

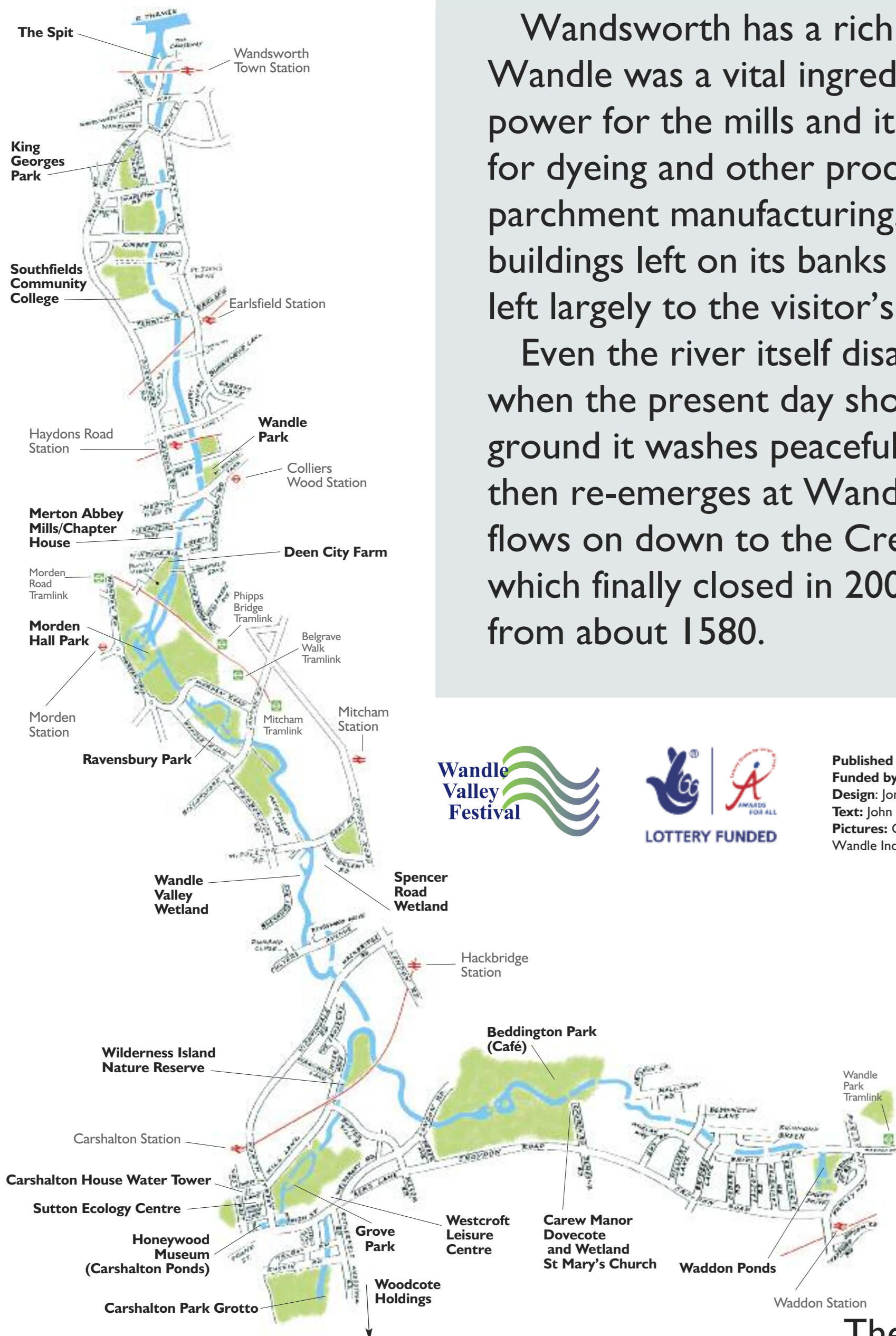
River Wandle In Wandsworth

Traces of a rich history on the Riverbank

The Wandle rises in Waddon and Carshalton and flows into the Thames at Wandsworth. The names of the river and Wandsworth are thought to have come from 'Wendel's Worth', an old English word for 'enclosure' or 'homestead'.

Wandsworth has a rich industrial history, of which the Wandle was a vital ingredient. Its fast flow provided power for the mills and its plentiful clean water was ideal for dyeing and other processes such as calico printing and parchment manufacturing. Today there are very few buildings left on its banks to tell the tale, which has to be left largely to the visitor's imagination.

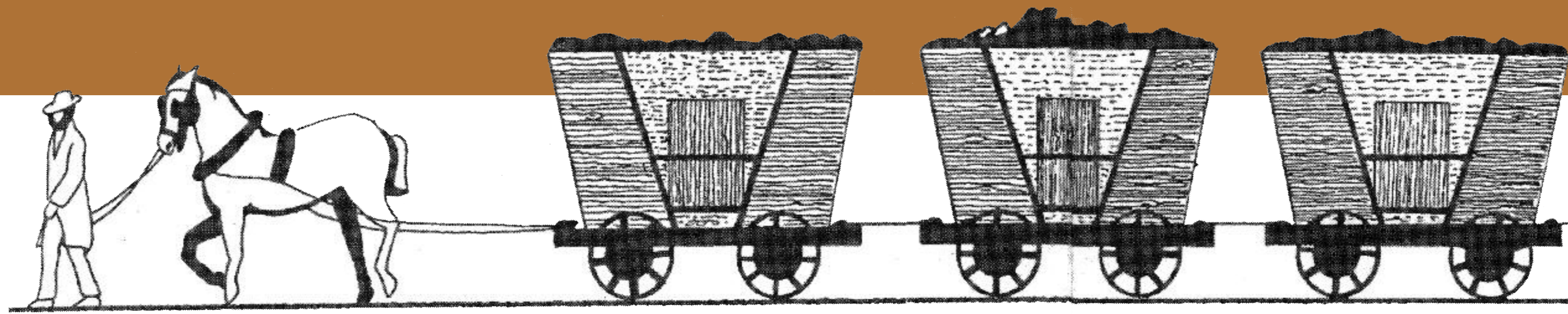
Even the river itself disappears into a tunnel, created when the present day shopping centre was built. Above ground it washes peacefully through King George's Park, then re-emerges at Wandsworth High Street where it flows on down to the Creek, past Young's Brewery which finally closed in 2006, having been a brewery site from about 1580.



Published by: Wandsworth Valley Festival
 Funded by: Awards For All
 Design: Jonathan Spearman-Ox
 Text: John Hawks
 Pictures: Courtesy of London Borough of Wandsworth, Wandsworth Industrial Museum, David Saxby

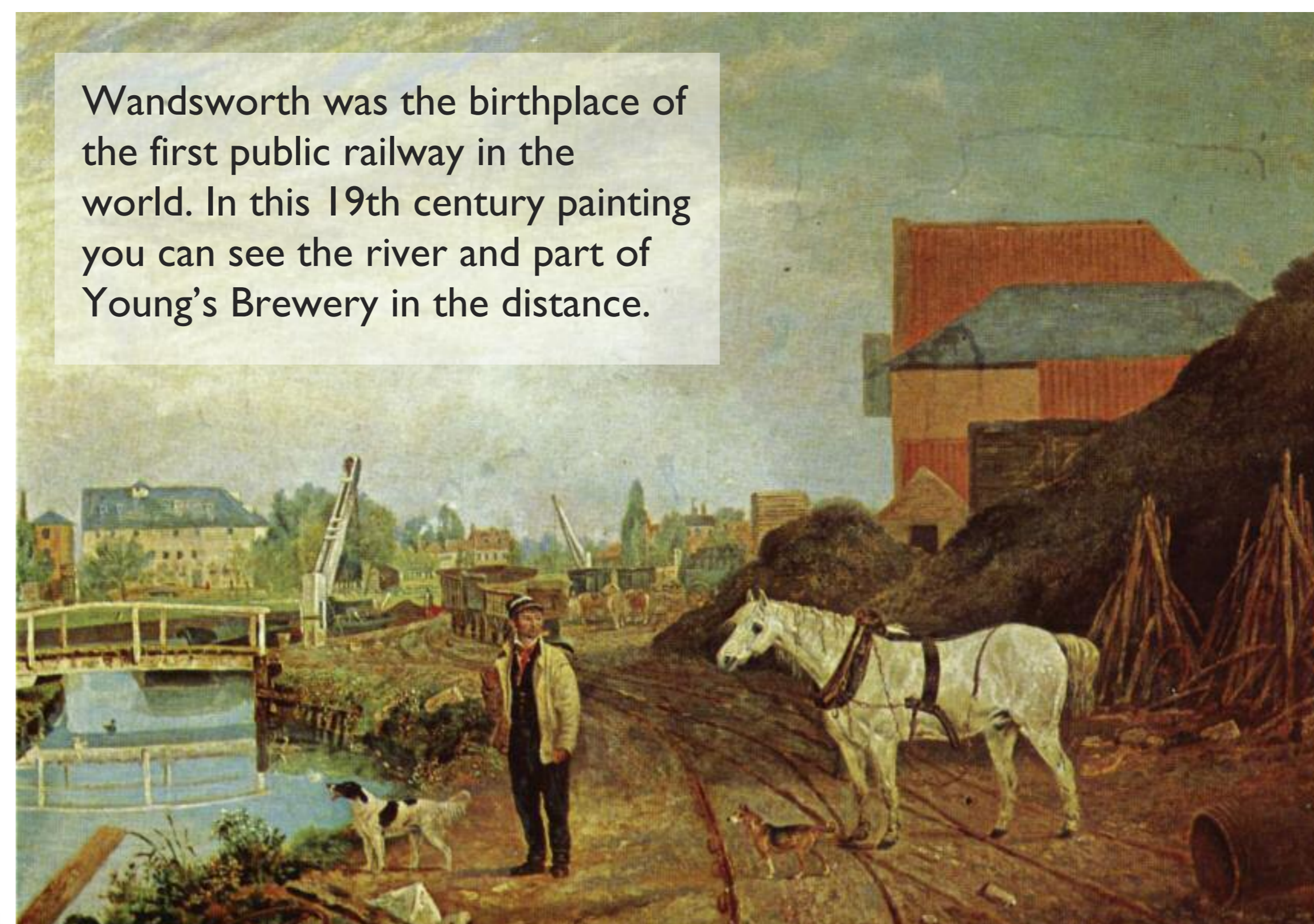


The Wandle as it will never be seen again; a view from Buckhold Road early last century, before the shopping centre was built and the river banished below ground.

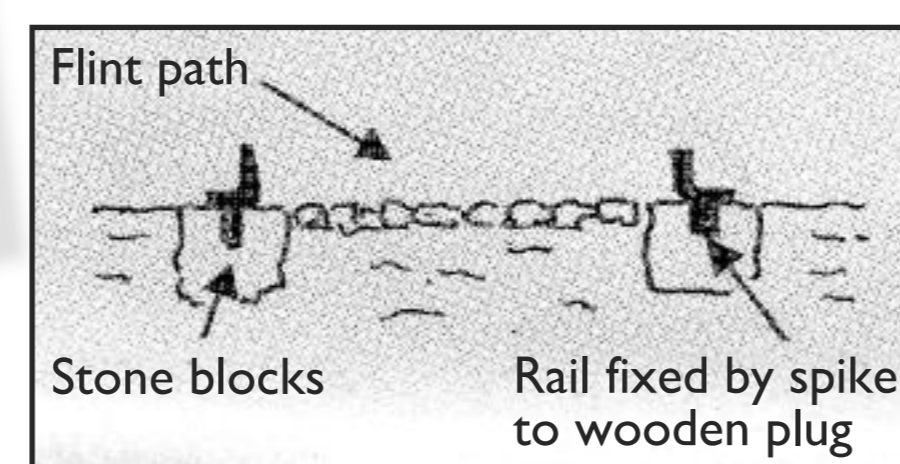


The Surrey Iron Railway

Wandsworth was the birthplace of the first public railway in the world. In this 19th century painting you can see the river and part of Young's Brewery in the distance.



The railway was opened in 1803, and ran for 8 miles from the mouth of the Wandle to Merstham in Surrey. The important industries along the river needed to transport goods to the Thames. Instead of expanding the river into a navigable canal it was decided to build a railway. This was before the invention of steam locomotives, so the railway was horse-drawn.



The iron rails were attached by pegs to separate stone blocks, rather than the wooden sleepers we are used to with locomotive drawn railways, so that the horses could walk between the rails

Inevitably the Surrey Iron Railway was killed off by competition from steam power and finally closed in 1846. Today it's just a ghost. Very few relics survive, but you can see three of the railway's stone sleeper blocks set into the pavement in Garratt Lane near the Wandle tunnel.

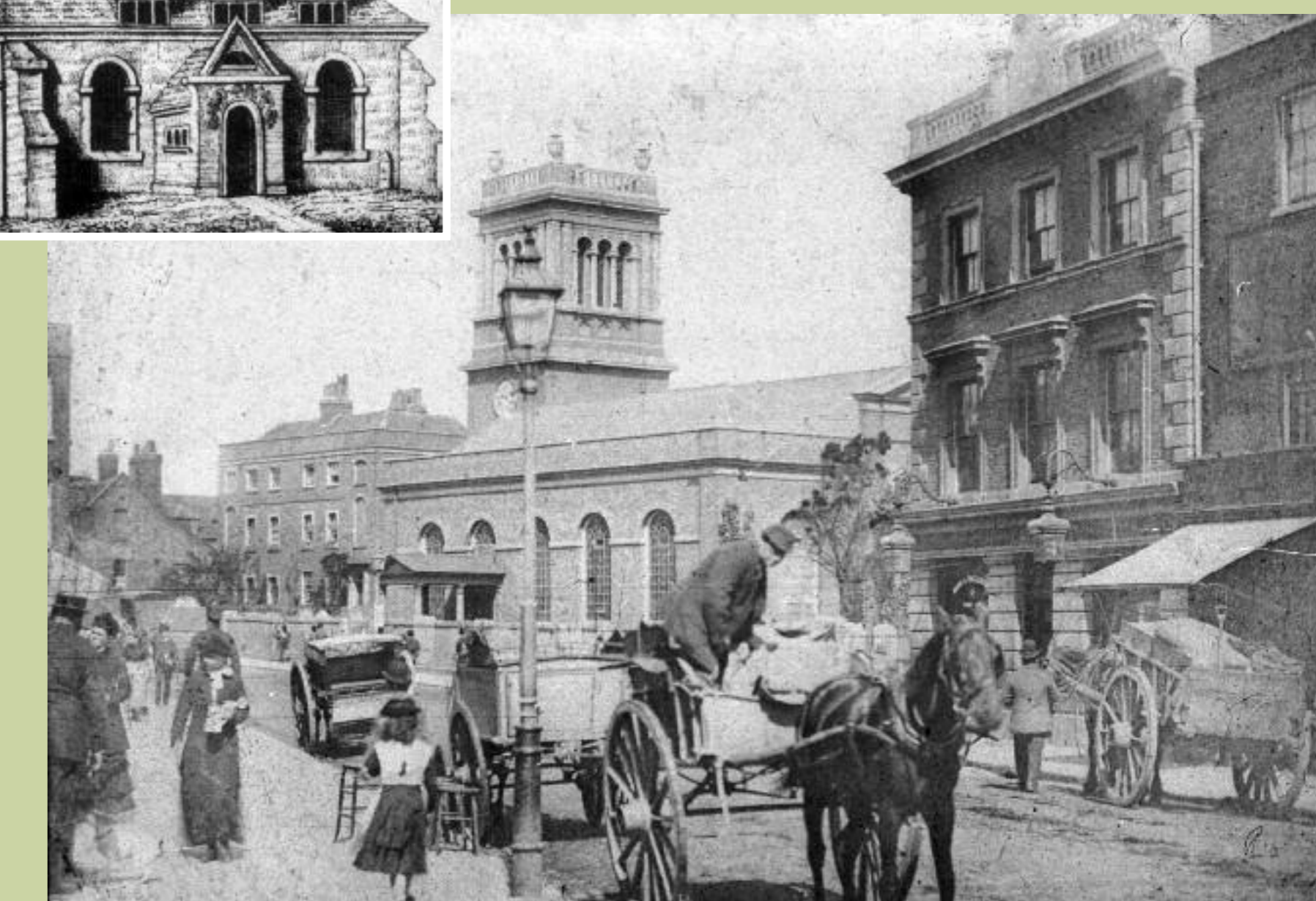


All Saints Church

The modest Georgian church that stands in the High Street near the Wandle bridge isn't Wandsworth's grandest, and it suffers from the busy main road, but it still brings to mind Wandsworth's origins as a pleasant market town round the river. The church dates from 1780, with parts of the tower constructed a century earlier. Though largely rebuilt after wartime bomb damage, it still retains its charm.



Left: Engraving of the church in 1630



Below: View in 1890 showing The King's Arms

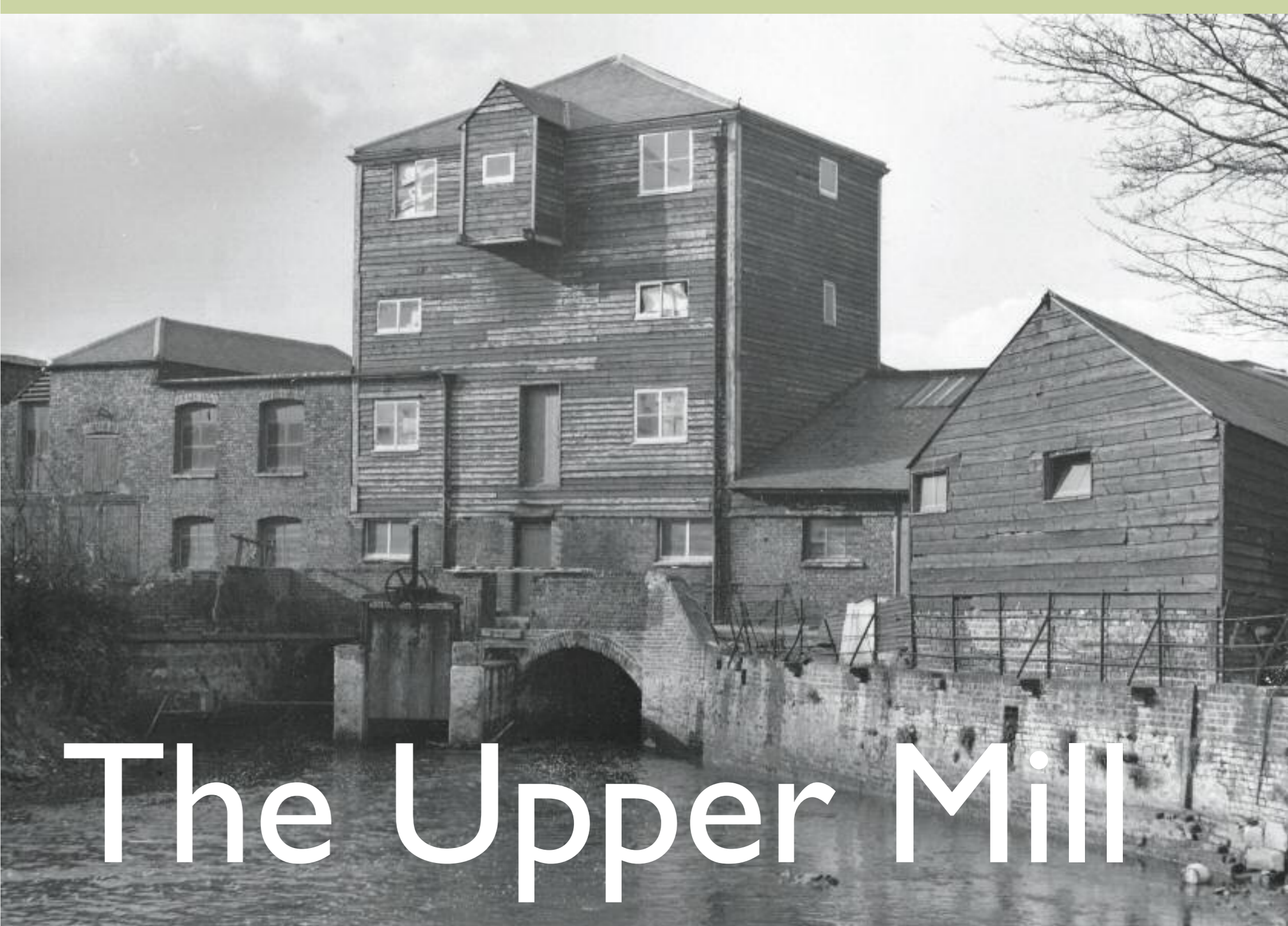
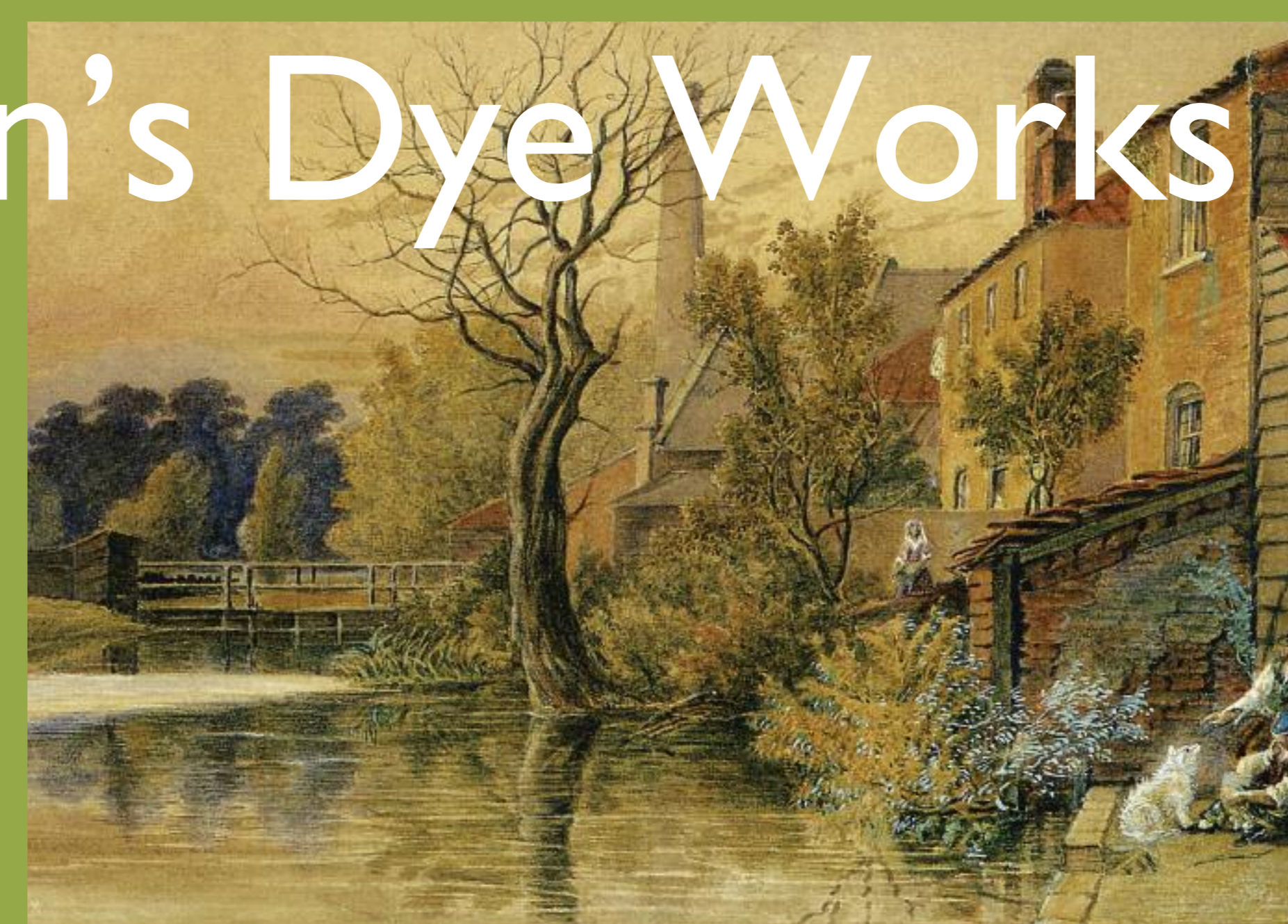
The Wandsworth and District Gas Company

Operating from the Creek where the Wandle joins the Thames, 100 years ago this was one of the country's biggest gas companies. It even had its own fleet of coal vessels. The flagship of these was the 'SS Wandle', which distinguished itself by fighting off a U-boat attack in the first World War! Their cheap gas made Wandsworth a popular centre for balloonists.



Williamson's Dye Works

A beautiful view painted in 1860 of the Dye Works which stood on Garratt Lane by Mapleton Road bridge. Its specialty was Wandsworth scarlet dye, famous throughout Europe and used for Cardinals' hats in Rome because the bright red colours were so fast they didn't run in wet weather!



This enormous mill straddled the Wandle where the shopping centre now stands. It was destroyed by fire in 1928. The Upper, Middle and Lower Mills were the largest on the Wandle and were all used to grind corn. In the 1800's the Upper and Middle Mills produced 60,000 sacks of flour a year.