

WATERMEADS NATURE RESERVE, Bishopsford Road, Morden



New Pathway at Watermeads,
Image Courtesy of: Stuart Swan

TREASURE DESCRIPTION:

The Watermeads are maintained as a nature reserve. Near the Bishopsford Road entrance is the site of an old snuff mill, demolished in the 1920s but traces of which are still visible: the end support to the waterwheel in the form of a brick pier, and wall set on the edge of the island formed between the old control weir, and the mill and a millstone on the river bank.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Due to the gradient the River Wandle has long had industrial usage and along its banks were numerous water mills for use such as grinding corn, copper and leather working; it was also notable for its trout and watercress beds.

Wetland areas were created as a result of the high water levels needed and Watermeads is a remnant of these. The site extends along the west

bank of the river; it was shown on the Tithe Map of 1837 as 'long meadow'.

Within the site is a fish pond and Paper Mill Cut, one of the Wandle's many channels and branches dug for milling.

VOLUNTEER REFLECTIONS

The Wandle Valley Big Green Fund project is making a new path through the reserve and plans to excavate a new backwater wetland next to the river in Poulter Park, which will create a new habitat for water voles and other wildlife. Another chapter in the life of this hidden treasure.

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SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE

The River Wandle Open Spaces Committee acquired Watermeads for the National Trust in 1913.

The Wandle Valley Regional Park Trust is leading a regeneration project that will bring improvements to Watermeads.

The riverside industries included those of *William Halfide*, who set up business beside the Wandle in 1742; in 1881 *William Morris* set up his workshops and from 1904-1972 *Liberty's* had mills and workshops here.

From the mid-19th Century, the milling industries had been declining as steam and electric power overtook water power and of the many mills hereabouts, only Grove Mill remains today.



Fisheries Cottages,
Image Courtesy of: Stuart Swan



End support to Snuff Mill Waterwheel
Image Courtesy of: Stuart Swan

MATERIALS USED

Fisheries cottages 475-479 London Road, Mitcham, are Grade II listed.

Two have parts dating from around 1755 and number 475 also from 1851.

References:

LondonGardensOnline.org.uk: www.londongardensonline.org.uk/
Merton Memories Photographic Archive: Fisheries Cottages & Grove Mill, Mitcham c.1898
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