



# MUSING

## News from Tewkesbury Museum

Autumn 2017

**Autumn is here at last! With a lot of great projects happening here at Tewkesbury Museum, and a number of great events planned, the next few months are sure to be exciting! 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.**

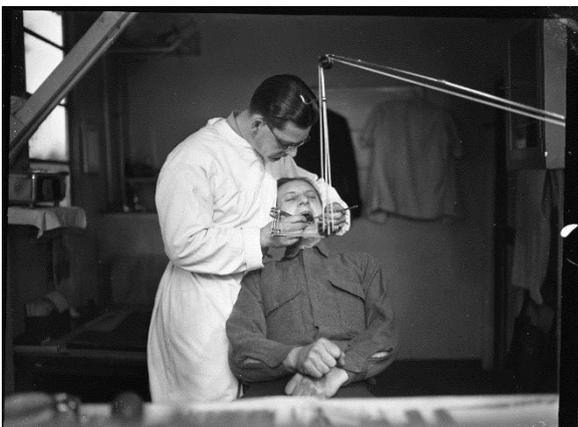
### **Camp 1009 Northway**

Many of you will not now of this, but during World War II when the American's left Camp G25 at Ashchurch to fight at the D Day landings a prison of war camp was quickly built to accommodate captured German soldiers from France & Germany. The camp was based around Northway House Hotel (Now known as the Northway). It consisted of a number of large huts to accommodate approximately 800 prisoners, there was a Chapel, games hall, theatre and sports ground possibly taken over when the Americans left.

Not much information exists of the camp, but during the Memories of Ashchurch project Mr Haines brought in a very large collection of negatives. These were taken in Camp 1009 and show the huts, prisoners playing sports and plays in the theatre plus other activities.

Ian Bartlett has been busy scanning these negatives to catalogue them for the database, so that more information can be obtained from them. It does look like that this will possibly turn out to be another research project for the future.

These are two photos from the collection:



Camp dentist San. Uffz. Ludwig Dittmeyer B174386



Some of the prisoners enjoying sports

## **Moving the Fairground**

Earlier this year we had more trouble with our leaky roof. This meant that the Model fairground had to come down stairs to protect it from getting wet. After a great deal of difficulty and dismantling various miniature rides we got everything settled and in place in the large front room on the ground floor. Graeme and I had spent a day playing with the Fairground...better than a train set any day!

As the bright and colourful fairground could be seen from outside it encouraged visitors into the museum, so it was, with a heavy heart that the day had come to take it all back upstairs again. Steve and Craig had worked hard on a temporary ceiling contraption so it is now safe from water ingress and has gone back to its purpose built display complete with back drop and blue sky.

It seemed tougher getting the rides back up the stairs, I had forgotten how we had had to tilt the delicate Gallopers and the Chair-o-planes to get them up the stairs and through the too narrow doors. We had more volunteers to help and that sped up the process somewhat, but secretly Graeme and I wished we had done it by ourselves. Just to have a play with the fairground once more.

## **A Masters Student and museum employment by Graeme Kilgour**

I have always been interested in history, and whilst completing my Undergraduate Degree became a volunteer at Tewkesbury Museum. I remember on my first day, Maggie, the curator, was swapping the upstairs store and Victorian room around. I was quickly ushered in and helped for the next couple of days. I was fascinated moving around all the objects, and decided to carry on volunteering. Now, I am studying part time for a Master's Degree in Museum Studies, learning about exciting subjects such as exhibition planning and development, care of collections and collection management. Whilst studying, I am running the Memories of Ashchurch Project, with the help of Maggie. This project is going very well, and near completion. It is with the encouragement of Maggie, that I am studying for my masters and able to work on this project.



So, if you may be interested in volunteering, there are a wealth of opportunities available and a great support network to help you succeed.

## **A Volunteer at Tewkesbury Museum by Mavis Wallis**

When I first moved to Tewkesbury Three years ago and the builders finished work on my house renovations I felt the need to go out and explore the town and meet some local people.

Walking along Barton street I came to the museum and called in to see if I could gather some information about my home in the old stocking factory in East Street where I met Maggie, the Curator. She kindly produced some research articles for me, before asking if I would like to become a volunteer. Being an octogenarian with mobility problems I was ambitious about my usefulness, but Maggie saw no difficulties in putting me to work as a meet and greeter to visitors. So I have become the 'Saturday Girl' in the reception lobby.

The acceptance, friendliness and encouragement of the staff, trustees and volunteers makes me feel useful. Meeting visitors from all parts of the world is far more interesting than I had anticipated. As I gradually acquire more knowledge of the town and its remarkable history, I am able to pass on little bits of information to visitors.

A real Bonus is the way in which my Saturday Job has opened doors to many events and activities in Tewkesbury such as meetings of the Historical Society, planning meetings, social events, visitors from Father Christmas and also to the dedicated weekly efforts of the small group of banner painters.

I am aware that the part I play in meeting and greeting some 30 to 40 visitors to the museum on a Saturday is only a small section of the contribution the museum makes to the town. Many other volunteers involved in research, sorting the archives, participating in educational sessions in schools and clubs and in fundraising to keep this valuable asset an important contribution to the attractions of Tewkesbury.

### **ALLEY HISTORY**

Tewkesbury's Alleys are being highlighted by a joint project. 'Alleycats' is promoting appropriate art in the alleys and lobbying for repairs and maintenance. The Museum is concentrating on researching and recording the heritage of the alleys. At the moment, this is being done through monthly articles in 'Tewkesbury Direct', but there is a plan for a book, or maybe a series of books.

Prior to about 1800, little is recorded about alleys. That which is mostly in old deeds and wills. These need expert interpretations because names were not fixed and in any case they were seldom quoted in documents. After about 1800 we know quite a lot, thanks to the memories of John Rogers and the research of Cliff Burd adding to data available in documents and newspapers. Much of this is social history, about the people who lived down the alleys and what they did to draw the attention of the press. Court reports feature a great deal.

There is agreement from Tewkesbury Borough Council for use of the 'stub' of Bank Alley (alongside 'Out of the Hat') to create an Alley interpretation centre, for which funding will be sought in the near future. The plan is to use touch-screen displays to introduce visitors to the history of alleys, and prompt them about what to explore.

### **FRAMEWORK KNITTING OUTING**

A group of volunteers and friends recently ventured a long way out of the town; to Ruddington, near Nottingham. This is the home of a Framework Knitting Museum, housed in restored frame-shops and stockings cottages. The purpose was to learn about every aspect of framework knitting and the work of the Museum. We were received by a lot of interested and informative volunteers, who between them gave us a comprehensive introduction to the equipment and an excellent overview of the history of mechanised knitting in the town. It was Nottingham, of course, which drove Tewkesbury's hosiers and stockings out of business, but there was no animosity! Altogether, it was an absorbing day out, and lots of food for thought. We're now better equipped to answer questions, and maybe, one



day, when we're in a position to add a display about stocking knitting we know where to turn to for advice. Seeing Queen Victoria's stockings was an unexpected bonus! Now we've got the ball rolling, the next outing will be to Thornbury Museum on Wednesday 1 November. Leave your name with the Museum for further details.

## **“Priestley's Progress: The Life of Sir Raymond Priestley, Antarctic Explorer, Scientist, Soldier, Academician”.**

### **Review.**

June 2017 saw the publication of the first full-life biography of Sir Raymond Priestley, educated in Tewkesbury and known mainly for taking part in two expeditions to Antarctica during the "Heroic Age of Antarctic Exploration" from 1900 – 1915. Titled “Priestley's Progress: The Life of Sir Raymond Priestley, Antarctic Explorer, Scientist, Soldier, Academician”.

The author is retired bank director Mike Bullock, a member of the Centre for First World War Studies at the University of Birmingham. His interest in Priestley was generated “by a happy coincidence, Sir Raymond was the inspiration for my previously co-authored book on communications during the First World War 1 based on his pioneering work as the Official Historian of the British Army Signal Service during the conflict”.

The Museum features strongly in the author's thanks: “As anticipated, the program of research required was very extensive and all those who have provided invaluable assistance are acknowledged, personally and with heartfelt thanks, elsewhere. Institutionally, the Town Museum in Tewkesbury, the Universities of Birmingham, Bristol, Cambridge and Melbourne, the Scott Polar Research Institute, the British Antarctic Survey, the Duke of Edinburgh's Archive at Buckingham Palace and the Royal Geographical Society are principal amongst a host of others” – so nice company to be included with! In particular, he thanks “Sue Edlin, Chair of the Trustees of Tewkesbury Town Museum, who shared her extensive knowledge of Priestley with me”.

There are some humorous wartime stories, here's an example: As a footnote to his award of a Military Cross, Priestley notes that quite ludicrous mistakes were sometimes made. In one instance Corps requested two lists: one for officers who refused to be inoculated; another for recommendations for the immediate award of a Military Cross. Each list contained twelve names, there was a mix-up at Corps Headquarters, and the twelve officers who had refused inoculation gained the award.”

Mike Bullock has captured the essence of Priestley's long and varied life and is to be congratulated.

### **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/)

