

# Herts Museums Newsletter

## Autumn 2011

### Events

**Dacorum Heritage Trust** - Through the Liaison Officer Gypsy Section of [Herts County Council](#) the Trust has visited the Long Marston and Traveller site and 3 families have agreed to record their memories and have their photos scanned for Our Dacorum. The recording will take place on Monday 3 October and will be transcribed and uploaded to the site alongside information about the traveller way of life.

**Mill Green Museum** - We held our annual Teddy Bears Fun Day on Wednesday 24 August, the event was very successful attracting over 300 visitors and raising £1,000 for the museum and earlier in August our Friends group ran their Summer Soiree with entertainment from Opera Interactive, again raising money to support the running of the museum.

**St Albans Signal Box** celebrated the unveiling of the National Railway Heritage Award given to us in December last year for the work on the box and grounds. The ceremony was carried out on 3 July by Lord Faulkner, Chairman of the Heritage Railway Association. A general celebration party was held on the day for our members and invited guests.

**First Garden City Museum, Letchworth** - Last month saw the Museum team don their straw boaters and dust off their bow ties for our Edwardian fete day. There were over 200 visitors who sampled the delights of the fair with traditional activities including a coconut shy, hoopla and a 'Name the Dog competition'.

**North Herts Museums Service, Letchworth** In April and May 2011, Letchworth Museum hosted the Eastern Region Textile Forum's travelling exhibition inspired by the work of Owen Jones. In partnership with the ERTF, we held textile workshops for both adults and children, which proved extremely popular, as did the Museums at Night event, also supported by the ERTF.

June saw the launch of a new book on the paintings, prints and drawings of William Ratcliffe in the museum's collection, written by Cultural Services Manager Ros Allwood, and containing many colour photographs. The book was partly funded through public subscription, and the photography was undertaken by a member of the local Camera Club who volunteered his time and expertise for us.

**North Herts Museums Service – Hitchin Museum** We had a Vikings and WWII Day this summer. Both were well attended and all who attended enjoyed themselves.

For the Viking day we had a local re-enactment group make camp outside the museum and show passers by Viking skills, weapons and games. Although some people seemed slightly intimidated and didn't stop to talk to the Vikings, those who did stayed for a long time, learnt new things and tried on Various outfits.

For the WWII day we had the usual mystery objects and spoke about the home front but we also had our museum intern speak about his great uncle who was an airman in the war. He showed visitors some of his uncle's pictures and possessions, including his flight log book and this really engaged visitors, especially those who remembered the war themselves.

**North Herts Archaeology** During August, North Herts Museums' Archaeology Officer worked with Norton Community Archaeology Group on the excavation of a site between Letchworth Garden City and Baldock suspected to be a henge. The five week project confirmed the identification and suggested that it is an unusually early example, dating from between 3000 and 2500 BC, to judge from the pottery, although we will be commissioning radiocarbon dates to confirm it. More information on the project is available through the

Group's blog at <http://nortoncommarch.wordpress.com>. For further information, contact Keith Fitzpatrick-Matthews, [keith.matthews@north-herts.gov.uk](mailto:keith.matthews@north-herts.gov.uk)



**Ware Museum** The replica of the Bed Post has proved to be a continuing attraction.

**Bushey Museum & Art Gallery** A new exhibition for Bushey Museum is the work of a local primary school, Little Reddings. This project is based on a National Gallery scheme, *Take One Picture*, in which schools across the country study one image from their collection and produce work which is subsequently displayed at the National Gallery. We chose a painting from Bushey Museum's collection by a local artist showing a former open air swimming pool. All classes in the school contributed work across the whole curriculum, including Design and Technology, PE/Dance and English. A grant of £500 from MLA financed this project.

**British Schools Museum, Hitchin** Bravo Mr Lancaster was a one act play by Tony Phillips, an actor and writer who was inspired by the story of Joseph Lancaster after a visit to the museum. The play was performed in our Lancasterian schoolroom to a packed audience. It was part of the Hitchin Festival programme along with a lunchtime talk on Seaside postcards from our collection. We held craft workshops and talks throughout the summer.

A film night will be held on Friday October 28; a selection of fascinating films depicting school life in early C20th plus several short Mitchell & Kenyon film extracts will be shown. There will be cinema-style refreshments with usherettes!

**Woburn Heritage Centre** - Graveyard Mapping. The graveyard behind the Heritage Centre has been "mapped" by volunteers from Santander throughout the summer. This was a very successful project, enjoyed by all, culminating in a small celebration with the church and all those who were involved in the project at its completion. We feel that this development will be very helpful to those who use the Heritage Centre for their family history projects.

**Hertford Museum-** We have been reviewing our education offer and this winter will be introducing drop in sessions for accompanied young visitors on Saturday afternoons to use our discovery bags. We have a programme of 6 demonstration sessions, led by textile workers and inspired by the museum collections on Saturday mornings and also two practical silk painting workshops one Saturday. There will be 2 talks/ Q&A sessions on photography one to be held on a weekday evening, one on a Saturday. For details click [here](#)

**Three Rivers Museum** marked the Royal Wedding with a small exhibition of bridal wear and related artefacts kindly loaned by Trust members; it was a popular display, not least because we featured a life-size cardboard cut-out of William and Kate beside which several visitors posed for photographs.

## Learning

**Dacorum Heritage Trust:** The Trusts ECAT 'Travel and Transport' box has been borrowed by the Berkhamsted Sure Start Centre and will be piloted in all centres in Dacorum before being returned to the Trust. Each centre will take photographs of how the box is used in each centres along with completing evaluation forms about the box and suggestion for how the resource can be improved.

The Trust has created 2 Key Stage 3 and 4 programmes which will be piloted in the new

academic year. Posters and flyers have been designed and will be distributed to all the Trusts secondary school contacts in September.

**St Albans Signal Box** – We were visited by Emma Steed, with assistance from Jane Munns, regarding interaction with local schools – unfortunately we have not been successful so far but the search continues.

**First Garden City Museum, Letchworth** - Over the past month we have been working in partnership with our local Children’s Centres developing drop-in sessions for their families at the Museum.

This month sees the team working with the Broadway Cinema to develop tours and talks in preparation for the Heritage Open Days.

**Ware Museum** is awaiting the outcome of HLF bid. We have had some extremely useful meetings and discussions with teaching establishments helping our bid. The Learning and Outreach Consultant provided useful up to date information and has kept us on track.

**British Schools Museum, Hitchin** We piloted 3 toddler sessions aimed at the under-fives based on popular children’s books. There was very little take up and some of the children were too young, babies rather than toddlers so we will look at how we can develop this in the future.

**Woburn Heritage Centre** - We have produced a summer museum trail for the Heritage Centre. Entitled “Spider Trail”, it has proved very popular with adult and young visitors alike. We also produced several colouring and learning sheets which younger children have enjoyed. We plan to continue the trails after the school holidays, perhaps with some variations and modifications based on feedback.

**Hertford Museum** were delighted to take part in the 150 years celebration at local school Abel Smith School in Hertford at the end of the summer term. Eleanor Payne, Learning Officer spent all day in school doing handling sessions for all classes, from reception to Year 6. This autumn we will be reviewing our schools service with local partner teachers to ensure it remains relevant to their curriculum. We are also pleased to see the increase in numbers of visits to the museum from pre school groups; they have focused on a number of topics such as toys and the seaside.

**St Albans Museums** To commemorate the 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the birth of Charles Dickens (7 Feb 1812) and to coincide with Resident’s First Weekend in St Albans we are having a special afternoon with a Dickensian theme on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> Jan at the Museum of St Albans. Activities will include handling mystery objects and playing with toys from Dickens’ day and story telling by Dickens ( a re-enactor from Spectrum Drama)

## Trends /Indicators

**St Albans Signal Box** - Numbers perhaps more variable than last year. For example 15 on one open afternoon when St Albans Council were running “Larks in the Parks” at several locations, and 50 the following open afternoon! We shall have had the extended openings for Heritage Open Days before the HMG meeting; it will be interesting to see how numbers attending this year compare with previous years.

More groups coming on organised visits “Out of Hours”, although these tend to be small groups of a dozen or so people.

**North Herts Museums Service, Letchworth** - Visitor numbers this summer have been slightly down, although as the exhibition last year was about dinosaurs (always very popular), and there was no main gallery summer exhibition this year at Letchworth Museum, the figures were actually very good, particularly on days when we had special events.

**Bushey Museum & Art Gallery** Due to the fact that one of our venues, Reveley Lodge, has been closed due to building work our numbers of visiting children have been lower than usual. It is hoped Reveley Lodge will be available later this term.

**Woburn Heritage Centre** Numbers visiting the museum this summer have been healthy. We put a note in the local school’s newsletter at the end of term about the museum and the

spider trail and this has encouraged more children to visit us. We have also noticed that families with children stay longer as their visit is more focussed. We had wheelchair using residents of a local care home visit us with their carers – they enjoyed the trail so much, that they spread the word to their friends and another group came at a later date!

**British Schools Museum, Hitchin** - We opened on Wednesdays and Fridays in addition to our normal opening during the School holidays and Wednesday openings proved to very popular especially with Grandparents and Grandchildren. The trend of drop-in visitors is generally down but group bookings are up.

**St Albans Museums** - School numbers have slipped a bit in the last year. We suspect that the cost of coaches is a large factor in this

### **Ideas for new projects that you would like to share .....**

**Dacorum Heritage Trust** - Heritage Writing Group – The Trust is putting together an application to the Clore Literary and Poetry Award for an under 19 Heritage inspired writing group based inspired by local people and stories.

**Dacorum Emergency Night Shelter (DENS)** – Following the successful photography project with DENS last year the Trust is investigating running a similar project this year. Rather than a 6 week project the Trust is proposing an afternoon workshop (3 hours) which will include an object handling workshop, photography tips, and time for recording stories after photographs have been taken.

**Ware Museums** are thinking about a project to commemorate 400 years of The New River (1603-1613)

**British Schools Museum, Hitchin** - As a result of Judith Carruther’s training I am developing a resource for children and families who will be able to borrow a school satchel which has a Victorian knitted doll boy or girl and some activities that will help the children engage with the museum. So far I have developed the satchels for the younger age group.

**Hertford Museum** are still interested in developing the Seed Warehouse as a joint facility and have ideas around the concept of an Eco or sustainability centre and would love to hear from anyone else who is thinking about these sorts of issues and how they can link to NH, geology and archaeology collections.

We are in the process of buying MODES XML and linking our images to data for the first time

### **We did this and it worked really well .....**

**Mill Green Museum** - We have just received confirmation that we have been successful in retaining our Soil Association Organic status for the wholemeal organic flour we mill at Mill Green Mill & Museum, after undergoing their recent inspection.

**Ware Museum** We will tell you if we are successful on our HLF bid. 16 talks on our project have stimulated interest on museum management as well as our aims and objectives.

**Woburn Heritage Centre** - We are really pleased with the success of our summer museum trails. We believe we have made the museum more fun and interesting – and most appropriately, given the age of our building, we have big hairy spiders hanging around! The volunteer sitters have also remarked on how much fun their sessions have been throughout the summer.

### **Training**

**Dacorum Heritage Trust** – Isobel Aptaker and Nina Bevan both attended Arts Award Training in Cambridge funded with Renaissance funding through the East of England's Effective Museums programme in July – The Trust is mentoring 4 young people through the Bronze programme. It is hoped that the project will go in for moderation along with portfolios in September.

‘Our Dacorum’ training for all Library staff was organised by the Local Studies Librarian as well as new contributors and editors

**Mill Green Museum** - Caroline Rawle has recently completed training so that she is licensed so that we can serve and sell alcohol on our property at our events.

**Ware Museum** - Ware Museum are working with CVS to develop ways to engage with new audiences. We are also planning to provide opportunities for visitors during 2012, the Olympic year. A progress meeting is planned for the end of September.

**North Herts Museums Service** Thanks to an HLF Grant we offered a week long training course for textile students from GCSE to graduate level on the construction of corsets. Ian Chipperfield worked with 7 students for 5 days. During this time they made 7 corsets for our Education/outreach programme. The students have also gained a skills portfolio. The project has also produced an 8 panel exhibition.

**British Schools Museum, Hitchin** attended and hosted a session for the Museums as Learning Spaces follow up project on developing family/children's trails which was led by Judith Caruthers. Judith also visited for a one to one session to advise on how to implement the ideas and put them into practice within our museum.

The curator attended a training session on eHive workshop; a web based collection management system and will feed back to the next meeting of HMG. For details please click [here](#)

**Hertford Museum** One volunteer has benefited from ICON training on glass and ceramic care held at the British Museum. The curator has attended a legacy giving seminar at St Albans CVS and Libby Finney's excellent Emergency Planning for flood seminar for HMG. AIM has helped with 80% grants towards travel and seminar fees. Eleanor Payne is attending the GEM conference with the last part of the training budget allocated by HLF as part of the development project and Libby Finney has delivered a days training for 4 volunteers and 3 staff on condition reporting for Ethnography collections.

## Successful grant applications

**Ware Museum** are awaiting HLF consideration of their bid for The Great Bed of Ware.

**North Herts Museums Service** HLF small grant for widening access to our corset collection. Providing training for Textile students and an exhibition plus 7 replica corsets for display.

**British Schools Museum, Hitchin** The sampler project is nearing completion with the drawer cabinet displaying examples of school needlework from our collection and two samplers, one of which is by Martha Stapleton, a pupil at Hitchin British schools. 15 other samplers have gone to the conservator. A training day at the end of August was given by the conservator to show the volunteers how to mount the samplers prior to display. They will be on display from mid October. Funding for the project came from a grant from Colchester and Ipswich Museums Service funded by Renaissance East, our 'sponsor a sampler' campaign and a grant from the AIM Pilgrim Trust Conservation scheme.

**Mill Green Museum** - We are currently working to complete our Sporting Heroes project, for which we received £10k from the MLA Strategic Priorities Fund last year. The project aims to highlight past sporting achievement in our district and our hopes for the future including the Olympics in 2012. The project includes producing an exhibition, banners and materials for an outreach session with schools and a DVD made in partnership with the University of Hertfordshire, as well as running sports themed activities. We aim to finish the project by the end of this financial year.

*The Roman Buildings Trust* has kindly donated to the museum service the equipment and software to create an audio tour for Welwyn Roman Baths to help visitors understand and be able to interpret the archaeological remains more effectively.

**Hertford Museum** have submitted a pre-application for an Olympic legacy project and would welcome other partners – Welwyn and Hatfield are already involved. They wish to submit in the next 3 weeks, a substantial part of £50k would be focussed on education work, events and training. The submission awaits start of school terms and closer liaison with them

## New funding sources or grants

**Dacorum Heritage Trust** - The Trust is exploring an application to the Garfield Weston Foundation for assistance with accessioning and making accessible areas of the Ovaltine collection. <http://www.garfieldweston.org/>

**Ware Museum** - Nat. West Community Force may apply to this for funding for the Great Bed project click [here](#) for further information. Please note that applications are about to close for 2011 but it might be worth considering for another year.

**British Schools Museum, Hitchin** - For the last few months the Museum Development Team have been hard at work putting on an application for the Heritage Lottery Fund, Phase 1. We hope to submit this in October 2011.

**Hertford Museum** are planning to submit conservation requests to AIM and Woodmansterne for Ethnography and paintings

## Useful websites

A suggestion from Sian at **Letchworth Museum** <http://www.picnik.com/> - if you don't have photo editing software, this is free. Just upload the image you want to edit, edit it, and save the edited version back to your computer.

## Resources and suppliers

Click [here](#) for a fantastic folding large trolley on wheels for Travel and Transport box from Amazon, suggested by Isobel at DHT.

Or try these recommendations from Beth at **First Garden City Museum** .....Beth writes I'm sure everyone will have visited these before but if you have some time to dig about for objects then the following places have been useful for me:

- The Fleetville Vintage Emporium, Hatfield Road, St.Albans AL1 4TB – click [here](#) for website
- Swan Antiques Centre, London Road, Boxmoor, Hemel Hempstead, HP1 2RA
- Heritage Antiques, Castle Road, Berkhamsted, HP4 2DW – click [here](#) for website

I know people's time is short but these are fun places to rummage at the weekends and all of them are close to a coffee shop!

**North Herts Museums Service** suggest David Cadle 01905 454173 and Adrian Warrell 01253 781215 .Between them they can cover any period for holiday or education sessions and can make most things from costume to repro armour/ WW2 toys. Etc have worked for us at North Herts Museums and also Stevenage and First Garden City Museum

**Hertford Museum** have loads of Education supplies coming in – Eleanor Payne has been trawling sites and could help with advice. Delighted with the new 'Just in case' boxes which are now available on the PEL website. Click [here](#) for details.

## Welcome to .....

Helen Giles (formerly Curator at Hertford Museum) is now Heritage and Museums Officer at Hertsmere Borough Council (three days per week) working with 3 museums in the Borough, Bushey Museum and Art Gallery, Elstree and Borehamwood and Potters Bar Museum.

There are exciting and challenging times ahead for Hertsmere Museums and Helen is looking forward to working with and supporting the volunteers at these museums. Helen Giles can be contacted on: 020 8207 7801, [helen.giles@hertsmere.gov.uk](mailto:helen.giles@hertsmere.gov.uk).

## AOB

**St Albans Signal Box** - Safety: Recently visited by English Heritage regarding safety during the Heritage Open Days in September. As a result of advice given we now have an "Attendance Register" whereby each volunteer signs in when attending the site. The Register includes all site safety information that volunteers need to know for their immediate reference. Both general safety risk assessment and our fire risk assessment have been

updated in the light of our two years of regular public opening.

**First Garden City Museum, Letchworth** - The Museum is currently moving towards free admission which will be in place by October this year.

**British Schools Museum, Hitchin** We now have a Facebook page and gathering 'I like' comments. Still not many comments logged but helpful as we are redeveloping our website with a new domain name.