

# Mosaic

## THE WANDLE INDUSTRIAL MUSEUM

THE RIVER WANDLE was described at its peak as 'the hardest worked river for its size in the world'. The Wandle Industrial Museum seeks to reverse the process of decline along its banks, by bringing its rich industrial heritage to the attention of the public through the establishment of permanent displays of the industries traditionally practiced there.

Centred in the London Borough of Merton, the museum was brought into being by concerned individuals who, dissatisfied with the continuing neglect of the river, saw the potential for enhancing the amenities of the borough, providing employment and creating a focus for the community through the scheme.

A study of the area's history was funded by the Manpower Services Commission with a view to identifying sites for development. The results of this work have been displayed at a series of public exhibitions which have been well attended and have provoked great interest in the subject.

Of all the numerous mills which once existed in the valley, Merton contains three which continue to operate in their historic buildings; Merton Mill, Ravensbury and Mitcham Grove. Another - Morden Snuff Mill - is preserved by the National Trust. However, the now derelict Liberty site, so called after its last major operator, Liberty & Co. of Regent Street, has become the focus of the museum project. With its listed buildings the site contains the last surviving waterwheel open to public view and therefore presents a unique opportunity for the Museum to realise its aims. Negotiations continue but in the meantime physical deterioration as well as human depredation pose a threat equal to demolition.

The overall plan sees a riverside walk linking these mills with museum buildings and connecting with the Wandle Path under construction by the London Borough of Sutton.

The W.I.M. is incorporated as a registered charity and is supported in its activities by the Friends of the Wandle whose latest guided walk took place on Sunday 9 September. Some five miles in length, it includes the sites listed above, and passes through scenes of remarkable natural beauty.

The Museum welcomes contributions in all forms. Most of the established sources of information have been explored, but from the response to exhibitions it is evident that there is a reservoir of reminiscences, memorabilia and artefacts which lies dormant with members of the general public.

Further information can be obtained from the Museum's headquarters at:  
Park Lodge,  
Byegrove Road,  
Colliers Wood,  
London,  
SW19 2AZ,  
tel. (01) 542 2406,  
or from  
Harry Galley,  
c/o Links School,  
Frinton Road,  
Tooting,  
London,  
SW17 9EH

## REVAMP AT THE PASSMORE EDWARDS

INCLUDED IN the recent setting-up of the Greater London Archaeological Service is one unusual museum which perhaps has

come to the attention of many people for the first time - the Passmore Edwards Museum in East London. This museum is concerned with the heritage of the historical county of Essex, including in particular the five Greater London Boroughs east of the River Lea; its outliers include a nature reserve, a Thames sailing barge and a working railway station.

This purpose-built museum, which was opened in 1900, is a Grade II listed building. The square entrance hall and main exhibition area is largely given over to the natural history and geological collections, while beyond the hall the area at the bottom of the rather fine staircase is used for temporary exhibitions.

At first floor level the square exhibition area is cut in the centre by a large circular light well which reflects the shape of the glass dome above and provides natural illumination for the ground floor below. It is this difficult area which has been recently transformed into an excellent archaeological and historical gallery.

Designing a display in a square with a large round hole cut in it obviously calls for a circle of display cases, but the designer was able to improve on this by having 'inlets' in each of the four corners, which apart from anything else add character to the gallery. This idea not only provides more frontage space for the cases but also allows some items to be viewed from two adjoining sides.

The display covers the usual prehistoric periods very well - of special interest are the iron smelting exhibit, the Bronze Age pottery and the model of the Iron Age defences at Rainham.

The Roman display contains a representative sample of material including part of a reconstructed building complete with hypocaust, stoke hole, *opus signinum*, wattle and daub walling, and a window. For the Dark Ages there is in particular a case of Saxon pottery from Mucking and some Viking weapons.

The prize of the medieval display must be the Bible from Waltham Abbey, but there is much other fine material including painted and gilded masonry, decorated floor tiles and painted glass. The post-medieval period is well covered, particularly with its pottery.

The display continues out onto the landing at the top of the stairs, where the pride of place is undoubtedly the two cases full of 18th century Bow porcelain; there are also some very interesting social history exhibits.

Anyone interested in London's past is recommended to see this excellent redesigned gallery, not only for its contents but also for the technique used in fitting it into a listed building with a difficult shape. The Passmore Edwards Museum, which is in Romford Road (10 minutes walk from Stratford Underground station or buses 86 and 25), is currently open on weekdays from 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. except for Thursdays (10 a.m. - 8 p.m.) and Saturdays (10 a.m. - 1 p.m. and 2 - 5 p.m.); it is closed on Sundays and public holiday periods, but these days and times may shortly be changed. For further information, phone (01) 519 4296.

NICHOLAS FUENTES

## Thank you

THE SUBSCRIPTIONS SECRETARY would like to thank everyone who responded to her request to increase their banker's order, especially those who also sent in the extra £1 retrospectively.