

Wooden Water Pipe at Ravensbury Park, Mitcham

by D. J. TURNER

(with a report on the contents by J. Cooper and C. P. Castell)

During the autumn of 1962, a backwater of the River Wandle in Ravensbury Park was drained to enable repairs to be carried out to the bank. While this work was being undertaken, the foreman, Mr W. A. Bloodworth, noticed a large wooden object, bound with iron, in the silt covering the river bed. The Merton and Morden Historical Society was given permission by the Merton and Morden U.D.C. to investigate the object, which was found to be a wooden water pipe crossing the backwater (Pl. I).

The pipe ran approximately north-south across the stream (Fig. 1. NGR TQ 26746815) and there was a junction in midstream. The joint was covered by

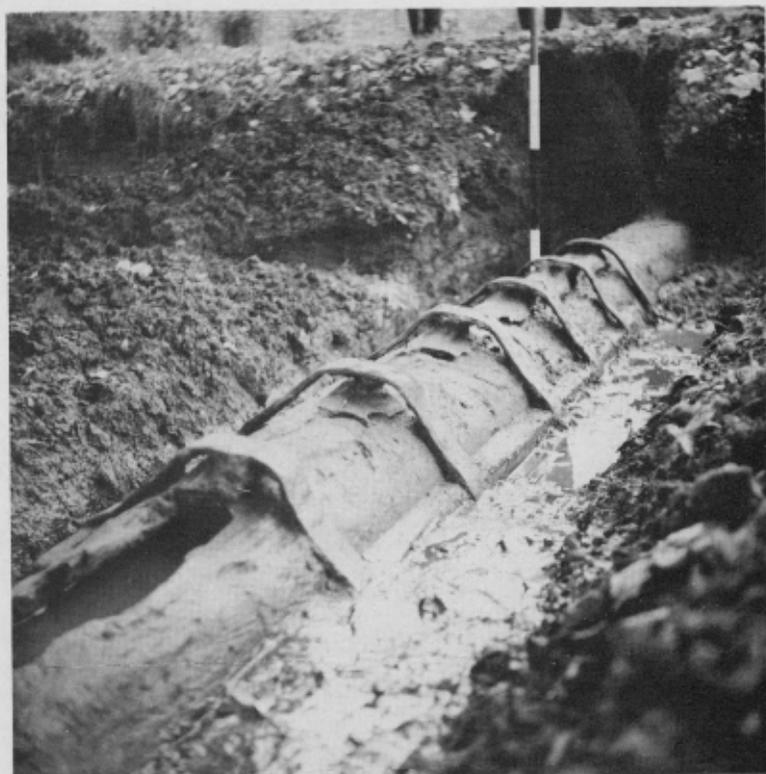


Plate I. Wooden Pipe found at Ravensbury Park, Mitcham.

an iron collar and the pipe was additionally supported at the joint by four 5 inch by 2 inch chamfered wooden planks bound into place by six iron hoops (Fig. 2). The upper plank had largely rotted away. The external diameter of the pipe was 1 ft 5 in. (Note: for clarity Fig. 2 has been drawn with the pipe rotated through 135° from its original position.)

The pipe sloped down from the joint at a gradient of 1 in 30 to the north (away from the main stream of the Wandle) and down at a gradient of 1 in 13 to the south.

After the silt had been excavated from around the pipe, the joint and its supporting planks were cut out of the pipe and lifted from the river bed by the local Civil Defence Corps. It was cleaned out and transported to a barn at Morden Park where it was allowed to dry slowly. It is now stored in the stables at Morden Hall, under the care of Merton Borough Council. It has not been possible to arrive at any certain conclusions about the date of the pipe but it seems probable that it led to the sluiced drain marked on the 1865/66 and 1894 1:2500 O.S. plans.

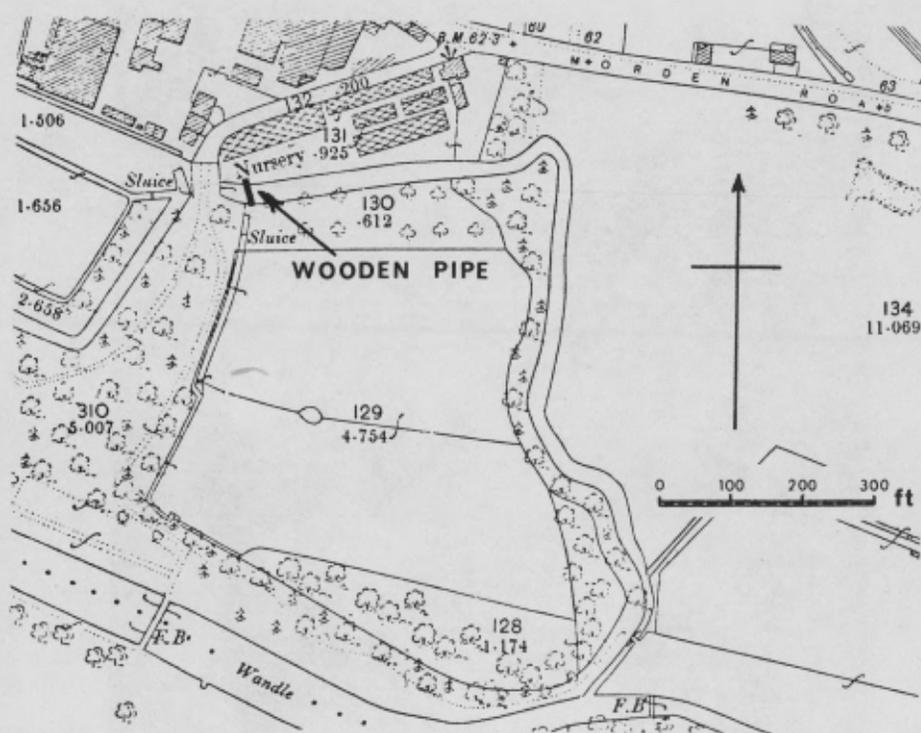


Fig. 1. Ravensbury Park, Mitcham. Location Map. Crown Copyright reserved

WOODEN PIPE FOUND AT RAVENSBURY PARK, MITCHAM.

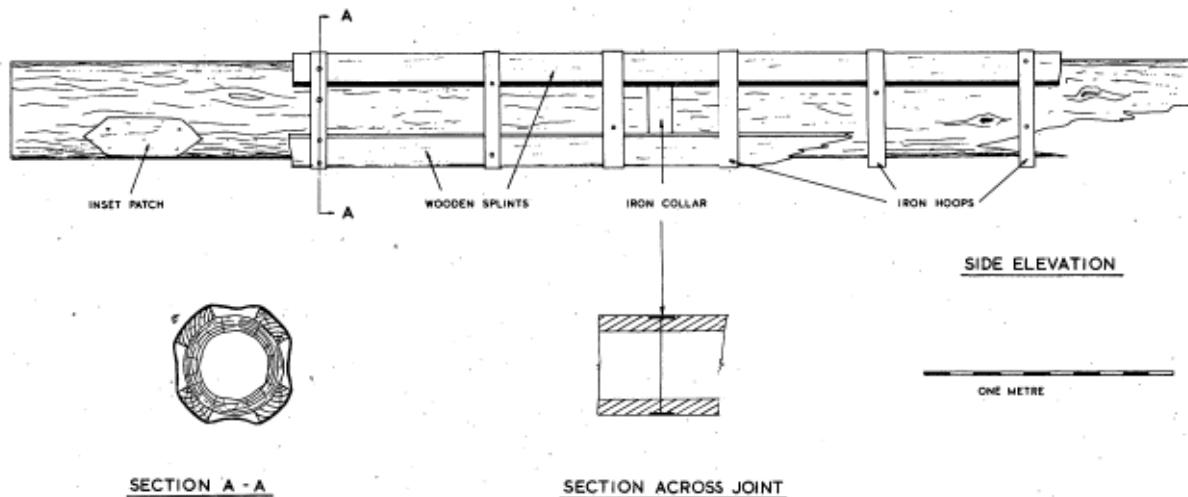


Fig. 2. Wooden Pipe found at Ravensbury Park, Mitcham.

The contents of the pipe were found to be stratified in two layers, the lower of gravel and the upper of very fine silt. Samples of both layers were submitted to Mr J. Cooper and Mr C. P. Castell of the British Museum (Natural History) for mechanical analysis and for a mollusca count. Their report is as follows:-

CRUDE MECHANICAL ANALYSIS

1000gms of each of the oven-dried samples were sieved wet. The individual sieve loads were then oven-dried and weighed. The results are expressed in the table as percentages of the total dry-weight of the 1000gm sample.

<i>Percentages of Dry-Weight Retained in Sieves</i>						
<i>Sample</i>	<i>Mesh Apertures</i>					<i>Finer fractions</i>
	<i>6.5mm</i>	<i>3.5mm</i>	<i>2.0mm</i>	<i>1.0mm</i>	<i>0.5mm</i>	
'Upper Silt'	0	7.9	3.2	10.9	12.8	65.2
'Lower Silt' (Gravel)	32.8	9.7	5.3	6.2	8.9	37.2

The gravel ranged in size from 6.5mm to 50mm, but one large pebble was 60mm long.

MOLLUSCA

These were removed after the sieving and weighing of the samples.

	<i>Lower Silt (Gravel)</i>	<i>Upper Silt</i>
AQUATIC GASTROPODS		
<i>Valvata cristata</i> Müller	1	24
<i>Valvata piscinalis</i> (Müller)	1	—
<i>Bithynia tentaculata</i> (L)	4 shells + 13 opercula	8 frgts. + 3 opercula
<i>Planorbis planorbis</i> (L)	1	—
<i>Planorbis albus</i> Müller	1	—
<i>Acroloxus lacustris</i> (L)	1	20
BIVALVES		
<i>Sphaerium corneum</i> (L)	6 frgts.	c. 300 shells and frgts.
<i>Pisidium</i> sp.	1	1

LAND GASTROPODS

<i>Carychium cf. tridentatum</i> (Risso)	—	1
<i>Succinea pfeifferi</i> Rossm.	7	—
<i>Cochlicopa lubrica</i> (Müller)	6 frgts	1
<i>Vallonia pulchella</i> (Müller)	1	—
<i>Vallonia excentrica</i> Sterki	3	—
<i>Helix aspersa</i> Müller	3 frgts	—
<i>Helix (Cepea)</i> sp.	7 frgts	—
<i>Hygromia striolata</i> (C. Pfr.)	1 frgt	—
<i>Hygromia hispida</i> (L)	79 shells and frgts	2
<i>Arion</i> sp. (granules)	44	1
<i>Retinella radiatula</i> (Alder)	1	—
<i>Agriolimax</i> sp.	5	—

ARTHROPODA

Insecta		
Caddis cases	4	6
Crustacea: Ostracoda		
<i>Candona neglecta</i> Sars	—	5
<i>Herpetocypris reptans</i> (Baird)	—	13

The 'Lower Silt' probably indicates the period when the pipe was in use, the flow of water enabling it to carry the larger grain sizes and many of the large molluscs. The 'Upper Silt' appears to indicate a period of disuse when fine material drifted in and filled the pipe. The molluscs are representative of those which lived in the River Wandle or on land adjacent to it.

Most of the species listed were seen 60 years ago in the area about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile to the north by A. W. Stelfox (1909) (See also C. P. Castell in D. J. Turner, 1967).

Acroloxus lacustris is an interesting addition to Stelfox's list; it lives on the surface of vegetation in ponds and slow-flowing streams.

Vallonia pulchella and *Retinella radiatula* are also additional records.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The writer wishes to acknowledge the kind co-operation of the officers of the then Merton and Morden U.D.C., especially Mr Sydney Astin, Town Clerk, and the help of the Civil Defence Corps in recovering the pipe section from the river bed. A number of enthusiastic volunteers from the then Merton and Morden Historical Society worked under unpleasantly wet conditions to make the examination and recovery of the pipe section possible, and gratitude is due to them. The writer also wishes to thank Mr E. N. Montague for preparing Fig. 2.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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