



WANDLE INDUSTRIAL MUSEUM

BULLETIN



Contents

Outreach	3
New Exhibition: The Calico People	4
Waterwheel maintenance	8
Volunteers	9
Dates for the Diary	11

WANDLE INDUSTRIAL MUSEUM

Founded in 1983

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Wakefield

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Michael Taylor

Editorial

As I am pulling together the final pieces of this copy of the bulletin the sun is shining and the temperature gauge hitting 30 degrees. A nice change from the wet weather we have had.

Our new exhibition opened in June and our new curator Siobhan gives an insight into what it is like to pull together a new display.

She is just one of a number of new volunteers we have at the museum. You will find out more about them on page 9.

Lastly don't forget to return your blue collection boxes to the museum. Hopefully they are now full of your odd pennies.

As always we hope you enjoy reading this edition of the bulletin. Don't forget that we welcome your feedback, comments and suggestions for future editions.

Best wishes,
Mick Taylor

PS: Don't forget to follow us on Facebook and that you can also find us on Flickr and You Tube. Shortly we also hope to be on Twitter.

Cover Picture:

The Mayor of Merton, Cllr Brenda Fraser opening our new exhibition 'The Calico People'.

Outreach

We met several new groups this Spring, in particular we made 3 visits to Workshop 305 in Weir Road, Wimbledon. This is a huge art studio for adults with special needs. Their talent is amazing and they all took naturally to doing their block prints.



Adults producing art work at Workshop 305. A truly inspiring place.

Our fame is suddenly spreading across “the Pond” . We were visited by a delightful trio of guys from Worcester Polytechnic Institute in USA who had been directed to us in respect of their research into the industrial archaeology of East Merton and a Ph.D student from Michigan who was looking at “eccentric” mid-nineteenth century English and French textile and wallpaper designs.

We also provided an “end of walk” refreshment stop for one of Melanie Nunzet’s groups and one for Communities First, who also received a brief talk on the ‘Mills of Merton’ and a guided tour of the museum.



Once again we had a stall and children’s activities at Merton’s Heritage Discovery Day at Morden Library. This year it was linked with the launch of the WW1 “Carved in Stone” project. Over 35 children and adults enjoyed the stained glass colouring and the block painting.

Alison Cousins

New Exhibition Opening

The official opening of our new exhibition, *'The Calico People'*, was performed this year by the current Mayor, Councillor Brenda Fraser. She made a special effort to mingle with all the volunteers and visitors and stayed a considerable time. She plans to auction the cake which Mary Hart made for her to raise money for Age UK. We were fortunate this year to have the professional display skills of Siobhan Kneale who was assisted by Edward Stalker, who added to the original research done by Mick Taylor.



Our Chairman Andrew Wakefield presents the Mayor, Cllr Brenda Fraser with the traditional museum cake.

Creating the New Exhibition - *The Calico People*

On joining the museum team in mid-May earlier this year, I was asked to undertake the role of curator for the museum's annual display. Working with another 'newbie' volunteer, Assistant Curator, Edward Stalker, the focus for the exhibition had already been agreed as *'The Calico People'*, and a substantial amount of research had already been undertaken by Mick Taylor of the Museum's Operations Team.

Being completely new to the museum, as well as reading through Mick's comprehensive research, our first task was to really get to know the Wandle and to specifically familiarise ourselves with the locations of the

various calico mills. We reviewed the museums current displays, looked through the various resources held in the museum library and archives, and undertook additional independent web based research. In addition, I also decided to undertake some place based research, by walking (most of!) the Wandle, using *London's Lost Rivers* by Tom Bolton as a guide. This was a great experience and one that I would highly recommend to those who have not already done so.

But our main source of factual information for the display, came from Peter McGow's comprehensive notes - a local researcher and historian, Peter McGow generously deposited his '*Notes on the Mills of the Wandle*' with the museum some time ago, two hard copy volumes are held in the museum's library, but all notes from both volumes are also digitised and accessible via the museums website (<http://www.wandle.org/mills/millsindex.html>)

The initial idea for the exhibition was to include additional context material relating to the development of the calico industry. Our second main task, therefore, was to also research the history of the industry, including the development of the fabric itself, the manufacturing processes used, and the significant politics associated with it. With a tight deadline, the goal was to have the display ready for unveiling by the new Merton Mayor, on Saturday 11 June, the day of the Mitcham Carnival. This gave us four and a half weeks to get to grips with the research, finalise the content and decide on display design.

Reviewing what needed to be done, we decided to split the tasks. Edward has a passion for history and is due to start a degree in the subject with the Open University in September 2016, therefore it seemed pertinent for him to undertake specific tasks in relation to checking and further developing some of the factual information already researched. With a background in exhibition design, production and interpretation, I concentrated on planning how we would present the exhibition display.

As we progressed with our research, we realised that numerous people were involved with the Wandle's calico industry, many with success stories but also many failures. A reason for selecting those to highlight in the display therefore had to be considered. Some individuals and families were mentioned in McGow's notes more than others, often having association with multiple mills over long periods of time, for example the Mauvillain's, therefore these were obvious choices. In addition, some were of both national and international significance, for example William Kilburn and William Morris, so very much had to be included. But

generally, as is often the case when undertaking research and developing exhibition content, the reason for selecting the other specific calico people highlighted in the display, was because of significant or more notable stories, actions or events that they were associated with during their time on the banks of the River Wandle.

Eleven individuals or family groups were identified for the final display, these were: **Pater Mauvillain** (1667-1740); **Francis Nixon** (1705-1765); **Anthony John Rutter** (1719-1804); **Reynolds Family** (active in the area from 1751-c.1866); **Samuel Makepeace** (1785-1859); **Sir George Amyand** (1720-1776); **John Leach** (c.1742-1818); **William Kilburn** (1745-1818); **Henry Gardiner** (active in the area c. 1774-1839); **The Littler Family** (active in the area from c.1833-1904); and **William Morris** (1834-1896)



William Kilburn

With the text based content decided upon, we also wanted to enhance the display as much as we could with images, ideally with one or two images per calico person or group. But because the majority of the period we were dealing with predated the invention of photography, images of individuals and places just did not exist in some instances. We therefore had to be inventive in finding representations to illustrate and enhance the display. The museum has a great archive of images that has slowly been digitised over the last year or so, and this was a good place to start. We also reviewed Merton Council's photographic archives via their Merton Memories website, and searched the online collections of institutions such as the Victoria and Albert Museum London. Images sourced included scans of old maps and copies of deeds highlighting locations of specific mills, painted portraits and examples of significant coats of arms, pattern designs for calico prints and, for the later period, photographic images of calico people, mills, and workers involved with the industry.

Identifying the location of each calico mill became an important focus whilst we researched and developed our content for the exhibition. Therefore, using a large scale map as the central focus for the display became a natural progression. The design of the display developed from this idea - locate and identify the mills on the map, then, in a traditional mapping sense, use pins and threads to link the display content to each individual mill. This way we managed to illustrate the fact that in total there were eighteen calico mills plus five drug or dye mills registered on

the River Wandle from the 1650s to 1940, whilst also identifying which mills our Calico People were associated with. The cotton threads of course were also a subtle acknowledgement of the material at the heart of the industry.

Due to limiting display space, our original plan of including additional contextual material about the calico industry as a whole, had to be reconsidered. We therefore decided to edit most of this additional content, apart from a small panel which explained '*What is calico?*', which provides a brief and basic description of the material itself, how it is made and where it originated from, and is supplemented with two



Siobhan Kneale, our new Curator and Edward Stalker, pictured with Meg Thomas (Centre) our previous Curator.

actual material samples, one of raw unbleached calico and the other printed. Viewers of the exhibition are invited to touch and feel the samples in order to '*...get an idea of the texture of the fabric.*' Not wanting to let our additional research go to waste, we decided to include this in an exhibition display book, which is placed in front of the display for those visitors who want to explore the subject a little further.

After a number of additional hours, meters of blue cotton thread that nearly tied us up in knots, and numerous spell checks and content edits, the exhibition display was finally ready for the Mayor of Merton to open on the 11th June. If you've not had the chance to visit the exhibition since it opened, please do drop by the museum to have a look, we would love to welcome you there and to know what you think of the new display.

Siobhan Kneale, Curator

Waterwheel Maintenance

This piece gives an insight into what it must have been like maintaining the many waterwheels along the River Wandle.

A sudden explosive sound on Saturday 18 June alerted Claire and Steve to a problem with the waterwheel at Merton Abbey Mills. The wheel was stopped, and examination showed a large crack had appeared on the axle housing of one of the spokes of the wheel.

Although the wheel is the responsibility of LB Merton, they are fortunate that, through Wandle Heritage, in Norman Fairey, assisted by Steve Llewellyn, they have an in house team of wheelwrights who can deal with this kind of problem at a cost far below what a third party contractor would have had to charge. This has meant they were able to start work straight away, and it has now been finished by them in double quick time. They have taken the opportunity to clean up all the ironwork at the same time and the wheel now looks as good as new.

The photos here show the before and after images of the damage and its repair, and the 'stilts' Norman and Steve had to construct in order to get the firm basis they need for the drilling work.

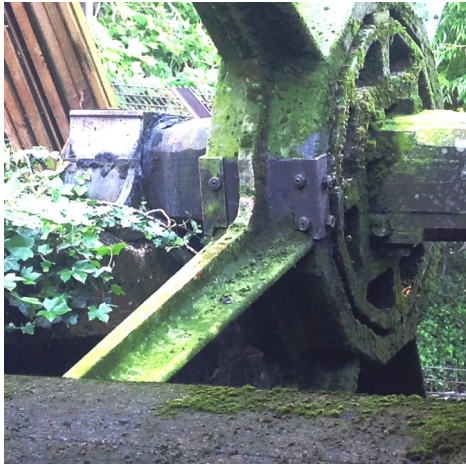


The crack appears.



The repair completed on 30th June 2016.

Although, technically, this is a 'temporary repair', a similar one on the left hand spoke carried out by Norman 24 years ago is still going strong, and visitors to the wheelhouse can also see, if they look carefully, that the pit-wheel has also had to be 'temporarily' repaired in the past, as well.



The previous repair made 24 years ago.

The truth, of course, is that, like many industrial facilities, waterwheels and their companion mechanisms are the subject of regular maintenance and repair over their lifetimes and would never be replaced if a repair would do the job.



One of our experts performing their balancing act on the stiles.

The Wandle is lucky to have these two experts on hand.

Nicholas Hart

Volunteers

In the last copy of the Bulletin we explained how we were working closely with a number of organisations to drive up our search for new volunteers. I am pleased to report that our efforts have borne fruit.

As you would have read Siobhan Kneale has joined as our new Curator. She brings with her experience of working in museums and on displays. She will be assisted by Edward Stalker. He has decided to take a career break and we are very happy with the skills that he will bring to the museum.

David Lamb has joined to work on the creative side of the marketing

element within the museum. David has experience in putting together booklets and leaflets.

We also have some new Front of House volunteers. Bianca Harrisskitt has joined our Sunday rota. Martin Roberts joined our Wednesday Front of House team and walked straight into a project. Given his background as a geography teacher he started getting into the work to restore and update the relief map of the Wandle Valley we have at the museum.



Restoration of the Wandle Valley relief map continues and additional streams as identified by Tony Scott of the Merton Historical Society will be shown.

Martin Roberts is repainting the contour lines of the map.

In addition Thomas Lyons has joined and Alison will be arranging for him to carry out research for us on the industries along the river.

Hopefully by the time you read this we may have a new administrator in place.

There is a meeting and get together for our volunteers on Wednesday 3rd August 2016 at 4pm in the museum. All volunteers are invited to attend.

Mick Taylor

Note: Even with all these new volunteers we are always on the lookout for additional volunteers. So if you know someone who may like to join us then please ask them to contact the museum.



Dates for the Diary

We are very happy to support our volunteer Melanie Nunzet and her programme of Summer and Autumn walks.



Date	Meeting place/time	Walk description
Thurs s 21 Jul	Carshalton Station 7 pm	Carshalton Evening Walk - A gentle stroll around Carshalton, with a visit to Wilderness Island, Grove Park and Carshalton Park. 3-4 miles.
Sun 31 Jul	Carshalton Station 11.15 am	Carshalton Lavender 2016 Harvest Visit to Wilderness Island and Stanley Road Allotments for barbecue lunch/refreshments and other attractions. Bring your own scissors. 4-5 miles.
Sun 21 Aug	Carshalton Station 11 am	Wandle Walk - To include Wilderness Island, Grove Park, Beddington Park and Carew Manor Wetland. 3-4 miles.
Wandle Fortnight - Four walks through four boroughs along the Wandle Trail. All walks will have a half hour refreshment stop during or at the end.		
Sat 17 Sept	Earlsfield Station 9.30 am	Wandsworth - walk from Earlsfield to Colliers Wood. 2 miles (led by Joan)
	Colliers Wood Station 11 am	Merton - walk from Colliers Wood to Mitcham Junction, to include the Watermeads and Bennett's Hole. 5 miles (led by me)
	Mitcham Junction Sta- tion 1.30 pm	Sutton - walk from Mitcham Junction to Carshalton, via Beddington Park. 3-4 miles (led by Frank)
	Carshalton Station 3.30 pm	Croydon - walk from Carshalton to Wandle Park. Finish Wandle Park tram stop. 3-4 miles (led by Steve)
Sat 8 Oct	Mitcham Junction 2 pm	Mitcham Common - Visit the ponds and hills of Mitcham Common. Finish at Mitcham Golf Club for refreshments. 3-4 miles.

For all walks starting at Mitcham Junction meet at bus stop on bridge.

17th September 2016 Mitcham Cricket Green Open Day. The museum will be open from 10-4pm.

10th-25th September 2016 Wandle Valley Fortnight. Keep an eye out for events and activities along the Wandle Valley.



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. 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.

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Company No 01792482, Charity No 288655.

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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.

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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