened by Mayor of Merton Cllr Michael Brunt. As well as the various artists displaying their work, we also had presentations, poetry readings and live music from our own group ‘The Dreaming River Band’. Joe Walinets from the group had opened the festival with his own composition “The Wandle Song”.

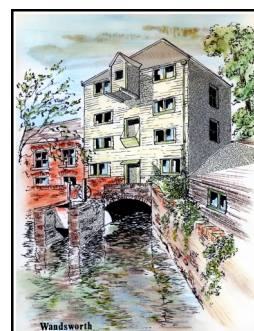
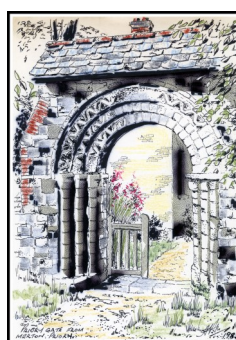
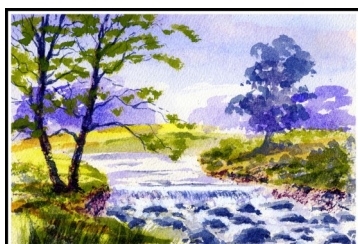
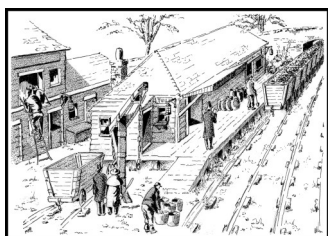
The weather, despite light rain during set-up on the first morning, was kind to us. A number of people, including the Mayor wanted to go round the museum. Something we hadn’t planned for. While the footfall wasn’t large we had a steady flow. We were competing with the Men’s singles final at Wimbledon on day two and the Euro 2020 football final.

Our thanks have to go to all our volunteers who helped over the two days and to all the speakers, artists and the band for helping the event go off successfully. We now need to decide if we should have another festival next year?

Mick Taylor (photos by Auriel Glanville)

Victor Hine Greeting Cards

As Alison indicated in the Ops Team report we now have available greeting cards showing the art work of Victor Hine. The inspiration for this came from a comment on Facebook by a Joan Ahern who said “Many of his water colours would make lovely greeting cards and perhaps a way of raising money for the museum.” Available at £3.00 per card.



Top: Cascade in Grove Park.

Left top: What the SIR depot at Mitcham may have looked like.

Right: Crown Pub and Mitcham Station

Above: The Cascade, Grove Park, Carshalton.

Left: Priory Gateway, St. Mary's, Merton Park.

Right: Upper Mill, Wandsworth

Dates for the Diary

21st August 2021 Merton Heritage Discovery Day

The event will be taking place between 12 and 4pm. Over 20 organisations will be there including the museum. We will have a stall and be holding a block printing session (booking required). More information at www.merton.gov.uk/heritage

11th September 2021 Mitcham Heritage Day

The museum will be open from 9:30am until 5pm. There will be talks about the textile industry and the methods used for printing at 10am and 3pm.

11th – 26th September 2021 Wandle Fortnight

Our volunteers John Sheridan will be leading three walks as part of Wandle Fortnight. These will take place on 14th Sept—Earlsfield to Wandsworth, 19th Sept—Morden Hall Park to The Chapter House, 23rd Sept—Colliers Wood to Earlsfield. All walks start at 11am. Book your place by emailing john.sheridan08@gmail.com.



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.

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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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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 office@wandle.org

You can find us on:

