



## Hertfordshire Museums Newsletter June 2010

[www.hertsmuseums.org.uk](http://www.hertsmuseums.org.uk)

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**Museum of Technology, The Great War & WWII** – Rosie Hourihane writes . . . In March we had two visits from Woolgrove MLD School, we demonstrated the working Gramophones, Telephones and Scientific artefacts. Sarah, our Learning Links teacher partner, took the completed “Old & New Comparing Technology” loan boxes with her, to continue the topic (Britain since 1948) in her classroom setting. In May Ken & Rosie visited Woolgrove School with the draft Timeline and the first draft of filmed Gramophones, (Learning Links grant) Sarah was extremely pleased with the Timeline and Ken is going to train Sarah in how to “personalise” it to fit in with her class. She kept the draft demos of the gramophones and will be showing them on her white board, the class has just acquired their first computers so its early days in the use of E2BN. The technology box was returned with very good feedback, the items were mainly used in Role Play and comparing size and weight. Rosie has conducted two more Reminiscence sessions and the loan boxes have been used by a local Quantum Care home. The museum opened for one evening during the Museums at Night weekend, we advertised in the local paper and used the advertising material provided by Culture 24, we provided bucks fizz, soft drinks, and nibbles, played our old 78rpm records, and demonstrated our working artefacts, the event was well attended by people who hadn't visited the museum before, our local MP and his wife popped in and we have received some good feedback. We have been given a large donation of early technology, including lots of ephemera, from Nortel, a company who specialised in telephony and telegraphy and all things associated, all of this has been itemised and added to Adlib. Rosie had dialog with Simon Greenish director of Bletchley Park, about the possibility of a short term loan of an Enigma Machine, hopefully to coincide with HODS. Apparently they now cost £60,000.00 so no hope of us getting one. Further to our conversation, Simon has confirmed that he will be happy to allow us the loan of an Enigma Machine, but only if our security is up to his standards. The demonstrations of our working Gramophones have been put onto E2BN, telephones are next on the list. The BBC got in touch with the museum after seeing our collection of Office Equipment on the web; consequently the museum is going to be part of a new programme called “British at Work”

**Royston & District Museum & Art Gallery** - Carole Kaszak, Curator writes . . .

The museum has recently had the Myths & Legends exhibition from Stevenage Museum, and Hertfordshire Oddities and Curiosities (HALS) on display both of which have received a lot of

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interest. The exhibition which follows is 'Village Penny Posts', which has been assembled by the Royston section of the North Herts Stamp Club. Based on the deliveries from Royston to the surrounding villages in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it incorporates the collection of stamps and postage ephemera bequeathed to the museum by Brian Turnpenny and runs from Sat. June 13<sup>th</sup> – Sunday August 8<sup>th</sup>. There have been several school visits for costume sessions and special group bookings to see the Royston Tapestry, with visitor numbers remaining steady. The Friends of the Museum held a Quiz Night which was well attended and raised over £400 for the museum and the Round Table donated £300 in support of the Royston Time Trackers young archaeology group. The Reminiscence boxes project is progressing rapidly now; there has been a good response from the public for what the museum is trying to achieve and a recent impromptu trial run for the Frank Letts Blind Fellowship was enjoyed by everyone, even receiving praise from the local press.

**Three Rivers Museum of Local History, Rickmansworth** – Alan Jamieson, Education Officer writes . . . The Museum is based in Basing House, an 18th century mansion.. The history of the famous house, 'Basing House' has now been published and is available to purchasers. Fact sheets (free to visitors) on old buildings in Rickmansworth have also been recently published. The Museum's education policy and programmes have been radically changed: this has led to re-awakened interest from local schools who have visited or booked for visits in the autumn. Two resource boxes are being prepared for an autumn launch: they are on Victorian Toys and World War II and Rickmansworth.

**Shaw's Corner, Ayot St Lawrence (National Trust)** - Ellen Dempster, Property Manager, Bedfordshire & Hertfordshire Properties writes . . . Shaw's Corner is the arts and crafts influenced home of Bernard Shaw. It is currently a time of real excitement here. With a grant from its American Alumni Association the London School of Economics is currently cataloguing and digitising Shaw's huge collection of photographs, many of which he took. Shaw's are putting together an exhibition of some these photos to be shown at the Palladian Church in Ayot St Lawrence in July to coincide with the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the National Trust holding performances of Shaw's plays here. We are also currently working with the University of Hertfordshire to appoint a PhD student who will be helping us to research the background and context of Shaw's art and personal belongings. We are beginning to re-introduce the vegetable patch in the garden so that we can tell more of the story of Shaw as a vegetarian. We are also considering how we can improve visitor facilities here to show more of Shaw's book collection and devote more space and attention to his work. We are looking forward to having Michael Friends Theatre Company here to perform 'You Never Can Tell' and 'Widowers Houses' this summer. We are mostly run by volunteers so that is another important aspect of our work. Bernard Shaw's vision when he left the house to the National Trust was a living shrine rather than a dead museum and that remains our purpose.

**Stotfold Mill, Stotfold, Beds** – Paul Redwood, Secretary writes . . . The last month has been hectic with our major fundraising event the Steam Fair and Country Show. Whilst the weather was bad on Saturday we still had 7000+ people through the door. Our "crowning glory" is that we (all the volunteers) have been awarded The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service the MBE for volunteer groups. This award recognises the huge amount of time that individuals have put in to restore the Mill to working condition.

Getting back to the real challenges means that we are now focussing on four main themes for the year (some may take longer):

1. *Archive* - Phase 2 the primary source material - cataloguing is underway
2. *Volunteer Strategy* - looking at new ways to increase our group and reduce the average age.
3. *Sustainable Development* - income, exhibits, repeat visitors etc
4. *Mill Leat* - repairs to the banks and sluice gate

**Potters Bar Museum** – Arnold Davey, Honorary Curator, writes . . . The exhibition celebrating the centenary of the Guides has proved very popular and we have had to arrange nine evening openings to accommodate parties from local Guide groups and some not so local. I understand that after we take the exhibition down at the end of this month the Guides (who designed and built it) are moving it to another venue for the rest of the year. Following that, the next exhibition will be on the Wars of the Roses, chosen to boost sales of Brian Warren's recent book which re-appraises the conventional accounts of the Battle of Barnet (1471). Brian's book has proved a little controversial, as it was intended to be. In writing the exhibition I have referred to eight different histories and found alarming discrepancies between them over dates, although most agree on the year that certain events took place. With no progress on getting a lease out of Hertsmere, I fear our Provisional Accreditation will now lapse.

**Tring & District Local History & Museum Society – Tring Local History Museum** – George Turner, Honorary Curator writes . . . Again, not a lot to report on the progress at The Tring Local History Museum. We await the delivery of text panels which are holding back the final phases of opening the museum. Progress is painfully slow, we have had several meetings with Dacorum Heritage Trust to make arrangements for the safe transport and installation of artefacts from Berkhamsted to Tring. Meanwhile, at the suggestion of Libby Finney, we have fixed 15<sup>th</sup> September as a "finish setting up date" (and perhaps official opening) but we hope to have a "soft" opening before that.

**Hertfordshire Fire Museum, Watford** – Roger Middleton writes . . . museum staff are still working on the finer details to complete the display in the Museum. This year the Museum, which is based at Watford Fire Station, Lower High Street, Watford is holding Open Days on 3 July, 7 August and 4 September, between 1pm and 4pm. Roger requests that if any of the other museum personnel visit the Herts Fire Museum, that they should please make themselves known to the Fire Museum staff.

**Stevenage Museum** – Ruth Stratton, Curator, writes . . . Stevenage Museum has a new Curator. Ruth Stratton started in March, the post having been vacant since August 2009. Ruth was formerly Assistant Curator at Hertford Museum. 'On the Box', a new exhibition on Children's Television programmes from 1950 onwards, opens on 3rd July and runs until the end of October when there will be an exhibition on Witchcraft.

**The British Schools Museum** – Fiona Dodwell, Curator, writes . . . The last two months have been very busy with an increase in visitor figures. The total audience figures for May are 1921 which is the best for that month that we have achieved! The increase is spread over all categories adults, children and schools. A lot of effort has gone into achieve this with extra group visits, lunchtime talks and special events.

#### **Some Highlights:**

- A Music Hall evening held in April at the Town Hall as part of our 200 years celebrations raised over £1,000.
- 188 Past Pupil's attended a reunion in early May! A very long day with lots of new information gained about the schools. Identifying people in class photographs proved to be so popular that we ran out of room and had to re-locate to a larger space. The oral history team were also working very hard with some fascinating memories including those of a lady who started at the school in 1918. Tours of the site were very popular with people trying to work out where they used to sit. All over the site school friends were meeting up and exchanging recollections. There will be another reunion next year but on a smaller scale!

- Our May Day Celebration was also very popular with 200 visitors.
- 'Discover what life was like for Victorian children' – half term activity

### **A selection of forthcoming events**

- Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> July - Teddy Bears' Picnic
- 24<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> September – UK Schoolroom Museum Conference

There are many more events and talks please see our website for details

[www.hitchinbritishschools.org.uk](http://www.hitchinbritishschools.org.uk)

Due to the increasing visitor numbers we are going to open on Wednesdays each week during the summer school holiday period in addition to our normal opening hours.

**Grants** - We have been awarded £29,000 from Biffa for new storage heaters, re-wiring and improved signage around the site. The Friends are providing the third party funding required for this.

**Welwyn Hatfield Museums Service** – Jenny Oxley, Curator, writes . . . The kitchen in cottage no. 6 at Mill Green Mill & Museum has now been fully renovated. The space is now bigger so that we can accommodate larger groups for activities and education visits, as well as serving our cream teas during the Summer. In Gallery 3 we have just opened a new exhibition, "Brave New Vision" an exhibition about the foundation and early years of Welwyn Garden City, to tie -in with the 90th birthday of the town. Two other displays linked to the 90th birthday are planned for later in the year at Campus West and the library in Welwyn Garden City. We are busy working on the Beatrix Potter exhibition featuring loans from the British Museum and the V&A of original Beatrix Potter drawings. We've recently loaned out collections objects to Woolmer Green Parish Council and Bishops Hatfield School for their summer events. The Modes User Group are currently working on getting our collections database online for us. The council's planning department have provisionally agreed to the citing of three new blue plaques in the district: 14 Parkway, WGC (Studio Lisa), 10 Parkway, WGC (Walter Summers) and New Court, Woolmer Green (Henry Macdonald), which we hope to install later in the year. We have contributed to the De Havilland project being undertaken by the University of Hertfordshire, providing images and text for their heritage trail which will lead visitors around the de Havilland campus site in Hatfield and will be taking collections objects and photographs along to their exhibition afternoon at the university on the 24th June. We are increasing the number of events we are putting on at Welwyn Roman Baths this Summer, including a picnic event on the 20th June, a Roman Food and Wine Day on the 25th July and children's activities for the Festival of Archaeology in July / August.

**St Albans Organ Theatre** – John Miller reports . . . the number of Sunday visitors had been down and there had been a water leak in the roof which had caused damage to the theatre organ – the damage to the instrument had now been repaired and was covered by the insurance. The roof had been repaired first and then work had been carried out to rebuild a piano. Concerts were doing well & some had silent movie accompaniments. On Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> June Keith Beckingham – a top man on Hammond organs was performing. Details of future concerts can be found at <http://www.stalbansorgantheatre.org.uk/site/frame.html>

**De Havilland Aircraft Heritage Centre** – Ralph Steiner reports . . . on Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> June 2010 the Centre will host another celebration signing event – this event will be celebrating the 70th Anniversary of the first flight of the DH98 Mosquito at the de Havilland Aircraft Heritage Centre and there will be over 20 Pilots & Navigators attending each day who flew the MOSQUITO during WW2, and they will be meeting the public. Two marquees have been booked to host the event. For further details please see website below <http://www.dehavillandmuseum.co.uk/June2010.html>

**Apsley Paper Trail, Frogmore Mill** – Dave Bellamy reports . . . the Mill had a burglary recently which resulted in 13 laptops being stolen – the burglar gave himself up and staff are now dealing with the insurance claim to replace the laptops. The next event at the Mill will be held on Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> June and will be a Craft Fayre hosting 45 craft stalls. The Mill was awarded Highly Commended last year for its Big Draw event – this year the event will be based around the world's largest envelope – this measures approximately 28 feet x 36 feet and has been offered to Frogmore Mill by Stanley Gibbons. It is hoped to use this envelope for publicity for the Big Draw which takes place in October 2010 & the publicity will also involve The Royal Mail. Other news – an application has been made to The National Archive for a grant for funding and school group visits have increased recently.

**St Albans South Signal Box** – John Webb, Publicity Officer, reports . . . volunteers from the signal box attended the Retro 50s & 60s Herts event at Hertfordshire Archives & Local Studies, County Hall on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> May 2010. Two signals and other memorabilia were taken along and around 300 people were spoken to on the day – this was an excellent publicity opportunity on the east side of Herts where the St Albans South Signal Box is less well known. There is no indication yet whether people visiting the HALS event will venture across to visit the Signal Box. The Sunday open afternoons have been quiet recently but out of hours visits from parties visiting in the evenings have increased and are averaging one per week. This year it is hoped to exceed the 2,000 visitors last year. Activities include maintenance of the Box – paintwork, installation of new computer simulator with coloured light signals; cataloguing of all items in the Box and formal procedures in place for open days including the installation of a brown tourist sign at the end of the road by Herts Highways. John also reported that he has been appointed a trustee of the Signal Box for the next three years.

**East Herts Council** – Andrew Holley, Heritage Officer reports . . .

**Bishop's Stortford Museum** - Discussions are continuing between the museum and the Town Council regarding a new off-site store to replace one of the existing stores which is due for demolition.

Recent exhibitions in the Thorleybourne Gallery have included final coursework from A Level Art students at Hockerill Anglo European College and Herts and Essex High School. The current exhibition is work by Year 3 Children from Northgate Primary School. The following exhibitions are scheduled for the rest of the summer and the autumn:

- The traditions, fashions and culture of pre-revolutionary China

This stunning exhibition investigates Chinese culture from birth, marriage and the role of the family and includes Chinese silk garments dating from the 1870s to the 1940s, special occasion silks and embroideries. The exhibition has been created in partnership with Epping Forest District Museum, Essex County Council, Saffron Walden Museum, the Warner Archive (Braintree District Council) and the Museums in Essex Committee.

- A Hayward Touring Southbank Exhibition of 35 vibrant lithographic prints by Henri Matisse

Henri Matisse's vibrant works are celebrated for their extraordinary richness and luminosity of colour. *Matisse: Drawing with Scissors*, features 35 lithographic prints of the famous cut-outs, produced in the last four years of his life, when the artist was confined to his bed, and includes many of his iconic images, such as *The Snail* and the *Blue Nudes*.

**Datchworth Museum** - The museum opened for the Open Gardens event in Datchworth on 30th May. The day as a whole was a great success, with just over £13,000 raised for good causes. Visitors enjoyed looking round a variety of different village gardens, admiring the scarecrows and flowerpot men around the village, and the museum had its busiest day of the year. Over the last 12 months the museum has welcomed groups from Guides, a local Records Group and the local school. The museum has have 919 artefacts - new additions include a silk handkerchief with a RAF badge on it from the 1940's, a handkerchief bought back from France in 1918 and a handmade lace veil dated 1917.

**Hertford Museum – Development** - The museum opened on to the public on 27th February 2010 and visitor numbers have been excellent to date. The museum still needs to raise about £18,000 towards the development project and has until August 2011 year to do this (which is when the development project officially finishes). Eleanor Payne, the Learning Officer, has been extremely busy welcoming local schools to the museum with special 'Teacher evenings' and free sessions. The feedback has been very positive and she has been taking bookings for the coming months. Bookings for the new meeting room have also really taken off with talks, events and meetings. The Country Market that used to be in Castle Hall has now moved over to the museum on a Friday (as Castle Hall is being refurbished) which brings in new audiences to the museum.

#### Exhibitions

- 'Biorhythm' An exhibition of works by Elspeth Kemp, 12<sup>th</sup> June – 17<sup>th</sup> July
- 'Another time, another place', an exhibition of landscape paintings capturing images and memories from across Hertfordshire and worldwide by Cathy Smale, 24<sup>th</sup> July - 25<sup>th</sup> September
- Children's TV programmes, 9<sup>th</sup> October - 31<sup>st</sup> December

#### Events

The Easter Holiday events were very really well received and the museum participated in Museums at Night on 15<sup>th</sup> May. Suzie Eustace from the Henry Moore Foundation gave a talk at the museum on 19<sup>th</sup> May about Henry Moore. The Friends of Hertford Museum organised a 'Scarecrow Trail' in the town centre to raise funds for the museum's development project during half-term. There are lots of fun events and activities planned for the summer holidays including a Hawaiian Flag Day, storytelling and puppetry and a birds of prey day. The museum is also offering cream teas in the museum garden on certain days.

**Much Hadham Forge Museum** - The Museum has now achieved Full Accreditation and will be working on the action points identified by the MLA. Birthday parties in the Jean Page Room are proving very successful at the museum and generating income for the museum. Future projects include:

- An exhibition about the Buntingford branch line called 'Hadham's Railway Past'
- Open Garden walks for St. Elizabeth's Centre in Perry Green
- A partnership project with the Henry Moore Foundation
- Roman archaeology project involving Hadham Ware kiln and villa sites
- Celebrating the museum's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary and the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the forge (both in 2011)

**Ware Museum** - The Trustees have received a reply from the V&A Museum regarding the loan of the Great Bed of Ware. The key abstract is as follows: 'The loan of The Great Bed of Ware has been agreed in principle by our Board of Trustees'. The use of the words 'in principle' is because the V&A will inspect the premises before delivery and they will advise and assist in any fine tuning of standards, if required. The Heritage Lottery Fund has replied to Ware Museum's Pre Assessment Form. The Trustees are in the process of seeking funding for the project. The period of the loan has been requested for 2012 and the proposal to have a copy made of a post of The Bed is still in hand. The AGM of the Ware Museum was held at the Ware Priory on the 9th June. Among other items, the help and assistance given by Andrew Holley and Sue Butler towards obtaining V&A approval of the loan of The Bed was emphasised and greatly appreciated. The speaker who had agreed to give a talk following the AGM was unfortunately unable to attend. Barry Sapsford, President of the Trustees, gave an illuminating talk on his childhood reminiscences in Ware during WW2. An exhibition about William Allen & Daniel Hanbury (the founders of Allen & Hanbury's, now part of GlaxoSmithKline) was held in the spring. This was part of the Local Heroes project, a nationwide programme celebrating local scientific heroes funded by the Royal Society. The current exhibition is about the Ware Lido. This will be followed 'All Creatures Great and Small' in July and the Local Heroes 2 in September.