

ARMS OF SIR THOMAS CECIL IN THE WINDOW
IN THE CHANCEL OF THE PARISH CHURCH
OF ST. MARY, WIMBLEDON *From a coloured
restoration by MISS ARNOLD* . . . *Page 161*

HERALDIC GLASS IN THE CECIL CHAPEL, PARISH
CHURCH OF ST. MARY, WIMBLEDON *From
photographs by G. C. DRUCE* . . . *to face Page 169*

The Illuminated Frontispiece reproduced by G. G. HUGGINS



THE RIVER WANDLE: PAST AND PRESENT *

INTEREST in the river which has gradually carved out the valley in which we live should be a perfectly natural emotion. As Charles Kingsley long ago pointed out, of all the physical agencies which have made our country what it is, and which are still continually modifying and gradually changing it, none, as a general rule, is more potent than water. Moreover, when we come to consider it, we shall find that no other of the various geographical features of which it may consist has more induced the first human settlement in any tract of country than the flow of a river or stream through or near it, and, accordingly, as that river or stream may be adapted to the purposes of man, whether for navigation, for mill power, or for whatsoever use to which it may be put, so has the development of the first early settlements in its valley proceeded,

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and their present-day character as towns or villages been eventually attained.

It is from this last point of view of the Wandle, as a chief factor in determining the salient characteristics of the various parishes through which it flows, that I propose principally to treat the river, and that historically, reviewing such documentary or other evidence as we may still have of its condition at different periods in its history.

But first of the river in its natural, physical features, its rise, course and fall from source to mouth. Here I will be as brief as may be, because the subject has already been very fully considered by writers well qualified by their scientific attainments to do so; by Mr. Smee, for instance, to whose delightful book on his garden at Wallington is prefixed an interesting account of the river, and, notably, by Mr. Frederick Braithwaite in a very learned paper which he read to the Institution of Civil Engineers so long ago as 1861, and which will be found in the Twentieth Volume of the Proceedings of that Institution.

The River Wandle takes its rise from a number of springs which issue from the chalk in the range of chalk hills known as the north Downs, which traverse the county of Surrey from west to east and pass a little to the

south of Croydon. These springs resolve themselves into two main streams, one of which has its head at Waddon, whence it flows through Beddington and Wallington to Hackbridge, where a little below the railway bridge of the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway it is joined by the other stream which flows from Carshalton, where it has its head in the ponds which form so picturesque a feature of that town. From Hackbridge the river flows on, dividing itself here and there into various branches which unite again to form one continuous stream, past Beddington Corner and Mitcham in a north-westerly direction, following the line of the hills to Morden, where, by Morden Hall, it finally strikes due north, and thence by Phipps Bridge and Merton, and dividing the parishes of Wimbledon and Tooting Graveney, it ultimately reaches Wandsworth, where it finds its outlet in the Thames.

During its course the Wandle is fed by land drainage, but not, apparently, to any great extent, except in very wet seasons. It has only one tributary of any considerable size, the River Graveney, which enters it by the flour mills just below the Wandle Bank at Merton.

Besides the sources of the river I have mentioned, there is another, and a somewhat peculiar one, in that it only appears for certain

short periods and then disappears for a number of years. This is the River Bourne, which rises in Marden Park in Woldingham and flows through Caterham to Croydon, where it joins the head of the Wandle at Waddon. Its appearance occurs at average intervals of from five to seven years, and the period of its flow is not usually of longer duration than a month, although during 1841 and 1842 (two years of great rainfall) it is recorded to have run without intermission. Various theories have been put forward to account for this peculiar property of this little river, but the phenomenon is probably capable of a simple explanation, and occurs whenever after a certain period of time, especially when accelerated by excessive rainfall, the chalk strata in which it rises has become over-saturated. The Bourne last rose, I believe, in 1903, but its value as a source of supply to the Wandle has been much diminished of late years by the tapping of the springs from which it is fed.

The total fall of the river from the main head of its eastern branch at Waddon, to where it joins the Thames at Wandsworth (a distance of barely 9 miles), is about 124 feet, whilst the fall from the head of the western branch at Carshalton to the same point is about 106 feet. It will readily be seen that a fall of such

magnitude in a river of such short extent renders it useless for navigation, but, on the other hand, supplies a very considerable amount of power, which can be easily adapted for turning the wheels of mills. It is this property of the Wandle which, as we shall see, has made it so important a factor in the industrial development of the district through which it flows. Herein the river may be compared with the other small rivers and streams which drain the interior of Surrey, for the Wey, the most important of these, was itself unnavigable, until in the middle of the 17th century human ingenuity had taken it in hand and canalized it from Weybridge to Guildford, and a hundred years still later, to Godalming.

In the name of the river we have one of those many philological puzzles, which even yet continue to baffle us. The more obvious derivation connects it with a Teutonic word meaning water, of which the nearest form occurs, perhaps, in the Lithuanic 'Wandu.' On the other hand it is pointed out that the place-name Wandsworth cannot be derived from the river, for the 's' at the end of the first compound can only denote the possessive case, and as it occurs in all the earliest known variants of the name—Wendles-wurthe [A.D. 693], Wandesorde, Wandeles-orde and Wendeles-orde [A.D. 1086]—the name must mean the worth or place of

Wendel, and that the river must therefore have derived its name by a back-formation from the name of this settlement. However this be, of one fact we may be certain, and that is, that the name of the river is of Saxon origin, and herein it differs from the great majority of all other English rivers whose British names carry us back to a more remote period in their history.

But in spite of the Saxon origin of its name, and of the fact that the names also of all the parishes and hamlets which lie in the river's valley prove that the settlement of this tract, as it exists at the present day, was determined no further back than during the period of Saxon rule in our island, there yet remain clear indications of human habitation here and there by the river's course in far earlier ages of our history. Anciently, before the Wandle had carved out its present channel, or, as is the case in many parts of it, man had himself diverted its natural course for his own purposes, the river must have flowed in a much wider and flatter valley. The drift-gravel which it brought down in its course extends for some considerable distance on each side of its present channel, and here we must look for those implements of flint which man chipped and fashioned for his use in the chase, or in husbandry, in the far distant ages, when he

had not yet learnt the art of metal-working. Discoveries of traces of the palaeolithic age, the earliest epoch at which we can be at all certain of the existence of man in this world, are infrequent in the neighbourhood of the Wandle, except at Wandsworth, where many flint implements of this period have been found at some distance on either side, within about a mile of its junction with the Thames. It is possible, however, that the gravel of the higher terraces in which these implements have been found may belong rather to the river system of the Thames, than to that of the Wandle. With the exception of the discovery of a palaeolithic implement at Croydon, near Croham Hurst, I believe no other traces of the existence of man in the higher parts of the old valley of the Wandle have yet come to light. Geology tells us that in these remote ages, or perhaps in times still more remote and incalculable, the Wandle had its rise considerably south of Croydon, and the cutting through the chalk hills just north of Merstham represents the now dry bed of the ancient river. Even within the last century the course of the river has been much shortened by the draining of the ponds which formerly existed by the church and palace of Croydon, and the various streams which once

surrounded these buildings have now been diverted into pipes beneath the surface of the ground.

Descending to the neolithic period, an age whose first beginnings are still almost immeasurable, but which seems to have terminated in Northern Europe about the year 1800 B.C., the evidences of the settlement of man in the Wandle valley are far more frequent.

Implements of this period have been found at Croydon, Waddon, Carshalton, Mitcham and Wandsworth, and other places along the river. A few years ago three curious underground chambers of hemispherical form were cut into in digging a sewer-trench at Waddon, and upon examination were found to contain, amongst remains of a later period, neolithic cores and flakes of flint, leading to the inference that these chambers were originally occupied in neolithic times, and that the flints were brought here and chipped into shape.*

Of the bronze period, which succeeded the neolithic, and probably ended in this country about 500 B.C., important remains have been found in some hoards of bronze implements at Beddington and Croydon, and in several very interesting implements recovered from the bed of the Wandle at Wandsworth.

* *Surrey Archaeological Collections*, xvii., 181.

This period was in its turn succeeded by the early iron age, represented in this country by the late Celtic culture. I do not know of the discovery of any objects of this period about the Wandle, but they are everywhere of rare occurrence; a fact not to be wondered at when we consider the perishable nature of the iron implements, which furnish its most characteristic features.

Proof of settlements in the river valley during the period of the Roman occupation is chiefly supplied by the remains of the small Roman villa which were discovered at Beddington in 1871, during the course of the sewage irrigation works, carried out by the Croydon Local Board of Health, on the north side of the Wandle, between Beddington Corner and Hackbridge. Roman and British coins of the 2nd and 3rd centuries of our era were found on the site. A discovery of a very large hoard of Roman coins was made in 1903 in the Wandle Road at Croydon.

Were other proof wanting to show how extensively the valley of the Wandle was occupied in Anglo-Saxon times, the names of the various places which lie along the river would still tell us, with no uncertain sound, of the nationality of their first settlers. Croydon, Waddon, Wallington, Beddington, Mitcham,

Morden, Merton and Wandsworth, all are unmistakeably Anglo-Saxon in their derivation; but we have more tangible evidence of our early Teutonic ancestors who first established themselves here, and it is not a little remarkable that of the very scanty number of Anglo-Saxon burial grounds which have been found in Surrey (I believe, all told, there are not more than five of which authentic record of their discovery has been made) no less than three should have lain in the Wandle Valley. Of these, the most important was found at Croydon in 1895, in what is now the Edridge Road, and with the burials were unearthed a most interesting collection of objects, some of which may now be seen in the British Museum and others in the Croydon Town Hall. Another burial ground of Anglo-Saxon date exists on Mr. Bidder's property at Mitcham, on the north side of the river, just below the bridge and south of Morden Lane. Discoveries of human remains have been made here at various intervals, extending over a long period, so that the field in which they have been found has been known in the court rolls of Ravensbury Manor for the last four centuries as Dead Man's Close. Recently, however, the field has been more systematically excavated by Mr. Bidder, and some seventy-

seven graves been laid open, many of them containing, in addition to the skeletons, characteristic Anglo-Saxon weapons and ornaments.* Another burial ground of this period was discovered in 1871 at Beddington, about 500. yards from the Roman villa already mentioned. In almost all these cases the bodies had been orientated, the head lying towards the west, a fact which is commonly taken to infer that the burials had been made in Christian times.

We cannot be certain when the Wandle was first utilized for mill power, though there can be little doubt that to the Saxons, to whom the invention of the water-mill was well known, the ease with which a stream with so great a fall from source to mouth could be harnessed for the purpose, must have especially appealed, and very probably have supplied one of the first motives to induce their settlement in the neighbourhood; but we must leave bare conjecture and content ourselves with the fact that at the date of the Domesday Survey (1086) there were, at least, thirteen mills on the Wandle. The ownership of twelve and a half is accounted for in the survey. The remaining half must have been

* *Archæologia* LX., 49, and *Proc. Soc. Antiq., Lond.*, 2nd series, XXI., 3.

held by someone, but the omission of all mention of it may lead to the inference that there may have been yet other mills, which are similarly omitted. Be this as it may, of the mills actually mentioned, one was at Croydon, held with the manor by Archbishop Lanfranc, and worth 5/-; two others, which the King held in demesne, were at Wallington, and worth 30/-. These values, I need hardly say, we must multiply at least sixtyfold to bring to their equivalent to-day. There was a mill at Carshalton worth 35/-, and four at Beddington, two in each of the two manors there, which were subsequently, in the reign of Edward III., to be united in the hands of the well-known Carew family, whose name was to be associated, even down to our own times, though not in the direct male line, with the manor. Of the Beddington mills, two were worth 40/- and the other two 35/-. In the manor of Witford, which was probably at Mitcham, for the name possibly still survives in Wickford Lane there,* was a mill worth 20/-, and also the half mill to which I have alluded, and which was also worth 20/-. At Morden the Abbey of Westminster held a mill worth 40/-, and at Merton the King another, worth 60/-. In addition to these

* *Victoria County History of Surrey*, I., 302.

mills Domesday mentions one belonging to the manor of Woodmansterne, worth 20/-, and as there could be no water-mill in this parish, and windmills did not exist in England in 1086, and as at a later date (viz., 1280) there appears to have been land at Carshalton, which was in the manor of Woodmansterne, it has been suggested that this mill may also have been on the Wandle.* There are mills also mentioned as belonging to the manors of Banstead and Chipstead which may, perhaps, be accounted for in some such way.

At any rate, we have proof enough here of the practical use to which our little river was already put at this early date. It is to this particular aspect of the Wandle that I am now going to invite your attention, and to a consideration of some of the more important among the many industries which the river has been the principal means of bringing into existence along its valley during the centuries which have elapsed from the Norman Conquest to the present day.

But before doing this I must briefly notice one event which took place in the valley in early mediæval days, and which must have exercised an important influence for some centuries on the character of the

* *Ibid* I., 316.

more immediate neighbourhood in which it occurred. This event was the foundation of the Priory of Austin Canons at Merton by Gilbert Norman, in or about the year 1114, and when we remember the predilection of mediæval founders of religious houses for riverside sites for their conventual buildings, we cannot but suspect that the presence of the Wandle played some part in the choice of Merton as the site of this very famous Priory.

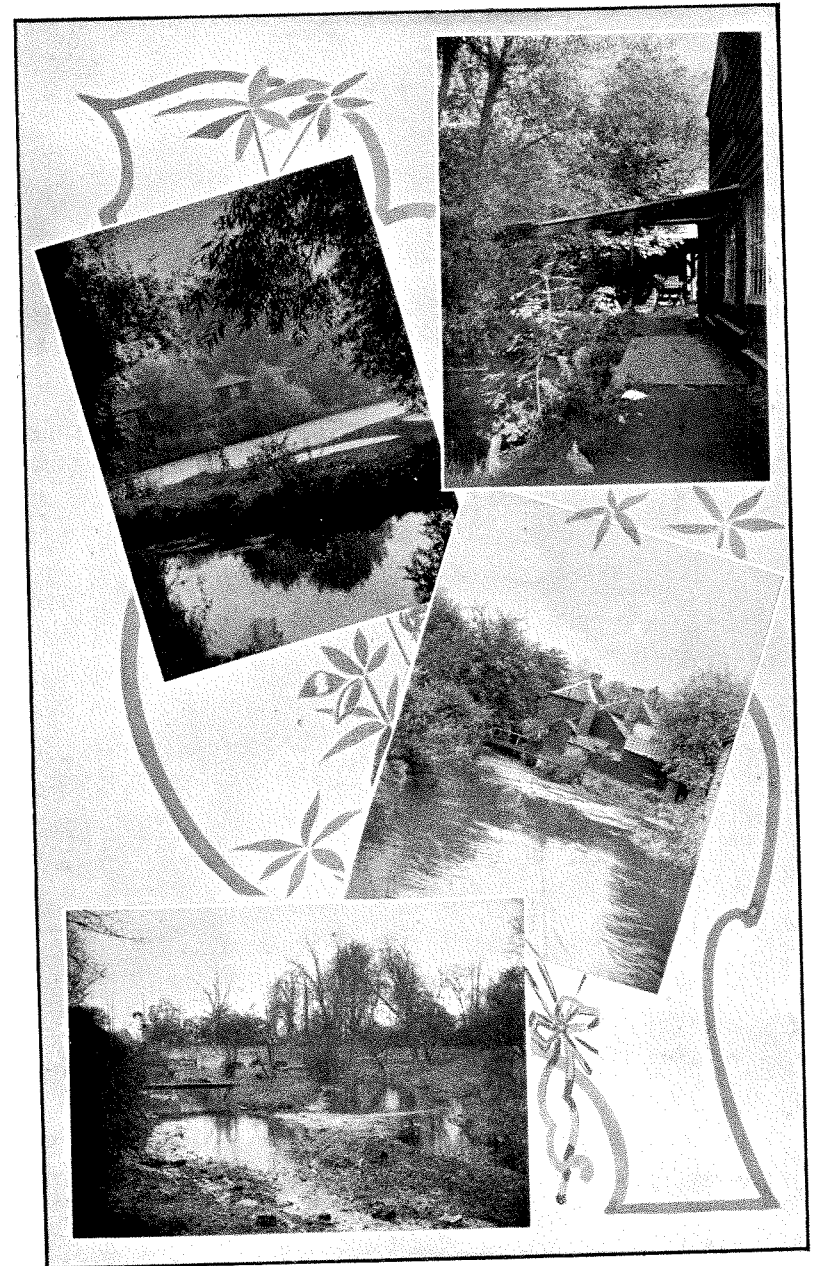
The Priory brought fame to Merton, so that, historically, it is one of the most important places in Surrey. It was a frequent house of call to our Sovereigns, many of their charters and patents being dated there. One of them, Henry VI., was crowned there in 1437. In 1236 one of the most famous of our early Councils was held at Merton, when the barons passed the celebrated statute, which gave expression to their unwillingness to change the laws of England. The social and educational influence in the Middle Ages of a religious house, such as Merton Priory, must have been great, and chief amongst the famous men who received their early training here were Thomas à Becket and Walter de Merton, Chancellor of England, and the founder of Merton College, Oxford. Amongst the temporalities of the Priory about the River Wandle,

which were found in its possession on its surrender to the Crown in 1539, were, in addition to the conventual buildings and the lands, including three mills, in Merton, a close at Phipps Bridge, or Pyppisbrigg, as it is then called, in the parish of Tooting Graveney, a fulling-mill at Wallington and the rectory of Carshalton, which included the tithes of several mills there, one of them being a fulling-mill, then in the tenure of the Priory of St. Mary Overie, Southwark.

But Merton Priory has long been a thing of the past, and only its historical associations remain to us now. Beyond a few stones of its ancient walls, there is barely a record preserved to us of the glories of its former buildings. It is to the industries, whose pursuit the Wandle has made possible in its valley, that we must chiefly look to-day, to learn how far the river has helped to mould the fortunes of the towns and villages which lie in our immediate neighbourhood here at Wimbledon. These industries I shall consider, with some regard to the order in point of time in which they were probably set up, digressing by the way, as opportunity serves, to glance at those notices of the Wandle, which give us here and there, at irregular intervals, a more or less complete account of

the industrial conditions obtaining in its whole valley.

In 1086 all the mills which were then in existence along the river can only have been flour-mills, for at this period and, indeed, for nearly a couple of centuries later, it is certain—at least in this country—that mill-power had been adopted for no other industry. Down to the end of the 17th century flour-making must have remained the predominant industry on the Wandle, and some of the corn-mills there were of very great importance, as we learn in the year 1610, when there were no less than twenty-four mills employed in this way. So important were these mills, that when in that year a scheme, of which more presently, was on foot to take away a certain part of the water of the river for waterworks, the strongest opposition was aroused, not only from the yeomen, farmers, and mealmen of the neighbourhood, but also from the inhabitants generally of the counties of Surrey and Middlesex. They succeeded in impressing upon the Royal Commissioners, who were appointed to enquire into the matter, their view, that the proposal would be to the very serious detriment, not only of the millers and others, who were directly dependent upon the mills for their



THE RIVER WANDLE.

MORRIS' MILLS, MERTON.
THE RIVER

MORRIS' MILLS, MERTON.
BACK OF BOURNE'S HOUSE,
NEAR MITCHAM

means of livelihood, but also of the inhabitants of Surrey and the City of London, 'which cannot be so conveniently served with meale at any tyme, as by the said milles, and especially in the tyme of greate froste this river never freezeth.' The Commissioners found also that the King himself was likely to suffer great damage by the scheme, 'in respect of his milles, which are in number sixe, and of the best seated in the said river.' It appears from the evidence submitted to the Commissioners, that the King's composition wheat from 'the thirteen counties,' that is to say, the fixed amount of wheat with which these counties had to supply the Crown, in accordance with its old prerogative of purveyance, at special rates, and which amounted in all to 3,500 quarters yearly, was all ground at the Lower Mills at Wandsworth. There were four mills at Wandsworth at this time in use as flour-mills, though one of them had originally existed as a brazil-mill. These mills were principally supplied from the markets of Kingston and Brentford, markets which, it was represented, would be especially affected by any tampering with the water supply of the Wandle, as well as the three other Surrey markets of Croydon, Reigate and Dorking. The opposition to the scheme evidently proved effectual,

for it seems to have been abandoned immediately upon the unfavourable report of the Commissioners.

Down to the present day flour-mills have always been fairly well represented on the Wandle and, perhaps, none amongst them have been more important than those at Wandsworth. A miller of Wandsworth, whose name has not come down to us, has acquired a certain amount of fame in history, as the leader of the 3,000 men who, in 1648, presented to Parliament the Surrey Petition for the restoration of the Monarchy, and is the hero of a doggerel poem dealing with that ill-fated movement. The four flour-mills which were at work in Wandsworth in 1610, were maintained in number down to fairly recent years, and in the seventies, three of them were owned by the Aerated Bread Company. Two of them were pulled down at the end of the eighties, and quite lately the remaining two, which I am told dated from the reign of Elizabeth, have followed suit. These, however, had ceased to be dependent upon the mill-power of the Wandle some time before their discontinuance, being worked by engines driven by water-gas.

The grinding of wheat into flour ceased during the seventeenth century to be the

principal Wandle industry, although, even in 1799, there were as many as nine flour-mills on the river, and one of them, that at Merton, was then stated to be the most complete of its kind in England. At the present day there are flour-mills at Waddon, Beddington and Merton.

After the grinding of wheat, the next purpose for which mill-power seems to have been applied was the fulling of cloth. Originally, fulling was done by treading on the cloth with the feet, or working it with the knees, hence our English surnames of Walker and Tucker. In course of time this process was superseded by mills, when, we do not exactly know, but the Surrey fulling-mills are believed to have been the earliest of their kind, and there was one at Woking in 1271. In 1376 we first hear of fulling-mills at Wandsworth, when complaint was made by the fullers of London that the 'hurers' of the same city, that is to say, the makers of shaggy fur caps, which were called 'hures,' were wont to send their caps to be fulled at the mills of Wandsworth, and certain other places, which do not concern us here, and that these caps were mixed with the cloths in fulling, which became crushed and torn, to the great damage and loss of the fullers. At the same time the

urers themselves complained of the use of water-mills by certain of their trade, and on their showing that caps fulled by this process were not equal to those fulled in the old way by hand, obtained an ordinance forbidding the use of mills for this purpose. Just a little more than two hundred years after this we again hear of the fulling-mills of Wandsworth, when, in 1579, the alnager for Surrey and Sussex, the officer of the Crown who had to affix the official seal upon every piece of cloth that was manufactured in those counties, was much concerned at the amount of cloth which he feared was conveyed out of the two shires unsealed to London, and said that he understood that 'divers broadcloths are brought out of other counties and milled at a mill near Wimbledon by Wandsworth.'

Closely allied with the process of fulling may be considered that of felting, and with felting is connected the manufacture of hats, so that here I will notice a curious and interesting little industry of this nature that was carried on at Wandsworth, for some time, at the end of the 17th and beginning of the 18th centuries; but before doing so, I must digress a little to speak of Wandsworth as a Huguenot settlement.

It is the fashion to date the first great

immigration into this country of those highly skilled workmen, and others, who, fleeing from the persecutions to which their Protestant leanings subjected them in France and other European countries, did so much either to improve existing industries and trades in England, or to introduce others hitherto unpractised here, from the Massacre of St. Bartholomew in 1572. Recent investigation has shown that in reality the immigration had been going on from a much earlier period, and the process of settlement amongst us of these alien manufacturers was very much more gradual than had been generally supposed. However it be, the establishment of the first church at Wandsworth for the French Protestants is said to date from 1573, the year following the massacre, though, whether on good authority or not, I am unaware. The large numbers of foreigners who came, in the first instance, to London and settled there, began, after a time, to spread out from the City into the suburbs and surrounding districts, and nothing could be more natural than that many of them should find in Wandsworth, with the special facilities it afforded for the carrying on of their industries, and its easy communication with London by water, a most favourable site for the establishment of one

of their colonies. Certain it is that foreign brewers were already at work there by the end of the 16th century, and to the foreign refugees is due, in a very great measure, the development of Wandsworth during the following century into quite a busy little manufacturing town. It was the Huguenots who first planted those market-gardens here and at Battersea which, at one time, formed the staple industry of the district, and wherein were grown cabbages, carrots and other vegetables, previously little known in this country, but now regarded as among the first necessities of life. Many other industries too they set up here, some of which I shall speak of shortly, but the manufacture which, at a later date, made Wandsworth famous far beyond our own shores, was that of hats by the refugees from Caudebec in Normandy.

These refugees seem to have been amongst those who left their country after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, for the establishment of the manufacture of Caudebec hats here is first noted by the French Ambassador in the following year. The Protestants of this little Normandy town had, apparently, an entire monopoly of the manufacture of felt and beaver hats, and are said to have had the secret of some liquid

compound, which served for the preparation of the rabbit and hare skins, as well as of the fur of the beaver. They kept their secret so well, that up to the year 1730, we are told, the French nobility, and all who prided themselves on their elegance, wore no hats but those of English make, and, by a special irony of circumstances, even the Cardinals of Rome ordered their hats from the poor Protestant refugees of Wandsworth. In 1730 the secret was taken back to France by one of the hatters, and a large factory was set up in Paris in that year. From this date the importance of the Wandsworth manufacture must have declined, but hats continued to be made in the town until some time in the first half of the last century.

Felt is still made on the Wandle, and at the present day there is a factory at Mitcham, which is, I believe, one of two only in England where the special cloth is made which is used for covering the hammers of pianofortes.

I now pass on to another group of Wandle industries, each of which, though a distinct manufacture, is so connected with the other two, so far as its history on this river is concerned, that I prefer to consider them together. These industries are dyeing, bleaching and calico-printing.

Of dyeing, it may be said that it appears to have been the next industry on the Wandle, after those of flour-making and fulling, in connection with which mill-power was used, for the brazil-mill at Wandsworth is mentioned as early as the year 1578. In 1610, as we have seen, it was used as a flour-mill, but it existed, until quite recent years, under the name of the Brazil or Middle Mill.

In 1691 we hear of a mill on the Wandle in Wimbledon, which was then used for grinding colours for the glazing of white ware, but had previously served both as a fulling-mill and a brazil-mill. It had been owned by one, Ellis Crispe, who had also been the previous owner of three mills at Merton, about which there was an appeal action before the House of Lords in 1693. One of these is described as a brazil-mill, though, apparently, it was used for grinding logwood at this date. Brazil-wood was a dye-stuff, the use of which was prohibited by Act of Parliament in 1532-3 as a subtlety, 'first invented and found by aliens out of this realm of England to the great hurt and slander of woollen cloths dyed within the said realm.' It was known, however, long before in England, and is referred to by Chaucer:—

'Him nedeth nat his colour for to dyen
With brasil, ne with greyn of Portingale.'

It gave its name to the South American country, but its use became much supplanted by that of logwood, the adoption of which in this country was also much opposed at first, and prohibited by legislation. But though the beautiful colours obtained by logwood were thought to be fleeting, the dye-stuff proved too valuable for its use to be thus put down, and it was ground on the Wandle during the 18th century, chiefly in connection with the calico-printing industry. A logwood mill is still in existence on the river, near Beddington Corner.

A considerable business in scarlet-dyeing was carried on at Wandsworth during the 18th century, and it is interesting to note that Voltaire spent the first period of his stay in England, between the years 1726 and 1729, at the house of Everard Falkener, a scarlet-dyer of Wandsworth, and afterwards dedicated to him his tragedy *Zaire*.

The art of bleaching seems to have been established in England, at all events on any considerable scale, at the end of the 16th century by Dutch settlers. Previously to that it appears to have been the usual practice to send linen goods to Holland in the spring to be bleached, and to have them returned in the autumn; but in 1582 we hear of a

Dutchman established in Southwark as a whitster, that being the term by which those engaged in the bleaching business were generally described. On January 13, 1621, there was buried at Mitcham one, Adrian Collant, a Dutchman, who is described in his will as 'of Mitcham in the countye of Surrey whitster.' He seems to have been the first of a long line of whitsters, who became established all over the Wandle valley, from the 17th to about the middle of the 19th century.

The art of calico-printing was of later introduction, but became inseparably connected with the bleaching industry. Its first appearance in England seems to have been at Richmond, in Surrey, where, probably about the year 1690, but perhaps earlier, a Frenchman had set up a small establishment. Not very long after this the Parish Register of Mitcham records the burial there of a calico-printer in 1718, and instances of the appearance in this Register of others engaged in the same trade, occur in great profusion after this date. Like the whitsters, the calico-printers soon spread over the whole Wandle valley, from Croydon to Wandsworth, and, until the middle of the last century, the district was one of the principal seats of the industry in the whole of England. During the 18th century calico-

printing became the predominant industry practised on the Wandle, and out of forty different industrial undertakings, which Malcolm records as being carried along on the course of the river in 1805, no less than twelve were calico-printing works, and there were three bleaching grounds, one of which was thought to be the largest in the kingdom. It may be of interest to complete here the list of the Wandle mills and factories at the last-mentioned date. The remainder consisted of nine flour mills, five snuff mills, three oil mills, two dyeing works, a paper mill, a skinning mill, a logwood mill, copper works, iron works and a porter brewery. The Wandle at this date is described as the hardest-worked river of its size in the world. Employment for upwards of 1,700 people was furnished during its short course. Indeed, when all the mills were at work, the total number of employed was estimated to be little, if at all, short of 3,000.

It is impossible to attempt any enumeration here of all the various calico-printing and bleaching works which were set up on the river. Among the more important were those on the site of Merton Abbey, the Ravensbury printing works at Mitcham, and the works at Phipps Bridge. Even the ancient archiepiscopal palace of Croydon was at one time used as

a calico-printing works, the grounds being used for bleaching. Perhaps the most important advance in the art made by the Wandle printers was the supersession of the original wood blocks by copper-plates. Francis Nixon, of the Merton Abbey Works, is said, in the epitaph on his tomb in Merton Churchyard, to have been the first who perfected copper-plate calico-printing. He died in 1765, and Lysons, who records this epitaph, considers the praise too extravagant, as he says many improvements had been introduced since that date.

About 1850 the Wandle industry, which had for some time previously been in a moribund condition, seems to have terminated almost completely; the Surrey calico-printers, who had for so many years held their own against all comers, being at last unable to compete with the improved quality and cheapness of the goods produced by the Manchester manufacturers. For a time silk-printing seems to have partly taken the place of the former calico-printing, an industry which, I believe, at the present day is represented on the Wandle only by Mr. Littler's works at Merton Abbey. Mr. Braithwaite added to the paper on the river, which he read at the Institution of Civil Engineers in 1861, a list of the mills

at work in the year 1853, and as this list must represent the condition of the river, just fifty years after Malcolm had made his observations, a classification of the mills in existence at the later period is interesting in comparison with the earlier list. We find that corn-grinding had assumed its old ascendancy as the principal industry practised on the Wandle, for, out of a total of thirty-four mills, whose aggregate horse-power was estimated at 781, fourteen were flour mills. There were five snuff mills, four print works, two paper mills, two dye mills, two copper mills, an oil and felt mill, an oil mill, a felt mill, a leather works and a gelatine mill. It must be noted, however, that this list includes only those works which used mill-power which, in some cases, had been supplemented by steam-power at this date. There were a few other works which used the water of the river in other ways, among them some print works and a medical distillery.

The works at Merton which were opened by the late William Morris in 1881, and are now carried on as Morris & Co., have an interest all their own in the art world; but, inasmuch as cotton-printing and the preparation of the necessary dye-stuffs are among the more important objects of these works, they may be considered to have revived two of the once great industries of the Wandle.

In the accounts I have now given of the river at different periods in its history, I have had occasion to refer to some of the numerous industries, other than those I have specially treated, which have been carried on in its valley at various times. Time will only permit me to deal very categorically with these now, and I cannot attempt to make the list anything like complete, so numerous and so various have been these industries.

First amongst them, perhaps, we may notice the metal works, some of which are of considerable antiquity. Mention is occasionally made in the survey of the manor of Wimbledon, which was prepared by the Parliamentary Commissioners in 1649, of an iron plate mill, which must have been on the Wandle and is, perhaps, to be identified with the iron mill which is marked on the map prefixed to Aubrey's 'Natural History and Antiquities of Surrey,' published in 1719. Henckell's iron mills at Wandsworth must have been there in 1792, and are spoken of in terms of praise by Dr. Hughson in 1808. Though the iron mills no longer exist, an Ironmill Road at Wandsworth still keeps their memory green. At Wandsworth also was a curious manufacture of brass plates for kettles, skellets, frying-pans and the like, which is noted by

Aubrey, whose book represents the result of an actual perambulation of the county begun in 1673, and who says that it was carried on by Dutchmen, who kept it a mystery. There is still a Frying-pan Creek at Wandsworth. There have been several copper mills on the Wandle, notably at Merton and Wimbledon.

We have seen that there were five snuff mills on the river, both in 1805 and 1853. This was quite a considerable Wandle industry and, in spite of the fact that other times have brought other manners, there is still some demand for this commodity, and Rutter's long-established mill in Morden Lane, Mitcham, continues to help meet this demand. Lambert's snuff mill at Hackbridge has only recently, I think, ceased working, and just above Mitcham bridge there are the ruins of a very old and long disused snuff mill.

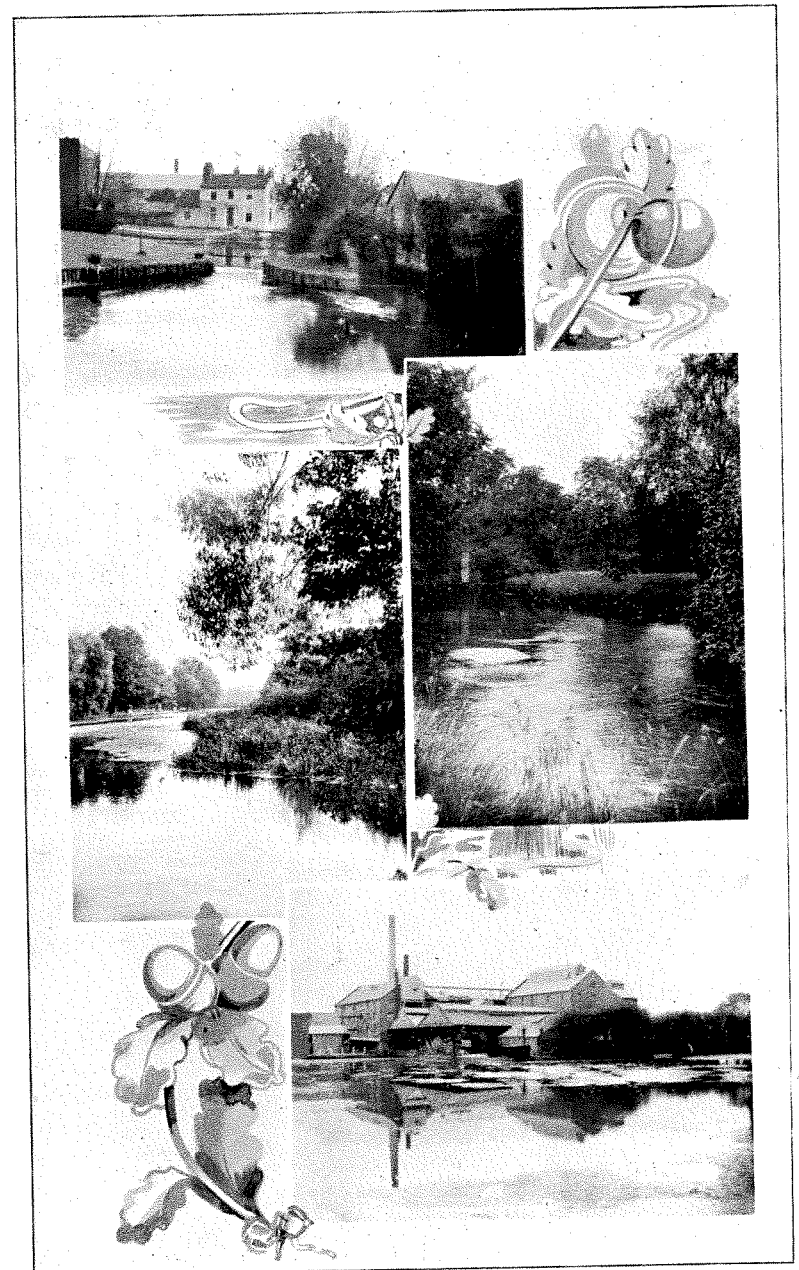
Paper mills were at work on the Wandle at least as early as 1792, when there were two at Carshalton. By 1811 these had passed into the hands of Messrs. Charles and James Ansell, from whom the present firm of C. Ansell Paper Company, Limited, has descended. I am informed by this firm that the Carshalton mills are now the only ones in Surrey for hand-made papers. At Wandsworth, where paper has been made for a considerable period,

the McMurray's Royal Paper Mills, Limited, make paper from Esparto and Tripoli grass.

Leather and parchment are now manufactured extensively at Mitcham and about the course of the Wandle, notably at Hackbridge and Beddington Corner. In 1792 Lysons mentions the mills of Mr. Savignac, at Carshalton, for preparing leather and parchment.

I must omit from this account notice of the important lavender-growing and market-gardening industries, which are still carried on to some extent in parts of the Wandle valley, and also of the jpanning and varnish works, which are so numerous at Mitcham and Merton, and other similar industries, which are not directly dependent upon the river for their existence. It must be remembered, however, that their establishment hereabouts may doubtless have been influenced, in the first place, by the industrial character the neighbourhood had already acquired, primarily on account of the river, and the settlement in it, in consequence of a large artisan population.

Imperfect as this account of the Wandle industries must necessarily be, it will yet, I hope, suffice to show how important the river has always been to those directly dependent upon these industries, and to explain the strength of the opposition with which every



THE RIVER WANDLE.

OLD SNUFF MILLS AND
BOURNE'S HOUSE, MITCHAM.

IN MR. BIDDER'S GROUNDS
AT MITCHAM.

attempt to tamper with its natural water supply has always been met. I have already spoken of the attempt made in 1610 to divert a portion of the river for water-works. This originated in the desire of King James I. to endow the College of Divinity at Chelsea, which he had recently founded by charter, with some permanent source of revenue. The College was to receive the profits to be derived from the diversion of a tenth part of the water which flowed between Croydon and Waddon mill, and its conveyance into the city of London by canals and underground pipes.* The opposition to this proposal led to its being quickly dropped, and in the same year a similar scheme for the purpose was sanctioned by Act of Parliament, whereby the water was to be drawn from the Lea at Hackney Marshes; but the vastly greater scheme of Myddelton, and the making of the New River, was already on foot, and the smaller scheme came to nought, the College of Divinity failing for lack of funds before it was fairly established.

At the end of the 18th century the Wandle was threatened, so far as the mill-

* The documents in connection with the inquiry by the Commissioners into the merits of this scheme have been printed from the original MSS. in the Public Record Office in *Surrey Archaeological Collections*, xxi., 170, *seq.*

owners were concerned, in a far more serious manner. Owing to the heaviness and badness of the roads through the Wealden clay, it had become a matter of the first importance to find an easier method for conveying heavy goods from London to the south coast, and accordingly a canal to Portsmouth was proposed, of which the river between Wandsworth and Croydon was to form a part. But once again it was felt that the mills on the river were too numerous and important to allow of any reduction in the supply of water for them, and the proposal was quashed. In place of this scheme an iron railway, between London and Portsmouth, by way of Croydon, Reigate and Arundel, was adopted, and the making of the Surrey Iron Railway, which ran from Wandsworth to Croydon, was sanctioned by Act of Parliament in 1801 as a part of this scheme. The railway was what we should call now-a-days a tramway, for it was designed for horse-traction only. Two years later the construction of the Croydon, Merstham and Godstone Railway was authorized, and the line was extended as far as Merstham, but it never got any further. The railway was never a financial success, and with the advent of the steam locomotive became useless. Another attempt to create a water supply from the

Wandle seems to have been made in 1849, when plans of the river were prepared, and of supply pipes from large reservoirs, to be constructed at Wandsworth and on Wimbledon Common, to Lambeth and the Elephant and Castle by way of Clapham. Beyond these plans I know nothing more of this proposal, but it is to be presumed that local opposition once again proved too strong. More successful attempts to tap the main sources of the Wandle for a regular water supply were made in the fifties by the Croydon Board of Health, which sank deep wells in the chalk hills, from which large supplies of water were pumped. An action at law, brought against the Board by Mr. Chasemore, the owner of the first mill on the river, who had ascertained by gauges that the pumping of the wells had lessened his mill-power, was ultimately carried to the House of Lords and decided in favour of the Board, apparently on the ground that it could not be proved that the underground streams of water which had been drawn from these wells would have otherwise found their way into the Wandle. Later proceedings, however, against the same Board, for pollution of the river, on account of its carrying all the sewage of Croydon into it, proved more successful, and committal orders were actually

obtained against the members of the Board by the injured owners of mills and lands adjacent to the river. Even so recently as last year (1906) has the Wandle been threatened, when the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway sought Parliamentary powers to sink a well at Carshalton, and therefrom to obtain as much as 2,000,000 gallons of water a day, to be pumped along their line as far as Victoria. The united opposition, however, of the various public bodies and associations affected by this proposal proved strong enough to lead to its ultimate abandonment.

So far I have confined myself to putting before you a picture, all too sketchy I am afraid, of the Wandle as a busy and eminently useful river. I have shown you in what high estimation this view of it has ever been held by the jealousy with which any attempt that threatened to take away one tittle of its usefulness has always been resented; but there is another property of the river about which we have, unfortunately, not heard anything like so much of recent years, though I conceive it is one that must appeal especially to the members of an association having such aims as those of the John Evelyn Club. I mean the beauty of the river, difficult enough to realize

though it be for us, who may know, perhaps, only the muddied and much-polluted stream at any point as it flows from Merton to the long so-called 'Sink of Surrey' at Wandsworth; but we must remember that the water, as it wells out from the chalk hills, is naturally of the clearest, and that the river, at a period not altogether outside the memory of living man, was one of the finest trout streams in England. Let us remember also 'the clear silver stream' which ran through the gardens at Beddington, where Queen Elizabeth was twice so quaintly entertained in the latter days of her reign. Let us remember that, in the days of the Stuarts, the whole valley of the river, from Wandsworth Bridge to Croydon, had its own Royal game-keeper, to preserve it for the pleasure of the Sovereign. Remember, too, Pope's description of the river in times when its waters were far from being merely ornamental. Speaking of Old Father Thames, he says:—

'Around his throne the sea-borne brothers stood,
Who swell with tributary urns his flood;
First, the famed authors of his ancient name,
The winding Iris, and the fruitful Thame;
The Kennet, swift, for silver eels renowned.'

And so on, until we come to the line—

'The blue, transparent Vandalis appears.'

Ruskin, writing in 1870, says:—

'Twenty years ago there was no lovelier piece of low-land scenery in South England, nor any more pathetic in the world, by its expression of sweet human character and life, than that immediately bordering on the sources of the Wandle, and including the low moors of Addington, and the villages of Beddington and Carshalton, with all their pools and streams. No clearer or diviner waters ever sang with constant lips of the hand which 'giveth rain from heaven;' no pastures ever lightened in spring-time with more passionate blossoming; no sweeter homes ever hallowed the heart of the passer-by with their pride of peaceful gladness—fain-hidden—yet full confessed.'

Since a little more than fifty years the Wandle has been scheduled in an Act of Parliament as a main sewer of the Metropolis. Unfortunately, during that period the description has been accepted far too frequently in its worst possible significance. Public bodies and individual mill-owners have both been to blame, with the result that the trout, which once were so plentiful, are now far to seek. Sometimes the harm has been done all unwittingly, as when on a recent occasion a heavy rainfall washed down into the river the creosote, which had been laid down as a preventative of the dust nuisance on some of the public roads hard by, and created sad havoc amongst the fish. Nevertheless, I am persuaded that much might be done to keep

the waters of the Wandle clear and limpid. Here and there, in the upper reaches, trout may still be found—I have seen them myself—in parts where the riparian owners are sufficiently enlightened and mindful of the amenities of the river to keep those parts well scoured, or to see that the outfall from their mills is well freed from all impurities before it is allowed to merge into the general stream. But what has been done by a few only must be done by all upon whose action the future well-being of the river depends, if it is ever to again become 'the blue, transparent Vandalis' of the poet.

The dissemination of principles which will help to instil a higher sense of their duties, not merely to themselves, but to the whole community, in the minds of all the riparian owners and authorities concerned, might, I venture to think, well be a work that could be undertaken by the John Evelyn Club, one of whose objects, I observe, is to be 'an educative centre for developing and fostering the taste for nature, and for grace in the aspect of everyday scenes.' And surely this becomes a matter of the first importance, if the water which will flow through your riverside parks and public gardens is to be, as it should be, their chief ornament and glory.

M. S. GIUSEPPI.