



MUSING

News from Tewkesbury Museum

Autumn 2016

Welcome to the first of a revamped Museum newsletter. We intend to publish four a year, as a general update on things pertaining to the Museum. We hope that this will be helpful, and we hope that it will encourage more involvement. We need Volunteers to keep the Museum open, and we need Friends to provide support without necessarily getting involved in the day-to-day activities of the Museum.

It's a busy time, but what's new? Our Ashchurch project is now under way, and will be followed, we hope, by far the biggest project we've undertaken to date, intended to secure the future for at least the next twenty years. These are described below.

Our biggest challenge is viability. Few would dispute the cultural importance of a town Museum, but in these straightened times it has to pay its way. Even with an annual grant from the Town Council, the Museum can't balance its books. Whilst there is 'social value' in a lot of what it does, this doesn't pay the bills. We need to attract more visitors, or bigger donations, and make more from associated fund-raising activities like the autumn and spring talks.

Never a dull moment!

REMEMBERING ASHCHURCH

With the imminent demise of the Ashchurch camp, our thoughts have turned to recording the 'people's history' of the camp whilst there are still people who remember it from first-hand knowledge.

A successful bid has been made to the Heritage Lottery Fund, and the project is now getting under way, led by Maggie and supported by volunteer Graeme Kilgour. The first 'event' will be on Saturday November 5th, at the Museum, where there'll be a small exhibition of the history of the camp and an opportunity to reminisce, for those with reminiscences.

The 'deliverables' from the project will be a permanent display in the Museum, a booklet about the history of the camp, a series of recordings of the memories of people who remember it and teaching and learning packs for schools.

EXHIBITIONS

The future exhibition programme is still being put together, but the likely 'batting order' is:

- Polish soldiers in World War 2
- Tewkesbury Pubs and Breweries (February)
- Tewkesbury Quakers
- Lanes, Courts and Alleys

Dates and details will follow as they're confirmed.

THE TALKS PROGRAMME

The museum talks run from late autumn until early spring each year. The museum is normally closed through these winter months except for weekends and when special visits to the museum have been requested. Staff from the museum arrange other outside activities during the winter to help keep local interest while the museum building goes through its annual maintenance and spruce up.

The talks, generally every two weeks, are part of the 'Friends of the Museum' programme of fundraising events, but because of the growing popularity and audience numbers, they have been moved from the museum to larger premises just a short walk away. Now held in the nearby Trinity Church hall, a venue has all facilities on one level, no stairs to climb, and parking is free in the adjacent car park after 5.30pm.

We have a wide range of speakers on subjects often relevant to the 'proud and ancient' town of Tewkesbury but also far reaching historical figures, buildings, trades and general worldly events that have moulded our country throughout its history.

Talks run for approximately one hour followed by a Q&A then tea/coffee and a piece of cake (home made of course) and chat inclusive of the £3 entrance fee.

Doors open at 6.30pm for a 7pm start. Seating (although in a larger venue) is limited so it's a case of getting to the event early to secure a seat.

Tickets are available at the door on the night and information for all talk dates will be given out either on the museum's website or from posters in shop windows, tourist information office or if museum is closed you can telephone 01684 297874.

The programme until December is:

Wednesday Oct. 12th 2016 ~ Steve Goodchild '**The Road from Gloucester**'.

Monday Oct. 24th 2016 ~ Roger Hendry (Everyman Theatre) '**One Stage at a Time**'.

Monday Nov. 7th 2016 ~ TBA

Monday Nov. 21st 2016 ~ Don Freeman '**Up The Tute**' or '**Up The Royal Mythe Hill**'

Monday Dec. 5th 2016 ~ TBA

At the talk events, it is always nice to meet the audience as they come in and to chat over things that interest them, ask how far they have travelled to Tewkesbury and hope we have given them reason to come again.

MUSEUM EVENTS

The Museum will be running a half-term activity during the week of 24-28 October This will be making stone cats from pebbles. These might be suitable for adorning secret corners of alleys, as Alleycats? We'll be open daily; 1.00 to 3.00. Helpers would be welcome. There'll be full instructions provided, and lots of pebbles. Contact Maggie.

We'll be having 'making' events with Melissa Turland for Halloween and Christmas; dates and details to be confirmed.

Our ever-popular Father Christmas visit will be on Saturday 10th and 17th December.

More dates for your diary. We will be holding four social evenings for friends and volunteers through the year. For 2017, the first will be a meal at the Bell, on MONDAY JANUARY 9th. The others will be social evenings with updates on Museum activities in town hostelryes. They'll be on Wednesdays; MARCH 15th, JUNE 14th and SEPTEMBER 13th. Full details of times and places will be circulated to Friends and Volunteers before the events.

A NEW MUSEUM LEAFLET

After many years, we ran out of Museum leaflets. For a long time, Phil had been spending time adding 'Free Entry' stickers to them, so it was decided to have a complete revamp rather than just a reprint. After a long gestation, with many revisions, the new leaflet was designed for us by Sam Edle, and 2,000 have been printed, for distribution to all the places where potential customers might lurk.

A discussion point has been the opening hours, and we've settled on a winter season of October to March, opening on Saturday, Sunday and Monday 11.00 am to 3.00pm and a summer season with seven day opening, 1.00pm to 4.00pm weekdays and 11.00 to 4.00 at weekends.

FRIENDS AND VOLUNTEERS

The Museum relies on volunteers to keep going, and we aim to make volunteering a positive experience. We have people at both ends of the age spectrum, and plenty for them to do.

The more volunteers we have, the longer the Museum's opening hours can be, and the more visitors we can attract. Visitors are important to us. Even those who don't leave a donation!

There are other things to do apart from manning the reception desk. There are a lot of documents to index and photographs to scan. We need help with our projects as well, and this often suits younger people, who can add a project to their CV. Building maintenance and cleaning are also on the list. We have a willing team who spend a Monday evening a month cleaning and polishing the building, inside and out.

We can tailor volunteering to an individual's needs.

Our Friends group provides funds for Museum projects. Membership is a good way of supporting the Museum, even if you don't have time to become involved in other ways. We hold social evenings for friends and volunteers and the occasional outing.

Information and leaflets are available from the Museum.

COSTUME HIRE

Given Tewkesbury's history it is not surprising that many events in the town have a medieval or other historical theme. Banquets, Parties, Balls and even weddings can call for dressing-up, which can be very expensive. If you are ever invited to an event that calls for dressing up it is well worth remembering that we have a large and varied collections of costumes at hire at very reasonable rates. Whilst most of them are medieval many can be adapted to other periods, and others are more generally historic. We have outfits for all shapes and sizes; from toddlers to rotund monks and slender ladies, with hats, headdresses and accessories to go with them all.

The hire fee is just £10, with a returnable deposit - so next time you are invited to a fancy dress party, medieval banquet or other occasion that requires dressing up why not call in and see what we you can find.

On a practical note - if you are thinking of going to next year's medieval festival in costume book early as they are snapped up very quickly

HELPING WITH ALLEYS

Alleys are in the news a lot nowadays, with the 'Alleycat' project working n getting people involved in their welfare and decoration. This is a project which interests the Museum, and we hope to learn a little about the story of the alleys, both old history

with their formation and modern history about their clearance and re-use. Because alleys were full of dwellings considered to be of no note, there is very little record of the changing landscape. There is more social history, though, from the past 200 years, of the ups and downs of alley dwellers. We hope to stage an exhibition in the spring, in conjunction with Alleycats, to show what we know about alleys, why they're there and the story of alley life

MAJOR REFURBISHMENT OF THE MUSEUM

The last time any significant work was done to the Museum building was in 1980, when the roof, and the structure of the building, was strengthened. There have been signs for a long time of the need to do some more major refurbishment, and a fund-raising programme is about to start. Initially, there'll be a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The bid will try to solve problems with the roof and rainwater system, to reduce the rising damp problems, deal with the remaining structural problems and make the building more air-tight. We're also optimistically hoping to solve some other problems of accessibility (it's not the most convenient of buildings!) and fire precautions at the same time.

The galleries won't be ignored. There'll be internal rearrangements with new or refurbished cabinets, and even a little bit of discrete technology might sneak in.

There's a lot to do; we're at the pre-application stage now. If that's accepted we have to prepare a detailed 'stage 1' application, which will lead to an even more detailed 'stage 2' application if it's approved. Then we can start work. The project will take at least two years, and possibly more. We're anticipating a cost of nearly a quarter of a million pounds. It's a project which will need a lot of expert assistance, and would suit people who want to add some experience to their CV without a long-term commitment to volunteering at the Museum.

1,000 YEARS AGO

'Then after this battle Cnut turned with his army up to Gloucestershire, where he learned that the king, Edmund, was. Then Ealdorman Eadric and the councillors who were gathered there advised that the kings should be reconciled with each other, and the two kings came together at Olney near Deerhurst, and they became companions and pledge-brothers, and agreed that both with pledge and with oaths, and they decided that payment to the army, and they afterwards parted And King Edmund succeeded to Wessex and Cnut to the northern part.' This is from the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, and is an event which took place in the autumn of 1016. This is the only written reference.

The island is long gone, and is believed to be the area known as the Naight. Strange to think that it was the scene of a peace treaty and an agreed division of England between two kings!

If you want to know more, the Battlefields Trust has a walk on Sunday 6th November, leaving at 10.00 from Odda's Chapel. There's no booking required, and no charge, though donations are always welcome, of course!

GETTING IN TOUCH

Calling in to the Museum (64 Barton Street) during opening hours is always to be recommended! At this time of the year, opening is 11.00am to 3.00pm Saturday-Monday. Otherwise, phone 01684 292901 (There's voicemail for outside opening hours) or email info@tewkesburymuseum.org.uk.