



MUSEUM

**NEWSLETTER**

Issue 87



Aug 2014

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**NB: All photos by Nicholas Hart unless otherwise stated.**

## Newsdesk

Visitors to the Museum during the Spring / Summer period have been good and we are pleased to report that the Sunday openings have proved popular.

**Outreach** we were pleased to have good weather for the National Trust Green Day Out on 6th July and raised £24.66.



**Figure 1 The William Morris Room at the Chapter House - Dave Saxby entertaining the WM Gallery and Society**

Through the summer the print team has been at the Chapter House on its open days, making new friends, and spreading the word. It was particularly pleasing to be there for the William Morris themed opening, and reacquainting ourselves with our friends from William Morris Gallery and William Morris Society.

**Open day** on 19<sup>th</sup> July was attended by 32 people and resulted in 1 volunteer. What was just as encouraging, though, thanks to the energetic leafleting, was the distances some had come just to visit us. Our thanks to Michael for all his hard work in producing the leaflets.

There have been a number of talks to other groups. These are not just one way talks, as the interaction with our audience nearly always produces something new. For example, Mary and Alison report that at their recent successful talk and print demonstration at West Barnes Library (a new location for us) they were approached by an gentleman who had known Horace Clark (the last block maker at the Liberty site) personally, was still in touch with his grandson, and would be happy to come in to the Museum and show us some of his memorabilia.



**Figure 2 Part of Michael Taylor's fine display at Morden Library**

The Schools Free Visits project has been successful, and a final report has been sent to the Ernest Cook Trust, who funded this. Hopefully we have proved a safe pair of hands, and will be able to qualify for further grants from this source when the opportunity arises.

We took part in the **Sharing Space** display at Morden Library, and again we must thank Michael for his solo effort in producing and mounting this display.



**Figure 3 Mayor Cllr Agatha Akyigyina cutting the ribbon to open our display.**

**Photo: Auriel Glanville**

We were delighted to welcome some visitors from Australia, who were visiting the area in which they were raised.

**Summer Opening.** Once again we had a successful and enjoyable opening of our new Exhibition 'Ravensbury Past Present and Future' in June which was opened by the Mayor of Merton, and were again flattered by the numbers of former Mayors

and current councillors who attended this, our year's flagship event. Our thanks to Meg for all her hard work in once again mounting this important annual exhibition, and to Mary for all the catering.

The next Volunteers Meeting will be on Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> September. Lunch will only be provided for those who have let Mary know they will be attending.

Other Dates for your diary:

Proposed group visit to the William



**Figure 4 Mary's Ravensbury celebration cake.**

**Photo: Auriel Glanville**

Morris exhibition (see below)

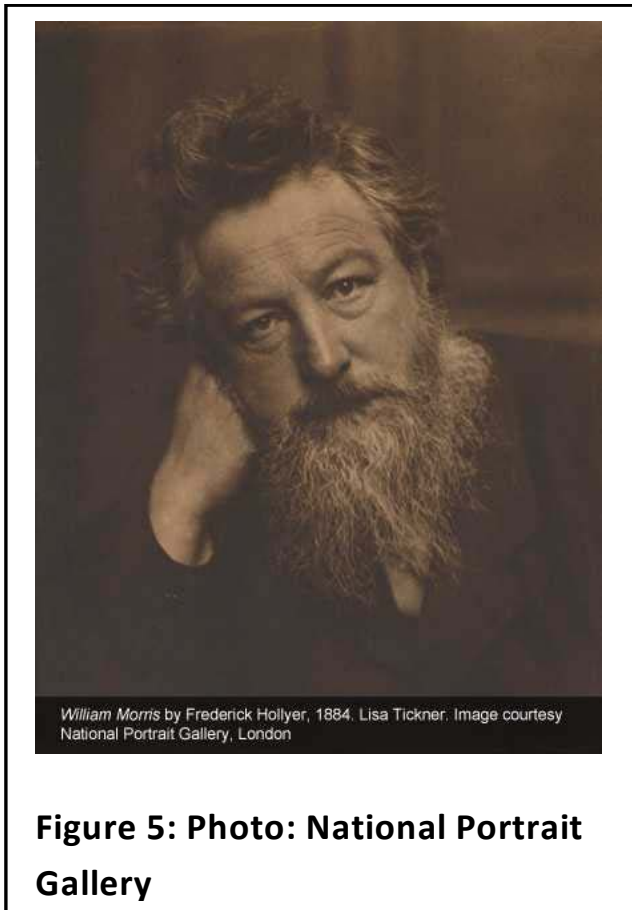
AGM – date not yet fixed. We will do so at the next Committee meeting, and publish this on our website

Admin team

## Other Museum News

### *The legacy of Morris*

The first exhibition devoted to William Morris and his influence on 20th century life is to open at the National Portrait Gallery on 16th October.



Featuring books, portraits, furniture, banners, textiles and jewellery, 'Anarchy and Beauty: William Morris and his legacy 1860-1960' will focus on Morris's far reaching politics, thought and design.

It also aims to highlight the element of anarchy within the 'art for the people' movement initiated by Morris and the artists of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.

The exhibition will run from 16th October to 11th January 2015. For a

group of 10 people the pre booked rate is £11 per person.

We are suggesting that we have a Museum group visit to the exhibition on Thursday 6th November. If you would like to join the group visit please pay

£11 per person to the Museum by 1st October so that we can make the booking.

## ***Reinalt***

Only this last week we have received the good news that our much respected IT volunteer guru, Reinalt, is out of hospital at last and recuperating at home.

These last few months must have been an incredibly frustrating time for a man with his energy and abilities, but we very much hope he will feel sufficiently able to take up his 'webbo' role for our website when he is ready to do so.

## ***Ravensbury***

We wish there was more to be said about Ravensbury Mill – we inch closer, when we should be striding forwards.

There is little our friends at Crown House can do to help, at this stage.

We can not of course publish the details of the problems which are slowing this down, but suffice to say that a real commitment from the freeholder would be most welcome.

While it is frustrating for me, it is even more frustrating for the team, who can not start planning properly for our move without all the information we are still missing, let alone a start date for taking possession. We have to start somewhere, though, and the good news is that AIM have awarded us £1,500 of funding to employ the services of a consultant who will guide us through these early pre planning stages to ensure we can actually take the decision to move and still comply with our legal obligations. Only then can we spend the time and money on the re-organisation it will involve, the major grant applications we will need to make it a success and its longer term sustainability

## ***New volunteers***

We have welcomed this year 3 new volunteers so far, Melanie, Anne and Joyce, to help with our Wednesday and Sunday opening days, and very much hope to keep them interested and gainfully occupied for years to come.

## ***Merton Priory and Merton Abbey Mills Update***

### **Chapter House**



**Figure 7 Chapter House - that's what i call**

Hopefully many of you will be able to come to the next Chapter House opening – 20 and 21 September for a one off and unique ‘first and last chance to see’. Almost all the sand that has been burying the archaeological remains has now been cleared, and the walls can now be seen properly. This is the last public opening this

year, and by next year the building works will have started (touch wood) which will change the whole appearance of this important site. Various new information has come to light, not least the remains of the original East Wall, and one of the north wall buttresses. Also revealed were the foundations of the south wall of the Priory Church’s nave, so we can be



**Figure 6 Dave Saxby giving some idea of how high these walls now are.**

sure of the actual dimensions of the 'slype'. In other works, you will never have another chance to see this site in this form!

This is also the first of the 7 year rolling 900<sup>th</sup> anniversary dates relating to the founding of the Priory. In 1114 the first canons of the new order came down to Merton from St Albans and camped out at the old Merton Parish Church. By 2015 the old Church had been replaced by what is formally known as the Anglican parish church of St Mary the Virgin, Merton, and they will be celebrating their 900<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its consecration. In May 2017 the canons took up their occupation of the Merton Priory site, and the consecration of the new church there. In 2021 we have the 900<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the formal royal charter establishing Merton Priory.

## **Wheelhouse update**

The waterwheel is now out of action whilst essential refurbishment takes place. As noted in previous newsletters, Wandle heritage had acquired some 'greenheart' wood at great expense. This is the water tolerant hardwood which will not rot from

prolonged exposure to the river, and will be used to replace the 'starts' – essentially the extensions to the spokes of the wheel on which the 'floats' are fixed. The floats are the actual paddles against which the river pushes to drive the wheel, and these are much easier to replace, and so simple scaffolding boards will be used for this. The photo here illustrates how much this refurbishment is needed.



**Figure 8 - Illustrating the urgent need for refurbishment of the water wheel**



Also of interest is that, in clearing out some surplus and inappropriate machinery, some of the old wheelhouse floor has been revealed (as well as the mummified remains of Merton Rat's friend), which is of much greater age than had previously been assumed. Well worth a peek next time you are there.



**Figure 9 The small section of ancient floor now visible in the Wheelhouse**

## Archives & Research Report

Our Archivists write:

Thanks again to Judith Goodman for donating the 1888-89 beautifully bound volume of The English Illustrated Magazine. It contains a chapter "On the Wandle" written and illustrated by Dewey Bates. There are some wonderful descriptions of deserted snuff mills overgrown with moss and ivy, "beautiful in their decay".

We were also given a collection of items celebrating the retirement in 1976 of Alexander Bremner from the New Merton Board Mills. He had been the Managing Director since 1958. There is a splendid scroll, complete with "spoof" coat of arms depicting on the shield of St Andrew "a Merton pachyderm in full flight argent" on the mantling



**Figure 10 The spoof coat of arms: Illustration courtesy Bremner family**

several golf balls and on the crest, the river Wandle topped by a paper mill with three chimneys. It had been signed by about 100 employees, including one S. Sparrowhawk. A recent visitor from Australia was delighted to spot the names of so many of his former colleagues. We were also given a brief history of the company written by Mr. Bremner's daughter and a glass presentation plate.

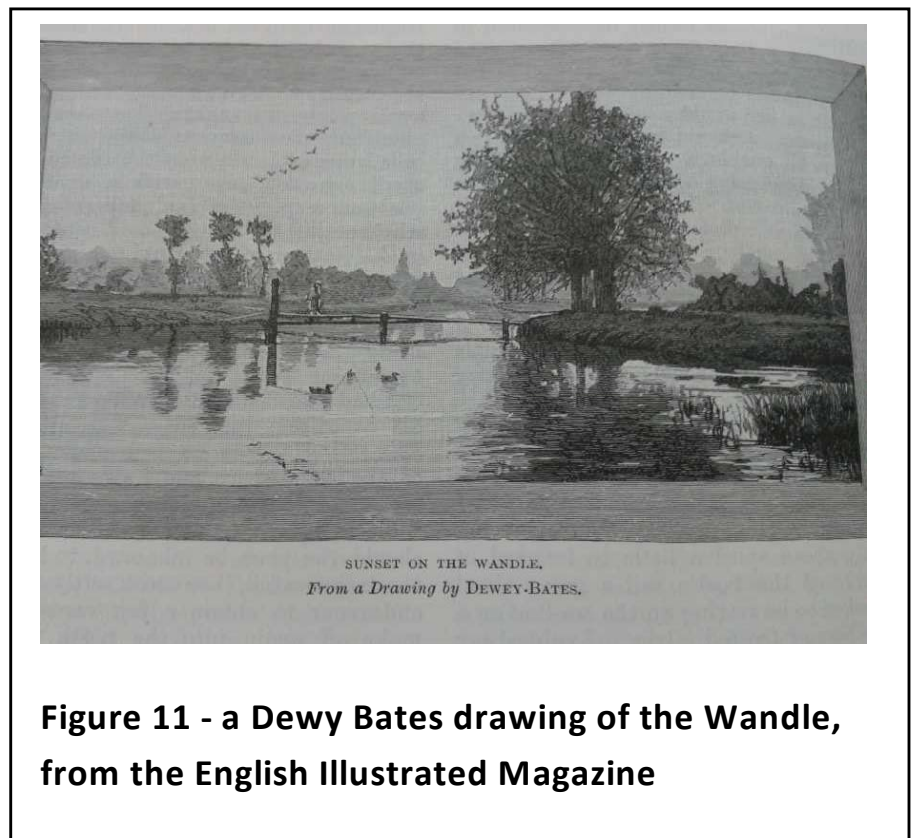
The newest acquisition is "The Influence of Merton Priory: as revealed by the Merton Priory Manuscripts" published by the Merton Historical Society in July. Also beautifully illustrated and produced, it is based on the lecture Richard Chellow gave to the Society in April 2014.

In the field of "The Wandle in Art and Literature" a new word has crept in. Borribles. For the uninitiated these are streetwise urchins who survive on their wits and who will

never grow up unless caught by the authorities who will pull off their little woollen hats and clip their pointed ears. Although London-wide, there is a "gang" known as "Wendles" who are based around the lower reaches of the Wandle. Their arch enemies inhabit SW19.

Enough said. Their escapades are in a trilogy by Michael de Larrabeiti,

the first book of which deals with the Wandle and was published in 1976. We are indebted to members of the Surrey History Centre for drawing our attention to this inexcusable gap in our knowledge of children's literature.



**Figure 11 - a Dewy Bates drawing of the Wandle, from the English Illustrated Magazine**

We have also been busy checking out the progress of the “Bridge to Nowhere” over the Wandle in Colliers Wood, which appears to be completed! Who knew? Or did we miss the fanfares and grand opening? We are also attempting to track the outfall of the stream from the lake in Wimbledon Park to where it joins the Wandle at Earlsfield.

Alison & Jacqui

**GLIAS AGM** Wed 21st May 2014 at the Swedenborgian Lecture Theatre, Holborn. **Peter Cousins** reports

The business meeting was followed by an illustrated talk entitled The Role of the London Transport Museum and its Friends, by Barry Lejeune, London Transport’s head of Customer Services until 2000.

Barry started by teasing us with a picture of an LT roundel in oxidised copper with the word ‘Cooking’ across the middle! He used this to make the point that the Museum’s business is London’s transport heritage, and there is much still in use, for example Underground railway stations, interiors and exteriors (Gloucester Road, Hounslow West, Covent Garden), train indicators (Earl’s Court), early logos (LTSR1 on the eastern District Line), the Kingsway tram subway, re-used horse-bus depots, and also the modern such as Canary Wharf station.

He summarised the origins of the Museum which had its roots in a collection of buses kept at Reigate garage till the 1960s, then moved to Clapham, then Syon Park and finally to Covent Garden in the 1980s. Taxis are now included (they are regulated by TfL), as is the London Overground. Social history such as housing is also included, as it is inextricably linked to transport.

He pointed out that the Museum runs an extensive educational programme, mostly at primary level, concentrating on safety and that it also promotes jobs in TfL.

He described Acton Depot which is a store for everything that is not in the

museum i.e. about three quarters of the total. It even includes an LT Christmas pudding!

He outlined the function of The Friends, who provide volunteers and raise funds for the Museum, and organise activities for members. They also make grants to the Museum for



**Figure 12: The Northmet building. Photo courtesy the website (see text)**

specific projects, and are helping digitise staff publications. They are working on the restoration of prototype Routemaster bus RM22, and are hoping to help with the restoration of 3 cars of the District Line Q stock in the Museum. They helped with the restoration of coach 353 for the Metropolitan 150 events last year. This year is Year of the Bus (RT type celebrates 75 years, RM type 60 years) and to commemorate the First World War, a B type bus has been restored and will be modified into war-time condition as used to carry troops to the front.

Finally, he revealed that the 'Cooking' logo was on the office building of the former North Metropolitan Electricity Supply Company in Wood Green, together with 'Lighting', 'Heating', 'Northmet' and 'Power'. Google 'Lighting, heating, cooking, power' and go to the Wikipedia entry with Northmet in the title to see a photo.

*1 London, Tilbury and Southend Railway*

*2 Completed since the lecture*

## Like Father Like Son

Michael Taylor writes:

Sarah Gould from the Merton Heritage Centre in Morden Library recently contacted me to ask if I knew what a 'print cutter' did. This is a job she had been asked about. Whilst I could only guess at an answer I asked Mary Hart and much to my surprise she was not sure.

As a result I started to search across that place in space called the internet and came upon a gentleman in Wikipedia called John Mosely Turner. His claim to fame is that he was one of the UK's longest living people. He lived from 1856 until 1968 passing away at the age of 111 years and 280 days. Other pieces of information about him were that he was born in Mitcham and he was a former silk print cutter.

I did a bit more research and did find print cutting associated with screen printing. This is the cutting of the patterns that are then placed on the screen and which when the colour is applied you will get your pattern on the silk or cloth. So it could be that a 'print cutter' is someone who makes the item that is used to form the pattern.

I now called in Peter Cousin and asked if he had John Mosely Turner on his records for the mill workers in Merton. Taking over the family PC, and barring Alison from using it, Peter did a great job in tracking him and his family down. In the 1881 census he found him in Mitcham as a 'calico print cutter'. There was no record of him in the 1891 census or 1901 census. He turns up in 1911 in Tottenham as a 'print block cutter'. Peter also told me that his father and grandfather were also called John Mosely Turner. Peter found that his father's occupations on the census were: Block Cutter (1871), Type and Print Cutter (1861), Print Cutter (1851). He was born in Mile End. His grandfather was a Print Cutter (1871), Calico Block Cutter (1861), Print Cutter (1851),

Printer (1841). He was born in Bethnal Green. So it seems to be a case of 'like father like son'.

Given this information it is almost certain that he made the print blocks used by Morris & Co and Littler's/Liberty's in hand block printing. We do not know who he or his father and grandfather worked for. Given that he lived in London Road, Colliers Wood (now Merton High Street) he may have worked for one of these. However speaking once more to Mary it is possible that he was a journeyman block maker. Therefore moving round the country to where ever his services were required. This may explain his absence from the 1891 and 1901 census records. It does ask the question what does a job title mean?

## **Water Mills and Disputes**

Meg Thomas writes:

It seems that from their very beginnings Water-Mills have been a source of disputes.

Leslie Syson writes in his book British Water Mills:

Control of the mills in early days was in the hands of the Admiralty, and the first indication of any laws affecting water-mills is contained in the Black Book of the Admiralty produced in 1360, though it refers back to 1216. The Admiralty had the power to pull down any mill which endangered any ships or boats.

There were constant disputes over the water supply to the mills.

Generally, these were caused by some hindrance to navigation or of the prevention of fish passing up river. Many were the results of the flooding of adjacent land or of work which diminished the flow of water to the mills further down stream.

No doubt the Lord Admiral was relieved when his duties in connection with water-mills was, in 1422 transferred to the Commissioner of Sewers!

But disputes went on and on, so much so that, many years later, Sutcliffe wrote:

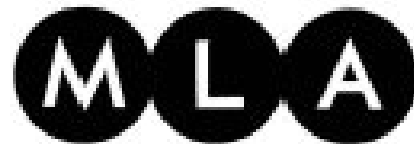
In consequence of so many water-mills, the country is never free from litigation and vexations, lawsuits repeating erecting, repairing or raising weirs, by which the peace and harmony of neighbours and friends are often destroyed.

Sutcliffe was the author of *Designing and Building Water Corn Mills* 1816.

I don't suppose The Wandle had too many disputes over hindrance to shipping but Peter McGow has recorded many disputes many leading to legal action. So not only has milling a long working history it also has a long history of altercations.

Meg Thomas

Editors Note – Help wanted. I remember reading somewhere that the current line of the Wandle through Merton Abbey Mills was the result of a new cut being made in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century by an adjoining owner who wanted to draw water away from Bennett's Mill to his own. A 40 year court case ensued, starting before the Civil War and ending after it. Now I can't trace the source for this story. Can anybody help? Ed.



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Museum

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.**

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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 [ndhart@wandle.org](mailto:ndhart@wandle.org)