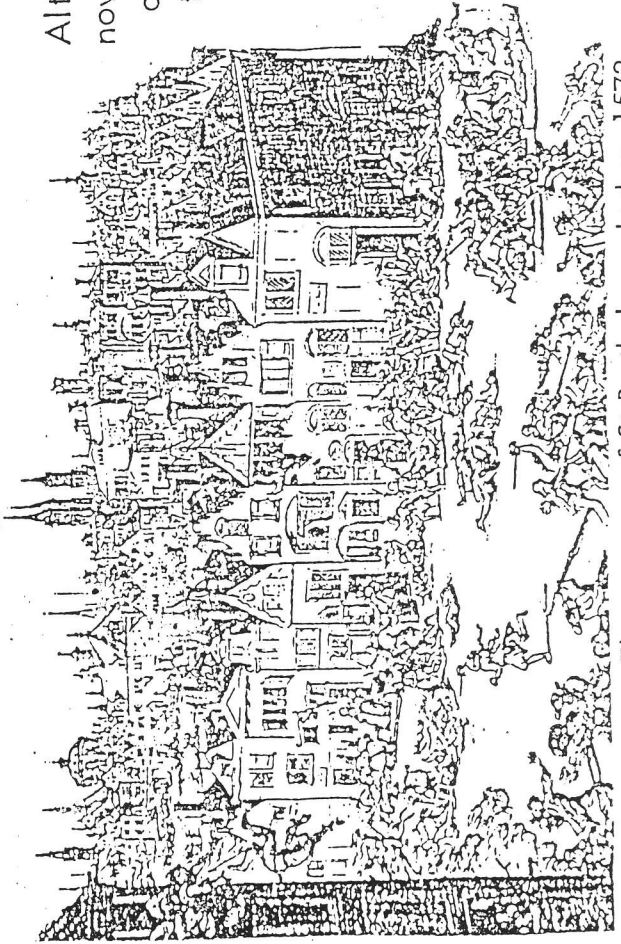


The Huguenots

What were the Huguenots? The Huguenots are believed to have started the textile industry in the Wandle Valley. They were protestants from France and the Netherlands, followers of John Calvin a religious reformer.

As Europe was mostly Catholic the Huguenots were unpopular and from 1562 until the end of the French Revolution (1789) they were persecuted, tortured and murdered for their beliefs. Many Huguenots left their countries and came to Britain as refugees.

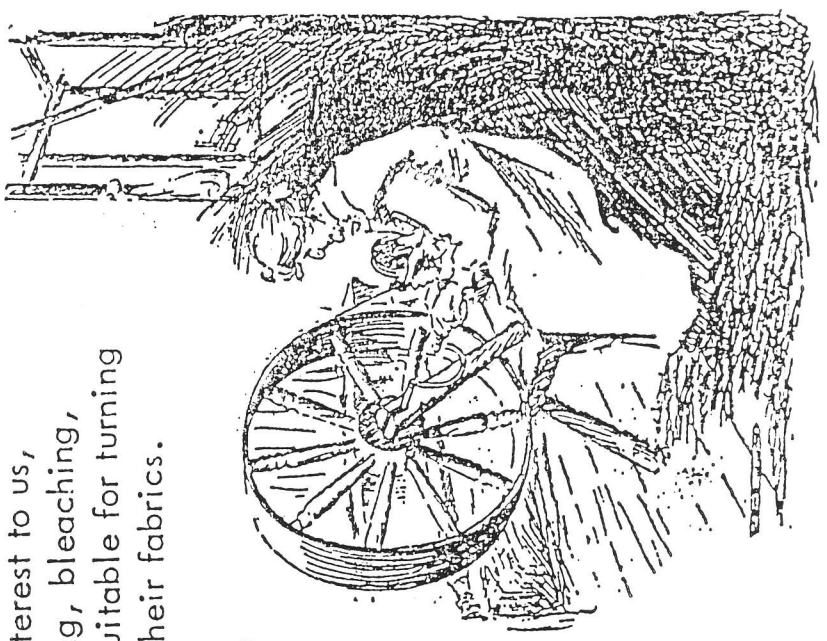
They brought with them their skills in metal working, paper making and, of most interest to us, textiles. The Huguenots were experts in all branches of the textile industry weaving, bleaching, printing and felt hat making. They found the water of the Wandle River not only suitable for turning their water wheels but, with its deposit of Fullers Earth, ideal for the cleaning of their fabrics.

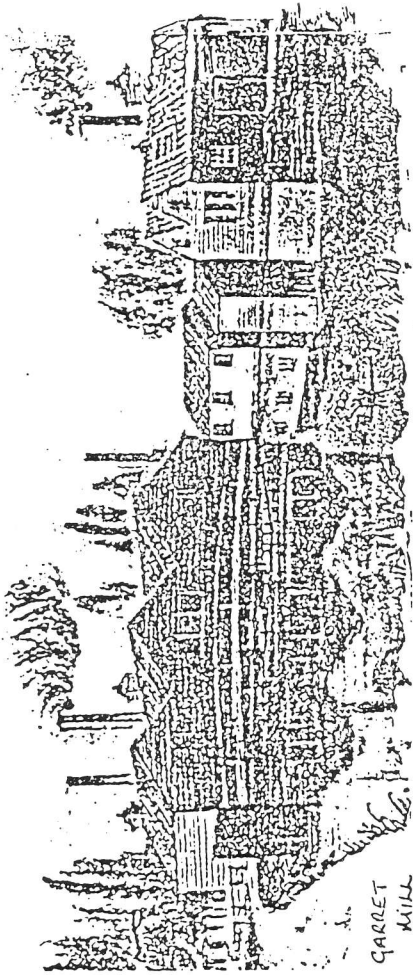


The massacre of St Bartholomew's day, 1572

Although the industry has gone on. Perhaps you recognise these names?

- Bosanquet Clarke
- De la Rue Streek
- Beaumont Butler
- Olivier Cazenove





GARRET MILL

Why THE WANDLE?

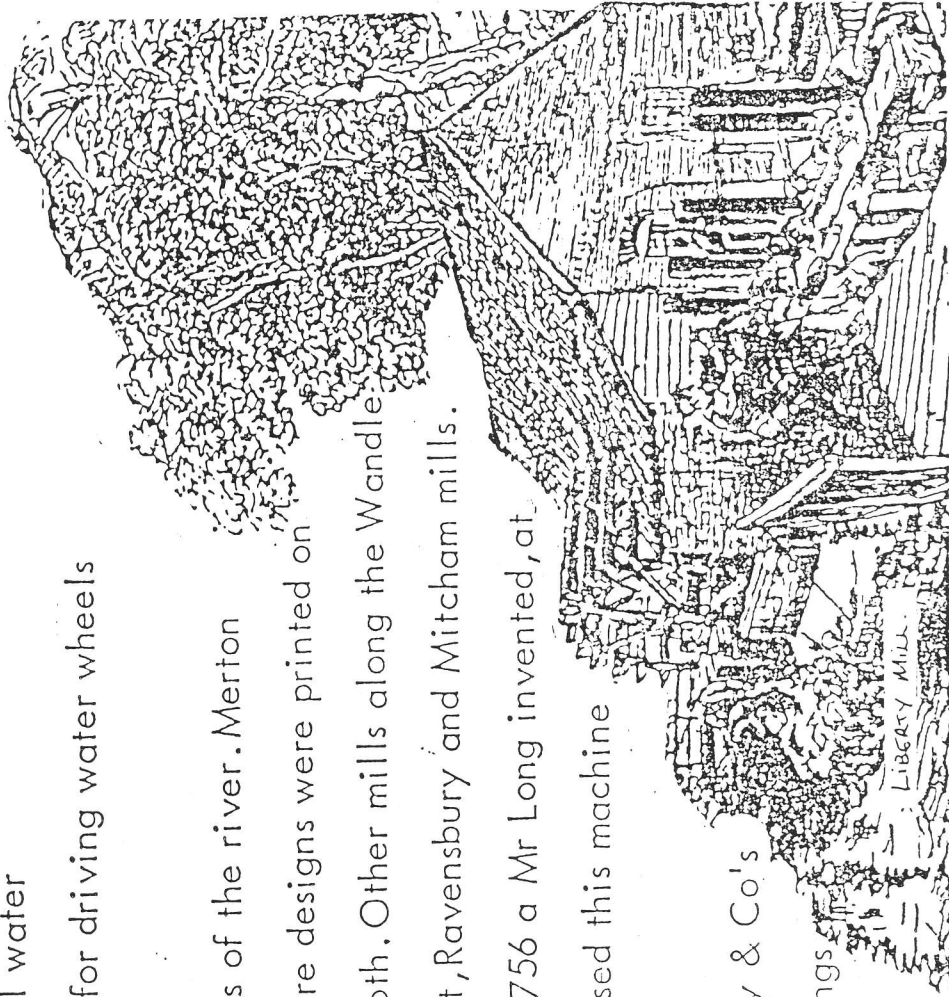
The Wandle Valley was good for textiles because it had

WATER. Water that was clean, fast-flowing with a natural water softener, Fullers Earth, dissolved in it. This was just right for driving water wheels and washing fabric.

Because of this many mills were built along the banks of the river. Merton Abbey especially has a long history of textile works where designs were printed on such fabrics as silk, wool and calico, a type of cotton cloth. Other mills along the Wandle ground dyestuffs and fabric printing took place at Garret, Ravensbury and Mitcham mills.

At first all fabric printing was done by hand, but in 1756 a Mr Long invented, at Phipps Bridge, a Copperplate printer and Francis Nixon used this machine in his works at Merton.

Fabrics printed at Colliers Wood were sold at Liberty & Co's famous shop in Regent Street and the Liberty mill buildings and waterwheel are still to be found on the site.



LIBERTY MILLS

ILES.TEXIILES.TEXIILES.TEXIILES



What are textiles? .

Every type of cloth is a textile!

Take a look at the clothes you are wearing.

The chances are that your clothes will be made from a wide range of different materials.

These fabrics are all textiles. Most textiles are made from spun and woven fibres.

Natural fibres come from animals and plants. Synthetic fibres, like nylon, are man-made.

Do you know the names of the materials you are wearing, or where they come from? .

You may know that wool comes from the fleeces of sheep.

What you may not know is that cotton is from a plant or that silk is from the cocoon of a moth.

In prehistoric times people wore only primitive clothes made from the hide and hair of animals.

What this pack will tell you is how some of the natural fibres were produced over the years and

how the Wandle Valley played an important part in the history of fabric printing and dyeing.

FIBRES

NATURAL FIBRES.

Wool cotton linen and silk are all natural fibres.

Wool comes from the fleece of sheep and goats. It is very warm and so is used for blankets and clothes.

Linen comes from the flax plant and makes a luxury fabric.

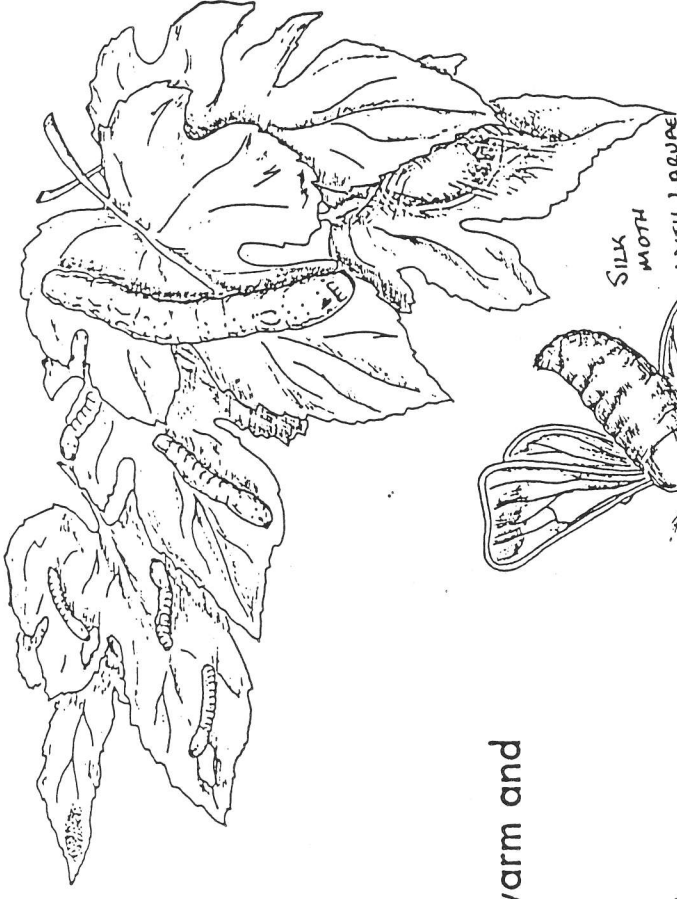
Silk comes from a silk moths cocoon. It is soft and very strong and expensive.

Cotton comes from a plant and is used for clothes and household goods.

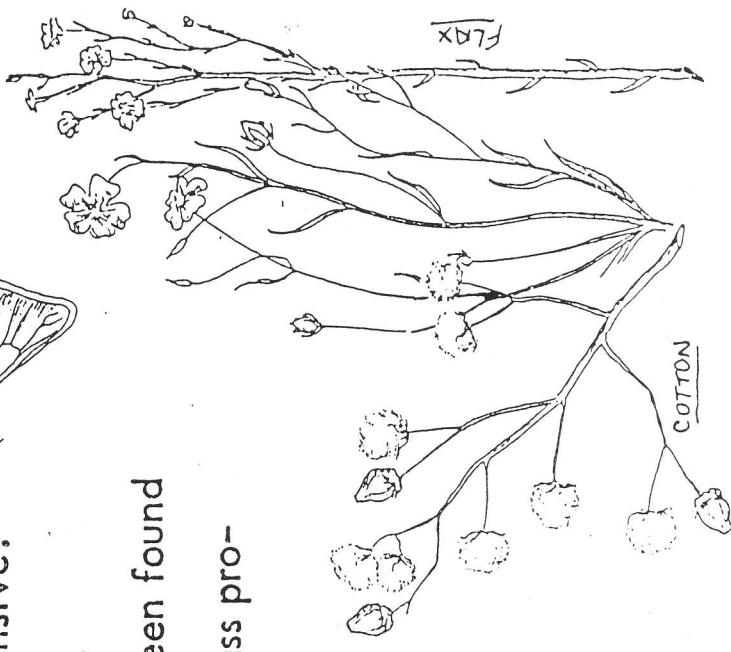
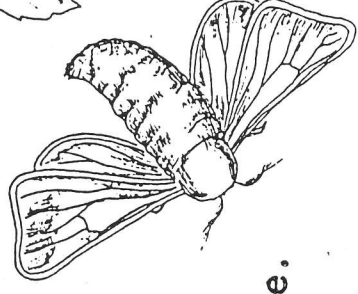
Wool linen and silk have been used for thousands of years, Linen has been found in tombs 4,500 years old. In the 18th Century cotton took over as a mass produced and cheaper alternative to other natural cloths.

MAN-MADE FIBRES.

Nylon, rayon and polyester are all man-made fibres. They are mass-produced by chemical processes. Fabrics can be made by using one fibre, or several together. The labels in clothes tell you how many and what fibres have been used to make them.

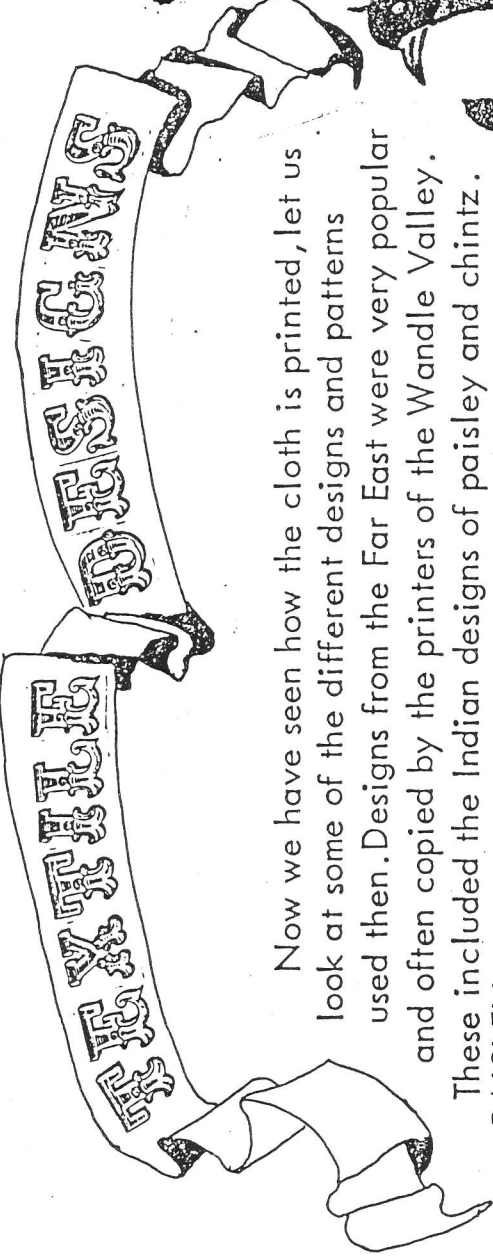


SILK MOTH WITH LARVAE AND COCOONS ON MULBERRY.



FLAX

COTTON



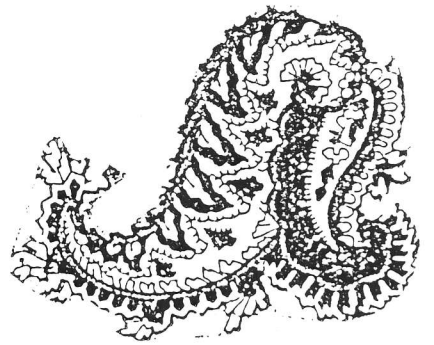
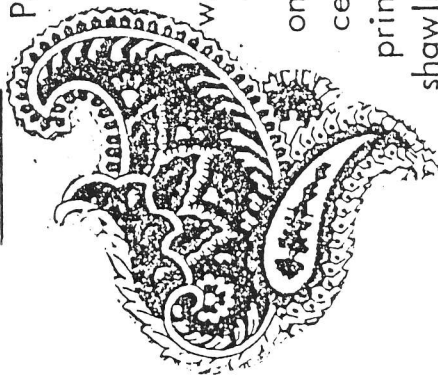
Now we have seen how the cloth is printed, let us look at some of the different designs and patterns used then. Designs from the Far East were very popular and often copied by the printers of the Wandle Valley. These included the Indian designs of paisley and chintz.

PAISLEY.

Paisley is the name given to a special pattern with 'Pinecone' motifs.

Like this one.

The design came from Kashmir and was copied in the major Scottish textile town of Paisley, and was first printed onto wool and silk fabrics. In the nineteenth century it became very popular and was then printed onto the cheaper cottons. Old paisley shawls are now very rare and expensive.



Have you noticed any of these designs on furniture or clothes at home or school?..



CHINTZ

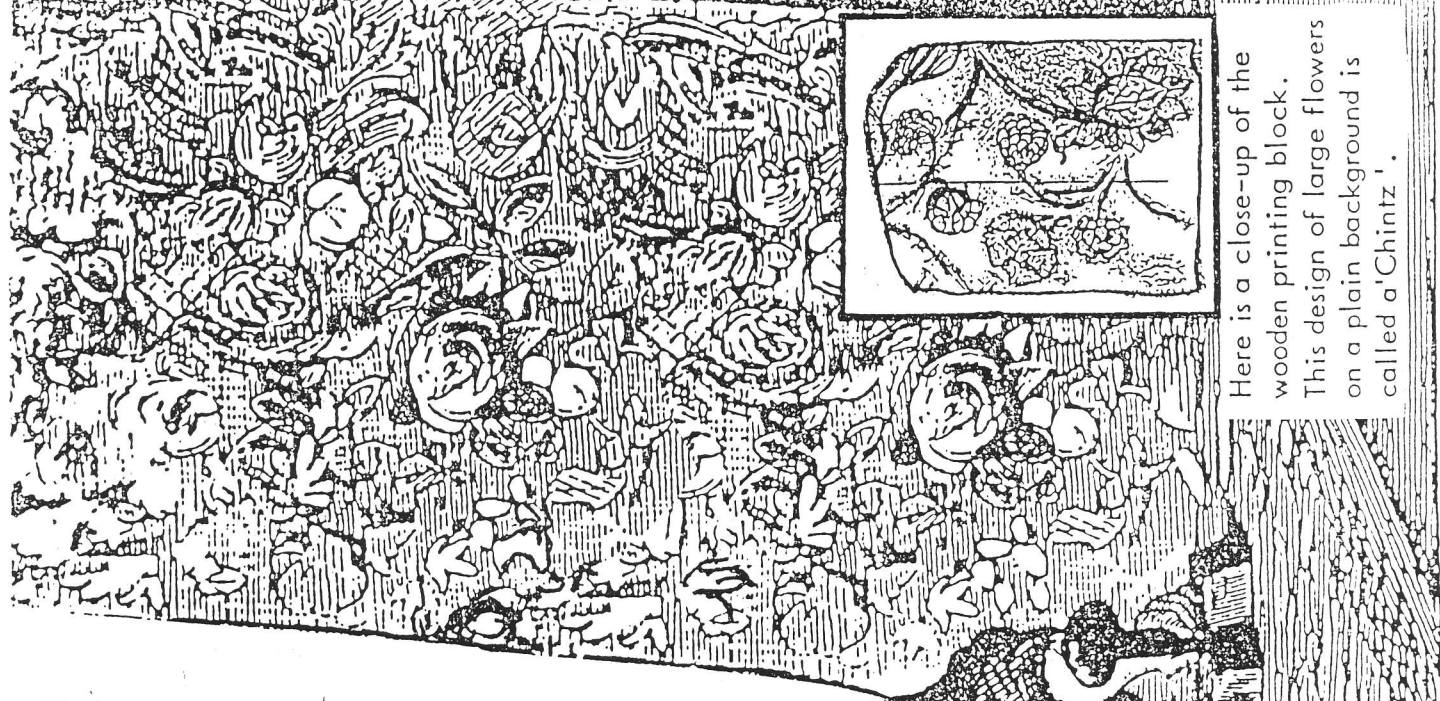
Chintz is from an Indian word meaning 'many coloured' and is the

name we give to a type of cotton cloth printed with a design of large flowers or tree boughs, with birds and animals in bright colours on a plain background.

These chintz's were a speciality of the printers in Merton Abbey from the early 1700's until the last factory closed in 1973. These designs are still in use up to the present day, and very popular as curtains and furnishing fabrics.

BLOCK PRINTING

Here we can see a boy spreading colour evenly onto a dye pad. The face of the block has a design carved upon it. The boy known as a 'Tierer' will then pass the block on to the woman. We can see her placing the already inked block on the cloth. She will then tap the block with a mallet to drive the dye into the cloth. When she removes the block it leaves behind a pattern on the cloth. This process is called **BLOCK PRINTING**. When there is more than one colour in the pattern she is making, she will have to go over the cloth again with the next block and colour. The printer has to have skill and patience so that the pattern is right and not smudged.



Here is a close-up of the wooden printing block. This design of large flowers on a plain background is called a 'Chintz'.

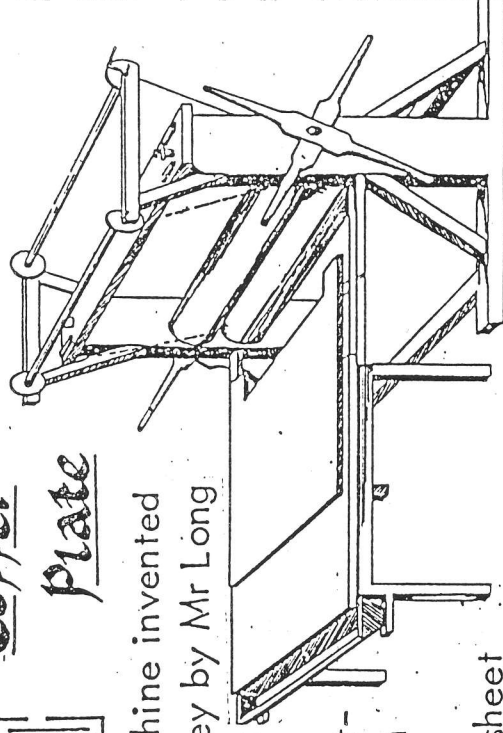
Inside a Block Printing Works 1874



PRINTING MACHINES

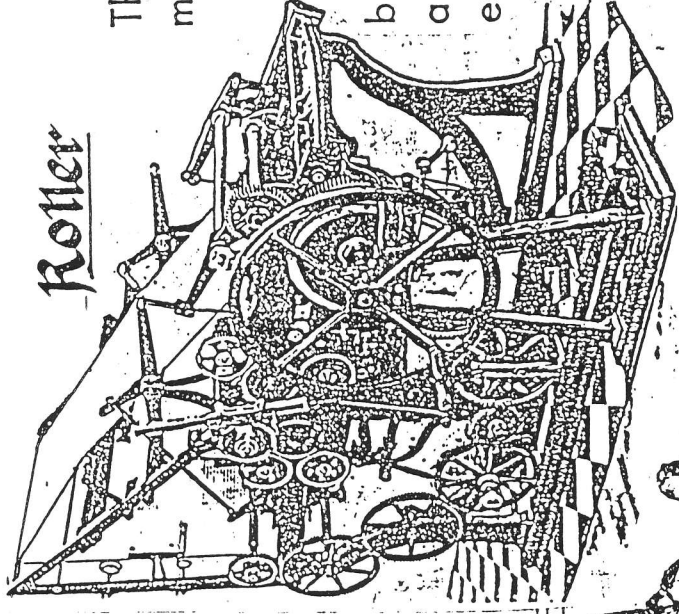
Copper Plate

This is the machine invented at Merton Abbey by Mr Long in 1767. It uses a copper plate to print the pattern. The design is cut into the surface of the sheet of metal, which is then inked up, placed on the cloth and fed between rollers.



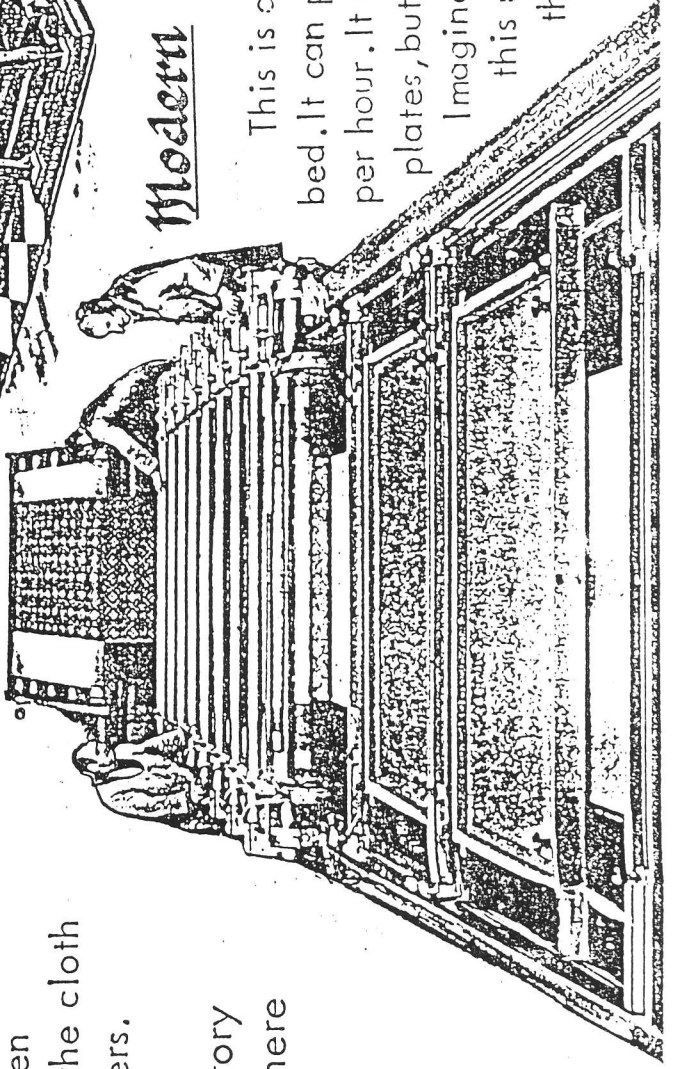
Roller

The roller printer is much faster than the copper plate, this machine works more like the hand block. The patterns are carried on the engraved rollers and the fabric is then fed through between them.



Modern Methods

Look at the factory machinery shown here and then at the hand block workshop, compare the working conditions in the two places! .



This is a modern high-speed printing bed. It can print many hundreds of metres per hour. It uses neither rollers or copper plates, but a screen rather like a stencil. Imagine the amount of printing that this machine can do compared to the hand block printer on the page before.

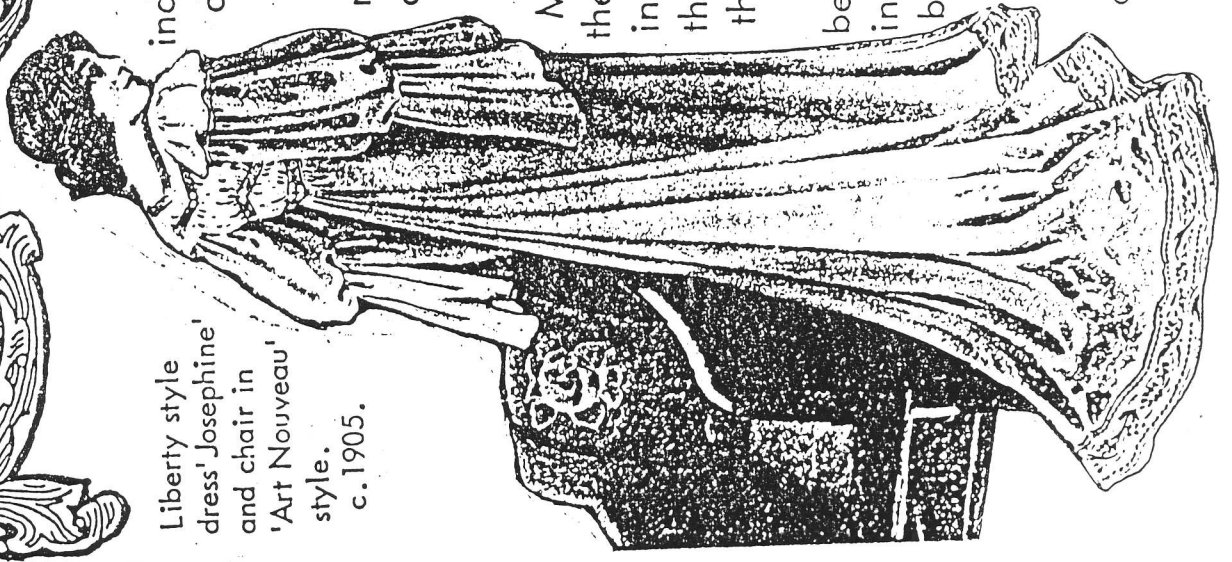
MORRIS AND LIBERTY

The two best known names in the Wandle Valley textile industry are William Morris and Arthur Liberty. Morris set up a company making textiles and other goods by hand, using old tools and methods like block printing and hand woven tapestries. Liberty began by selling goods he bought ready made from the Orient and later he had textiles designed and created by his own craftsmen which were sold for clothing and furnishings.

In 1881 Morris moved his company to one of the mill sites at Merton Abbey and in 1912 Liberty set up across the river in the old Littlers Mill. Both sites had been used by the Huguenots in the 17th-18th centuries. Both companies used the water of the Wandle for colour mixing, dyeing and printing as well as for the rinsing of their textiles.

Morris and Liberty became known world-wide for their beautiful cloths, colours and patterns. Morris and Co closed down in 1940 and the Liberty works stopped printing at Merton in 1973, but their styles and designs are still in use today.

Littlers Close, Liberty Avenue and the William Morris Club are reminders of these great men. Can you think of any other roads or places named after them? .



Liberty style dress 'Josephine' and chair in 'Art Nouveau' style. c.1905.

