



WANDLE INDUSTRIAL MUSEUM

BULLETIN



Contents

John Glassbrook, a Morris & Co tapestry weaver	3
A Regular Visitor	5
Update from the Ops Team	6
Wandle Trail Update	7
S.I.R. Share Certificate	8
Frederick Braithwaite	9
Dates for the Diary	10

WANDLE INDUSTRIAL MUSEUM

Founded in 1983

PRESIDENT

Harry Galley

TRUSTEES

Secretary: Nicholas Hart

John Hawks

OPERATIONS COMMITTEE

Alison Cousins

Eric Shaw

Roger Steele

Michael Taylor

GUEST EDITOR

Michael Taylor

Editorial

We are now well into the New Year and before you know it Christmas will be upon us. Time flies when you are busy and we are certainly busy at the museum. Our diary is full of talks, printing sessions and walks.

The month of May sees the annual Merton Discovery Day. This event has been well attended in previous years and I am sure that will continue this year. The museum will be there with a stall and running activities for all ages. To find out what is happening check out the 'Dates for the Diary' page.

It always interests me when you look at social media activity such as Facebook and Twitter and who is following you and reading your posts. There are a number of individuals who look at what we are up to yet few are members of the museum. Whether it affects membership overall is up for debate. But what we do know is that we are grateful to all those members who continue to pay their annual membership for your support. Thank you.

Best wishes,
Mick Taylor

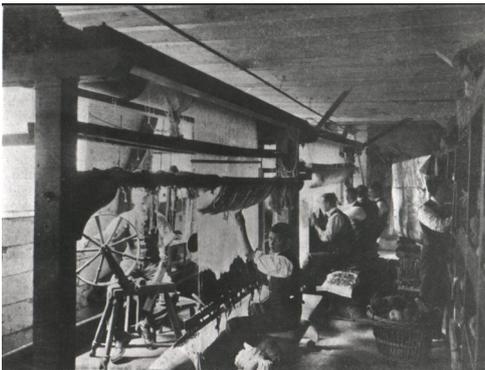
Cover Picture:

The Dovecot Studio tapestry weavers in 1914-early 1915. For more information about this group and their association with the Wandle Valley read Dave Saxby's article on John Glassbrook.

John Glassbrook, a Morris & Co tapestry weaver

Dave Saxby tells the story behind our cover photograph.

In 1901 Morris & Co took on a new tapestry apprentice, a 14 year old local lad called Gordon Berry whose family lived at 6 Leyton Road, close to the Morris & Co works. Three years later another 14 year old local boy, John Glassbrook, was also taken on as a tapestry apprentice. The two boys were trained by the master weavers John Martin and Walter Taylor.



The tapestry workshop at Merton Abbey in c1904-05. The weavers are Walter Taylor (aged 29), Robert Ellis (aged 29), John Martin (aged 32), Gordon Berry (aged 17) and the 14-15 year old John Glassbrook sits in the front.

John Glassbrook was born on 8 April 1889 at 56 Graham Road, South Wimbledon. He was the seventh of eleven children born to James and Elizabeth Glassbrook (née Rae). When John was about 12 years old his father left his mother to bring up about 6 of the children on her own. Whilst he was at Morris & Co, he studied drawing, painting and design at the School of Art in Kingston, Surrey, and he designed a wallpaper for Morris & Co which is now in the William Morris Gallery collection. In 1911 he was aged 21 and living with his mother and siblings at 82 Cecil Road, Wimbledon. John was also known as 'Jack' by his friends and family.

In late in 1911 or very early in 1912 John Glassbrook and Gordon Berry were persuaded to leave Morris & Co by John Crichton-Stuart, 4th Marquess of Bute, to go to Edinburgh and weave tapestries for his castles and stately homes. John and Gordon became the first master tapestry weavers at the new tapestry studio called 'Dovecot Studios' in Corstorphine in the west of Edinburgh which was set-up in 1912. Four local Edinburgh boys were taken on as their apprentice weavers; these were James Wood, David Anderson, Ronald Cruickshank and Richard Gordon. The first tapestry woven at the studio in 1912 was *Lord of the Hunt*, designed by William Skeoch Cumming.



See our cover photograph. The Dovecot Studio tapestry weavers in 1914-early 1915. Gordon Berry is in the back row, far left with John Glassbrook next to him. The four apprentices are James Wood, David Anderson, Ronald Cruickshank and Richard Gordon (courtesy of the Glassbrook family).

John had a cheerful personality and was talented in music and drama. He was a member of the Edinburgh Operatic Society and starred in many local operas. He was most popular as the Lord High Executioner in the 'Mikado' and took a leading part in other Gilbert and Sullivan operas by the Craig Gray Company. He also enjoyed football and athletics.

By 1916 the right half of the *Lord of the Hunt* tapestry had been woven, but the Dovecot Studio closed during the War and John, Gordon and the four apprentices enlisted in the army. John was rejected twice on medical grounds before being accepted for the army. He joined the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders in October 1916 when they were stationed at Dreghorn. After a few months training he was selected as a gunner with the E Battery, Tank Corps. When leaving for the Front, John and Gordon met their former master weaver, John Martin in London. During his time in the army he entertained wounded soldiers and kept up their spirits.

At the Front he wrote a letter to his sister Emma on 23 August 1917 '*...I will tell you what I would like you to get me Wem [Emma], and that is a stick of Vinolia shaving soap. Well Emma I am very pleased to say that I'm in the best of health, and having a very good time. But give me dear 'Auld Reekie' and I'll be as happy as anybody. I'm very anxious to get back and to see how the tapestry is getting on. It has been covered up for twelve months now and I'm wondering if Mr Thompson has ever given it a look. But Cheer i oh I don't suppose it will be so very long before we are back again. Now I must close. Trusting this finds you in the best of health. With fondest love. From your affectionate Brother Jack.*'



John 'Jack' Glassbrook in uniform in 1916-17 (courtesy of the Glassbrook family)

Sadly 'Jack' never saw his tapestry finished or returned to see his sister Emma and his mother. He fought at Passchendaele and a month after writing the letter to his sister, he died of his wounds on 26th September 1917 at the age of 28 at Ypres, West Flanders. He is buried at Wieltje Farm Cemetery, West-Vlaanderen, Belgium.

His friend and tapestry partner Gordon Berry served with the 14th battalion of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders and was sadly killed in action on 24th April 1917 at the age of 30. Both are commemorated on the war memorial at Corstorphine Kirk. Hearing of their deaths, John Martin said '*both of whom have passed into the Great Unknown for which I shall ever regret*'.

The four Dovecot apprentices James Wood, David Anderson, Ronald Cruickshank and Richard Gordon survived the War and returned to the Dovecot Studios. Between 1919–24 they continued to weave the *Lord of the Hunt* tapestry and as a mark of respect for their masters, John and Gordon's initials were woven behind a bobbin and shears on the lower border of the tapestry which they never completed.



John and Gordon's initials woven behind a bobbin and shears on the lower border of the *Lord of the Hunt* tapestry (courtesy of the Glassbrook family)

Our thanks go to Dave Saxby from the Museum of London and the Glassbrook Family for allowing us to print this article. An article by Dave Saxby on Glassbrook also appears in the Spring 2017 issue of 'The William Morris Society Magazine'. This may be viewed at the museum.

A Regular Visitor

Those of you who know our Wednesday volunteer and handyman Eric Shaw will be aware of his love of dogs. Never without a couple of dog biscuits in his pocket he has attracted a regular visitor. Ted and his owner turn up on most Wednesday afternoons. Ted will even bark to get Eric's attention if he is not at the front door to get his biscuit.



Update from the Ops Team

It has been a very busy period for the Ops team , with very little sign of quieter times ahead. Apart from the day-to-day running of the museum, these are the main points.

School Visits – we have had two schools at the museum for printing sessions with 114 children and helpers. An additional “outreach” visit was postponed and, if rescheduled, will join the two schools already planned.



A helper from the Date Valley School in Mitcham completes her personal block print.

Talks and Walks have become a major part of our activities and so far this year we have met with five groups totalling 147 adults in Merton, Banstead and Purley. There are a further 10 sessions already booked for later this year. Although we do not charge a fee for this service, donations and sales of books gives a regular income.



Eric Shaw speaking to an audience at West Barnes Library, Motspur Park on the Surrey Iron Railway.

Heritage Days - we are committed to the following:-

Discovery Day in Merton Library where we will have a stall, and will also give Printing and Stained Glass sessions. We will give a talk and Print session as part of Wandsworth Heritage Week, and will open all day for the Mitcham Heritage Day where we will expect over 50 visitors to the Museum. See *'Dates for the Diary'*.

Exhibits are continuing to be updated, with the William Morris Works now refurbished, while a new range of “more-authentic” figures are being prepared for the display.



Our volunteer Martin Roberts seen here cleaning up our model of the Morris Works at Merton Abbey.

We have held a meeting with our Curatorial Advisor and with our Trustees, as required for our Certification, and continue to meet regularly with the other groups concerned with the Wandle Valley.



We can report that successful marmalade making is not restricted to the distaff side of the Hart household. Nicholas and Michael achieved silver and bronze awards in the “Man-Made” category of the Dalemain Marmalade Awards. Well done to both of them and here’s hoping that we get to taste it soon.

Wandle Trail Update

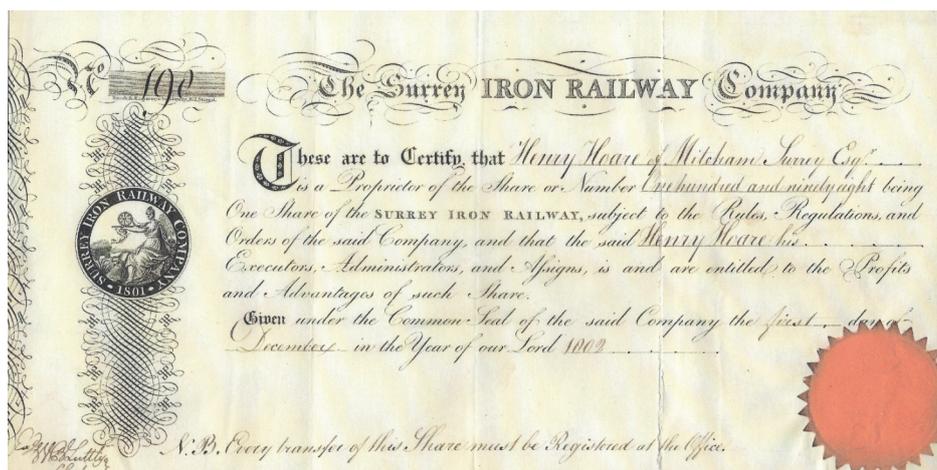
Thanks to Melanie Nunzet for identifying a couple of possible new diversions for the route within Wandsworth. It is also good to note that the Crane pub on Armoury Way, which was renamed The Armoury by the brewery just a few years ago, has now reverted to its original name. For some reason, however, the sign now depicts the bird and not a piece of lifting machinery!

The museum is also working with the Living Wandle Partnership and their partner The Building Exploratory in a project called ‘Mapping the Mills’. Using a team of volunteers the object of the project is to track

down all the locations of the mills that existed on the River Wandle.

Next year sees the 20th anniversary of the first Wandle Trail walk. Were you there? Maybe you have some memories of walking the Wandle Trail you would like to share? If so please let us have your stories so we can include them in an issue of The Bulletin to celebrate the first walk next year.

SIR Share Certificate



Reading Mick Taylors article on Page 9 “Flog It” of the last issue of the “Bulletin”, and of the De Morgan “tiles” that he put alongside the display, reminded me of something similar that is on display in the museum at the S.I.R. section.

In the left hand corner is a photocopy of a S.I.R. Share certificate. From a few feet, sorry centimetres!, away it looks like the real thing.

It was sent to us by the auctioneer at a philatelic auction in Shrewsbury some time ago. A friend of mine sent a copy of the auction programme in which this certificate was mentioned for auction.

Our then management committee put in a bid of £150—the guide price was £75. We were unsuccessful. The certificate went for £500, and apparently the successful bidder was prepared to go as far as £1000.

I think that this ties in very nicely with Micks remarks about the genuine De Morgan tiles.

Eric Shaw

Frederick Braithwaite

Almost every book about the River Wandle will include reference to a study completed by Braithwaite. Yet who was he?

He was born on 20th June 1798, the fourth son of John Braithwaite, the founder of a manufacturing business involved in the ingenious and successful use of diving-bells to raise ships and goods from the sea bed. Educated at Lords Grammar School in Tooting he became involved with mechanical engineering in 1837 when he succeeded his brother in the family business. The engine factory part of the business he looked after was involved in sinking a large number of wells in and around London. This led to him paying particular attention to anything connected to the water-supply of the Metropolis.

Under his supervision a great number of wells were sunk around London. One example was a well designed by him sunk at Reid's brewery (Clerkenwell) in 1841. A large chamber built in the chalk with galleries that struck water-bearing fissures. He used information kept by his brother John from 1810 to gain knowledge of the depths the strata could be struck. There were exhibits of his studies that showed the decline of water in deep wells.

Braithwaite, due to an interest in the preservation of iron-clad ships, became an Associate of the Institution of Naval Architects. He joined the Institution of Civil Engineers in 1838 as an Associate, becoming a Member in 1845 and finally joining as an 'Associate of Council' between 1842 and 1843.

In 1848 he helped with establishing waterworks in Lisbon before he returned to England in 1850 to give evidence to the Board of Health on the supply of water to the Metropolis. A paper 'On the Infiltration of Salt Water into the Springs of Wells under London and Liverpool' was followed up by a paper 'On the Rise and Fall of the River Wandle; its Springs, Tributaries, and Pollution.' in 1853.

Braithwaite died on the 27th February 1865.

His paper 'On the Rise and Fall of the River Wandle' and the discussion around it can be obtained from the Institution of Civil Engineers virtual library.



Dates for the Diary

Most of our talks, walks and printing sessions are private events. However listed below are those events open to all comers.

Merton Priory Chapter House

For the weekend of **May 6th and 7th**, the Chapter House will be open between 11am until 4.30 pm.

Your chance to discover Merton's amazing heritage.

Whether you are interested in local history, want to find out more about your local area, or would like the chance to try something new – the Merton Heritage Discovery Day promises something for everyone. This popular annual event is a showcase for the borough's rich and varied history and attracts hundreds of visitors of all ages. The 2017 event will take place at Morden Library, Merton Civic Centre on **Saturday 13 May from 12.30 to 4.3pm**. Admission is FREE.

The Discovery Day programme will feature photographic displays, archive film, IT taster sessions and children's activities including archaeology, block printing and even tambourine music. Local history talks and workshops will cover topics from Merton Priory and the River Wandle, to Black history, Mitcham Cricket Green, famous Wimbledonians and the St. Helier Estate. Visitors can also tour the Heritage marketplace which hosts stalls from the borough's many museums, local history societies, genealogists and community groups.

For more information contact Merton Heritage Centre: Tel. 020 8545 3239. Email: local.studies@merton.gov.uk

The Weaver's Apprentice

This exhibition is currently on at the Dovecot Studios in Edinburgh until July 1st. It features the influence of the founding master weavers from the Morris works in Merton. A report will follow in the next Bulletin. See Page 3 for information about the Dovecot Studios.

Wandsworth Heritage Festival

As part of the Wandsworth Heritage Festival the museum will be opening its doors on Sunday 4th June from 11am for a talk and the opportunity to print using traditional methods. Learn more about the art

of block printing as used for over 250 years by the textile works along the River Wandle. Booking details to be confirmed.

There will also be a talk on the 'Mills of the River Wandle' at Earlsfield Library on 6th June at 6:30pm.

'Mills of the River Wandle' Talk

There will be a further opportunity to learn more about the mills at West Barnes Library on Tuesday 20th June from 10:30 to 12.

Mitcham Heritage Day

The museum will be open from 10am on the 9th September with free entry. We are part of a full day of activities taking place around the area of the Cricket Green from talks, tours and fun covering all aspects of the heritage of Mitcham. More details to follow.

New Exhibition Opening 10th June 2017



This years new exhibition will focus on brewing in the Wandle Valley.

There will be a Private View on Saturday 10th June to which all members and volunteers will be invited.

The exhibition will be open to the public the following day.

So put the date in your diary and wait to learn more about one of the lesser known but no less important industries of the River Wandle.



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.

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 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 office@wandle.org

You can find us on:

