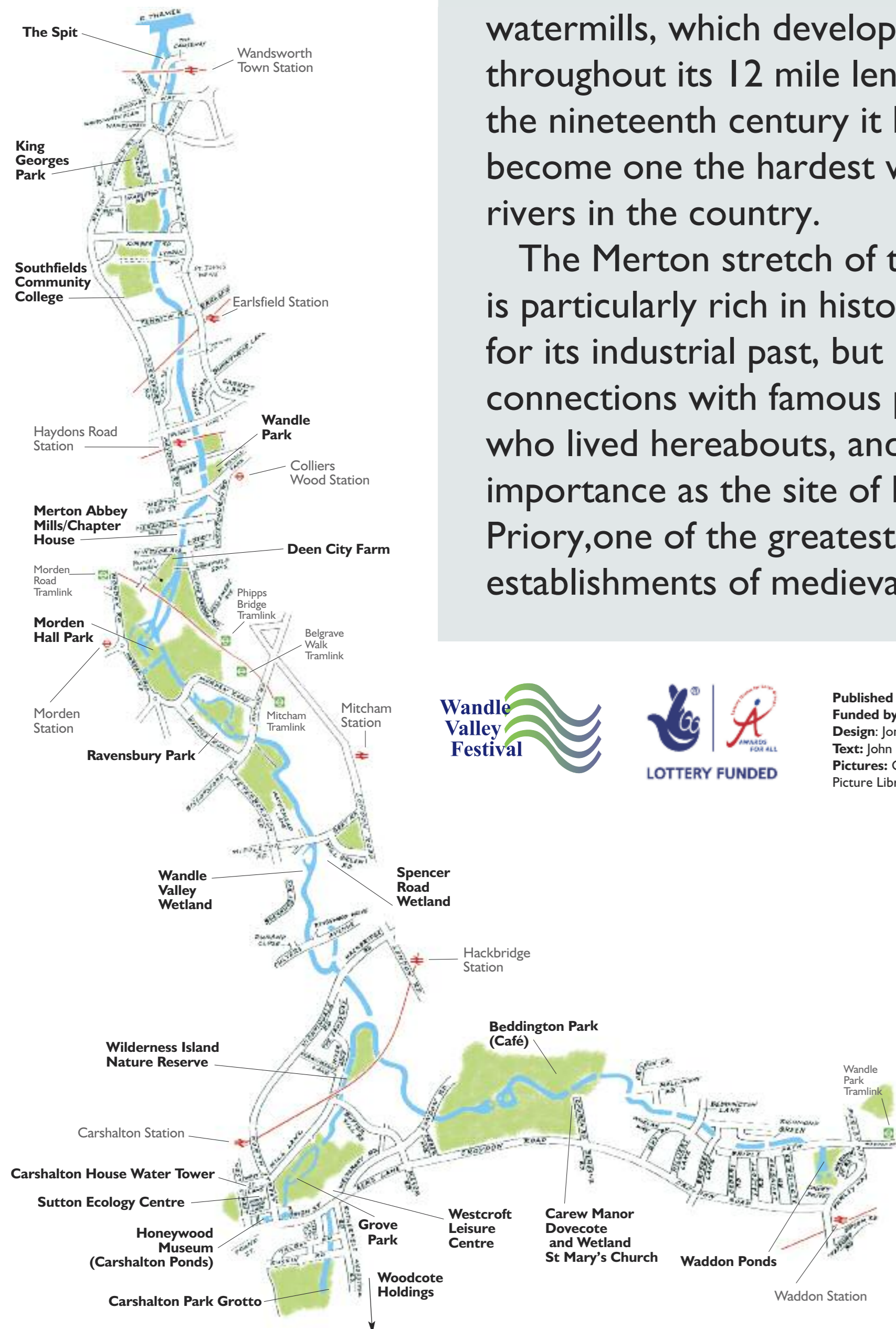


River Wandle In Merton

Historic mills of the Wandle

Once upon a time The Wandle was a peaceful chalk stream in open country, meandering past grand estates and pretty villages. Its fast flow, however, was ideal for watermills, which developed throughout its 12 mile length, and by the nineteenth century it had become one of the hardest worked rivers in the country.

The Merton stretch of the Wandle is particularly rich in history, not just for its industrial past, but in its connections with famous people who lived hereabouts, and its importance as the site of Merton Priory, one of the greatest monastic establishments of medieval times.



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Morden Hall Park



The Wandle is at its most beautiful as it flows through the National Trust's Morden Hall Park. The elegant Victorian footbridge is one of the Wandle's most iconic landmarks.



Morden Hall was the home of Gilliat Hatfeild, a Victorian businessman and philanthropist who made his money from snuff. You can still see the snuff mill, with what remains of two waterwheels, and other fine buildings, including the Stable Yard, the Cottage and the hall, now a Restaurant.



There are eight historic buildings, including one of the country's finest waterwheels, now in working order and used to power a potter's wheel. The wheel was used to drive spools that rinsed gum from the silk after the printing process. You can still see the original rinsing spools in the Wheelhouse (Illustrated).

Merton Abbey Mills

Now a popular market and visitor centre, Merton Abbey Mills was reborn in 1989 out of the derelict Liberty silk printing works.



The medieval Colour House is now a theatre, and the other buildings of the printworks have been converted into shops, studios, restaurants, and 'The William Morris', one of the only truly riverside pubs on the Wandle.



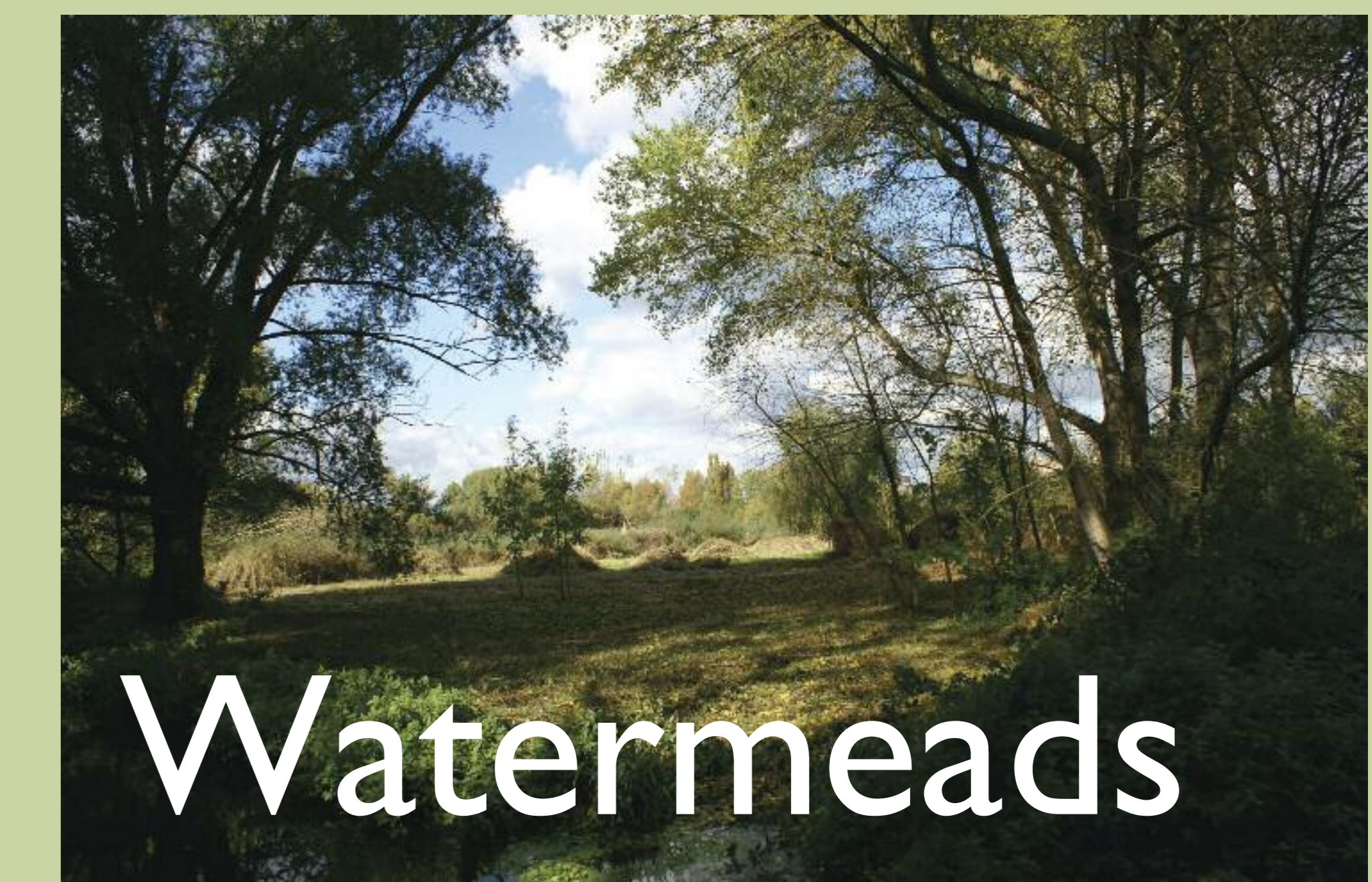
Merton Mills

In Wandle Bank, beside Wandle Park, the buildings of 'Merton Mills' still stand, though now they have been converted into flats. For centuries there was a large corn mill on this site, but it was latterly taken over by Connolly's, the famous leather firm who specialised in seating for quality cars such as Rolls and Jaguar. Nothing remains of the mill wheels, but you can still see the 'mill-race' – the sloping bed of the river which channelled the water to them.

Ravensbury Mill



Situated next to Ravensbury Park on Morden Road where it crosses the Wandle, this is a modest looking building, but inside there are two spectacular water wheels which were used for snuff milling. It is hoped these will one day be restored, and the building become the home of the Wandle Industrial Museum.



Watermeads

Either side of Morden Hall Park the Wandle flows through two beautiful stretches, both National Trust property - Watermeads (a nature reserve) and Bunce's Meadow, once full of dirty factories but now completely reclaimed by Mother Nature. This is the home of the Deen City Farm, one of the best of its kind in the country.