



# MUSING

## News from Tewkesbury Museum

Spring/Summer 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 great blessing. 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 has had a very good run since its beginning on 5<sup>th</sup> of October.

After a successful marketing campaign, we have had a number of people coming forward with their memories of Ashchurch Army camp. Of prominence, is an interview by Marline Payne, whose biological father was an American Soldier, commenting that:

'In my early life I lived in Evesham and as I got older I found out that my father then was an American soldier who didn't actually live with us; and that he was stationed at Ashchurch Camp. I was five years old before I saw him because he came back to Tewkesbury to see us. By then I had two brothers as well and we all had the same father. My mother had married him in 1943 but when he was stationed away to France in 1945 after I was born, he didn't come back and they eventually split up.... and so really I didn't even see him again until ..... I saw him when I was five years old but I wasn't aware who he was and then when I was older my grandmother in America started writing to me and we kept in touch and then we went to meet my father in 1987, who by then was living in Germany.'

This is just one of many stories of GI children that are coming out of this project. We are collecting a great number of other stories about the camp. These will all be available for you to hear and see when our final exhibition goes up in September.

### **EXHIBITIONS**

Our exhibition programme has changed yet again! We'd like to have a plan and stick to it, but we've not reached that level of competence yet.

The Pubs and Breweries exhibition has been and gone, and seemed to be well received, despite a lot of people thinking that it was simply a repeat of last year's (it wasn't!). We've put the display texts into a booklet, which is available for visitors to peruse.

The Quakers exhibition has been cancelled, and instead the fairground models have been moved downstairs to allow work to be done on the fairground room. The main effort will be to stop the roof leaking onto the models, but there will be a bit of refurbishment as

well. We need to leave plenty of time for that, so the alleys exhibition is being delayed until a time when we can fit it in and do justice to it.

1. September 2 - December 4. Ashchurch Camp. *What we've discovered through the HLF-funded project*
2. December: Father Christmas will be taking over.
3. January: Some interesting Tewkesbury residents
4. February: More pub and brewery history.

### **TALKS AND WALKS PROGRAMME**

The talks programme has now finished for the summer and we hope to start again in the autumn with a whole new programme exploring, mostly, corners of Tewkesbury's past. We hope to be able to announce dates and topics later in the summer.

Meanwhile, we're planning on a series of summer walks. These will be arranged in collaboration with the 'Alleycat' project and will be almost random walks around areas of the town centre, looking at buildings and features and recalling the history and heritage of the area. No two walks will be the same. They will start on June 21<sup>st</sup>, on alternate Wednesday evenings until the end of August. Look out for the notices.

We're always looking out for volunteers to help with talks and walks, which are an important. All that's needed is a reasonable knowledge of local history, a love of odd stories, a memory and the ability to stand in front of others and talk about things.

### **THE FAIRGROUND**

Moving the fairground display to the ground floor, done of necessity, has certainly created a great deal of interest and generated more visitors through having an enticing shop window. We've talked about conservation, restoration and re-animation of the fairground or a very long time, and the renewed interest might prompt us into action. We will be establishing a dedicated fund for the fairground and planning the work needed into the overall Museum forward plan. The Town Mayor has started the ball rolling by making the Museum one of her charities for the year.

### **ACCREDITATION**

The Museum is accredited against a scheme run by the Arts Council. Accreditation as tangible benefits. It puts the Museum in a support network which extends across the South West and includes the County's Museum Development Officer, whose help and advice is invaluable. It also means that the Museum is able to take archaeological finds from the area, and to loan and borrow items from other accredited Museums. Finally, it makes grant applications to bodies like the Heritage Lottery Fund that little bit more credible.

The Accreditation is due to be reviewed in April 2018, so work is under way to check that all the paperwork is correct and in place. The first item we're looking at is the Museum's business plan, or Forward plan in Museum-speak. This is a crucial document at a crucial time, and given the plans to refurbish the building it needs to be a radical document. We'll be looking for volunteers soon to help with the brainstorming.

### **OUTINGS**

We're thinking about running maybe four or five outings a year to other Museums. Generally, this is to see how they work and to learn from what they do. The first is pencilled in for late July, to Wigston Framework Knitters Museum in Leicester. It will be a 'car share' event. If anyone is interested, please let us know. If this works, we'll follow it with trips to other Museums within an hour's drive or so.

### **Volunteers at the museum**

We have had a great response to our appeals for new volunteers. Sue, working on front of house has been a great help, taking the pressure off our curator enabling her to do a lot of much needed office work. Joanne, another new volunteer, works one day a week with us. She had proved very useful in sorting our library of books about Tewkesbury as well as other general research into the history of Tewkesbury and its residents. We have also had a very nice young man from Alderman Knights school, Jake, who worked with us for a few months. He was very helpful in working on our Memories of Ashchurch Project, as well as other tasks set for him.

Maggie, our curator said ‘we would like to thank all of our friends and volunteers for their continued support.’

## **MANAGEMENT CHANGES**

The constitution of the Museum was established in 1962. It was modified in 1975, to reflect the joint involvement of the Borough and Town Councils and again in XXX when the Borough Council withdrew. It has become more and more difficult to keep up with all the things which a Museum needs to do, especially since we became accredited and with an expectation of precise and documented policies and procedures. The workload on the Curator and Trustees to maintain all these ‘back-office’ standards is not sustainable, and a new way needs to be found, and we’re planning to change our systems to involve friends and volunteers more directly in the day-to-day running. In a way, this is returning to the structure which existed forty years ago.

Instead of monthly Trustee and Curator meetings where all the decisions are made we plan to have much less frequent Trustee meetings, to provide the oversight, but create a ‘Management group’ where day-to-day business is done. We think that this will be more inclusive, involving volunteers who know what works and what could work better, and be a step along the road to our goal; of becoming an excellent Museum.

## **A LIME DAY**

In April this year, Steve Goodchild (Chairman) and Craig Fletcher (Trustee) attended a workshop at Blackfriars Priory, Gloucester, on the use of lime in building. We went because we are interested in understanding how to repair the Tewkesbury Museum building. The one day course was designed to provide a comprehensive introduction to the properties and use of lime in buildings.

During the day we had talks, practical demonstrations and the opportunity to try out lime plastering, lime brick pointing and painting with lime wash.

The photo shows Steve having a go at

lime plastering! As a result of this training, we are better placed to make informed decisions on how to renovate our building. The day was organised by Gloucester City Council as part of the Southgate Street Townscape Initiative, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund.



## **BRICK TAX**

One of the reasons why old bricks are so big is that George III introduced a brick tax in 1784, to help pay for the wars in the American Colonies. Bricks were initially taxed at 4s per thousand. Not liking paying tax, brick-makers began to increase the size of their

bricks. The government introduced a maximum volume for a brick, at 150 cubic inches. The level of taxation was increased in 1794, 1797, and 1805, peaking at 5s 10d per thousand bricks.

The biggest, double-sized, bricks, known as 'Jumbs' and 'Gobs', were made by Joseph Wilkes at his Meacham brickworks.

The tax was withdrawn in 1850 because it was affecting development as alternatives to bricks were sought for building.

### **Tewkesbury Medieval Festival**

The museum had a stall at the Tewkesbury Medieval Festival, on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> of July. A great weekend was had by all. Below is a photograph brought in by our volunteer Joanne.



### **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](mailto:info@tewkesburymuseum.org.uk).

For news and information, our web site is [www.tewkesburymuseum.org/](http://www.tewkesburymuseum.org/)