



NEWSLETTER

Issue 80

November 2012

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1 Newsdesk

Visitors to the Museum during the Summer /Autumn season have been good including the summer openings.

In September we had visits from the Tuesday Rendezvous Club and 10 interested members of the Public came to our Open Afternoon for the annual Festival for the Over 50's.

In November we had a visit from St Nicholas Special Needs School in Purley and the Printing Team went to the 1st Wandsworth Scout Group

Outreach: We were pleased to participate for the first time with Make a Difference Day when 2 Merton Councillors came to the museum to take part in our activities. We were pleased to welcome Cllr Geraldine Stanford and Cllr Logie Lohendran. – more details below (p6).

Events: On September 26th our Volunteers Lunch Meeting was transformed into a Fund Raising Day. Games and Raffle took place and members were invited to make a voluntary contribution for their food and drink and also for cakes and jams made by Mary.



Figure 1 Our Chair in control at the AGM

Altogether we raised nearly £500. So a big thank you to all who participated and gave generous donations. We hope to put this money aside for special projects.

Annual General Meeting: on October 26th. This was a successful evening with an interesting presentation by Claire Longworth of the De Morgan Centre on 'William and Evelyn De Morgan'. Once again the Raffle proved popular with 2 Christmas cakes by Mary, and it raised £70

Membership: We are pleased to welcome 4 new members Cllr and Mrs Southgate, Phillip Moore who won a year's free membership at the Olympics Hub Event, and Peter Hawkes from Toulouse, France.

Volunteers: We have a new Sunday Volunteer Christina Jeal who is keen to join our Sunday Rota. We always need extra helpers for our Sunday openings so please let us know if you are able to help.

Dates for your Diary: December 12th is the next Volunteers lunch meeting. This will be a Christmas Party and we hope to see as many as possible at this annual event.

Thursday 10th January has been booked for our Members and friends New Year Lunch at the Toby Carvery at Park Place Mitcham meeting at 12.30 for 1.00pm start.

A booking Form is included with this Newsletter which we should like to be returned by 21st December at the latest. The cost will be £10 for 2 courses, Vegetarian options will be available.

As before a selection of wine and soft drinks will be available on your table.

Membership:

Subscriptions for the year commencing 1st January 2013 are now due and a renewal form is enclosed with this Newsletter. We hope to see you at some of our future events. Meanwhile we wish all our members and volunteers a very Happy Christmas

Sheila H

November 2012

2. Museum Update

Curators Report

Education:

We have received the £1000 grant from the Ernest Cook Trust.

Helen and I drafted a letter to the schools who responded to our letters.

We have offered each school a free session between Jan 2013 and Oct 2013.

Within the grant is a sum of money for the hire of the hall and for materials to use in the workshops.

Wandle Trail Map

Justin of What Communication came to see us on Wednesday and we discussed the map. He has taken it away to work on a new one.



Figure 2 an extract from our original 1988 map

A suggestion, by Michael, that we may look at an App of our map before someone else does.

All this has been made more urgent by recent developments. Although we launched the Wandle Trail in 1988, this fact seems largely to have been forgotten by the new Wandle Trail Partnership led by Sustrans, and evidenced at the recent drop in meeting attended by Ray and Michael. Michael has suggested the lead officer visits us so we can give (and receive) a full picture of what was, and what is to be. It seems clear their remit is solely focussed on the cycling use of the Trail, and

the heritage and walking aspects are not present.

Nicholas has also reported that a new Wiki page on the Wandle Trail had been created, presumably by Sustrans, which gave them the credit for creation of the Wandle trail, crediting us with merely ‘an idea’. This has now been changed on an interim basis, but we must consider a proper revision, as well as a new map of our own to show we remain at the centre of these developments.

2013 forward plan

This was discussed at last week’s management meeting, and a draft should be ready for general review by the time of the Christmas Lunch

Meg Thomas

Archive Report

As part of “Make a Difference Day”, which in Merton was stretched to about ten days (!), Councillors Geraldine Stanford and Logie Lohendran both gave

up an afternoon to help in the museum, which was much appreciated. Geraldine helped to number the maps, which seemed appropriate in view of her name being shared with London's largest travel bookshop. Logie assisted Jacqui in researching local names for our master file. As he was unfamiliar with the museum we also asked him to be a "mystery shopper". This is a concept popular in libraries and galleries, and is useful in getting a fresh perception on layout, guiding, content etc.

We have committed to supporting the Merton Memories project by contributing initially to the Discovery Days and the compilation of Local Area Packs. This is an initiative headed up by Merton Libraries / Heritage to create a local history photographic database. In the distant future, if our staffing and finances permit, we would hope to offer a selection of our own photos to augment the central collection.

With this in mind, we are trying to create our own in-house digitisation along the same lines, using much the same headings and descriptions. It is a real advantage that Michael Taylor is actually working on Merton Memories and can therefore keep us up to speed with developments.

We have been in touch with Allen Clark, a former block printer at Liberty's, now living on the South Coast, with whom we hope to arrange an informal interview, and have also been offered some glass jars from Jackson's of Mitcham, presently in the possession of Miss Turner, the founder's granddaughter.

Alison & Jacqui

Improving the Museum

Those of you who have visited the museum recently may have seen some improvements we have made.

Over the last few years the two areas either side of the path leading to the museum entrance has changed from



Figure 3 creating the 'garden' (Photo M. Taylor)

pleasant grassed areas to those more suited to being used for mud-wrestling. People visiting the Vestry Hall have used the area outside the museum to park their cars. This has been more noticeable on a Sunday. As a result of the cars turning the previously nicely grassed areas had been turned into piles of continuous wet mud.

Efforts have now been made to recover the two areas. To help the areas recover they have been filled with fresh earth and gravel. A low wire fence has been placed around both areas and plants put in. Amongst the plants that have been put in are several lavender bushes. It is hoped that these will grow and provide the museum with lavender to use. We will be looking to add additional plants in the future.

As a result of this work the path to the museum is now much cleaner. Our only problem is the autumn leaf fall. A minor one compared to having to scrape away the mud from the path.

Other work that has taken place is the installation by Eric of a security light overlooking the front door. It certainly makes it easier for those entering and leaving the museum at night.

Future plans are in place to redecorate the interior of the museum. The ladies toilet has already been completed and this is due to be followed by the kitchen area. We are also looking at painting the outside of the museum. Volunteers to help with this work are more than welcome. This will include painting the name of the museum along the side so that it can be seen from the road. If anyone knows a sign writer who would be willing to give us their time then please contact the museum.

Michael Taylor, Nov 2012

General

Recent Museum events have included our Annual General Meeting, once



Figure 4 Eric at work on the security light (photo M. Taylor)

again at Raynes Park library. The formal business was passed without much comment, and we were able to relax, well fed and watered, to enjoy a fascinating run through of the lives and works of the two de Morgans, William and his wife Evelyn, given by Claire Longworth of the de Morgan Centre in Wandsworth. Although not as widely known as should be the case, these two fine artists have left us a wonderful legacy of their work, and so long as we have such enthusiastic curators as Claire to look after and promote their work they will

not be forgotten.

Those who attended the AGM will have heard our chairman's fateful words - if I can remember them accurately along the lines of 'This time next year we will either be holding this meeting at Ravensbury, or it will never happen.'



Figure 5 Claire Longworth, curator of the De Morgan Centre, keeping full attention of the AGM audience

The reason for this announcement was that only a week earlier we had heard from the enforcement office at Merton that the court case was drawing to a close. We had very much hoped that by the time of this newsletter some flesh would have been put on these bones, but nothing yet. However, with the energy now being shown by the LBM officers involved, and with the active interest of 2 cabinet members of the status of Andrew Judge and Nick Draper, there can be little doubt momentum will not be lost, so watch this space!

As mentioned above, Michael's involvement in the Merton Memories project has enabled us to review our copyright policies. The new Copyright Act has extended some time limits, and clarified others. Like many museums, one of our main concerns is that few photographs in our collection have proper provenance, so it is difficult for us to distinguish between those where we now have copyright by way of gift from the originator of the photo, those where copyright is clearly owned by an identifiable person where we can not publish or reproduce without consent, and those where the consent we need is not possible because these are 'orphan' works - there must be a copyright owner, but it is impossible to trace him/her. Alison and Michael are working closely on this, and drawing on the work being done by Sarah Gould and her

team at LBM as well should be able to create a new policy and record keeping protocol to simplify this for us for the future.

Surrey Iron Railway – Watch this space

South Croydon MP Richard Ottaway’s Scrap Metal Dealers Bill proposes a whole-scale reform of the scrap metal industry, which is the principal outlet for stolen metal. The Evening Standard of 9 November (thanks to Alison for spotting this) goes on to extrapolate: “Tracks from one of the world's first railways could be displayed in Croydon for the first time in decades if a local MP's Bill becomes law today. The historic iron tracks from the Croydon, Merstham and Godstone Railway, which ran from 1805 to 1838 with horse-drawn wagons, have had to be kept in secret rural locations to foil scrap metal thieves.”

We are not sure which tracks they mean, and it was only passing its House of Commons stage on the 9th, so has a long way to go yet before it becomes law, but all credit to the Evening Standard for picking up on this, and we would be grateful if everyone kept their eyes open for more information on this possibility.

3. Merton Abbey Mills and Merton Priory updates

Nature Notes

In the late summer, Merton Abbey Mills was privileged to be selected as its new home by a young heron. Christened ‘Henry’ he rapidly grew accustomed to feeding off smoked salmon and other titbits offered to him by The Commonwealth Café, and by fish fingers and spam offered by Claire at the Wheelhouse.



Figure 6 Henry the heron on first sighting

While mildly interested in the River Wandle, Henry showed no great enthusiasm for fishing for himself, and was worryingly trusting of human beings.



Figure 7 Henry after 3 months on his return to Merton Abbey Mills

Then, without warning, he disappeared. Much worrying took place about what dark fate may have snatched him away.

Just as suddenly, however, he has returned, much larger and grander, and much more self-assured, but just as uninterested in fishing

for himself as before.

Talking of Henry, the refined version of the eel trap has been working well, and the photo shows just one day's sample. It is interesting that many of the eels who make their way up the eel ladder to the collection tank, then return the same way without going on to join the river above the weir.

Over at the Chapter House much has been happening. Many of you will have seen Marcus Beale's model of the proposed extension works, and this week a final presentation is to be made to the Wandle Valley Landscape Partnership and the HLF. Subject to that going well the grant application will be submitted in January, the grant will be approved by mid-2103, and building works under way early in 2014.



Figure 8 the Chapter House improvement model

There is every hope that, exactly 900 years since the monks from St Albans founded their new Priory in Merton in what is now Merton Park, the site they moved to 3 years later will have reopened to celebrate that historically important 400 years before Henry VIII's dissolution closed it forever.

In the meantime the displays are improving all the time, and the Chapter House has been open for 3 weekends (London Open House and Merton Arts Trail) and Mary and her team have been working hard at persuading visitors there to come to our museum as well.

4. A SHOCKING EVENT - Eric Shaw remembers.

During the recent fundraising lunch at the museum Nicholas and I were talking about the new security light above the entrance, and the wiring up of it.

I mentioned my involvement with lighting wiring in Crete in 1957. It was in an underground stone quarry reputed to have been originally dug during the Minoan era, though the earliest date that we could find scratched on the walls was 1896. In the 1940s it was used to store live ammunition of all kinds and when the Germans left Greece they blew the entrance up. Subsequently

the Greek army excavated back inside.

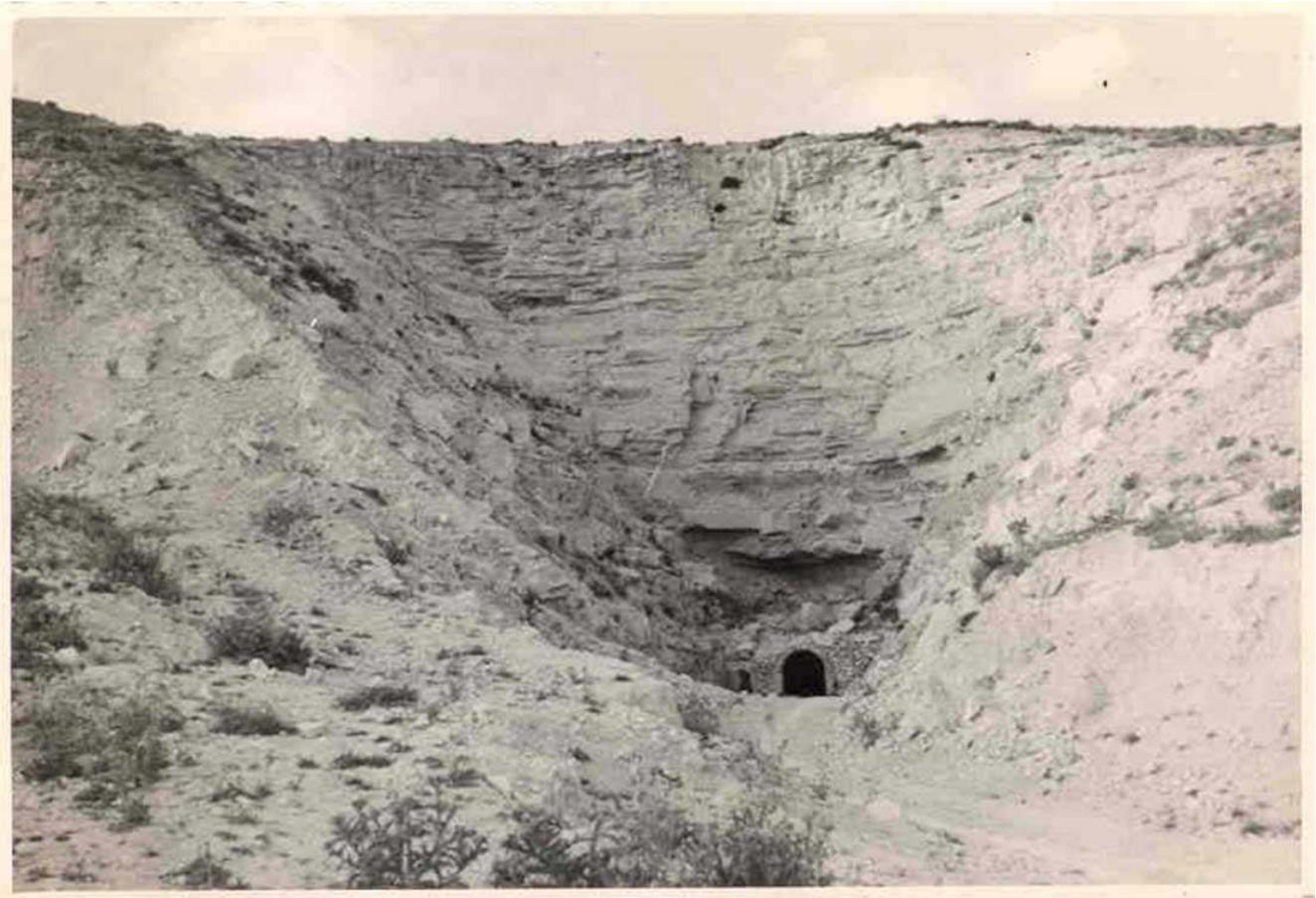


Figure 9 Showing the scale of the rock face above where Eric was working (photo E Shaw)

The company that I worked for had an interest in scrap metal, and six of us were sent to see what could be re covered for scrap.



Figure 10 ... and how small the people by comparison (photo E Shaw)

We had our own electric generator and air compressor for our pneumatic drills. We also took steel supports to hold up the rock that was shattered, to make it safe for us to continue digging. We worked around the exploded area and then into it to see what we could find.

As we had dug further, extending the lighting wiring as we went, our supply of lighting fittings started to run out, so we removed odd ones to extend the system. What we didn't do was mark where we had taken the fittings from, and sometimes the copper conduct broke later on after the fitting had been removed. Imagine being in a rough-hewn tunnel where, apart from the lighting before the break, there was none further on. How do you locate the break without any equipment?

Torchlight was too feeble, and would have taken ages, anyway. What I used to do was to walk along the tunnel holding the wire in my hand. Air inside

the tunnel was humid, and the wiring was damp, so when my hand reached the break I got a shock, even though I was wearing rubber soled safety boots.

Now that I knew where the break was, standing on a rubber mat I could repair it with the current still on.

Sometimes I would ask one of my colleagues, who was holding the torch, to pass me a pair of pliers. After a couple of times, and with suitable expletives, they refused because they got a shock through me, although I never felt a thing, and I still don't understand why.

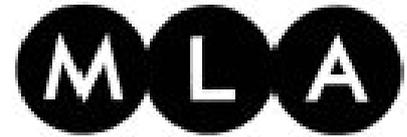
Anyway after the break was repaired we could continue digging until the next time!

What I didn't tell Nicholas was that after my return from Crete, my colleagues in the drawing office referred to me as the "ex-Cretian".

Eric Shaw, 14/10/2012

Editor's note

Only by recording the memories of people like Eric can we keep trace of the way the workplace used to be – in this case the unquestioning belief of the employer in the common sense of its employees (however misplaced) and on the side of the worker the casual acceptance of that responsibility. In these days of political correctness, the latent insult in the last paragraph would cause immediate disciplinary action – but then would be merely regarded as banter.



Accredited
Museum

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 ndhart@wandle.org