

WADDON PONDS

History Of The Ponds And The River Wandle



Waddon Ponds -
Courtesy of Croydon Museum

Waddon Ponds is one of three main sites where the River Wandle can be seen in Croydon.

The river used to flow from its source near the site of the former Swan and Sugarloaf Pub on the Brighton Road, through the grounds of the Archbishops of Canterbury's Palace in central Croydon, and into Wandle Park, where the river was de-culverted in 2012. It now also flows through the New South Quarter development.

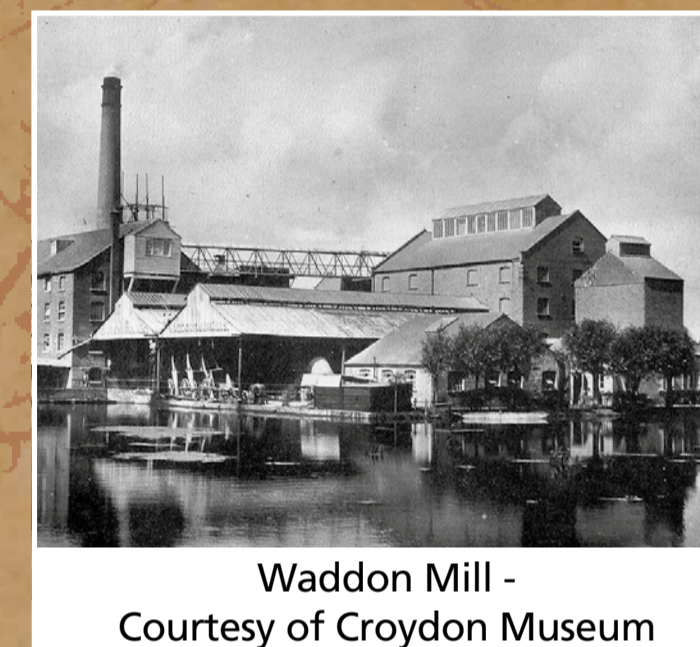
The river then flowed towards Waddon and into a large mill pond on the northern side of Mill Lane. The river continues through the boroughs of Sutton, Merton, Wandsworth and into the Thames.

Most of Waddon Ponds is managed as water-gardens with large weeping willows trailing their pendulous branches in the water. The ponds are fed by springs which arise at the junction between the beds of sand and chalk and the London Gravel Beds. The water then flows north towards Mill Lane and what used to be the Northern millpond and the River Wandle.

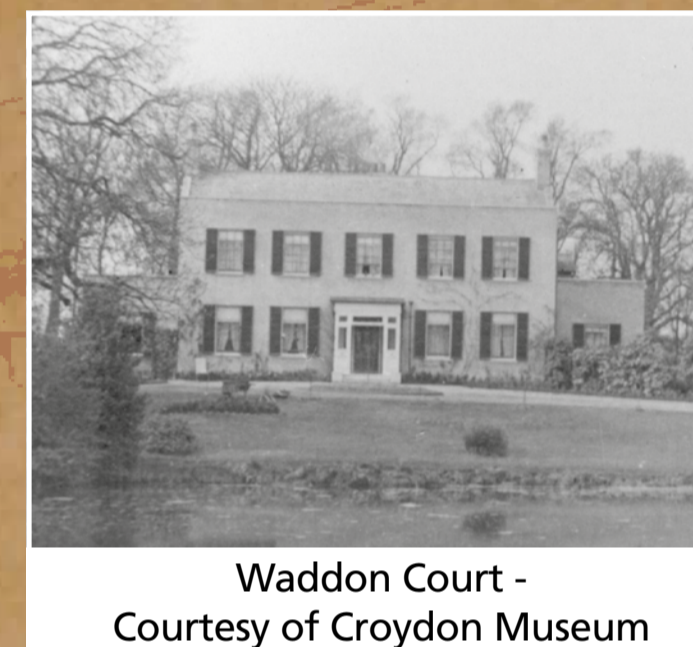
The name Waddon is thought to have been derived from wad-dun or woad hill. Woad (*Isatis tinctoria*) would have grown on the chalk hills and has been used by ancient Britons who extracted blue dye from the plant to use as paint.

When the houses were built at near-by Aldwick Road on Brandy Bottle Hill, west of the pond, traces of Bronze Age and Iron Age Man were found. Remains from the Iron Age were also found on the sandy slopes of Alton Road to the east of the ponds.

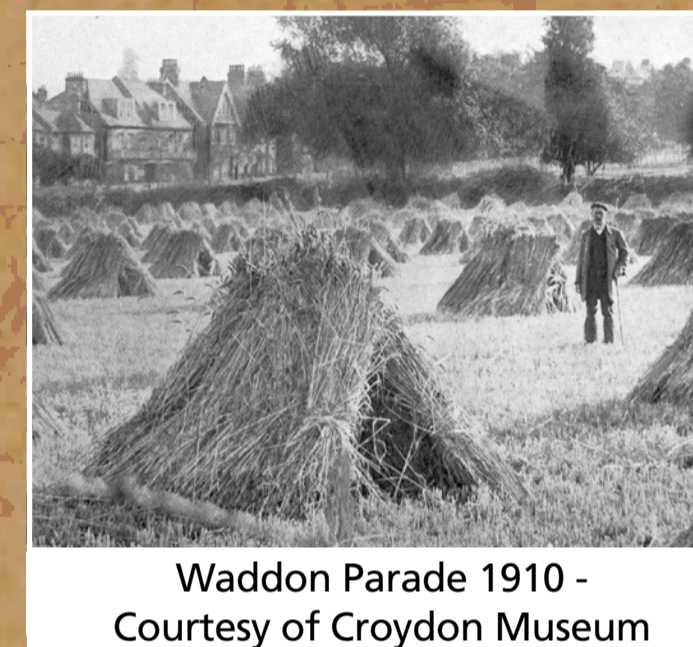
Waddon Ponds was part of a very old estate that held an area of 2000 acres for 500 years. The eighteenth century owner of Waddon Court Farm, John Dewey Parker, entertained distinguished men of the day on his estate. The visitors included, Boscawens, John Marshall the agriculturalist, Gros the antiquary and Arthur Young, whose agricultural "Travels" became a classic of the time.



Waddon Mill -
Courtesy of Croydon Museum



Waddon Court -
Courtesy of Croydon Museum



Waddon Parade 1910 -
Courtesy of Croydon Museum

It was also reputed that Lord Nelson fished in the extensive lakes which stretch from today's site past Mill Lane to Waddon Marshes.



Waddon Map - 1860

The Domesday Book mentions that there was a mill at the northern end of the ponds, it was a manorial mill which was used for grinding corn.

The River Wandle had been dammed at the northern end to form

a lake but the river was diverted at the end of the 19th century to the north and east. The area of land created was used for watercress beds, then drained for allotments and finally industry was established on the site. The mill closed down in 1928.

In 1910, records show that Waddon Ponds belonged to two estates; Waddon Court, which was owned by Mr Crowley, and Waddon Lodge which was owned by Miss Mary Waterall. When the two owners died the Croydon Corporation bought part of both estates in 1928 following the vigorous campaign to protect the ponds by Mr Pescott Row, an author of books about the beauties of England.



The River Wandle - a dry river bed 1952
- Courtesy of Croydon Advertiser

THE RIVER WANDLE

The river has been well-used since Roman times, its fast flowing waters were not suitable for navigation but ideal for powering mills and evidence of Roman wheat mills have been found along the river. The Wandle was heavily industrialised in the 17th and 18th century, with a range of industries including paper, gunpowder, tobacco and textiles. In Victorian times the Wandle had 90 mills along its length, but a drop in water level and population increase caused the Wandle to be officially declared a sewer by the 1960's.

Subsequent clean-ups of the river have led to a dramatic improvement in water quality leading to a return of the river's once famous Brown Trout.

For more information about the River Wandle and how to get involved visit:

Wandle Valley Regional Park
www.wandlevalleypark.co.uk

Croydon Council:
www.croydon.gov.uk

