

## **U3A Bikers The River Wandle to Beddington Park Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> April 2023**

At last! Sunshine and the promise of a rain-free ride, after several wet outings over the past few weeks.

Cold it was with an overnight temperature of just 3 degrees and so the dozen riders assembled at Brockwell Lido were well wrapped for this outing.

After the usual briefing and a group photo. Were on to the well-used route to Clapham Common (where Dilwen joined us at Eagle Pond; no heron seen today) and across Wandsworth Common.



This took us to our early coffee stop at the Skylark Café. Some sat in the sun outside, others stayed in the warm inside.

HMP Wandsworth, looking as foreboding as ever, was passed and then it was a long free-wheel ride down Magdalen Road to Garret Lane and to the River Wandle. We had a short pause for those who had not ridden this way before to look at the information boards.



After the prolonged and heavy rain of recent days the river was at the highest level I have seen it in a long while.

We crossed Merton High Street near Colliers Wood and noted, just by the path, a blue plaque. Near here was the Merton Abbey Works of William Morris which were established in 1881, in a building previously used for calico printing since 1752.

The factory produced carpets, tapestries, printed fabrics, and stained glass, in the patterns well-known to us today. The works continued after Morris's death (1896) and finally closed in 1940.



Nearby was the first of the two water-wheels we would see today. Until recently derelict and without all its paddles, this water-mill has been restored and can sometimes be seen turning.

We passed Deen City Farm, crossed the tracks of the tramway which runs to Wimbledon, noting the improved paths (tarmac replacing gravel) and so arrived at Morton Hall Park, today with only a few visitors. Here was the second water-wheel; the mill was used at one time to grind tobacco to produce snuff.

The Wandle continues through Morden Hall Park to an exit at the Surrey Arms pub on Morden Road, which we crossed.

Here we again joined the Wandle and followed the river for a couple of miles as it meandered along beside the trail which was dappled in sunlight filtering through the trees.





Our route then detoured at Hackbridge Road through residential streets, The Causeway, Riverbank Way, Mill Lane, Butter Hill and Lakeside, to a fairly inconspicuous entrance to Beddington Park.

On splendid, quiet paths we continued in an anti-clockwise direction around the park, to St Mary's Church, a Grade II\* listed 14th-century flint parish church which occupies a prominent position in the park.



Carew Manor was the former manor house of the Carew family, lost to money lenders and bad debts by Charles Carew in the 1850s.

It was once a medieval moated house, then the home to the Royal Female Orphanage from 1762 until 1968. It now houses the council offices and Carew Manor School.



We stopped to admire the Grade II\* listed dovecote, built between 1707 and 1727 in Pigeon House Meadow on the site of one dating from Tudor times. With space for over 1300 doves. it would have supplied eggs and birds for Manor table.

It was now lunch-time and very conveniently there was the Pavilion to serve us: good food, albeit not as promptly as we would have liked.

The ride was completed by the short journey around the rest of the park and on to busy London Road for the short ride on to Hackbridge Railway Station.



From here there were choices of destinations, including Tulse Hill and Herne Hill.

Here are some more views along the River Wandle:



**Comment:** Beddington Park is a relatively new destination for the Group, first visited by Jane and Joe. Further research identified Hackbridge Railway Station as a good starting point and gave easy access to the upper part of the River Wandle, not previously visited by the Group. This part of the river shows the benefit of several extensive clean-up operations and it now flows between banks with reed beds, with weeds and algae flourishing. Brown trout, chub, roach and dace thrive here too. By reversing the route, we avoided finishing the ride up the long hill from Earlsfield to Wandsworth Common!

**Distance covered:** 12 miles cycled

**Riders** Andrew & Mary, Denise & John, Dilwen, Felicity, Ian, Jane, John, Judy, Martin, Pat, Valerie.

**Acknowledgement:** source material from Wikipedia and Onthetudortrail

*Ride leader: John Clements*

*Report by John Clements, 26<sup>th</sup> April 2023 (some photos are from previous visits)*

## Notes

**The River Wandle** is a tributary of the River Thames. With a total length of about 9 miles, the river passes through the London Boroughs of Croydon, Sutton, Merton, to meet the Thames at Wandsworth. A short headwater - the Caterham Bourne - is in Surrey, the historic county of the river's catchment. Other tributaries of the Wandle include the River Wrythe and the Norbury Brook. The name Wandle is thought to derive from a back-formation of Wandsworth (Old English "Wendlesworth" meaning "Wendle's Settlement"). The Wandle Trail follows the course of the river from Croydon to Wandsworth.

For many centuries the River Wandle rose from a spring beside the Brighton Road (A23).

**Carew Manor** (file photo) The Domesday Book mentions two Beddington estates and these were united by Nicholas Carew to form Carew Manor in 1381. Beddington Park originated as a deer park in the 14th century for the Carew family. The Manor of Beddington continued to be owned by the Carew family until Sir Nicholas Carew was executed for treason in March 1539. His lands were seized and returned to the Crown but his son, Sir Francis Carew, was later restored to his inheritance under Queen Mary.



This has an important place in Tudor history; Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn visited here and the grounds resonate with the memories of other great Tudor personalities. In May 1536, Jane Seymour took up temporary residence at Beddington Park and Henry visited Jane discreetly under the cover of darkness. According to local legend, Elizabeth I and Sir Walter Raleigh used to take walks in the park. In about 1591 Sir Walter Raleigh secretly, and without royal permission, married one of Queen Elizabeth I's maids of honour, Elizabeth Throckmorton of Carew Manor. Raleigh spent time in the Tower of London for this and Elizabeth was expelled from the court. A popular story is that when Raleigh was beheaded by James I in 1618, Elizabeth claimed his embalmed head and kept it in a bag for the rest of her life. Some even say that Raleigh's embalmed head is buried on the grounds!

The River Wandle runs through the park, culminating in the lake in the Grange Garden before continuing to flow through a residential area, only becoming accessible beyond Hackbridge Road.