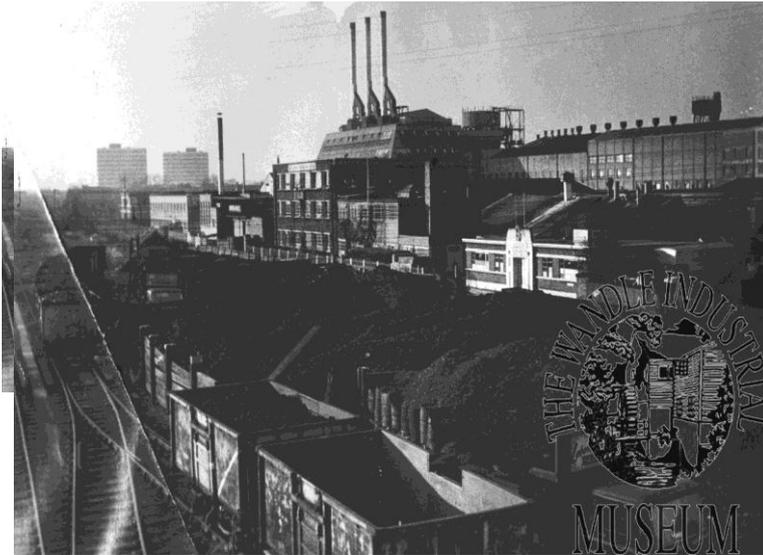


MERTON ABBEY TRAIL

The River Wandle was famous for cloth making going back over 800 years. By 1800 there were a huge number of water mills along its banks. Water power was also used to grind corn and wheat to make bread - also to make paper and even for making gun powder.

Stop 1. Merton Board Mills



There was a paper mill here which was knocked down 30 years ago and replaced by the Sainsbury's.

In this picture you can see the paper mill and the railway that used to be here. On the walk you we'll point out where the railway line used to be in Merantun Way.

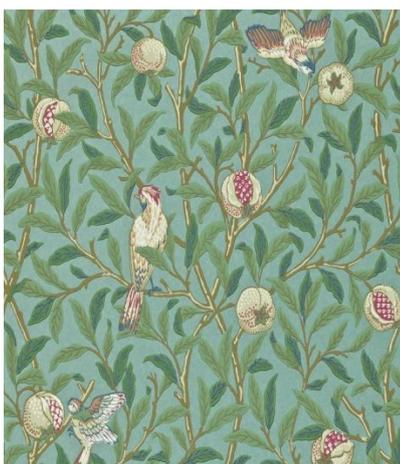
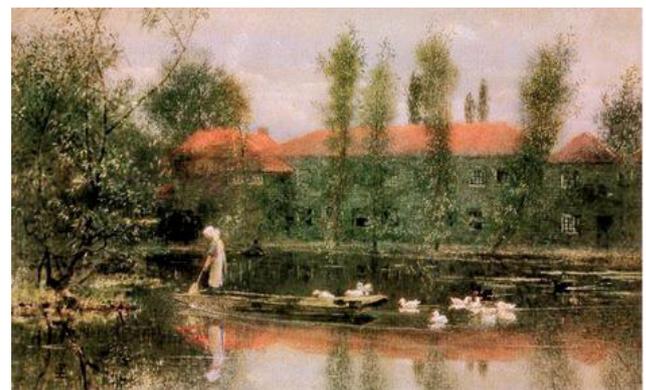
In the background you can see two tower blocks on High Path estate which will shortly be demolished. This shows us how change is always happening in our area.

Stop 2. William Morris – Merton Abbey Works

William Morris was the most famous designer of his day. 140 years ago he opened a factory here, where Sainsbury's is now. You can see the old factory in this painting.

The factory was used for cloth printing, dyeing and carpet weaving. William Morris also designed furniture, stained glass windows and wallpaper.

(one of his wallpaper designs is shown below).



William Morris wanted everyone to be able to own beautiful things, not just rich people.

When he died aged 65, one of his doctors said it was because he was "doing the work of ten men in one lifetime".

Although he died over 100 years ago, today you can still buy wallpapers and designs he made all those years before.

Stop 3 – The Wheelhouse

Walk along the river path and cross Merantun Way. This waterwheel is the only working one left on the river Wandle.

Now it is a pottery workshop and gallery, and the wheel is used to turn the potter's wheel. It works every weekend when you can go and see it turning round.

The wheel also provides electricity and powers other machines in the wheelhouse.



Stop 4. Liberty Works

Cloth printing started here nearly 300 years ago. The factory was owned by a family called the Littlers, and was used to make silk and very fine cloth for sale in expensive shops.

The factory got bigger as the family sold more cloth and silk. By 1875 the Littlers started to print for the world famous Liberty's shop in Regent Street in London. The factory was soon making all of the cloth that Liberty's sold.



This picture shows what the factory looked like 50 years ago. You can see it looks a lot smarter than it does today. David Luff, who is showing you round today, used to work at the factory when it looked like this.

During the Second World War, part of the factory was used by a company to make parts for aeroplanes that were used in the war.

The factory finally closed down about 40 years ago. Many of the buildings are still here and are now used as a market with restaurants and shops called Merton Abbey Mills.

Some of the cloth patterns that were made here are still famous and can be bought from the Liberty's shop in London.