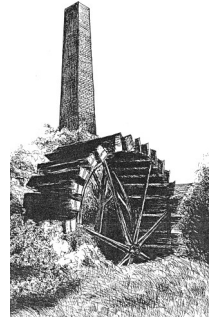


# WANDLE INDUSTRIAL MUSEUM



# BULLETIN

**celebrating**

## The Wandle Trail

Featuring  
Watermeads · Ravensbury Park · Morden Hall Park

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**WANDLE INDUSTRIAL  
MUSEUM  
Founded in 1983**

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# Editorial

Welcome to this special edition of our bulletin to celebrate 30 years since the first 'official' Wandle Trail walk on 18th September 1988.

Looking through the pages you will learn about some of the earlier walks that took place, what people have had to say about the trail and the river, the maps that have been produced since the first Wandle Trail map, and what is happening on 16th September in celebration of the first walk.

I hope that you will find this look back of interest.

Best wishes,  
*Mick Taylor*

***Cover Picture:***

*A book produced by the museum. This A4 book produced in the late 1980s covered just part of the Wandle Trail.*

## The Foundations of the Wandle Trail



The museum was founded in 1983. By 1984 it was producing guides and leading walks along parts of the Wandle. In August 1984 Stephen Ashcroft, at that time a trustee of the museum, wrote to the Local Guardian newspaper about the loss of historical materials from the arch in Station Road, Merton Abbey. At the end of the letter he encouraged people to learn more by 'going on the next guided walk along the river on September 9'. This therefore indicates that walks had already taken place.

The cutting on the right, taken from 'Wimbledon News' 24th July 1987 reinforces the museum's desire to continue its existing programme of walks and calling for volunteers to help. Walks taking place on a Sunday afternoon during the summer.

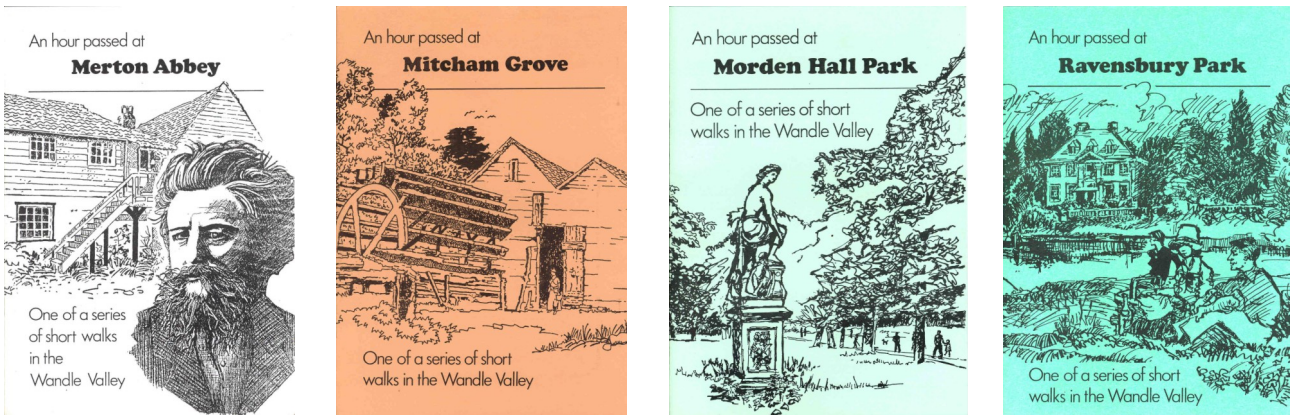
In January 1988, also in the Wimbledon News, the announcement is made that the museum was issuing four guides during the coming year. The first of these was 'An Hour Passed at Merton Abbey'. Three more followed:

- An Hour Passed at Ravensbury Park.
- An Hour Passed at Morden Hall Park.
- An Hour Passed at Mitcham Grove.

### BRIEFLY

A SERIES OF guided walks along the banks of the River Wandle has been organised by Wandle Industrial Museum.

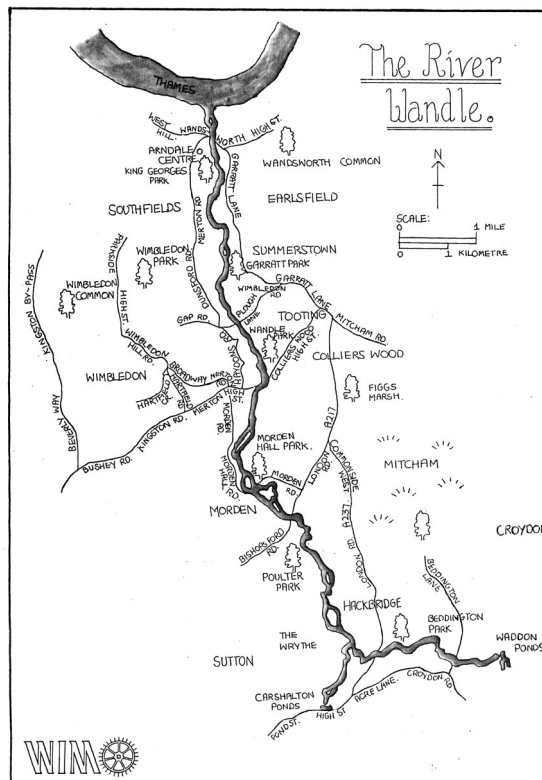
The museum is looking for volunteers with an interest and knowledge of local history to take the walks on Sunday afternoons throughout the summer. If you can help phone curator Pam Gimlett on 540 2406.



The set of four 'An Hour Passed' books produced by the Wandle Industrial Museum in 1988. These are still available today from the museum and appear from time to time on Amazon.

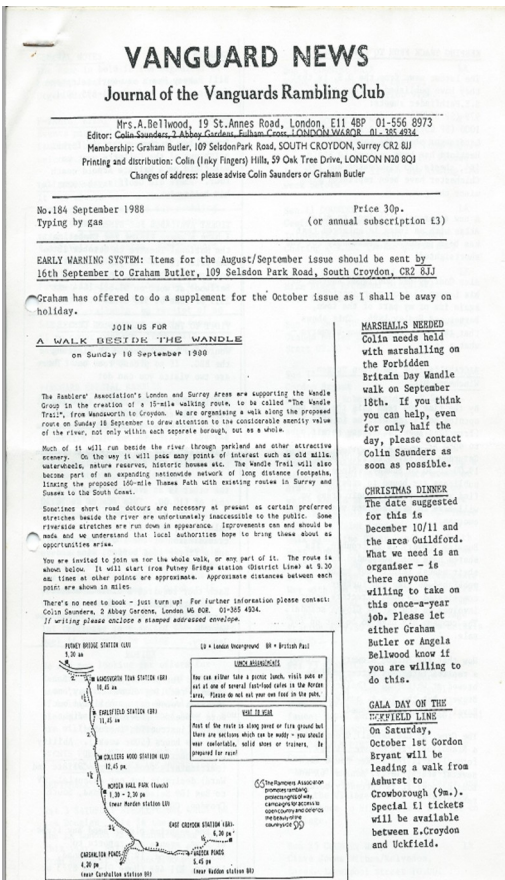
Around the same time as the 'An Hour Passed' books were announced the museum said it was working with the London Tourist Board to produce a Wandle "Heritage Trail" by the summer.

In fact the first map produced by the museum is the one shown below. Drawn in 1984 it proved to be the foundation that the "Heritage Trail" was based on.



By September 1988 the first copies of 'The Wandle Trail: A Heritage Walk by the River Wandle' was available. Not that it had an easy introduction!

In September 1988 as the Vanguard Ramblers Association issue of their newsletter (shown below) gave details of a walk along the River Wandle



saying that there were many points of interest, that the walk would form part of a nationwide network and there would be road detours. It was also to start from Putney Bridge Station. The last comment made was 'no need to book just show up' and show up they did! On the 18th September and led by Colin Saunders over 200 people turned up. As well the Vanguard newsletter there was publicity in Time Out and also on LBC Radio which would have helped swell the number of walkers.

Also arriving hot off the press was the first 'Wandle Trail' map and copies were given to everyone on the walk.

At the halfway point the group were spread out over a mile and it took 20 minutes for everyone to reach it. The walk had been scheduled to finish at East Croydon Station at 6:30pm. It had started at 9:30am.

## They said What!

Since the walk of 18th September 1988 people have continued to discover the River Wandle and the Wandle Trail. The following is some of the things that have appeared.

### 6th June 1990

Merton Council produced a paper outlining its plans for the Wandle Trail. These included (1) Trail/Landscaping Scheme, (2) Bridges and Seating, and (3) Signposts and Information. The budget identified was around £100k.

### Summer 1990

Roger Beard writing in the Telegraph whilst praising the Wandle Trail highlighted issues at the Earlsfield/Wandsworth element of the walk:

- 'The lower Wandle yields a rich harvest of old prams, bikes and bedsteads.'

- You ‘*run the risk of guard dogs and irate owners*’.
- The river is ‘*becoming the town drain*’.

### September 1991

In a copy of Merton Messenger Gene Saunders started his piece with the words of William Blake “England’s green and pleasant land ..... Obviously William Blake visited Merton and walked the banks of the Wandle”

In the same article the advert below appeared.

## Join the Wandle trail

<p>A walk along the full length of the Wandle has been arranged for next Saturday, 12 October. It will start from Putney Bridge District Line Station, 9.30am, and finish at East Croydon around 6.00pm.</p> <p>If you don't feel up to the full distance you can join the party at Merton Abbey Mills around 1.30pm if you want to join them for lunch. There will then be a sightseeing</p>	<p>break before the walk continues at around 3.00pm.</p> <p>The walk is a joint venture organised by the Ramblers' Association, the Vanguards Rambling Club and the Wandle Group.</p> <p>If you are interested and want more information contact Graham Butler on 081 657 4150 (evenings) or Colin Saunders 081 686 0443, or meet them at Putney Bridge or the Mills.</p>
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The **Local Guardian** newspaper on 12th September covered a earlier walk led by the Ramblers Association where 90 people had turned up. The walk went from Morden Underground Station to Carshalton.

### October 1994

The **Wandsworth Guardian** carried a letter from three local residents. They asked if the ‘*Wandle Trail could be extended to encompass the length of the river*’. They also highlighted that the ‘*banks need cleaning but hope the “wild” feel would remain*’.

### Summer 1998

Meg Thomas, then curator at the Wandle Industrial Museum, led a walk that caused a problem for a local resident in Watermead Lane, Mitcham. ‘*As the group grew larger one local resident became a little concerned at the extra noise and people gathering near his riverside cottage but as we did not appear to be a group of vandals, I think age was against us, he was reassured.*’

By now a number of different groups were walking the Wandle Trail. One was the Merton Historical Society and their walk, led by the late Eric Montague, was captured by Judith Goodman for their December 2000 Bulletin. It included both the good and bad for the trail.

Eric told the group of 24 that *'construction and signposting began in the 1970s and there is now a clearly marked path from Waddon to Wandsworth'*. He decried the behaviour of some of the people along the trail *'Pity Merton's interpretation panels have been vandalised'*. He also highlighted a change that had taken place at Morden Hall Park *'Tramlink's new level crossing has replaced the 100 year old footbridge that crossed the railway line of 1855'*.

## July 2006

Sheila Prophet in the London Property Section of the Telegraph Newspaper spoke of the *'proposal for Youngs site and the Wandle Delta', 'the river's signposted heritage trail', 'Wandle Trust, which unearths skiploads of rubbish each month', and 'now it has been cleaned up people love the idea of owning a riverside home'*.

The last few years have seen the development of the National Cycle Network - Sustrans. The Wandle Trail is given by their website as being part of Route 22 yet looking at their maps it in fact shown as Route 20. There must be a good reason for this?

Part of the Wandle Trail is the **'Wandle Art Trail'**. Funded by the Arts Council, Groundwork Merton, Merton BC, London Institute, Wandsworth BC, SEED Programme Bridge House Estates Trust, RSA Art and Architecture and Sustrans. Andrew Sabin was appointed as the lead artist in June 2002 to develop an overarching artistic vision for the route, his proposals focused on looking closely at the river. He, along with a team of other artists, created a series of entrances, gateways and bridges.



Bridge across the river at Watercress Park, Mitcham.



Sustrans Route Marker in Ravensbury Park.

## **Recalling a Recent Walk Along The Wandle Trail**

*By Norma Cox*

On Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> June 2018, a party of about dozen members of Merton Historical Society and friends were taken on a Wandle walk, led by Mick Taylor of the Wandle Industrial Museum. The walk started at the Watermeads near Mitcham Bridge and finished at Honeywood museum Carshalton, a distance of 2.5 miles. This walk was the second Wandle walk for Merton Historical Society, last year the first walk along the Wandle started at Mitcham tram station and finished at the Sainsbury's in Colliers Wood (once called the Savacentre) (1).

On the day it was not possible to enter the Watermeads due to a faulty bridge in the Watermeads , so the walk proceeded along the footpath which ran along the Watermeads edge, the footpath is known as the Wandle trail (2). It was impossible to see the Wandle here due to the high hedge on the Watermeads side of the footpath (East side). On the West side of the path was a Sports Centre. Eventually the hedge ended and the river Wandle appeared, crystal clear this chalk river looked sylvan, edged by willow- trees and bushes along its bank. This was at the nature reserve of Bennetts Hole and further to the West was Poulters Park. On the East bank of the Wandle, some industrial buildings could be seen in the Willows Industrial site. The Wandle here had two channels because the river had been changed by the mill owners to direct water to their mills. The mills were a Logwood mill on the East bank and Mitcham mill situated on an island which had formed by the added river-channel. By 1884 these two mills became Eagle Leather Works (3). The footpath which hugged the West bank of the river Wandle, ventured south towards Goat Bridge. Just before the bridge the footpath became part of Watermeads Lane and on the West side of Watermeads Lane was a row of cottages which were probably connected with the Wandle Tannery which was situated on land at the end of the cottage terrace. The foot path rose up an incline to reach Goat Bridge. Using the pedestrian crossing was essential to cross the road here as Middleton Road was extremely busy. On the South side of Goat Bridge the walk stopped so that the group could look at the view of the Wandle. The view of the river Wandle at Goat Bridge looking southwards however really astonished me. Gone were the Weeping-Willows and Alder trees that once lined the river bank. The soil from the stripped bank had slid down towards the river and now exposed the river seemed dark, slow and uninteresting. Beyond this, a mechanical digger moved the soil around on the wounded landscape. A new twenty-first century building site had been created. New buildings were evident which were quite close to the



Crieff Villas in Mill Green Lane, the grand houses that were once the homes of the mill-owners. This view was a far cry from the photograph that I had taken in 2012 from Goat Bridge Figure 1 (4). I was so perturbed by the view from Goat Bridge that I decided to return on Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> July 2018 to view the scene and photograph it. Fortunately on that day the river bank had been rebuilt and possibly grassed, there was also a new land-drain showing on the river bank. With completed buildings evident, the building site was taking shape, see Figure 2 (5)



Figure 1



Figure 2

This new development was on the site of a former flour mill and former drug and dye mill and was part of the Hackbridge Regeneration plan (6). The group now descended the slope of the footpath, which had restarted on the West bank of the Wandle. There was a second channel of the Wandle here and in this channel a large hording stood, which advertised the 'Jura' works, an industrial unit which specialised in enamel work. This small industrial site situated immediately below Goat Bridge had an elegant Georgian house at its entrance, with a large protective metal barrier in front of it. Further into the site there were small very old buildings which were in use but unfortunately there was a strong smell of solvent about the site. Some of the buildings edged right beside the river and Mick pointed out that these were probably the original buildings. At the buildings edge by the river there was a sluice gate. This site was once Mitcham Leather Mills. Walking on, Mick pointed out that the areas on both banks of the Wandle were now designated as Wetland sites. On the East side of the Wandle was the Spencer Road Wetlands and former Watercress beds. Further East there was another short channel which had been cut in order to supply water to the Calico works and Peppermint and Lavender distillery at Mill Green (7). Following the footpath on and crossing Culvers Avenue where the river had been split into two channels to supply water to Culvers Mill and Culvers House, a mansion which was once on the site, today the area is very residential. Further channels had crossed the site before they all came together the bridge at Hackbridge. The area was called the Culvers and was the site of Reynolds bleaching grounds. His calico firm on this site was very large. Today residential buildings cover the Culvers site. At the bridge in Hackbridge, the footpath rose up to cross the Hackbridge Road. This road was also rather busy. The view to the North

East from the bridge had changed but I knew of the change and it didn't surprise me. When I photographed the area in 2015 the industrial site between the river Wandle and the London Road had been cleared for development. . The site was called the Felnex site and in 1917 was home to the Hackbridge cable company. In 2015 the cleared site had been



Figure 3



Figure 4

enclosed by a large green wooden fence and on the fence were posters charting the history, of the site. The posters had been prepared by children from the local primary school, which was adjacent to the Felnex site in the Hackbridge Road Figures 3 & 4 (8). Today new housing covers this land Figure 5 (9). This development was also part of the Hackbridge Regeneration scheme.

Having crossed the Hackbridge Road the group walked along the footpath beside the river Wandle and then out on to a quiet residential street which had a nature park on its East side.



Figure 5

At this stage in the walk the river Wandle was not seen as it was culverted underground and the Croydon branch of the Wandle joined the Carshalton branch here. Nearby in Butter Hill were the historic two bridges and sluices (10).

At this point however, I had become rather tired and in need of a break. I informed Mick Taylor that my sister and I were going for a comfort-break in the Palmerston pub on the corner of Palmerston Road and Mill Lane. The group carried on into the Grove Recreation ground to view Ansell's Mill and follow the River Wandle towards Carshalton Ponds and Honeywood Museum. My sister and I followed on after our break.

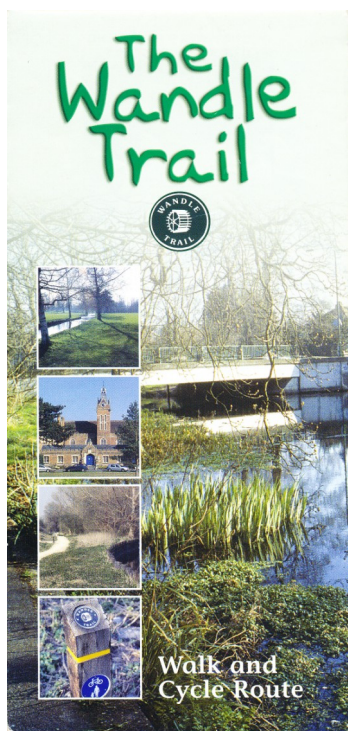
*See Page 14 for Endnote and References.*

## A History of Wandle Trail /Heritage Maps and Guides



The first Wandle Trail map appeared in 1988 at the first walk arranged by the Vanguard Ramblers Association. Showing the river it gave existing walks and proposed walks along the trail with information on various sections of the trail. The map was funded by the Wandle Industrial Museum without any sponsorship.

In 1996 a second version of the map appeared. The sections had been reworked and there was no longer information on proposed walks. Therefore one could now walk the complete route. The map also received sponsorship, and help in its production, from Brown & Root, Surrey

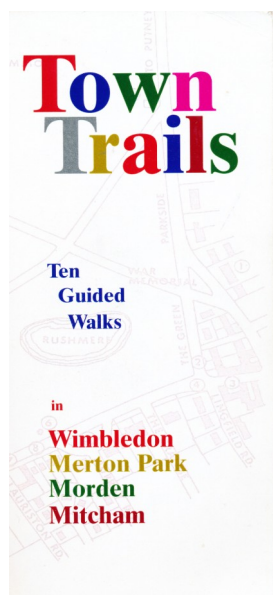


The next Wandle Trail map arrived in 2003. This version was produced by a partnership of the boroughs of Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth, Groundwork Merton and Sustrans. Like the 1988 and 1996 version it had sections covering the heritage and history of the route. It also included within the map of the river the transport links: buses, tram stops, British Rail and underground stations.

Once again we see a number of proposed future routes along with separate routes in places for walkers and cycle users for whom it linked to the London Cycling Network. A big plus must have been the location of the various WCs on the route!

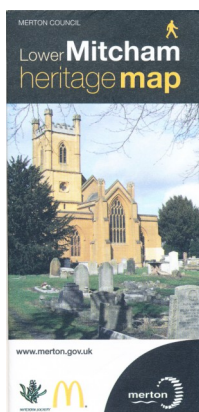
The map is still available online.

Recent years have seen the production of a number of maps and guides that include just part of the Wandle Trail.

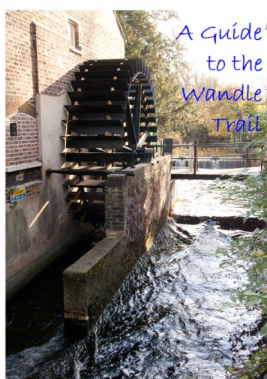


Town Trails had originally been produced in a series of single leaflets. In 2011 these were put into one book. Published by Wimbledon Society Museum Press it was a joint effort between The Museum of Wimbledon and Merton Historical Society. It has three trails that cover elements of the Wandle Trail:

- Trail 4 Wandle Path to Merton Abbey Mills.
- Trail 5 Morden, Town Centre and Morden Hall.
- Trail 7 Mitcham, Ravensbury.



2013 saw The Mitcham Society in association with Merton Council's Future Merton Team produced two Mitcham Heritage Maps. One covered the 'Upper' part and the other the 'Lower' part. It is this last map that covers the area of the Wandle Trail from Bennett's Hole Nature Reserve to Morden Hall Park



With stocks of the 1996 map now exhausted the museum produced its own guide in May 2015. Intended as an online version, and still available on our website, it broke the route of the Wandle Trail down into five sections. It covered a number of places of interest along the route.

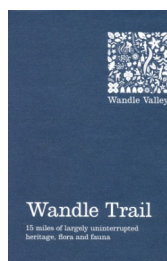


After a two year project the Communities First Group produced the ‘*Merton Working Heritage: The Heritage Walk*’ guide. With a number of photographs and information on a number of locations it covered the London Borough of Merton element of the Wandle Trail.

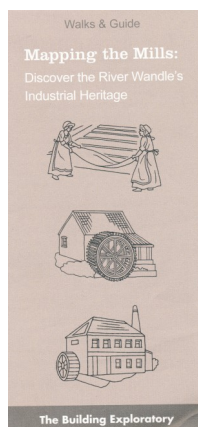
Into 2017 and onwards into 2018 has seen an explosion of maps and guides. All have been the result of the work done by the Living Wandle Partnership and through the lottery funding it received.



‘*Discover the Source of the Wandle*’ is a set of three guides that cover the Carshalton and Croydon area and enable the individual to find out where the water for the River Wandle comes from.



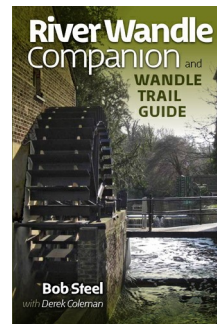
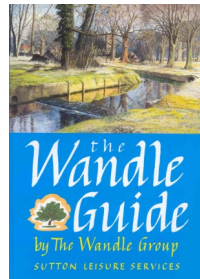
This pocket sized guide from 2017 gives information about how to get active and a number of top tips to follow when using the Wandle Trail. It also includes a number of ‘Wandle Trail Highlights’ in other words places of interest to the walker and those cycling the route.



‘*Mapping the Mills*’ includes four short walks along the Wandle Trail as well as giving the user the option to follow the complete trail. Information on the various sites along the route is only given in the sections for the four walks. It does show the location of the various mills and works along the River Wandle and involved a large amount of research to discover as many as possible. The map was produced in 2018 by The Building Exploratory using a team of volunteers.

Two other publications have included information on the Wandle Trail.

The 1997 edition of the 'Wandle Guide', produced by Sutton Leisure Services, and The Wandle Companion written by Bob Steel and printed in 2012.



So what is the latest on walking the Wandle Trail? The museum has produced two audio trails covering part of the Wandle Trail using software from a company called izi.Travel. So far two trails are available:

- Mitcham and Ravensbury Park
- Merton Abbey Trail

A third, Morden Hall Park, should become available during September.



To access the audio trails go to the izi.Travel website <https://izi.travel/en>

Or download the izi.Travel app to your smartphone.

Except for those now out of print all the maps and guides shown are available from the museum.

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## Recalling a Recent Walk Along The Wandle Trail:

### Endnote and References.

1. Cox, Norma. Wandle Walk. Wandle Industrial Museum Bulletin. 2017. Summer: 7-10
2. Steel, Bob & Coleman, Derek. River Wandle Companion and Wandle Trail Guide.
3. Culverhouse Books. Suffolk. 2012:100.
4. Steel, Bob & Coleman, Derek. Eagle Leather Works. 2012: 175. (note1).
5. Figure 1. View from Goat Bridge looking South 2012 by Norma Cox. [www.sihg.org.uk/news/12nov-SIHGnews190.pdf](http://www.sihg.org.uk/news/12nov-SIHGnews190.pdf). Accessed 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2018.
6. Figure 2 . Photograph from Goat Bridge looking South 2018 by Norma Cox 18 July 2018.
7. <https://moderngov.sutton.gov.uk/documents/s8864/Hackbridge%20Masterplan%20Draft%20Final.pdf>. Accessed 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2018.
8. Steel, Bob & Coleman, Derek. Calico bleaching wash mill and lavender and peppermint distillery. 2012:171. (note1).
10. Figure 3 Photograph of the cleared Felnex site 2015 and Figure 4 Photograph of the posters on the green fence 2015 by Norma Cox. Hackbridge Cable Company Wandle Industrial Museum Bulletin. 2015. Summer:7.
12. Figure 5. Photograph of new housing on the Felnex site 2018. By Norma Cox 18<sup>th</sup> July 2018.
13. Steel, Bob & Coleman, Derek. Bridges and sluices at Butter Hill. 2012:156-157. (note 1)

# WANDLE TRAIL 30<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY WALKS

## SUNDAY 16 SEPTEMBER 2018

In 1988 the first Ramblers' walk took place along the newly created Wandle Trail from Wandsworth to Croydon. The walk was led by Colin Saunders of the Long Distance Walkers Association and attracted over 200 people. As part of Wandle Fortnight we are hoping to exceed this number and are offering a selection of walks up and down the Wandle so please come along.

## Help us celebrate.

### Walk One

Dep. 9.30 Charing Cross Station (forecourt), lunch Morden Hall Park, finish East Croydon Station (17 miles). Led by Colin Saunders.

### Walk Two

Dep. 10.00 Mitcham Junction Station (bus stop on bridge), circular walk visiting hidden paths and green spaces around Mitcham, includes a visit to the Wandle Industrial Museum - entry fee £1.50 to include refreshments (4-5 miles).

### Walk Three

Dep. 10.30 am Wandle Park Tram Stop. Finish Morden Hall Park (7 miles).

### Walk Four

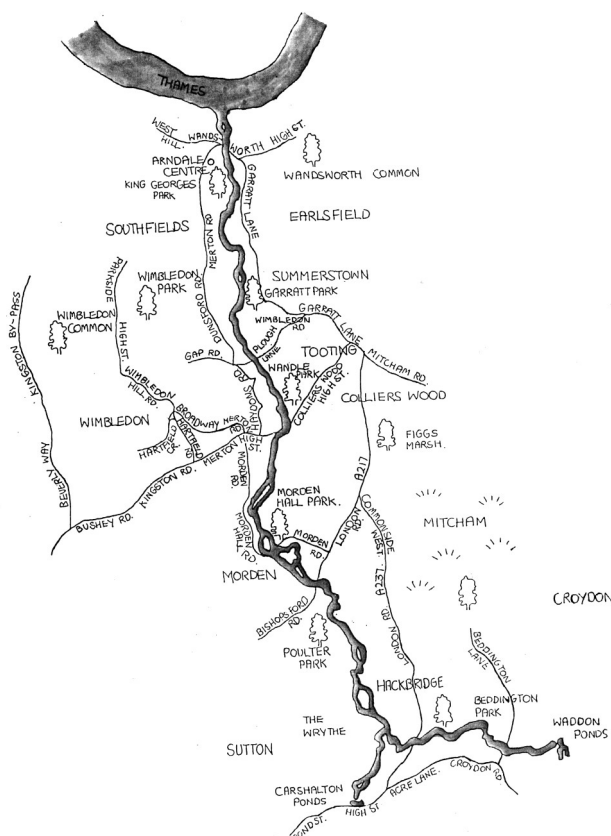
Dep. 1.30 pm Wandle Park Tram Stop. Finish Mitcham Junction Station (4 miles).

### Walk Five

Dep. 2.30 pm Morden Hall Park (Snuff Mill). Finish Earlsfield Station (4 miles).

### Walk Six

Dep. 3.45 pm Earlsfield Station. Finish Wandsworth Town (2.5 miles).



All walks are led by members of the Sutton and Wandle Valley, the Croydon, and the Hammersmith, Fulham and Wandsworth Ramblers' groups.

For further information, now or on the day, please contact Melanie on 07944 833605, or e-mail [mlnunuzet@gmail.com](mailto:mlnunuzet@gmail.com).



# Wandle Fortnight





Museum Mentor: Chris Taft, British Postal Museum and Archive.  
Museum Advisor: Yvette Shepherd, Museum of London (Docklands).

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 is closed 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 [office@wandle.org](mailto:office@wandle.org)

You can find us on:

