



WANDLE INDUSTRIAL MUSEUM BULLETIN

New exhibition opening



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**WANDLE INDUSTRIAL
MUSEUM
Founded in 1983**

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Editorial

Welcome to the latest copy of the Wandle Industrial Museum bulletin. Helen who edited the last edition has stepped down from the museum. Alison explains in the Operations Team report the reason behind this. So David, a new volunteer at the museum, has stepped in and helped put this issue together. Thanks David. A new edition also brings about a new cover. We hope you like it? You will certainly see how busy we have been at the museum since the last issue and it is not going to ease up! As always we are grateful to all our members and volunteers for their contributions to the bulletin. If you do have any comments about it then please do send them to us. Enjoy the read.

Mick Taylor

The new exhibition opening 13th June 2015

As tradition dictates the Mayor of Merton, David Cheung, paused on his way to Mitcham Carnival in order to open our new exhibition “A Time of Anniversaries”. He was welcomed by Andrew Wakefield on behalf of the Museum before being given a review of our turbulent year by Alison followed by an explanation of the exhibition by Roger. Mayor Cheung replied, praising the efforts made to inform Merton residents of the rich



history of the area. He then cut the ribbon to complete the opening and was presented with a commemorative cake bearing the Mayoral Crest, baked for him by Mary Hart. There was then time enough for a drink and some snacks before the Mayor, Lady Mayoress and entourage were whisked off to open the Carnival.

“A Time of Anniversaries”.

The thought of celebrating the 3 major anniversaries of Magna Carta (1215), Agincourt (1415) and Waterloo (1815) was with us from the outset, but as Alison and Jacqui delved into the archives to uncover the Wandle connections more and more snippets came to light with some interesting coincidences. The item that finally decided the theme for the exhibition was a notice that Europe was to celebrate the “European Industrial and Technical Year” and this could be the finishing point, so off we went. It became obvious very quickly that we would be swamped unless we concentrated on 100 or 50 year steps, although some licence was allowed (175 years crept in under the radar).

Starting was easy with Magna Carta and no need for wordy explanation as we had a permanent display in place, Agincourt a non-starter with no connections found although I felt obliged to mention our own Mitcham crossbow manufacturer. Then the dates and connections took off with ‘Capability’ Brown working in Wimbledon Park while Nelson’s Victory was being launched, Nelson leaving Merton when our river was being described as the ‘Hardest working river in the country’ and his Emma Hamilton dying in 1815 to bring us back to Waterloo.

We wrote them, pinned them up and made connections with coloured tape, but we encourage all visitors to find their own path through it and will add and subtract items throughout the year to make the most of unused items in our limited space.

What of our chosen finishing point – a simple statement was issued to say that the UK had no plans for any celebration of The European Industrial and Technical Year. You win some, you lose some.

Operations Team Report

We recently welcomed David Sarrà as a new volunteer and immediately upgraded him to work as our exhibitions curator, to refresh and upgrade some of the existing displays. He has excellent presentation skills and has also agreed to guest edit this Bulletin.

Sadly, Helen Daniels has resigned as Administrator, as the weekday journey from Kent has proved too much but she has still offered to cover some Sunday openings. Helen has done sterling work for us in the areas of fundraising and Gift Aid and we are sorry to lose her.

School visits are as popular as ever, including two each from St. Teresa’s and Benedict Schools. The team also spent two full days at Cranmer School,

as part of an initiative by Communities First. Being based in the art room was fine until we had to get back from a classroom at the other side of the playing field in the middle of a downpour. We were helped on one of the days by Sophie Whitehead, who had visited the museum earlier in the year and indicated an interest in fabric printing.

We also had a final visit from the Secret London group on April 2nd.

Talks and Walks - Mick Taylor led a successful walk along the Wandle for the Purley Photographic Club and gave an illustrated talk on “Mills of the Wandle” at West Barnes library. Alison Cousins gave a talk on lavender, at Morden Library, and on the history of local brewing to a group at the Dementia Hub in Mitcham.

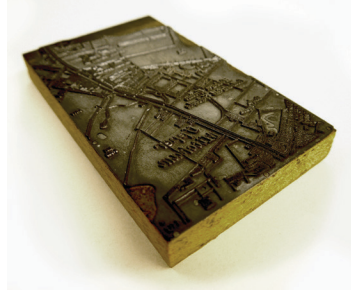
Out and About - we had a stall at the annual Heritage Discovery Day in Morden Library on March 28th and also this year offered fabric block printing in the children’s activity area.

We were at the Morden Hall Country Fair over the May Bank Holiday, as usual, and were delighted that several new volunteers came to help us. Alison Cousins also attended the Museums and Heritage Show, including a lecture on Accreditation. We need to submit our application for full accreditation early next year and up-to-date guidance is crucial.

New Acquisitions

Groundwork London donated a canvas depicting images of the Wandle and its heritage, produced for the project - “River Wandle : Flowing through Time”. It is on display above the shop/reception area. Meg Thomas, our former curator, visited St. Faith’s school in Wandsworth last year for this, so thanks to her we also received a book to accompany the project, which includes some photos of the museum and many objects from our displays. We have also recently received a very generous donation from Mr. & Mrs. Bellamy to enable some updating and additions to our unique relief model of the Wandle Valley.

The Merton Historical Society has needed to find new homes for many of their artefacts and we were pleased to receive some engraved book plates of local maps and buildings.



Browsing through the *Journal of Stained Glass*, as one does, we discovered that Volume XXXV, 2011, included a list of stained glass workers, glaziers, and student glass painters who were employed by Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. in the 1860's and 1870's.

Volunteers – a meeting was held on May 13th. We are still trying to find the best timing for these so we are planning an evening event on July 14th to thank all our volunteers.

New Exhibition - the team put together the annual display this year, in the absence of a curator. Roger Steele has done a full report elsewhere in this issue.

And going the other way....we have lent our small models of a loom and a tapestry frame to the Merton Priory Trust, in the hope that they can be demonstrated alongside the block printing sessions when the Priory is open. Also on loan will be our architect's model of the Liberty Mills and a few printing blocks for the Liberty Fabrics evening being held by local furnishers E & A Wates, on July 9th.

The factory site of the Hackbridge Cable Company



Fig 1

Recently as I travelled through Hackbridge, I saw from the upper deck of a 127 bus, the concrete white bareness of a cleared building site Fig 1 (1). The site was ringed with green hoardings and along the hoardings were posters. These posters were made by the pupils of the local primary school, which is close to the cleared site. The posters told the history of the area Fig 2 (2). Hackbridge once had an ancient hack-bridge crossing the river Wandle. It had many large houses near the river and local mills once thrived there. The mill sites were later used by other industries and they benefited from the nearby railway connection. Earlier the Surrey Iron Railway had a branch line to Hackbridge.

The posters identified the cleared site as the Felnex trading estate, it was known as the Kelvin Works where earlier the Hackbridge Cable Company had been founded in 1917. Prior to 1917 the Ordnance survey maps for 1868 and 1895-6 show that the site was empty. By 1933 the Ordnance survey map shows the full development on the site Fig 3 (3). Fig 4 shows a view of the works buildings (4). Gracesguide (5) informs us that the



Fig 2

Hackbridge Cable Company of Kelvin Works, Hackbridge was a manufacturer and supplier of cable to public utilities and commercial undertakings. In 1917 it was incorporated as

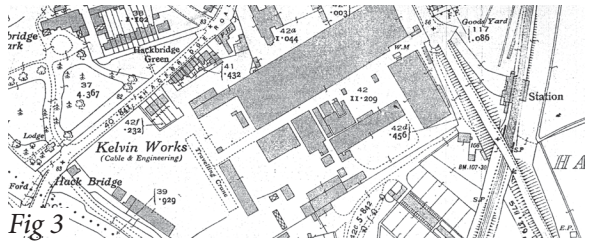


Fig 3

a private company and then made into a public company the same year. In 1939 it worked on fuel injection equipment for diesel engines. This project carried on for two years and was a financial drain on the company. Work ceased on this project at the outbreak of World War 2. After World War 2, the Hackbridge Cable Company acquired the cable factory based in Woolwich, which had been seized from Siemens during the war. The Hackbridge Cable Company gave an undertaking not to resell the Siemens name for 20 years. In 1947 the company acquired Bryce Electric Construction Company and the Mitcham Motor Company, a haulage company. In 1948 Hackbridge Cable Holdings Ltd was formed as a public limited company



Fig 4

to acquire Hackbridge Cable Company. In 1955 the company acquired Bryce Siemens. In 1956 Hackbridge Cable Holdings changed its name to Hackbridge Holdings. In 1961 the company advertised as Cable makers and electrical engineers. Also in 1961, the company formed a new subsidiary Kelvin Metal Industries to carry out metal fabrications for the group and outside customers. In 1967 AEI took over the company. The company became AEI Cables Limited in 1968. Later the site was owned by the TT group (6). Fig 5(7) shows an aerial view of the Hackbridge Cable Company in 1951.

There were active businesses on the site in the years 1980-1990. The Kelvin works buildings were used partly by Fabric Warehouse (8) The building layout prior to demolition was dominated by three large buildings which

had remained unchanged since the 1980's (9). The Felnax Trading estate was demolished in August 2014, to make way for housing in a £150 million scheme called Hackbridge Regeneration(10). The plan is for 725 units of accommodation, shops, a GP surgery and a care-home. The site occupies 7.7 hectares with frontages on London Road (A237) and Hackbridge Road (B277).



Fig 5

The new building scheme is for Sustainable building .With green roofs which help storm water management because the plants, trees and soil on the roof help retain water. The green roofs also act as insulation, lowering heating and cooling costs. Green roofs can also help combat pollution (11). Heating for the site will be obtained from the proposed Beddington incinerator, reducing carbon dioxide emissions (12). These proposals are controversial, as there is opposition to the incinerator (13) and rumours that the occupants of the new housing site will be locked into an expensive heating scheme(14).

None of the old cable factory buildings remain. Ninety-eight years on, the site is ready for a twenty-first century design.

Norma Cox

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- (2)www.hackbridgendg.com/2015/01/21/history_of_hackbridge_posters
- (3) With kind permission of the Ordnance Survey
- (4)With kind permission of Sutton Local History Library
- (5)www.gracesguide.co.uk/Hackbridge_Cable_Co
- (6)www.edithsstreets.blogspot.co.uk/2010/09/bv55-hackbridge-thames-tributories.html
- (7)www.britainfromabove.org.uk/image/eaw036877
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Mayflies



Watching the One Show the other week my interest was peaked at the mention of the River Wandle. George McGavin the One Show 'bug man' met with Dr Cyril Bennett, President of the Wandle Piscators. Their aim was to return the mayfly to the R. Wandle.

The mayfly famous for its ephemeral existence is a vital source of food, especially its eggs and nymphs, for the inhabitants of the river. Dr Bennett set about this task by snatching female Mayflies from the air as they returned to the River Avon to lay their eggs. He spent weeks stripping them of their precious cargo then incubating the eggs in tanks of tap water. This was to prevent any Avon nasties being transported to the Wandle.

When the eggs were ready to hatch George and Cyril transported nearly 8 million, yes 8 million, of them to the Wandle. Where? Well that of course is a closely guarded secret.

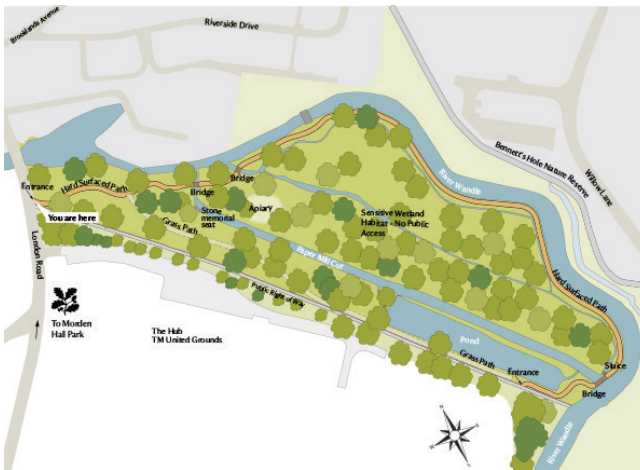


Meg Thomas

Editor Note: You can find out more by visiting www.wandlepiscators.net

Other News

- The Chapter House will be open to visitors on 25th/26th July (Archaeology Month) and 19th/20th September (London Open House). Block Print demos will be taking place.
- The Marmalade Window in the wheelhouse at Merton Abbey Mills is now complete. Made possible by the fundraising efforts of Mary Hart.
- The long-awaited permanent access to The Watermeads is now complete, although the sensitive wetland habitat in the centre area is still out of bounds.



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- The Gam Gurung Bridge (the former “bridge to nowhere”) in Collier’s Wood, has been formally opened. Now Wandle Meadow Nature Park and Bewley Street are linked.



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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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.



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