



MUSING

News from Tewkesbury Museum

Winter 2017

In writing regular newsletters, it is difficult to separate genuine news from speculation about what might be happening soon. At the Museum, we're on the cusp of a lot that might be happening! Some of this will be alluded to in the pieces about projects. We're about to embark on interesting times, which we're hoping will be a blessing, not a curse. There will be a great deal to do over the coming years, and it will take determination and perseverance, and a lot of help from our friends.

MEMORIES OF ASHCHURCH

The Memories of Ashchurch project started on 5th October 2016. The press release raised some interest; Maggie was interviewed by BBC Radio Gloucestershire and the local press ran a variety of articles for us. The Echo printed a picture of the John Moore Museum by mistake but otherwise it was a good beginning to what looks as if it's going to be a really successful project. Next, was to the recording equipment needed for the project was bought, with some extra computer storage for all those extra records. Then we advertised for volunteers and were lucky enough to recruit Linda Pike, Katie Townsend and Joan Jennings.

Linda is researching Ashchurch for her History degree at the University of Worcester. She has already carried out some oral history interviews and is very keen to help us throughout this project.

Graeme, Maggie and Ian were given a day's Training, by Julia Letts from the Oral History Society. This was focussed on learning how to persuade people to tell their stories and understanding the importance of how to archive them correctly.

The Project's public opening event was on Saturday 5th November, using the Watson Hall and the Museum. There was an exhibition in the Museum, as well as a 'Who, What, Where and When?' exhibition in the Watson Hall which had a variety of pictures which visitors are asked to say if they recognised the people, vehicles or occasions.

The Friends of the Museum ran a tombola and Bric-a-Brac table (items donated by volunteers and trustees) Tea and coffee was free but lots of people donated money towards the museum. A total of £81.67 was raised. This event was really successful and we had a lot of response from the visitors, with three people bringing old photographs and fifteen coming forward and offering to be interviewed for this project.

We were also given a contact for the current Manager of Ashchurch Army camp, which was very useful, and our first visit has been arranged.

EXHIBITIONS

There is now a programme for temporary exhibitions programme for 2017:

1. Pubs and breweries (open February 2nd). *An update of last year's exhibition, to coincide with the CAMRA Winter Ale Festival*
2. Tewkesbury Quakers (opens March). *A look at the rise and decline of Quakerism, and the mark it left on Tewkesbury*
3. Alleys (opens June). *An eclectic collection of Alleys, Courts and stories about them.*
4. Ashchurch (opens September). *What we've discovered through the HLF-funded project*
5. The Mop Fair (opens October). *History and memories of the Mop.*

6. Remembrance (November). *Those who went to war.*

This programme brings a lot of variety, and local interest. It will be worth the effort to pop in and visit.

SPRING TALKS PROGRAMME

The autumn talk programme contained huge variety and attracted a lot of people. Almost 200 in total.

We'll be running another programme of six talks through the spring, We can't give details of all the talks yet, but the dates are given below.

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, all included in the £3 entrance fee.

Doors open at 6.30pm for a 7pm start. Seating is limited so it's a case of getting to the event early to secure the best seat.

The dates for the spring are:

Monday January 23rd. Tewkesbury Pubs and Breweries

Monday February 6th.

Monday February 20th.

Monday March 6th.

Monday March 20th.

Monday April 3rd.

MUSEUM EVENTS

Half term events

Half term is 13 - 17 February in 2017. The Museum will be open, and special events will be advertised in advance. The Mouse Hunt and Museum detective sheets are always available, and will keep children of all ages entertained.

Friends and Volunteers

The Friends and Volunteers New Year meal is at the Bell Hotel on Monday January 9th. If you'd like to partake, Maggie has all the details; telephone the Museum, 01684 292901, or email Maggie@tewkesburymuseum.org.

On March 15th, we'll be having a social gathering in the Tudor Hotel Mayor's Parlour at 7.00pm. We'll be taking the opportunity to bring you up to date about the Museum's projects and especially the early, and evolving plans we'll be seeking HLF funding for.

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.

As well as help with reception duties whilst the Museum is open, we need people for:

- 1. Painting and decorating and minor repair work in the winter refurbishment*
- 2. Making a shelter for the fairground display, to protect it from roof leaks*
- 3. The major scheme project team. There are all sorts of things which will need doing, especially around developing and testing ideas, searching for grants, writing and managing plans, collecting evidence, etc. etc.*
- 4. Indexing and assessing documents in the Museum's operational records*
- 5. Our monthly cleaning team always needs help! Normally 7.00pm on the first Monday of the month for hoovering, dusting and polishing.*

We can tailor volunteering to an individual's needs.

FATHER CHRISTMAS

The museum's beautifully panelled Victorian parlour really came into its own last week, as beautifully decorated, with holly, Ivy, tinsel, fairy lights and a selection of vintage toys, it became a perfect grotto for Father Christmas, when he made his annual pilgrimages to Tewkesbury on December 10th and again on 17th, establishing himself in the Museum.

The visits were a huge success with children and parents, The museum's band of helpers and supporters did a magnificent job in making everyone feel welcome whilst keeping visits to time.

He brought a great deal of excitement and Christmas spirit to the place, and raised a goodly sum for the museum. Our coffee bar provided sustenance for waiting families, and more thanks are due, to all the lovely ladies who donated delicious cakes for us.

His two elvish helpers were a new addition this year. They were a great hit with the everyone and made sure that each visitor had their fair share of Santa's time.

Many of the visitors had their photo taken with him, a souvenir of another great Tewkesbury Museum day. He was delighted to tell us that not one of his young visitors were on the naughty list this year, and can all look forward to a visit from him on Christmas Eve - as long of course as they are in bed and fast asleep when he calls. Everyone seemed to be pleased with the gifts which he gave them.

A new system of pre booked 10 minute slots worked very well, and saved the long queues and Christmas chaos that have characterised earlier visits.

Thank you to Michelle Paignton and the twin elves; to Phil South, Ian Bartlett, Roger Hendry, Mavis Wallis, Peggy Clatworthy, Graeme Kilgour, Angie and Geoff Pope and Maggie for all the time and effort they put into making the events such a success.



If you did not get to see him this year, we're hoping that Father Christmas will drop in again next year.

FRIENDS OF THE FUTURE

The Friends of Tewkesbury Museum has started to stutter as an organisation. This sometimes happens when key people decide to retire at the same time. It's lost its way a little, which is concerning to the Museum. The structure of the Trust at present gives no voice to the community, except through Trustees and their election by the Town Council.

The Friends play a very important part in the life of the museum; they are a source of help, both volunteers and funding for approved projects. They also give that link to the local community which gives the Museum its legitimacy. We'd like to develop that much further.

We're launching a recruitment drive and our target is 100 friends. We've got a way to go, and we'll need to find reliable people with the skills run the organisation as well.

The membership list is being checked and updated. There's a new leaflet to aid recruitment. Members are encouraged to pay by standing order, which is much more convenient for everyone. Membership fees remain unchanged at £10.00 for an individual

and £15.00 for a family. If you're not a member, why not give it a go?

A MUSEUM FOR THE 2020s

Progress with the 'big project' has been slow but steady. Mostly so far it's been talking, thinking and planning. We've had professional advice on how to go about things, and the big message coming through is that we've underestimated everything! Time, cost and commitment mostly.

We've been concentrating on sorting out the basics which have to be in place before a grant would even be considered. That means going through what the Heritage Lottery Fund will expect to see in our application. They'll be looking for all the many aspects of governance to be in place and for evidence of the museum adding value for the community through its activities.

REMEMBERING A HOSPITAL

During World War I, the demand for hospital beds far exceeded supply, and many local communities and benefactors rose to the occasion. In 1914, the Watson Hall was opened as a hospital, managed by the Red Cross, but Lord Coventry's offer of the use of Mitton Manor was quickly taken up and in June 1915, the hospital transferred there, closing in January 1919. It treated 1,188 sick and wounded soldiers, the first patients were a group of Belgian soldiers. Over the period, only three patients died, and those from the 1918 influenza epidemic. It was manned by the Gloucestershire Red Cross volunteers, who were almost entirely local women, under the command of Mrs Devereux.

After the war, the Red Cross awarded plaques to all the emergency hospitals. When Mitton Manor fell into disrepair following the sale of the estate for housing, the plaque was 'rescued' from what looked like certain destruction and the rescuer deposited it in the Museum for safe keeping. Mitton Manor has itself been rescued and has been beautifully restored. It is now right that the plaque should be returned to its proper home, and following some lobbying by John Dixon and the Historical Society the Trustees have agreed. Damage, presumably arising when it was taken off the wall, will be repaired and in January it will go home again.



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.

For news and information, our web site is www.tewkesburymuseum.org/