



# **Tewkesbury Museum**

## **Supporter's Newsletter**

**APRIL  
2022**

---

### **SOME STATS FOR 2021-22**

Museum years finish on March 31<sup>st</sup>, like tax years. Last year ended last Thursday. The total number of visitors was 2.125, which is half of a 'normal' year, but we were closed for most of last summer. We were open for 401 hours, so welcomed 5.3 visitors every hour, on average. That compares well with the 4.4 visitors per hour in the last 'normal year'; 2019/20.

---

### **SUE EDLIN**

Sue was a Trustee of the Museum for many years and Chair until 2014. She resigned to care for her husband Roy, who had had a stroke. It's sad to report that she passed away on 21<sup>st</sup> February, age 87.

Sue and Roy came to Tewkesbury when they retired from their careers in nursing. Sue worked through some particularly frustrating times at the Museum, starting at a time when finances were in a dire state and maintenance of the building was virtually ignored. She supported Maggie, the curator, in hosting a very popular exhibition about the Titanic, and later saw through the change from paid to free entry, which vastly increased visitor numbers and improved income.

She led on the preparation of a joint Town Council/Museum bid for a Heritage Lottery Fund grant to carry out all necessary repairs, particularly to the roof structure and ceiling, and to re-organise the layout of the display galleries. This, unfortunately, failed after a huge amount of work had been done. It was not completely wasted effort, though, because it wakened a desire to improve. It included a survey of the building by a firm of conservation architects which gave a vision of what could be achieved, and started the path towards display rebuilding and helped considerably with highlighting solutions to recent roof problems

Sue's great interest, though, was Raymond Priestley. She spent a considerable time researching his eventful history and putting together the displays which we still use. A 'tongue in cheek' letter to Buckingham Palace resulted in a visit by Prince Phillip to view the exhibition, and the rest of the museum, on a very memorable day. Prince Phillip reminisced with great nostalgia about the man who had guided him around Antarctica on the Royal Yacht, Britannia, whilst he was on a pre-marriage world tour. That day was maybe the Museum's proudest to date.

Sue's last service to the Museum was to deliver a well-attended and well-received talk about Raymond Priestley as part of the 2019 spring talks series. Personal matters meant

---

that Sue was not able to volunteer for the Museum, but she never lost interest, and was always an excellent source of sensible advice, on all sorts of matters. We will miss her.

---

## TALKS AND WALKS

---

The spring talks programme got off to a positive start on 15<sup>th</sup> March with a review of Tewkesbury's miscreants of the past and the way they were dealt with. It attracted more than 60 people, which far exceeded our expectations. The tea and cake afterwards were popular, and added to the feeling that things might be returning to as they were.

Our next talk has been advertised as Mike Kean Price, telling us the 'Boy's Own' story of a war hero, entitled 'From Deserter to VC Hero'. It's a sign of the times that Mike has tested positive for Covid, and can't be sure of being clear by April 5<sup>th</sup>. He's agreed to postpone his talk until the autumn series.

Sam Eedle has volunteered to step into the breach with a talk entitled "**The disappearance of Heneage Bloxham**"; an intriguing story about a Tewkesbury man in the First World War.

On April 19<sup>th</sup>, John Dixon will be talking about tan yards, a trade which consisted of far more than Abel Fletcher!

May starts, on 3<sup>rd</sup>, with a more hands-on session, our 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary event, which will feature Jo Teague talking about the Stitch Story project, providing an opportunity to add a stitch, and to reminisce about the history of the Museum, the people who founded it and those who kept it in existence.

The final session in our spring session, on 17<sup>th</sup>, is 'Ripping Yarns & Wizard Wheezes; The Golden Age of the Children's Comic'. Our speaker will be John Reid. A fitting finale to the series

---

## TEWKESBURY GUIDING

---

The exhibition marking the centenary of Tewkesbury guiding opened quietly on 19<sup>th</sup> March. It has attracted a number of local guides and ex-guiders into the Museum, adding to the footfall. The exhibition is comprehensive and colourful, reflecting the enthusiasm for the movement of its curators.

The date of the foundation of the movement in Tewkesbury is a little uncertain, seeming to be very early in the Great War. It got off to a proper start, though, in 1921. There was a short break after the Second World War until 1948, when it was re-established and has run continuously since then.

Early guide leaders came from the gentry:

- Captain Miss Iris Brierley of Southwick Park
- Captain Miss Scobell of Walton House
- Captain Miss Gwendoline Mary Moore
- Lieut. Miss Daphne Moore (John Moore's sister)
- Captain Miss Devereux
- Captain Miss Powys-Cobb

---

---

## DIGITAL COLLECTIONS

---

The internet has revolutionised research and general inquisitiveness in all sorts of ways, particularly by making it so easy to search for documents and increasingly to give the facility to read documents on line. Not only does this save a great deal of time and a lot of travelling to read originals but it also can provide very sophisticated facilities to search within documents. Excellent exemplars are [Archive.org](#), established to scan historical documents in University libraries and containing millions of books, and in Britain the [The Book Library](#), managed by AJH Computer Services and containing a very eclectic collection of books, including the Venerable Bede and the complete works of Shakespeare. [Grace's Guide](#) provides documents relating to our industrial history. County archaeological Societies have made their transactions available digitally. Our local example is [BGAS transactions](#).

Meanwhile, the Collections Trust has been contemplating the future of digital archives, and after a lot of consultation with museums and archives large and small has produced a considered report on the topic. It's maybe a little specialist, but worth a look if you're interested in archive collections and their future. It's available [HERE](#)

---

## HISTORIC ENGLAND PHOTOS

---

Historic England hold a lot of digital items in the form of photographic collections, which are available to view on line. They've recently launched a collection of 400,000 aerial photographs (not all historic) which include some fascinating views of Tewkesbury in the 1920s, though many are copies of items in the 'Britain from Above' collection.

[HISTORIC ENGLAND](#)

[BRITAIN FROM ABOVE](#)

---

## ZOOMING

---

The rise of Zoom and its competitors for holding discussions at a distance and for giving talks is possibly a positive legacy of lockdowns, as there is the option of linking in to an event which might even be on another continent. It saves time, and it saves cost.

This webinar comes from PEL, who are our supplier of conservation items. The third in a series that they've presented on Zoom, it's about the history of picture frames and their materials presented by specialist conservator Caroline Oliver ACR. The webinar will be on 28<sup>th</sup> April at 10.30am, lasting about an hour. [Register here](#) Restricted numbers apply to attendance and places will be allocated on a first come first served basis.

---

## OUR MODELS OF BUILDINGS

---

The Borough Council meeting on 17 November 1963 must have been an interesting one, and must have gone on for a long time. The Town Clerk, Mr Smale, They approved the purchase of a model village to install in the Town Hall garden, the installation of the model fairground, recently purchased from Mr Boughton of Apperley, (not the Salt models, they came later) in the Town Hall basement and the purchase of a crazy golf set to go alongside the putting green on the Vineyards. Mr Smale seems to have got his way, against the better judgement of some Councillors, by stressing that orders needed to be placed almost immediately to complete the work in time for the following summer. The 'Register' said that

Alderman Knight was concerned about items being brought up which were not provided for in the minutes "And there always seems to be a matter of urgency about them", he added. The Borough Surveyor said that he wanted to make it clear that the model village would not be based on Tewkesbury, but would incorporate important buildings in the town. He did not want the council to run away with the idea that it would be Tewkesbury in miniature. That would be impossible and ridiculous in the space available.

On 24 June 1964, the 'Register' reported:

### **£600 Model Village**

*WORKMEN are now busy on a site at the rear of the Town Hall. laying-out the model village which arrived last week.*

*The models, built by Mr. John Fenwick of Canvey Island, Essex. and costing a total of £600 are made of asbestos and oil-bound hardboard to stand up against bad weather.*

*Among the models are Tewkesbury Abbey (the largest of the lot, measuring 8 ft. long by 4 ft. 8 ins, high). a farm (the smallest model), the Town Hall, Tudor House Hotel, Royal Hop Pole Hotel, Gupshill Manor, the Museum, Warwick House, the Berkeley Arms public house. the old Spa House, the Olde Hat Shop, the Nodding Gables, a caravan site and a cricket match.*

*The village was never intended to be a model of Tewkesbury and such famous buildings as Badminton House have been included.*

*The whole idea of the model village has been opposed from the very start by Ald. F.H. Knight, who has not been alone in his views. He has described it recently as "an absolutely mad idea from beginning to end and a complete waste of money".*

*I'm afraid I'm inclined to agree. To my mind a model village should be on a large, ambitious scale. such as the one at Bourton-on-the-Water. which attracts visitors from all over the world. and is rightly famous.*

*Bits and pieces of Tewkesbury. with models of buildings from other parts thrown in, and displayed on what is. after all, a small site. seems to me to be something of nothing.*

### **Depends on tourists**

*And the cost of £600 is, I should have thought, something which the Borough Council, with a loan debt already of over one million pounds, can ill afford.*

*While saying all this, however, I must add that it may be unfair to condemn this venture out of hand before it has even got going. A charge will be made to visitors to the "village" and the hope is, of course, that there will be enough of these during the summer, to recoup the amount spent on it.*

*One or two people have criticised the Council for refusing to make a contribution out of the rates towards the Cobalt Unit appeal fund and yet don't mind paying £600 for a model village. The two are, of course, not comparable. The Cobalt Fund is a charity and I agree with Ald. Knight that it would be wrong to make what amounts to a demand on the ratepayers towards it. The model village is something which the Council hopes will be an asset to the town because of the income it will bring in.*

*Whether they are misguided in the latter view remains to be seen.*

It opened to the public in August. Mr Smale reported that attendance was good in its first year of operation, though by 1966 it seemed to be making a thumping deficit and councillors were again up in arms over another proposal, from Councillor Husband, to purchase some fairground models from Mr Salt, though they did narrowly approve it.

The Museum now houses the remains of the model village; the cut-off fronts of several of the models. The rest were left in one of the Town Hall cells and when inspected a few years ago were in such a poor condition that they were disposed of under asbestos precautions.

A Canvey Island magazine carried a short biography of John Fenwick, the model maker, some time ago:

### **Mr. John Fenwick (1900 – 1978)**

It was in May 1948 that Lieut. Col Horace Fielder opened a history of Canvey in miniature, in the grounds of what was then 'The Mascot Gardens', Furtherwick Road. The designer of old Canvey was Mr. John Fenwick There were replicas of the old village pump, The Red Cow, The Lobster Smack, St. Katherines Church complete with organ playing, The Catholic Church, models of the. ruins of Hadleigh Castle, with the railway lines in front, with an electric train running whenever people were viewing.

His first venture was in about 1929 when he had a model putting green next to Beach House and Sutherland's Fair. He later had a miniature golf at the Labworth Car Park, and when the Casino first opened he had moving models of "World War I". Before the second world war there was a model he made outside "The Mascot" where people could put coins in for the hospital fund.

He also painted quite a few pictures of Old Canvey, some are in 'The Heritage Centre' and some of his models are in the Dutch Museum. In 1973 he was still developing talents. He started making sculptures from driftwood found on Canvey beach. He was not only making money from American buyers, but a reputation among London Art Galleries. His work was accepted for the Marine Art Exhibition.

The model village attracted thousands of visitors each season, also school parties. He made replicas for other seaside resorts, including the Isle of Wight, Clacton and Cromer. He also had a model exhibition in the Festival of Britain, and a model of Tewkesbury at Tewkesbury.

Mr Fenwick died in 1978, his grandson Brian White took over the Village but unfortunately the first week-end it was opened it was vandalised. Mr. Aubrey Stevens a friend of Mr. Fenwick said "The village was always a target for vandals but John never worried when the buildings were smashed. He just built them up again".

---

## **CRIME AND PUNISHMENT**

---

This example of the way that law and order worked in 1855 comes courtesy of Wendy.

### ***County Petty Sessions***

*Before Ven. Archdeacon Timbrill, D.D; J.W.Martin; J.Yorke and J.Hopton Esqrs.*

*John Humphris and John Grove, two of the County Constabulary stationed in this Town, were charged with neglect when on Town duty, in not detecting parties stealing 12 knockers and 6 bell pulls, on the night of 28th August.*

*Sergeant Tanner deposed that he has charge of the Tewkesbury Station, and directs the constables when and where to go. On the night in question, Grove had charge of one side of the Town and Humphris the other. Grove was on duty from 8 till 5 and Humphris from 9 till 6. It is customary to have a third man out in the Town, but the one out that night was obliged to return to the Station in consequence of illness. Mr Lefroy had ordered him (Tanner) to bring the constables who had been on duty before the Magistrates; he enquired of Humphris if he had heard of any injury being done in Church Street and he had not; he also told Grove of the mischief in High Street. Humphris told him Mr Bolding was fearful of having his garden robbed, owing to the Avon being drawn off, and he was requested to watch; he (Tanner) saw Humphris at the Cross about 9 o'clock. The report from the Diary kept at the Station was read and showed the men had properly entered up their duty.*

---

*In answer to the Chairman the Sergeant said he could not prove the men had neglected their duty that night; it would be quite possible for a knocker or bell to be taken without the men being able to detect the depredators as there are so many Alleys to hide in.*

*After a short consultation between the Magistrates, Dr Timbrill said it appeared to the Magistrates that there was no proof whatever that the Constables had been guilty of a neglect of duty, it appeared from the diary that the men had been on duty the whole night. The Bench would always be ready to punish any Constable brought before them against whom any neglect of duty was proved, but when not one act of neglect had been proved against them, as in this case, of course no punishment could be inflicted.*

*Men were always considered innocent until proven guilty, and in this case there did not appear to be any cause of suspicion against them; the Bench considered there was no occasion to call upon the Constables to answer the charge, and that they left the Court without a stain upon their character.*

*Mr Brown, the Mayor, here addressed the Bench, observing that the present case showed the inefficiency of the Police; he thought the decision just come to would hold good if one side of the Street was knocked down. If the Police had shown proper vigilance the depredations complained of could not have been committed.*

*Mr Martin, "Then if you consider the police are to blame in this matter, why won't you come forward as a complainant and prove a neglect of duty against them?"*

*Mr Brown considered he had the safety of the Borough in his keeping, and he must say he was not satisfied with the conduct of the police*

*.Mr Martin, " Then why not bring forward proof of the inefficiency?"; it appeared to Mr Brown to be a matter of opinion whether proper vigilance had been exercised, and the Bench were unanimously of the opinion that there was no blame attached to the police, he (Mr Martin) had no doubt that Mr Brown when a boy had experience in these matters, and knew how easy it was to avoid any vigilance of the police; his opinion was that it was fully proved that two men were not sufficient to guard the Borough; it was most palpable that whilst the police were at one end of the Town, depredations might be committed at the other.*

*Dr Timbrill was of the same opinion as Mr Martin, that the chief complaint was that there were not sufficient Officers to protect the Town, but it was not for Magistrates to point out to the Chief Constable the regulation of the Force; it must be left to him to decide whether the present number of Constables were sufficient to guarantee the safety of the Town.*

*The charge against the men was read, to which they had sent in the following answer. Humphris denied being guilty of a neglect of duty; he was requested by two men in the employ of Mr Bolding to pay particular attention to that gentleman's garden, in consequence of the River Avon being dry, which gave Mr Bolding a suspicion that his fruit would be stolen, as it was on a former occasion; he therefore considered it his duty to watch the garden, which formed part of his beat, and which accounted for his being absent from the Church Street longer than usual. Grove also gave a general denial.*

*There were several leading gentlemen of the Town present to watch the case, many of whom attended for the purpose of speaking to the efficiency of the police and their general good conduct.*

---

---

## THE MILL AVON

---

The Museum was recently sent a document following the life the Drinkwater family through the last couple of centuries. A local family, they had an eventful time in and around the town. One of the illustrations was this picture of the Mill Avon in 1906. It would be unrecognisable if it wasn't for the Abbey!



These buildings were commercially useful when the river provided a means of transport for goods, and employment for watermen. The arrival of the railway marked the beginning of the end for this trade, and by the end of the war they were, like much of the town centre, an embarrassingly derelict problem to the town. The solution came with the Riverside Walk project. They were, with a very few exceptions, swept away to provide a promenade along the riverside and an environment which we now take for granted.

---

## NEARLY SIXTY .....

---

**Tewkesbury Museum will be sixty years old this year!** It was opened on 11 May 1962 by Sir George Dowty.

It has suffered periods of closure since, some financial, most recently because of Covid and the roof repairs, but nonetheless 60 years is quite an achievement. And one that should be marked. So we are putting together a small display highlighting major events in the museum's life with illustrations of items from the collection. We want as many volunteers or former volunteers to contribute ideas to what events and items should be included and to take part in making the display. So far, we have a special logo, by Sam Eedle (proudly displayed at the head of this newsletter). New volunteer Paul Amphlett, - a skilled artist –

---

---

will be working on layout of the display and Wendy Snarey is researching museum history and trying to locate early acquisitions.

The anniversary will also be publicised on traditional media and social media

Finally, we also hope to have a "Museum Memories" session during the Museum Talk on 3<sup>rd</sup> May when Stitch Story – the Tewkesbury embroidery project - will be the main attraction.

We might even get an embroidered museum, though this has yet to be decided. Julie has offered to bake a birthday cake, with a museum photo or logo iced on! So, lots to look forward to.

If you can help please get in touch, either directly with Bill ([billadie18@gmail.com](mailto:billadie18@gmail.com)) or through the museum. And hope to see you on Tuesday, 3<sup>rd</sup> May.

---

## **KING EDGAR**

---

The Historical Society's next talk, at the Methodist Church, is on Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> April, at 7.45, is 'King Edgar - My Favourite Anglo-Saxon King' by Dr. David Pegg. This will make an interesting diversion from Tewkesbury's history. King Edgar's reign maybe set an example of competence which it is a shame that others, up to the present day, haven't followed.

---

## **CONTRIBUTIONS**

---

This newsletter is intended for volunteers and friends of the Museum. It is confined to local history, the background to items in the museum collection and things which the editor thinks are interesting. I hope you also find them interesting!

Contributions are very welcome, and will add to the range and variety of topics covered. If you have a few minutes to type up something you're researched, or even to suggest a topic which would be of general interest, please email [info@tewkesburymuseum.org](mailto:info@tewkesburymuseum.org) .

The circulation of this email is to a list which has not been updated for a while. If you no longer want to be on that list, just reply to this email with 'UNSUBSCRIBE' in the subject box.

---