

Museum *Update*

March 2007

Winter 2006/07: Director's round-up

There has been a real esprit de corps in the Museum this winter amongst the staff and volunteers. We have survived a 29-hour power cut during the terrible January gales; a stoppage of water for a couple of days, due to problems encountered during the improvement of the water services; and the heaviest snow fall for ten years, which prevented schools and most staff and volunteers from coming to the Museum. Everyone has pulled together to survive the arctic and Spartan conditions (!) – even to the extent of sourcing quantities of hot water for tea from the fully functional College next door!



The Spartan conditions this winter – the Director prepares to fight for her warm coffee . . .

“A Rolls Royce of building projects”

It has been a historic winter, too, as we have seen the completion and initial use of the Mid-Site Toilets – *aka* the Bakerloos. The Building Inspector from Chiltern District Council described the building as “a Rolls Royce of building projects” – which is an enormous tribute to all those who constructed the building and worked on the fit-out. In addition to all this, John Hyde-Trutch, Robin Mitchener and the building volunteers have also spent the winter engaged in upgrading the Museum’s water services, so that these will be capable of supporting all our future projects in the Village Green area.

Other incredible feats include the planting of about 1,300 hedgerow plants down the spine road and along the track where the Maple Cross building is stored, as well as the new hedging work that has taken place on the hedge adjacent to the prefab. Conway Rowland’s volunteers all learnt new skills to carry out this work, and it has been much admired by visitors, staff and volunteers alike. At last, the Museum car park and site roads have also been repaired, thanks to the generosity of a number of donors, contractors and suppliers.

In the farm over the winter, volunteers Keith Baggeley and John Smithson have set about the task of restoring the 1940s Ransome’s Threshing Machine in Hill Farm Barn, joined by Chris English. This work has been generously supported by a Sustainable Development Fund grant from the Chiltern Conservation Board. The project team have done a fantastic job – and now that the renovations have been completed, the painting work will continue over the summer, with the intention of providing working demonstrations in the future.

Traditional working practices demonstrated

Soon, you will see farm volunteers sporting new 1940s working clothes, as they carry out tasks around the farm – again, courtesy of a grant from the Chilterns Conservation Board. Conway Rowland has produced an excellent farm development plan, outlining exciting changes to the historic farm buildings and surrounding rural environment to create a working traditional Chilterns farmstead incorporating demonstrations of traditional farming practices. Work has started on the restoration of farm artefacts – especially the horse-drawn implements, with a view to these being used by Sovereign in the future.

A busy programme for every weekend

Looking forward to the new season, this year we hope to attract new visitors with a busy programme for every weekend, to include demonstrations, activities and living history, as well as our popular major events. We are extremely grateful to our volunteers, supporters and external organisations, who are generously providing their time and expertise to offer our visitors such a wonderful experience, every weekend of the season. We will continue to offer family activities during holiday periods, too.

New sponsors for our events

We welcome new Events Officer, Paul Hannon, who began work at the end of November last year, as he takes charge of the events programme for this year. We are delighted that, this year, we have a number of new sponsors for our events. These include local estate agents, who are supporting the Museum with road-side signs in different areas for events and other Museum projects. I would particularly like to thank Ted Cooper and other office volunteers for their invaluable assistance and tireless efforts to seek such sponsorship on our behalf. This fantastic support from the local community will do much to raise the Museum's profile, and provide invaluable additional marketing opportunities. We will also have a new events leaflet this year, sponsored by Bucks Building Society, and this sponsorship will allow a small number of colour leaflets to be distributed

locally, to raise awareness of our event programme. I am very grateful to Sue Hutcheson for giving considerable time and effort to sourcing sponsorship for this new venture, and to marketing and design company Montage, who have provided the design work for this leaflet.

“Soon, you will see farm volunteers sporting new 1940s working clothes, as they carry out tasks around the farm”

We are pleased to welcome new external events organiser Oakleigh Event Management, who are providing a new Craft and Country Show and a Christmas Craft Fair this year, and MTS Events who will be bringing the Noddy and Friends Show back to the Museum in August.

New education programmes

Education and lifelong learning continue to develop, with increased numbers of schools taking advantage of the exciting new education programmes on offer, including winter special events and a new range of workshops for Key Stage 3 (ages 11-14) and Foundation Stage (preschool) children. We have also increased the range of craft courses for adults, this year, with exciting opportunities to learn new skills. In addition, we are hoping to provide further traditional building skills courses, in association with the Chilterns Conservation Board and the Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College, later this year.

This year will bring many challenges – and we need the invaluable support of our volunteers, Friends and supporters more than ever. Your loyalty and commitment to the Museum is vital to all that we do, and makes possible our ground-breaking and often unique achievements in all aspects of our historic buildings and site. Thank you all so much for what you do for the Museum, and I wish us all a prosperous and exciting 2007 season.

Sue Shave, Museum Director

Acknowledgements

The Museum is very grateful to the following sponsors, donors and suppliers for their generosity and support.

Repair of site roads and car park

GE Healthcare

Private donation

Agripower

O'Hara's

Bardon Aggregates



Agripower resurfacing the car park in February

Chilterns Conservation Board Sustainable Development Fund

Threshing machine restoration £1,500

1940s farm clothes £1,000

Prefab oral history project £350

Museum leaflets and education leaflet

GE Healthcare

Events leaflet

Bucks Building Society

Montage



Sharp-eyed readers will spot Verena helping Conway hedge-laying

Anonymous donation

(via the Friends of the Museum)

£5,000 plus Gift Aid for:

buildings and artefacts

farm estate and gardens

computers and audio visual

catering

Education development

Pam and David Lindsey

£140

Funds update

Caversham £13,000

Astleham £5,000

Farm Equipment Fund £2,740



Conway models this season's new look . . .

Expanding Ted's experience

Ted is beginning to shape up into an excellent worker of sheep. He's a bit too gentle and too quick to back off if a ewe stamps her foot or takes a run at him, but he's young and this is not unusual. It was clear to me that he needed to broaden his horizons, and rather than working the same few Oxford ewes he had been on since he was five months old, I needed to get him on a decent flock. Working a flock requires a completely different style of operation, as the dog needs to work at the sides and corners to keep the larger number together, otherwise they will drift and spread out.

Bullsland farm

Adjacent to the rear of Chiltern Open Air Museum is Bullsland Farm. This has been farmed as a sheep operation for as long as I can remember, and currently Peter Bailey has a flock of 500 or so crossbred breeding ewes and Suffolk store lambs on the rolling hillsides. Peter also has a two-year-old working collie, Jess – who was, when last I saw her, a bit of a handful. Peter bought her at an auction to take over from his old faithful Floss. I gave Jess a few lessons last year, but did wonder if she would ever make a useful dog, as she had a habit of dive-bombing the sheep at every chance.

I rang Peter, and he seemed pleased to hear from me, and was only too keen for me to bring Ted for a training session on his flock. He told me that Jess was much improved, and was being used as a working dog, but that her old habit was still a problem. I enjoy a challenge – and to try and cure Jess would, without doubt, be a challenge and a half. The longer a problem is left, the more difficult it is to eradicate; Jess was now two and I wondered if it would be possible to break her of the habit of nipping the corner ewe as she went round the flock.

Ted was off – he wanted action

We met at the agreed time, and I let out my three dogs, confident that they would behave – but Ted was off; once he saw the flock, it was too much, and he wanted action. I was surprised but pleased that he showed so much interest, and I soon had him under control. It was a pleasure to see him working different sheep and larger numbers, and he was doing extremely well, now beginning to take his flanking commands and balancing the sheep to me. I did a little driving work along the hedge, so he began to work in front of me without me being visible; this was a major step forward, as it showed a boost in his confidence.

We then gave Jess a chance to show her improvement, and I could see she was now stopping when asked (mostly), and gathering the flock from a distance. She still, however, took the opportunity to grab the back end of a sheep when she could. Peter and I worked on keeping her close by and flanking her wide, then stopping her before she could cut in – not easy with a little rocket like Jess. My feeling was that Peter, in using Jess as his main work dog, was often too far away to correct her misdemeanours. We decided on a course of action, and left the training there.



Sheep – not as placid as you'd imagine

Now, Peter needed a hand with a sheep problem, and this was a chance to give my older dogs a run. He had a ewe with 'New

Forest' – an eye complaint caused by a parasite which, although curable, will cause blindness. This particular ewe was in a flock of about a hundred, so I sent the dogs off, with the intention of getting the flock in the barn; unfortunately, a gap in the fence gave them an escape route. They all burst into the adjacent field, leaving the blind one bumping into everything in her path and now alone in the field – not what we wanted. Working a blind sheep with a dog is impossible, and it took several attempts involving all of us to get her back near the barn.

Sheep have very hard skulls

At this point, I will explain that sheep have very hard skulls – and, having been bowled over by our Oxford Down rams on several occasions, I speak from experience. A ewe, however, will not normally attack a person unless she has a lamb with her – and then it is normally just a stamp, and possibly a butt – so, I was fairly confident as she started to run towards me that I would grab her as she went past, as I was sure she was not attacking me. I had of course not taken into account the fact that she was almost blind, and instead of running past me she hit me fair and square in the unmentionables. I sailed through the air, and as I landed I heard Peter say, “Ooh – right in the crown jewels!”. Fortunately, I got up laughing, with no harm done – and it dawned on me that the ewe probably had no idea I was there; she was just running as fast as she could, anywhere.

Every Sunday over the next few weeks I paid a visit to Bullsland Farm, and the experience of working on a large flock was paying dividends. The fact that Ted has to cast out wider is a major advantage, and the further he goes the more sheep he sees. It makes him think, and you can see him doing it as he turns himself further out to gather the whole flock. He is now responding to his flanking commands, and I am starting to apply a few whistles, too.

When training a dog, there are times that are frustrating, as you seem to be getting nowhere. At other times, the dog seems to take a leap forward; now, in his tenth month, Ted seems to be at one of those points. We have really moved on, going from close-contact training to real working-at-a-distance, and under good control. I really think I have a champion here – but then I always think that! Time will tell.

“I had of course not taken into account the fact that she was almost blind, and instead of running past me she hit me fair and square in the unmentionables.”

The old ‘fight or flight’ situation

Ted still has a weakness, as I mentioned earlier, and it is just that he is a sensitive dog who is wary of sheep who want to have a go at him – and, believe me, some are very aggressive. I have spent a lot of time in the last couple of months building his confidence and encouraging him to face up to sheep that start to get a bit cheeky. Working in a corner definitely helps, with me close by for moral support and encouraging him to have a little go at them. Some dogs are quick to use their teeth and need to be discouraged from going too far; Ted is the opposite – so gentle that I won’t have to worry about him damaging the sheep. The problem remaining – and only too apparent, now – is at a distance, when he hasn’t got me by his side; up until now, he has turned tail when challenged, and we can’t have that happening for too long. Suddenly, I noticed a change in his approach. It’s the old ‘fight or flight’ situation – if he gets too close, then the cheeky one turns on him; he has now worked that out, so now he just lies down as soon as one starts to turn round on him, and it seems to be working; as soon as the dog takes the pressure off by stopping, then the sheep turns back to join the rest. The next stage is to get him to stop on his feet, and then to get him to take a step at a time towards any really stubborn ones, as it’s always down to a battle of wills.

Well that’s it for now; the next bit of excitement will be a visit to my friends Bob and Val – the shepherds in Northampton from whom I bought Ted. They still have his brother Cap and sister Mint – and apparently Mint is something special, so I am looking forward to comparing Ted, and getting a view on him from Val who has competed on One Man and His Dog, and in 2006 was a judge at the English National Sheepdog Trials. I am sure Bob will have his opinion as well, and he has won just about every sheepdog trial in the country.

Steve Stone, Volunteer Shepherd

Library update: a touch of nostalgia . . .

Recently, an issue of the COAM newsletter for Autumn 1994 landed on my desk. Reading through it, I discovered an article I had written, trying to explain the workings of the Library. It was in the very early days of organising a Research Library for COAM, so the stock was quite small. Nevertheless, most of the systems used then are in place today – and hopefully still work reasonably well!

Those were the days

In those days – that is from April 1993 until September 1998, when we moved to Astleham – the Library was housed in the tiny room opposite the kitchen in the Cabin. It also doubled up as the tea room for the farm and maintenance workers – and although, of course, their company was always much appreciated, it could get a wee bit crowded at times in such a limited space. As for the mud distributed so generously around the floor – particularly on wet days – how could I hope to create a dignified and suitably learned atmosphere? Just to add to my difficulties, towards the end of this period, as the move to Astleham drew nearer, the roof began to leak and a number of the journal holdings were ruined. Life certainly wasn't dull.

Despite these minor problems (did I say minor?), the Chiltern Society decided that the Library deserved supporting, and generously provided enough funds to purchase proper library furniture for our new location. It was a thrill, too, when last year – for the first time, and thanks to the generosity of the Friends of COAM – the Library was given a sum of money enabling us to buy a number of new books.

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“No longer a lone ranger”

Since moving into Astleham, the Library has grown considerably. The major change is that I am no longer a lone ranger! Jean Brown, Marina Long, Florence Hallam and Colin Mills have come to join me, and between them all form an excellent Library team. I am truly indebted to them for their continuing hard work and dedication.

Please remember, we are always delighted to help any visitors find a book, or try to discover the answer to any query. We now have a database with more than two thousand entries of articles, extracts, etc., including a number of reports, theses and similar items. Those entitled to borrow from the Library include all staff members, volunteers, Friends of COAM, and members of the Chiltern Society. Books can be borrowed for a maximum period of two months.

How to find your way around

To help find your way around the Library, I would like to go back to the 1994 article mentioned above, and repeat most of what I wrote then, although with some later differences.

Books are in classified order, and unless marked ‘R’ for reference only, are available for loan. There is a sequence of children’s books, both fiction and non-fiction, and these are prefixed with a ‘J’ for junior, followed by an ‘F’ for fiction, or a basic classification number for non-fiction. Please remember that any book marked with a capital ‘R’ or ‘JR’ means ‘for consultation within the Library only’.

There is a card catalogue, with sequences by author and subject number to detail the library holdings. There is also an alphabetical subject index to guide enquirers to the classification number for any particular subject.

The Dewey Decimal system

Dewey Decimal Classification is the system used to identify the subjects. This is the method most often employed in public libraries, so may already be familiar to some of you. For those who have not used it before, here is a brief description. Dewey divides all knowledge under ten main headings, which are numbered 000-999, always using three figures for the notation. The more zeros in a number the more general the subject, e.g.: 300 is Social Sciences; 500 is Natural Sciences; 600 is Applied Sciences; 700 is Arts and Architecture.

Within each general heading, up to 99 subdivisions can be made, while still keeping to just three figures. However, should more detail be required, a decimal point can be added followed by a further figure. Only rarely would a second figure be needed. For example: 600 is Applied Science; 630 is Agriculture; 634.1 is Fruit Growing; 636.39 is Goats.

Well worth consulting

Journals are kept in alphabetical order of their titles. Mainly, we have to rely on the generosity of various donors to provide these, and consequently we have very few complete runs. However, there are some very useful titles which you may find it well worth consulting.

We also have a database of single items, such as journal articles and newspaper reports. These are kept in the 'Libinf' – the Library Information File. Larger items not suitable for the bookshelves, such as theses or reports, may be found in a file entitled 'RDF' – the Research Document File. These are classified using the Dewey System, and have an entry in the card catalogue. Both files can be searched on the computer by author, title, and keywords, and for the RDF there is also the classification number.

The best day to contact the COAM Library is Monday, although Jean and Colin may be here on other days. Please make use of your Library. We are here to help whenever we can.

*Patricia Lindsey
Honorary Librarian, COAM Library*



Maidenhead Pavilion in this winter's snow. The flowerpot man has gone off in search of warmth.

Gems from Thea's book stall

I would like to express my appreciation of the article in the last *Update* about my book-selling activities over the past two years, and thank some of the people who have made it possible to raise that amount of money.

'Oscar' acceptance speech

Firstly, I'd like to thank those who donated books – and those who bought them! Another thank you goes to Jean Brown and my niece, who helped me on the big event days, and all those lovely people who came and gave me a 'loo' break. Also to Conway and many others who helped me carry the boxes of books from the car to the room. (This reads like an Oscar acceptance speech – it isn't; I mean it).

I will, for various reasons, be unable to sell books on as many occasions next season, but I hope to do so on the big event days. I still have thirty small boxes of books to sell, under my bungalow (don't be surprised at such an odd storage space – it's an odd bungalow), and I hope for more donations. I will have a new selection for those events I will be able to do.

I thought that people who had not already heard them might be amused by some of the comments that have been made, and incidents that have taken place, in the Elliot 'book' room.

Beatific smile

A man approached my corner with a beatific smile, clutching a large book to his chest. It was a book I had had for three seasons, with a very tatty dust cover, and I had intended to pass it on at the end of the season. He told me he had been searching for this book for two or three years, in charity shops and on the internet. It was most pleasing that he had finally found it at COAM.

A customer refused to pay seventy pence for a novel, insisting it was only worth fifty. I gently pointed out that

it was for Caversham. "Oh, it's for charity, is it?", he said, and gave me a pound and refused the change.

I am frequently told it would be better if I put all the works by the same author together. I tell the customers I agree – and can they suggest a method of persuading people to return the books from whence they came? I also get told it would be better if all the titles faced the same way – which gets more-or-less the same reply.

Totally obscure books

I have customers who ask me for totally obscure books that have been out of print for years – and when I say we might have it, if they would like to look, I get a stuffy: "Don't you know what books you've got?!" *You try remembering them all!*

A child was sitting on the floor, tearing the pages of a book. When I remonstrated,

the grandmother (I assume) said most indignantly, "He's only playing". She didn't buy the book.

I was asked, "Have you got a catalogue of all the music books you stock?". *No.*

"I must not buy any more books"

I often hear customers muttering, "I really must not buy any more books. I should be getting rid of them". These people rarely leave without one or two.

And many's the time I have heard a voice from outside saying, "Where is so-and-so? Oh, God – (s)he's in the bookshop – we won't see him/her for hours!".

A small boy was tearing around the room and jumping up and down (the floor does make a lovely noise). When I asked the man with him to stop him, as it was very loud in the café below, and makes dust fall from the ceiling onto people's food, he grabbed the child and yanked him out, saying "Come on – we're obviously not wanted here!".

Candlewick bedspread

When Jean was looking after the money, one day, a lady came in. She didn't want a book, but the thirty-year-old faded candlewick bedspread that I use to cover the books. *Now, I wonder how much I could have raised if I had sold it?*

I keep a large and very visible box of carrier bags beside the money box. I ask the customers if they would like one. If I had a pound for every person who says "If you've got one", I would have doubled the amount raised.

My favourite was the lady who looked round the room at the vast variety of books for sale and said, "Have you read them all?"!

Thea Murray

Fundraising

The tombola at the December Craft Fair raised £501 for the **Caversham Refurbishment Fund**. The sale of scarves (and hats and gloves) has continued unabated, achieving a magnificent £782.50 for the **Astleham Garden Project** in 2006. The Lucky Dip, Name the Bear (won by Jean Kennedy), and sale of teasels all boosted the **Farm Equipment Fund** by a further £41 in December.

Once again, I take great pleasure in thanking all of you who have helped in so many ways: by standing in drafty marquees, knitting, donating prizes for the Tombola, and parting with your money so willingly. Without your support and dedication, none of this would have happened.

Copies of *Musings Around Marsworth* are still available, should anyone wish to part with £2.50 (special discounted price for Friends and Volunteers!).

Verena Clark, Vice Chairman



The Toll House looks charming in the snow – although the walk would be cold . . .

Crafty goings on . . .

Since November, two groups of volunteers have been learning new craft skills – crochet and lace – under the supervision of Mary Martin and Joyce Parsons.

We all learn at different speeds!

Mary Martin was very tactful when she said that the crochet class “all learn at different speeds and different levels” – i.e. some of us (well, mainly me, actually!) were very much beginners, while others steamed ahead. We began by mastering the basic techniques, and by the end of the course could crochet small pieces using a variety of stitches. It was Mary’s first venture into teaching crochet, and I know that the class would agree that she was an excellent teacher. It was a really fun course – with lots of chat and coffee between stitches. I hope that the stewards will continue their crochet in the Toll House and Prefab – by the end of the season I am sure we will have enough for a blanket or two!

Further demonstrations scheduled

The lace-making class began with Joyce teaching the class half and cloth stitches, and by practising simple pieces such as a bookmark. We then progressed to making seasonal pieces before Christmas, and on to more complex patterns in the New Year. Joyce was very patient and encouraging with the group, and they enjoyed looking at her lace books and patterns, and using her beautiful bobbins. After weeks of practice, the group came to appreciate the dedication and skill involved in producing hand-made lace, and enjoyed making small pieces of their own. Some of the lace makers demonstrated their skills for visitors in half term, and further lace demonstrations are scheduled on a number of weekends during the season.

The Museum would like to thank Mary and Joyce for their hard work. The scheduled basket-making class ran for one week before Joy Viall’s accident, but Joy is hoping to run the course again later in the year.

Jenny Simmonds, Visitor Services Officer



Lacemaking goes at its own pace

To whom it may concern . . .

Whomsoever, that is, has been at the Museum as long as I have! Back in 1988, an appeal was launched for the funds to put up the Leagrave Cottages, and the Friends played a considerable part in raising the £40,000 required. Gladys Taaffe did sponsored walks in 1989 and 1990 (she was only a septuagenarian then), and the rest of us put on various activities.

The Dunstable Shop 'pot'

When that was done, the Friends asked the Board what was to be the next project, and were told: Dunstable Shop. So, we set about raising money for that, only to be told that plans had changed – this was the time of the great Heritage Lottery bid, and all the headaches that entailed. The result was that, since then, £16,000 has been sitting in the Dunstable Shop 'pot', earning interest and useful as a 'sinking fund' at the time of year when the Museum has outgoings but little income.

Mid-Site Loos

Towards the end of last year, it became apparent that, after the fit-out was completed with the Biffa grant money, the Mid-Site Loos were going to require some additional funds to finish off the exterior paving and make some urgent unforeseen water services improvements. So, the Friends' Committee authorised up to £2,500 of the Dunstable money to be used for this work. Just how much will be required is not yet clear at the time of writing – but if you are one of those people who gave to Dunstable in the early '90s, we want you to know what is happening to the money! The exact amount taken out of the fund will be known by the time of the Friends' AGM.

Tom Crosby, Volunteer Co-ordinator

Getting set for the season

I am looking forward to the Museum Opening this year, and to welcoming back our seasonal volunteers – and of course the winter volunteers who revert back to their summer roles!

Training

In case there are any volunteers who missed the training sessions I ran in March, I am happy to organise other group sessions, or one-to-one training if necessary. There are some new developments this year, and it is always useful to remind yourselves of all the Museum procedures.

Stewards' news: stewarding the farm area

In addition to stewarding the Toll House and Prefab, we are hoping that stewards will consider stewarding the farm area. The farmyard would benefit from additional interpretation by providing a steward to speak to visitors about the buildings. I am compiling an information pack for those who are interested. I hope that stewards will welcome the change of scene, and enjoy reading about the farm buildings.

New volunteers: *your Museum needs you!*

If you have been considering volunteering at the Museum for a while, but have never quite got around to it, why not make 2007 the year to start! If you are interested, please get in touch with me on the usual Museum number, or email me on: visitorcoam@btconnect.com

Jenny Simmonds, Visitor Services Officer

Gladys Taaffe

Gladys is unwell at present and will not be able to carry out her stewarding duties this season. We send her our best wishes.

The 2006 Auction

For the past two or three years, the November Auction has not brought in as much as previously, and I was beginning to wonder if, like so many other good ideas, it had run its course and was due for a rest. Was it worth all the hassle, for a relatively small return?

The best for many years

Then the 2006 Auction brought us £1,700 profit – the best for many years. Why? What had we done differently? Good news can sometimes be as worrying as bad – for a start, can we maintain the success? And what did we do differently? One thing that might have helped was that a volunteer placed leaflets with local estate agents, to go in their ‘welcome’ packs for new residents. Certainly, we did see quite a number of new faces this year, and we hope to see them again next November.

Enthusiastic bidding

The bidding was more enthusiastic than in the past couple of years, making Cris’s task much easier. One interesting point was that some of the best-selling items of silver were from 1960 – so, maybe more modern silver is coming into its own. Other items that raised a good price included Victorian watercolours, Daguerreotypes, Victorian boxes and early-twentieth-century china (any more Clarice Cliff out there?). Books do not sell particularly well.

Thanks to all who helped

Of course, this auction doesn’t just happen of its own accord, and my thanks go to those who helped beforehand (and I hope we don’t get another Friday afternoon as wet as that one!), and those who turned out on the day: Verena – a worthy successor to Gladys – and her merry band in the kitchen, and all those who helped in the hall. Thank you all – and see you on 17 November this year!

Tom Crosby, Volunteer Co-ordinator

Windsor chair exhibition at the High Wycombe Furniture Factory

During the years since the High Wycombe Furniture Factory was re-erected at the Museum, visitors have often asked for more information about what went on there, and about its main area of production – Windsor chairs. We have long-term aims for a larger-scale exhibition, once the Café has moved to a new home – but, in the meantime, Jeanette Marsh and I have been working on a small display in what was the factory office; the first building on the left as you approach down the new ramp.

This exhibition consists of seven Windsor chairs, dating from the eighteenth to the early twentieth centuries – all but one made in the Thames Valley area – including one chair made by James Elliott & Sons. There will also be display boards offering some background to the subject, and illustrations of chairs made in other parts of England, which make interesting comparisons (we are grateful to Montage for contributing the design work for this project). Further information will be available in a ringbinder, nearby.

Stewart Linford

It is hoped to have everything in place for the start of the 2007 season, and there is to be an official opening ceremony on May Day Bank Holiday Monday, 7 May, at 3pm. Stewart Linford – one of the last Windsor chair makers in High Wycombe will have some of his firm’s Windsor chairs on show in the High Wycombe Furniture Factory over the May Day Bank Holiday weekend. Do go and take a look, next time you are up at the Museum.

Cris Claxton Stevens, Trustee

It happens every year . . .

Is it a sign of advancing age, or are the winters really getting shorter? I remember the time when the Museum closed at the end of October, and we knew we had five months (bar a weekend in December) to mess the site up, repair and repaint the buildings, and generally enjoy ourselves without having to worry about inconveniencing visitors.

Out of hibernation

And now? “Tom, we’ve got schools all of November and half of February, so we’ll need stewards in the Toll House. And in the Prefab for half term, when we are open to the public.” And *you* thought you were going to get a five-month break too, did you? So, here and now, I say thank you to those of you who have come out of hibernation to help out. (Mind you, I keep seeing stewards doing wonderful work with Jennie Booth in the artefact department. Hope they don’t get too attached to that occupation!)

Pay: a cup of tea and a bun

So, now it really is the start of the season, and Hazel and I are wanting bodies every day: Blythe Road, Toll House, Prefab – and we would like to cover the Farm area as well. Oh – and Chris would like more help in the Café, so that he can work a five-day week, this year. All of which means . . . *come on, those of you out there who are not yet stewards – now’s your chance to join the team!* Hours: half or full day, as often or as seldom as you like. Pay: a cup of tea and a bun. Duties: to show the visitors what a wonderful Museum we have, to explain about the buildings (training given, of course) – and to enjoy yourself out in the open air.

Sounds appealing? Of course it does! Give Jen or me a call (addresses on the back page).

Tom Crosby, Volunteer Co-ordinator

Volunteers’ Social Evening

Saturday 9 June 2007

Put this date in your diary!

The annual Volunteers’ Social Evening will start at 6.15pm, with a buffet supper to be served from 7pm, and will end at 9.15pm.

The cost will be a £6 donation to cover the food, which will as usual be prepared by a number of very helpful and talented volunteers. Drinks will be available during the evening, also for a donation.

Proceeds from the evening will go towards the re-erection of Haddenham Cottage.

Prefab Anniversary

Of interest to many may be the fact that 9 June 2007 coincides with the sixtieth anniversary of the first occupation of the Amersham Prefab, number 6 Finch Lane.

Looking forward to seeing you all there. We will be in contact nearer the date for help!

Hazel Howe and Verena Clark

Artefacts

At the end of last season, I asked for volunteers to help me with cleaning and packing artefacts; I had a very good response, and we started in Didcot bay 4 (the roof of Didcot is divided by large beams into 4 bays. Why start in bay 4? It's nearest the door and easiest to get things out!).

Scraping the ceiling, looking like a snowman

Then Jill Broad volunteered to paint the Toll House Office. Val Weston said she would help her. Angela Hull said she would do the ceiling, and I couldn't leave her on her own, so John Cole went to help as well. I thought I would never get any artefacts cleaned. But guess who was up the ladder, scraping the ceiling, looking like a snowman? Me. As you'll see when you go into the Toll House, we did manage to paint the office and the kitchen – so, a good job well done.

And we did manage to clean, polish photograph and pack all the artefacts in bay 4 of Didcot: nearly 400 (mostly carpentry) tools. Thank you to John Hyde-Trutch on the forklift for taking most of them into the Kabin, and back again.



They started green and damp (the benches, that is).

They started off . . . very green and damp

When you go into Thame Vicarage Room, you will find two six-foot school benches. They started off in the asbestos shed at the bottom of the site, very green and damp. At the end of last season, Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College Furniture Conservation students came for a day's placement at the Museum, and

washed these benches down. When they dried, they were cleaned and polished, and minor repairs were made. After a lot of hard work, I think they look good, and will be helpful to the Education department's interpretation of a Victorian school room.

We have also repainted the top displays in the High Wycombe Furniture Factory, and had to renumber some of the spoons, as over-zealous cleaning last year took the numbers off – all good practice for future accessioning. Then we reset the display and tidied the drawers, as some of the artefacts had moved. We have also photographed nearly all the Chesham wood-ware artefacts, some of which are still in the upstairs of Rossway granary. Thank you, Chris.

Thanks to all who have helped

Although the Museum has been closed, we have been very busy. If you like what has been done, thank Jill Broad, Val Weston, Shelia Tregunna, Aileen McSloy, Angela Hull, John Cole, Audrey Hughes and Jean Brown. I would like to thank all the volunteers who have helped me throughout the winter. I have managed to get a conservation placement on the Sharing Skills museums training programme at the Weald and Downland Museum at the end of February. I'm hoping to expand my knowledge of artefacts conservation and curatorial skills so, there's no telling what I'll be asking you to do next winter! I'm looking forward to another season – let's hope the sun shines on us all.

Jennie Booth, Museum Assistant

Help wanted in the Café

Volunteers and occasional temporary casual staff needed in the Café during the season, particularly during busy special events.

Please contact Chris Maynard at the Museum if you can help.

Is that a Museum leaflet I see before me?

It's that time again . . . the new season approaches, and I'm asking for your help with Museum publicity.

This year, we have a new-look eight-page main leaflet, with many more photographs – it's brighter, and hopefully more accessible, than in the past. We've also redesigned the events pages to make them more attractive and less like a list.

Leaflet distribution: we still need your help

We have a major leaflet distribution contract from 1 March, for much of the season. There are over 900 planned outlets across the region, including a very local community presence in about 80 outlets in South Bucks and East Berkshire. But while the Museum's leaflets will be in more places than probably ever before – they will be 'visible', but won't be everywhere – we do still need your help. If you know somewhere where you can get leaflets distributed, take a bundle from an already-opened box, which you'll find in the volunteers' room – and don't forget to sign on the list saying where you're planning to use the leaflets. *Please do not take a full box without talking to me first* – our leaflet supplies are limited, and some of the full boxes have already been allocated.

Posters for this season

On the notice board in the volunteers' room, you'll also find mini versions of a number of posters produced for this season. If you have access to areas where posters could be placed – either advertising the Museum in general (reasonably long-term presence), or advertising a specific Museum event (possibly shorter term presence) – make a note of the number of the poster and ask someone in the office to print one off for you.

If you'd like to contact me about this or any other publicity matter, I'd be pleased to hear from you. As I'm not in the office all the time, and we may miss each other on site, there are three options for getting in touch: leave a message in my pigeonhole on the first-floor landing in Astleham; email me: marketingcoam@btconnect.com; or phone me on 07811 174425.

Thank you, in advance, for your help.

*Phil Holbrook, **Press and Marketing***

Electronic Update!

Update is now being posted on the Museum web site under 'Museum News'.

If you can access our web site and are prepared to download *Update* as a pdf file (the average size is about 1 MB), please help the Museum to cut costs by sending your email address to Chris Maynard at webmaster.coam@btconnect.com for an email alert to let you know when *Update* is posted on the web site in future.

Book Keeper Wanted

John Drinkwater is leaving the Museum after a year of sterling service in the Finance Department. We are very grateful to John for all his hard work and support.

If you have book-keeping experience and can give a regular commitment of about two days a week, please contact Sue Shave at the Museum.

Midwinter spring

*“Midwinter spring is its own season
Sempiternal though sodden towards sundown,
Suspended in time, between pole and tropic.
. . . Between melting and freezing
The soul’s sap quivers. There is no earth smell
Or smell of living thing.”*

February is a bleak month, when all in nature has been much the same for too long, and as I walk up through the site, having looked at the various ongoing jobs, I am painfully aware of how short a time is left to achieve all we have set out to do this winter. As my mind casts over these things, I can’t help but feel that the problem starts with ‘the list’. Let me explain . . .

‘The list’

There comes a natural break in the day, every morning, when all the animals have been fed and any urgent matters arising from this have been dealt with. The kettle goes on, and over this quarter-hour tea break there comes at me the inevitable query: “What’s on the agenda for today?”. Every winter, I write out a list of all the projects we need to do, and every night I mentally weigh items on this list, with all the other jobs that are forever arising, against all the likely variables for the following day – priorities, weather, available manpower, other things going on on site – and I try to judge what best suits the morrow. This process continues right up to the inevitable point of this question being posed in the morning, at which point I have to commit – and that’s what we do that day.

Usually, for fear of daunting the loyal farm volunteers, I leave ‘the list’ firmly at home. I might discuss the things that are on it, but never bring it in – for fear that they would give up or go on strike in rebellion at seeing written in black and white all the things I hope we will get done each winter! This year, however, I typed up the list – and, one morning, I brought all six pages of it down to the farm and pinned it up in the workshop, and left a big black marker pen out, to give us all the satisfaction of deleting the jobs on the list as they were completed.

What is it that’s so important about what we do?

My problem with this list is that, as I write it, I have some control over what goes on and what stays off, and this starts me questioning. Why is the list six pages, not three? Would it really matter if x or y or z was not completed this winter? After all, we could make life easier and just reduce things down to basic repairs and maintenance (most of which is not even included in this, the ‘projects list’). And so, my mental questioning drills down – trying, as ever, to get at what is important about what we do; trying to answer myself as to why all these ambitious tasks, relating to this unusual little Museum in this particular corner of England, should seem so important to achieve. Why should it seem so important to keep the place alive and growing and vibrant? In what way does it all relate to the average person of today?

*“Staying power is
needed to see things
through, and maybe it
helps to find this if you
can slow down enough
to see the beauty in all
things around.”*

“Seize the big black marker pen”

On the face of it, my volunteers’ response to the list is more pragmatic; after all, they don’t write it – they just really want to keep things moving on. To start with, they studiously ignored ‘the list’ – but, as the weeks progressed and work went on, I would find one or another of them at different points in time furtively studying it – an action which became progressively more open, until they were as keen as I was, upon completion of a job, to return to the cattle byre and seize

the big black marker pen and score another line through ‘the list’.

For all their apparent pragmatism and purported scorn for ‘whys’, ‘wherefores’ and ‘bigger pictures’, as I walk up the site mulling over another week’s work, I am beginning to see, after all these years of working with them, that my volunteers maybe have their own answers to these questions; answers that, upon consideration, are no less tangible for not being articulated.

A week in the life

On *Monday*, they mainly fix and make things. Be it gates, fences, chicken houses, hay feeders, machines, they seem to be driven by an unassailable conviction that things must be maintained – and maintained well – and

cared for. Things should be in their proper place, working and clean and tidy. (*This is what we rely on for things to go on at all.*)

Tuesday has no volunteers, but **Wednesday** brings a sense of urgency and purpose; the volunteers seem to be pulling at the reins, striving to get another task complete. Maybe it's partly that there's usually a good-sized team on a Wednesday, but problems seem to disappear almost as soon as they are encountered; someone always second-guessing what will slow things down and circumventing it, spotting where tweaking the job will shorten another. All goes on on Wednesday seemingly with little regard for the weather – and the weather always seems to 'give it some' on Wednesdays, too; almost all the heaving wet days out planting that stick in my mind are Wednesdays, as too are the days pulling frozen brash apart in the woods. Things only slow up towards the end of the day, as inevitable weariness of limb sets in, at which time the sense of team achievement is only added to, once the evening feed round is completed, as we get a chance to look in on what the guys working on the threshing machine restoration have done. (*Without throwing oneself at pushing things forward, life stands still.*)

Thursday, too, has a similar kind of momentum, but maybe in a slightly different way. For a start, the Thursday volunteers usually manage to fulfil their longstanding commitment to provide good weather, so there is a space to appreciate the beauty of the views, or the sound of the birdsong, on Thursday. Subtlety of approach and stamina come in to play on Thursday; with slightly fewer volunteers, there is time to adjust and plan some tasks, as we go and chat to the blacksmiths at lunchtime, and find out how the latest task in the forge is progressing. The stamina comes in where the team can see the ends of whole jobs – which will earn another black line on the projects list – and so work right up to the last scrap of daylight to get them finished; retiring to the farmyard to appreciate the gathering dusk, and find the energy to go home, over a last cup of tea. (*Staying power is needed to see things*

through, and maybe it helps to find this if you can slow down enough to see the beauty in all things around.)

Friday has a different shape. We sort things that might otherwise come up over the weekend; work on repairs to vehicles, equipment and hand tools; and do all the little running repairs and awkward slow bits that would otherwise hold up progress on the busier days. (*Attention to detail is the thread that holds things together.*)

The weekend brings more time for reflection; the only people in are usually those feeding the animals, in our different respective shifts. I find quiet time at the weekend, often, to look at the week's progress properly and plan adjustments to jobs, and to do bits of livestock work that have been hard to fit into the busy week.

"I have my volunteers to thank"

All of which brings me back to where I started; strolling back up the site, past Henton Chapel, at the close of day on a Saturday in February, having completed my jobs and surveyed another week's worth of doings. I am coming to accept that there is no single clear answer to all my questionings, and I shall probably forever be pondering upon them; but I realise I have my volunteers to thank for their own quiet, unspoken expressions of belief in the intrinsic importance of certain things in life, which is manifested in all the work done that I see around me.

"Why should it seem so important to keep the place alive and growing and vibrant? In what way does it all relate to the average person of today?"

*"... So, while the light fails
On a winter's afternoon, in a secluded chapel
History is now and England.*

...

*We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time."*

Extracts from 'Little Gidding', no. 4 of 'Four Quartets', by T. S. Eliot

Conway Rowland, *Site and Farm Manager*

Embers from the forge

Pelicans, mowers, welding and widgets

Here we are at the gate of the year again, with winter maintenance and repair under way all over the site. Old Sol has turned, and journeys back to warm us for the coming months, bringing longer days and more time to labour in the forge and fields. Although (as yet) the winter has been comparatively mild, there have still been times when Jack Frost has placed half an inch of frost on the outside tub and the forge fire has just a little more coal than coke, so as to throw out a bit of local global warming. It is of course expected that the longer the forge is used, the longer the job list becomes, and looking at the list of items in hand this year throws up an amazing variety of work tackled this period, not all of which originated on site.

It started last year with tent pegs

It started last year with tent pegs; the re-enactment group 'Pelican in her Piety' could not put up their tents quickly in the deteriorating weather using wooden pegs because of the very stony ground on site. Following an urgent plea for assistance, a few metal ones were quickly produced, and the immediate problem solved. There quickly followed an order for another score of pegs, and they were set up for some time to come. The group are enthusiastic re-enactors, covering a period in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and take their name from an ancient symbol in the Christian tradition, originating in Psalm 102¹. We have now moved on from tent pegs; at this time, they would really like a portable 'medieval' (made last week!) fire basket – so, I am working on that!

The Museum continues to acquire farm equipment to supplement its work, and this year has been no exception. There came the mower: very useful, no doubt, behind the tractor for top cutting the grass, after various shows have churned the field – but not with bent metal flaps and locking bars looking like twisted sticks of

liquorice! Not too difficult a job for the forge – but I did learn very quickly to put hot pieces of wide metal edge-on into the bosh (a purpose built container for quenching metal next to the hearth) to avoid a scalding! Refitted, and in a proud new coat of red, the parts look well and the mower will sally forth again to do its job when required.

We are cutting up old bedsteads

Many will have noticed the additional work at Wood End with the wall and roadway improvements, together with the temporary hurdles to assist safety at this time. Strong metal fencing is planned to top the wall, and to encompass this we are cutting up old bedsteads – not I

hasten to add, for the fencing itself, but to provide a work-stand to facilitate the construction of suitable fence panels to be incorporated in the wall (after, of course, the jolly old blacksmith has bricked in the supports!). These panels will be welded up on the new work-stand, and will eventually be fitted at Wood End to finish off the retaining wall.

Training up volunteers in the 'black art'

With more interest being shown in the working Forge through the season, a lot of effort this session has also been put into training up two volunteers in the 'black art'. This will provide the Museum with the opportunity to have more working blacksmiths during the season, as well as support in the Forge for some of the larger jobs planned in the future. Additionally, some thought is being given to 'work experience' days on smithing for interested parties. A trial day carried out earlier in the season was deemed a great success by the young participant. The only outstanding point is clarification being required on the Museum's policy on the issue of black pointed hats and symbolic hammers.

“The only outstanding point is clarification being required on the Museum's policy on the issue of black pointed hats and symbolic hammers.”

“A tool discarded by the Devil himself”

On the smaller side, a trivet is required for the woodland course, and Henry Russell has a small pick-head to be converted into a twybill. A twybill is effectively a morticing axe, with a horizontal chisel on one end and a vertical chisel on the other. By changing over ends, both the sides and the waste of the mortice can be removed with the one tool, rather than using separate chisels and a mallet. This item usually turns up in green woodworking, but Henry wanted one for general carpentry. A quick heat, a jumping up on the ends, and some judicious light hammering produced the change, and a quick quench re-hardened the tips. Another job ‘jobbed’! Henry tells me that this was a tool discarded by the Devil himself! When using it, the Devil brought the handle too far back, and placed a horizontal chisel mark on his forehead. Quickly reversing the tool and trying again, another over-enthusiastic stroke placed the vertical chisel cut across the first mark, thus forming a cross – which is why the tool was discarded!

And what about this widget? That’s a different class of engineering, more delicate-like, see? An accomplished needle-woman and dear friend is losing the dexterity in her hands and wondered if it was possible for me to make something to help. Well, it’s not exactly hammering fence iron is it? But with a bit of head-scratching, and the resurrecting of some past skills, a small horizontal clamp appeared. This is intended to act like a horizontal finger and thumb to hold material for sewing – but, like all such projects, its entry into the world is accompanied by many birthing pangs, and the inevitable changes in timescales. Its present lifetime is incorporated in a short ‘Ode to a Widget’* – penned on the back of a packet, and sold subject to royalties for blacksmiths anticipating retirement.

Ah, well – no good hanging about – to fix this job list, I shall have to come in *two* days a week! There’s gratitude for you!

*Brian the Iron, Brian Hill
Volunteer blacksmith*

***“It is of course expected
that the longer the
Forge is used, the
longer the job list
becomes . . . ”***

¹ Psalm 102 v.6: “I am like a Pelican of the wilderness”. This gave rise to a number of legends and allegorical interpretations in medieval lore. The Physiologus, a second century AD popular theological work, described animals, both real and mythological, giving each an allegorical interpretation. It told of the pelican drawing blood from its own breast to feed its young, and this has become a symbol of self-sacrifice and nurturing for centuries. The

explanation for this idea of ‘vulning’ – or breast piercing – probably lies in the way in which the bird bends forward when feeding its young; in pressing the pouch against the breast of the adult bird, the translucent membrane of the pouch gives a pink hue to the breast feathers of the pelican. Coupled with the reddish tip of the beak, it appears as if the pelican is piercing its own breast. Later, particularly in the Middle Ages, this was taken as an allegorical depiction of the sacrifice of Christ shedding His blood, and so led to its widespread use in Christian literature and art. In medieval and baroque art, the image of the pelican appears on altars, chalices and tabernacle doors. It is also frequently used in heraldry. Today, emblems of pelicans are found in many locations, from cathedrals to inn signs.

(With thanks to Julie Rogers and Aidan Turnbull of the group ‘Pelican in her Piety’.)



A craftsman at work – he makes it look so easy!

*Ode to a Widget

I'm working on a Widget, a funny little thing,
Started it in Autumn, should be done by spring,
It's for a sewing lady, a very clever gel,
Who needs a little helper to hold materiél.

It's made of brass and steel and Al-oo-min-ee-um,
It's meant to do the job of a finger and a thumb.
It has a pillar and two fingers and you rest it on the
table,
It's round at the bottom to make it very stable.

Every piece is carefully fashioned, a polished work of
art.
Each looks very beautiful – especially when apart.
It's when they go together the problems then begin,
The base and trigger meet – but the guides – they don't
go in!

The slot and centre pillar are perfectly aligned,
In their place upon the base, the elements – they bind!
The “thumb” is smooth and polished and fitted
perfectly-
Until it met the finger (I wonder if it's me?)

The screws are cut to length and the heads reduced in
size,
But in the wrong position I have to realise.
The spring inside the column, it came from out a door.
Hard to manipulate – Blast! I've dropped it on the floor!

But these challenges are set us in every part of life,
So it's on to file and fitting bench to overcome the
strife.
A touch by here, a nudge by there, a twitch around the
back.
Now it goes together – but it wobbles and it's slack!

Back to the drawing board to design another part –
Part of Engineering, the Black bit of the Art.
I'm still working on the Widget, the rotten little thing.
Started it in Autumn – finished it WHICH Spring?

Brian the Iron

Relief at last!

Yes – it's official – you can all uncross your legs now . . .
the Mid-Site-Loos are open!

The Building Inspector passed the work on Tuesday 6
February, and on the following afternoon, a small in-
house opening ceremony was performed. Len and Esme
Baker cut the tape and 'christened' the new facilities.

The toilets will be known as the 'Bakerloos' – but just
for the sake of confusion we'll probably call them
'Faversham'. Of course, they weren't completely
finished – a few minor things still needed finishing off –
but hopefully by the time you read this they will be.

Thanks to all who have worked on this project

We rushed to get them open in time for the first school
groups that Thursday and Friday (remember those days?
– four inches of snow!). Both schools cancelled.
Fortunately, we opened for half term, the following
week. My thanks to all the Buildings volunteers who
have worked on this project for the last six years.

The main opening ceremony will take place at the start
of the season, on 31 March.

Use them and admire them!

Do make a point of using them! – or even just going in to
admire them. Don't forget to go into the arable field
system to admire the reed beds. These were installed to
clean up the water from the septic tank. The clean water
flows down to the edge of the woods to create a wetland
area. It is important to remember that, because of the
reed beds, only environmentally friendly soaps and
cleaning materials must be used. Please don't pour
anything down the drain that will kill the bacteria in the
beds.

I wish you all the joy of using them!

John Hyde Trutch, Buildings Manager

News from the Friends of Chiltern Open Air Museum

Message from the Chairman

I went to visit the newly opened Mid-Site Loos (MSLs), last week. Congratulations to John Hyde-Trutch and the building team for such an attractive and beautifully finished building, which has been long awaited, and will considerably add to the amenities of the Museum. The Friends have been involved in fundraising for the MSLs (originally known as the 'Bakerloos', since Len and Esme Baker began fundraising in the early 1990s). Since then, fundraising has widened to supporting grant application bids, with a percentage contribution from the Friends to enable grants to be released. It has been a long, hard, frustrating process for all concerned – but, at last, congratulations to all those who were involved.

Please help, in whatever way you can

As ever, the next season is nearly upon us – and, as ever, I am asking all Friends out there to help in whatever way they can. One project is finished, but there are many others waiting which will need your support (and funds). We contribute annually about ten per cent of the Museum's General Purposes income, and while I cannot list exactly where the Friends money is spent, it is essential to remember always that your subscription is helping to keep the Museum open for you and the wider community to enjoy.

You can help further by giving your time. I am saddened that, after six years of numerous appeals for help, only a few have come forward (but I am of course delighted that they did, as we could not operate without them).

"Replacements are needed from time to time"

With over eight hundred Friends, we are simply not getting all the practical help we need. Where are you yummy mummies and daddies, too? Most of us on the committee, with a few notable exceptions, are retired, and the majority are OAPs. Logically, that means that, inevitably, some – like me – are nearly worn out (nearly, but not quite – I can still paint up to first-floor level!); and, as with many old vehicles, replacements are needed from time to time.

For the last time from me – you can help the Friends and the Chiltern Open Air Museum in any or all of the following ways:

- Volunteer for the Friends Centre shop
Any day, any time between 11am and 5pm (phone Jenny Cartmell on: 01923 777970)
- Help out with fundraising events like coffee mornings
What about a coffee morning or a toy sale, where a small percentage goes to the Friends? Every little helps; for example, the scarf knitters have raised £111 to date, and their magic scarves are being sold all over the surrounding area
- Help out with publicity stalls at fêtes near you in the summer
Details from me: 01844 344461
- Help us to finish painting the Friends Centre
The high bits that we couldn't reach

- Let us have any surplus soft fruit to make into jam – *or make jam for us*

- If you make cakes, make an extra one for one of our cake sales
The next one is always about to happen: they are held in March, April, May, June, July and August, and possibly September

- If you are green-fingered, let us have some of the plants you have grown.
Our visitors love buying plants. The main stock, as ever, is provided by Les Parsons and Lawford Thomas – but surplus good-quality labelled plants are always welcome. (Please don't use yogurt pots; pots are available at the rear of the Friends Centre – please help yourself. Please don't give us immature perennials; let them grow a few leaves first, or they won't sell.)

- Above all, keep coming to the Museum!
There is a wide and varied programme, with something for everyone. Bring your friends, bring a group (details of group visits from Melissa Maynard, at the Museum or on the website) – but please try to boost visitor numbers in 2007

This is my final contribution as Friends Chairman. I am stepping down after nearly seven years. It really is time for a change, and for someone else, who will bring in new ideas, to take over the Friends Committee. Thanks to all those who have supported me in the past – especially the committees and our regular helpers, without whom we would be unable to give the necessary financial support to the Museum.

Gillian Cassidy, Friends Chairman

200 Club Results

Winners December 2006

Mrs W Crawforth (£21) Ms K Abbott (£10)

Winners January 2007

Mrs P Pike (£21) Mr E Moutrie (£10)

Friends talks

The winter 2006/07 talks season has now ended, with talks given in February by John and Jo Brewster on 'Wren and his contemporaries', and in March by Peter Perdoni on the subject of 'Chiltern Chairmaking'.

The next winter talks season will commence in September 2007. In the new programme, it is hoped to include the talk on the 'Colne Valley Park Historic Landscape Characterisation Project', postponed from February.

Gill Cassidy, Chairman of the Friends

Education news

Schools are back (apart from a small hitch with the snow)!

Jennie Booth and I rushed to get the buildings ready, and made it just in time for the snow – when the first schools couldn't get here because the coach companies wouldn't bring them in case they got sued! But, even so, we had everything (well, almost everything) ready.

This year, we hope to be very busy with school groups of all ages on site – new Foundation Stage workshops have been designed, for 3-to-5-year-olds, that utilise activities to bring traditional stories alive – with stories including old favourites like Goldilocks and the Three Bears, The Tale of Mrs Tiggywinkle, and modern classics like Percy the Park Keeper's Treasure Hunt. We are very grateful to Pam Bacon and Bucks County Council for a recent grant to support some local schools in accessing these exciting new programmes. We have also completed another 2 resource boxes for Key Stage 3 classes to use around site, helping students to understand travel and tourism within the heritage industry, and the impact of the industrial revolution on the built heritage of the Chilterns.

Young Volunteers

We would like to invite young people to become involved in volunteering at the Museum this year. Whether you just want to volunteer, or whether this activity will help you gain a service badge with the Scouts – this could be for you!

The club will run from 1pm - 4pm.

The dates and tasks for the Young Volunteers club:

Saturday 14 April

Creating an Iron Age garden

Saturday 12 May

Helping around the site

Saturday 9 June

Making a new patio for the Café

Saturday 14 July

Working on one of our buildings

Saturday 11 August

Maintaining the new Iron Age garden

Saturday 8 September

Taking part in harvest activities around the Museum

Saturday 13 October

Helping around the site

Saturday 10 November

Putting the Iron Age garden to bed for the winter

Please note:

- Parents will be asked to complete a consent form before their child can take part in the activities
- All young people taking part in this activity will be supervised by a Museum volunteer
- We ask for a small voluntary contribution of £2 per child per session to cover the cost of a snack from the Museum Café and materials or equipment

Arborfield Adventurers

This year's holiday club will run from Monday 13 until Thursday 16 August, and will have a 1940s theme.

In order to provide this service, I would like once again to ask for volunteers to help with the activities, as we can not possibly run this club without your help.

Craft workshops for adults

Of course, education isn't just for the children – we have lots to offer adults of all ages, including our programme of craft workshops. This year, the following are on offer (*with a £5 discount for Friends and volunteers – just quote “March Update” when you book!*).

An introduction to pole-lathe turning and green woodworking

Cleave and shape the wood with hand tools, and learn to use a pole-lathe to make several turned items to take home.

Tutor: Lois Beakhouse

One-day course:

Sunday 22 April 2007

Cost: £45 per person

Two-day course:

Saturday 28 and Sunday 29 April 2007

Cost: £90 per person

Up to 5 delegates per day

Harvesting herbs from the cottage garden

Over the centuries, cottage gardens have evolved around supplying the daily needs for the family. This has included cookery, fragrances, dyes and home medicine. The origin of the herbaceous border was in growing many useful herbs. With gardens within the Museum grounds as examples of the historic background, we explore those harvests most suitable for today. Information on preserving and storing the herbs gathered on the day, in addition to practical demonstration of, and hands-on experience in, making herbal seasonings, including vinegars, honeys, mustard and a syrup; fragrant recipes with rose and lavender; a small craft flower project; and safe medicinal herbal teas and an ointment.

Tutor: Christina Stapley

One-day course:

Saturday 23 June 2007

Cost: £40 per person

Up to 12 delegates per day

Victorian blacksmith

Learn about the working Victorian Forge, and make your own hand-forged object to take home.

Tutor: Brian Hill

One-day workshops available by pre-arrangement

Cost: £40 per person

Up to 2 delegates per day

Rag rug making

Making rag rugs was an essential part of life for rural and industrial households until the 1950s. Enjoy a day exploring the different techniques used, and then start your own rug or cushion-cover, using either traditional or contemporary designs, which you will take home to complete.

Tutor: Deborah Hastings

One-day course:

Saturday 15 September 2007

Cost: £40 per person

Up to 20 delegates per day

Hedgerow basketry

Enjoy a day designing and making a basket from natural hedgerow plants, while gaining insight into choosing the right stems, harvesting times and methods, storage and preparation of weavers and stakes. This practical experience in the ancient craft of basket weaving and design will lead to a working knowledge of the textures, appearance and flexibility of various natural materials.

Tutor: Christina Stapley

One-day course:

Sunday 7 October 2007

Cost: £40 per person

Up to 12 delegates per day

Herbal Christmas gifts and decorations

Christmas is a time of tradition, folklore and gift-giving. Spend a day making herbal Christmas gifts and decorations using natural materials. Up to five items can be chosen from a possible ten, and all of the ingredients and materials are provided. Decorations and gifts that can be made during the day include: a decorated Yule log with candle; a festive basket containing a selection of herb teas, confections, seasonings, spices and decorative goodies; a herb swag covered in sprays of dried herbs, seed heads and spices, trimmed with ribbon bows; and a Christmas door wreath. A full choice of items to be made is available on request from the office, and is included in the booking pack.

Tutor: Christina Stapley

One-day course:

Sunday 16 December 2007

Cost: £40 per person, plus the cost of materials

Up to 12 delegates per day

If you are interested in helping with any of the activities, or attending any of the courses or clubs, please contact Melissa Maynard on 01494 875542, or email educationcoam@btconnect.com

Melissa Maynard, Education Officer

Wood End Café: a mini-makeover

The old adage of ‘you need to spend money to make money’ is very true. However, how can you spend money when there is no money in the first place? The profit from the Café is given to the Museum in order to support the operation of the Museum, which means that there is minimal opportunity for investment in the Café – and any such investment is usually along the lines of: “Which bit of equipment will not last the season?”!

However, a few very kind anonymous donors have given me the chance to invest properly in the Café, this year. I would like to take this opportunity to thank these donors for providing this wonderful opportunity.

My next task was to work out what equipment would enhance the Café. So, I planned for the following:

New under-counter refrigerator

I can replace an aging refrigerator with a new one – and, more importantly, when I asked my two regular volunteers if they would work for me in the 2007 season, their answer was yes . . . but only if I got a new under-counter fridge! So, thanks to the donation, I get to keep my two regular volunteers!

New chiller cabinet

This one is an open-fronted display fridge, dedicated to the sale of cold food such as sandwiches, rolls, yogurts, etc., which should increase the variety of cold foods on offer

New tables

This should increase the seating capacity and offer a less cramped layout

Something we are not short of at the Museum is ideas. However, the resources are always spread thinly – so, any help is always very welcome, and makes a real difference. Thank you very much to our anonymous donors. We hope you will be pleased with the new-look Café!

Chris Maynard, Catering Manager

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Paul Hannon: new Events Officer



Paul preparing for D-Day

I joined the Museum as part-time Events Officer in late November 2006, following my participation in the Prelude to D-Day event in May last year. Although I was born in Swansea, I have actually lived in Hertfordshire for 27 years. My background includes extensive experience in the marketing and advertising industries, as well as working as a freelance illustrator for 16 years, illustrating over 30 books.

I have a deep interest in military history, and am now employed as a military history instructor for the British Army, accompanying many tour groups to the former battlefields of Europe. I also lecture at the National Army Museum and the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst on a regular basis. From time to time, I assist with exhibitions at the Imperial War Museum, and I am an organising member of a World War Two armoured vehicle preservation group.

I am looking forward to working on the 2007 season’s event programme, and will be contacting volunteers from time to time to ask you all to help run activities, deal with exhibitors – and assist with any other jobs that need doing! My days are irregular, but will probably include one day a week in the office, and the major events for the Museum. If you need to contact me, please leave a message in my pigeon hole in the main Museum office, or email me on: eventscoam@btconnect.com

Paul Hannon, Events Officer

'Ere we go again!



Working on the new water supply.

22 December 2006

“Can you supply some 63mm blue water pipe and fittings?”

“Certainly – but we don’t keep them in stock. The fittings I can get next day, but the pipe might take a week.”

“If I fax you a list, could you fax back a quote?”

“Certainly.”

2 January 2007

Quote received.

3 January

“Thanks for the quote; I also need the following – could you send a revised quote?”

Quote received. Order faxed.

15 January

Started digging trench for new water main.

19 January, Friday

“Where is my water pipe and fittings?”

“Sorry – I’ve got your fittings, but the pipe won’t be in until next Tuesday.”

21 January, Sunday

Six feet left to dig; shed a track from the digger and split it.

22 January

New digger delivered.

23 January, Tuesday

“Where is my water pipe and fittings?”

“Sorry – he can’t deliver now until next week.”

“Why?”

“The delivery driver missed his slot at our depot.”

“Pardon?”

“Deliveries have to be made during timed slots. If they come late, they can’t unload and have to book another slot.”

“-----” [stunned silence]

“Sorry.”

24 January

“I can deliver your pipe and fittings tomorrow, if you want.”

“Is the Pope Catholic?”

“I’ve got some pipe, but it’s in 100m lengths, not 50m, is that alright?”

“No. We won’t be able to manage coils that big – that’s why I wanted 50m coils.”

“*^%***!!!!”\$%***!!!”

“Can I have the fittings? – at least I could make a start.”

“Certainly – I’ll deliver them tomorrow.”

25 January

Fittings delivered PM (while I’m out), plus two 50m coils of pipe.

26 January

“Did you get the delivery? I found out another of our branches had some pipe and sent the lorry over to get them.”

“Thank you very much. I can get started now. Unfortunately, you have sent the wrong marker tape – I need the wide blue warning tape to put in the trench – and there are two inserts missing.”

“Oh! We don’t stock that tape. I’ll sort out the missing inserts. I can give you a number for the tape.”

27 January, Saturday

Bought roll of warning tape at my local branch.

28 January, Sunday

Turned water off to put in ‘T’ and stop-cock for new main. Couldn’t reuse old 50mm stop cock to re-connect existing main – water still off.



The trench runs smoothly, anyway . . .

29 January

Called in at two other suppliers for 50mm stop-cock. Not stocked. Rang possible supplier in desperation (part of High Wycombe).

“Yes, we can do that – you’ll need a two-inch brass stop-cock and two fittings to connect to the pipe. It’s rather expensive.”

“How expensive? - - - - - [sharp intake of breath] Oh! I’ll pop over this afternoon.”

Later that day . . . The new stop-cock needed a longer piece of pipe to go onto than I had left. The new fittings were of course push-fit – i.e. they don’t undo. An expensive tool is available to disconnect these fittings, but two halves of an old hacksaw blade work just as well. Even later that day . . . Stop-cock fitted, water back on – but only as far as Leagrave. As I couldn’t fit the stop-cock on Sunday, I decided to cut the existing main and replace it with the bigger pipe from Leagrave to the in-line stop-cock. I put in the ‘T’ and second stop-cock at Leagrave, but found I needed some other fittings to re-connect the old main!

30 January

Connected mains, water finally back on at Office.

“I can deliver the rest of the pipe tomorrow.”

31 January

Stop-cock for Mid-Site Loos leaking – again. Dug it out, and moved it to spine road, next to where the supply ‘T’ is off. Rest of pipe delivered, but not the missing inserts.

1 February

Started putting in pipes, working up from the main stop-cock. Found we had a 13m gap, and only a 10m length of pipe left.

2 February, Friday

Measured length of first two coils of pipe; both 3m short. Should have had a 10m gap and 13m of pipe.

“We have just put the rest of the pipes in, but we haven’t got enough; the first two coils you sent were only 47m long.”

“The Manager is busy at the moment – I’ll ask him to ring you back.”

5 February, Monday

“I rang you on Friday about the short lengths of pipe.”

“The manager is busy at the moment, but he said it was impossible for them to be short.”

“Do you want to come and measure them? I measured the rest of the pipes – one was 3m short, and another 4m short. They got two right, though.”

“Oh.”

“Tell him to ring me back.”

3pm . . . *“Can I speak to the manager, please?”*

“He’s at lunch.”

“?”

3.30pm . . . Sent fax to the manager.

Two minutes later . . . *“I’ve spoken to the manufacturer – they are going to give you a complimentary 25m coil in compensation.”*

“You got my fax, then?”

“What fax?”

“Oh, never mind. When will I get the pipe?”

“Ah! Monday or Tuesday next week.”

*“****!!*!*%*!!**”*

14 February, Wednesday

“When is the rest of the pipe due, then, John?”

“Yesterday.”

Later that morning . . . *“John, your pipe has arrived.”*

Later that afternoon . . . *“OK! Water on; that’s good. Job done!”*

[Exit stage left, to thunderous applause!?!]

John Hyde-Trutch, Buildings Manager

Gardens update

Last year's hot dry summer had some unexpected effects. Surprisingly, the potatoes and pumpkins did well, as did the Cardoons, but the carrot and parsnip crop was very poor – sorry, Sovereign!

The allotment proved its worth, providing many of the vegetables used to decorate Henton for harvest, and most of the pumpkins for Halloween. Following the splendid job the farm volunteers have done laying the hedge, it can now be seen from the Prefab, and to improve the view, we have moved the shed (unfortunately it lost its roof, and almost blew away during the January gales – but that's another story).

"The label may cause some amusement"

The wet weather has often kept us off the ground, this winter, but has given us more time to decide what to grow in the coming season. Some of the more unusual varieties we grew last year – like the 'Red Currant' tomatoes in the Toll House, which were tiny and delicious – will reappear, together with some new additions, like 'Grosse Blondes Paresseuse' lettuce. Even if the crop fails, the label may cause some amusement.

The small fenced garden at the Iron Age House has been dug over, and we have found a source of seeds for some of the plants grown at that time. Creating and maintaining the garden will be a job for the new Young Volunteers club, which starts this season.

Now that the days are getting longer, it will soon be time start sowing seeds. As usual, a wide range of plants will be on sale at the Friends Centre, from mid May. Favourites like petunias, begonias and the ever-popular lavender will be available, together with some less common varieties.

Lawford Thomas and the Gardeners

Another winter over

As usual, this winter has seen a hive of activity on the building front.

The priority was to get the Bakerloos finished. The contractors completed the fitting out at the end of January. We were then able to fit all the dispensers, mirrors, bins, etc., and the engineers were able to fit the alarm system.

Trenches and mud all over the place

Once we had got the loos working, we realised that we would have a problem with water supply – with alarming implications for a busy event weekend. To alleviate this, it was decided to increase the size of the water main, allowing for future expansion as well. In the end, it was decided to put a second, bigger, main in; parallel with the existing one, and extending far enough to feed the new toilets. Thus, the usual winter scenario: trenches and mud all over the place. For various reasons, the work took a bit longer than anticipated (no surprises there).

Inevitably, this interrupted the repair work on the Gerrards Cross building, but fortunately, most of the wall sections had been repaired and painted. My volunteers are clearing the re-erection site down by Glory Mill, and we hope to get the ground works completed by a contractor before the season starts, with a view to beginning the re-erection later in the year.

The interior of the Toll House got a make-over this year; Jennie Booth's stalwart artefacts team did a splendid job of repainting the front room.

The Prefab lost its front door, for a while. It was necessary to remove it to replace the outer skin and repair part of the frame.

A new set of doors has been made and fitted to the Iron Age House. They have been constructed from split ash by Henry Russell; you may remember him from the sawing course last year and the work on the doors for Arborfield.

John Hyde-Trutch, Buildings Manager

Obituaries

Myrtle Thrower

10 February 1919 – 7 February 2007

Myrtle Thrower was an amazing woman, full of enthusiasm for everything she did. She spent forty years in the teaching profession, and twenty-five years in retirement. I first met Myrtle as a young teacher, in 1972, when she appointed me as one of her teachers at Brushwood School in Chesham. She expected the same high standards from her staff and pupils as she demanded of herself, but she cared about them too. I have good memories of working with her, both in school and taking children on residential school visits to Swanage and Shortenils.

A very active Museum volunteer

In 1981, Myrtle retired from teaching, and found herself in a very different position – “from ‘she who must be obeyed’ to a forgotten has-been”. She soon picked up the threads of a busy life again. During these years, she travelled extensively – including regular visits to China and Malaysia, becoming the first westerner to attend a degree course in Malaysia studying Chinese brush painting. She also became very active here at the Museum as a volunteer, selling tickets with Len and Esme Baker and others – until the introduction of the ‘new-fangled tills’ – and in the early days of the Museum’s education service. She was also keen to get others interested in the Museum’s work – including my family!

Myrtle Thrower was an amazingly energetic and enthusiastic person, and it was a privilege to have known and worked with her.

Pam Linsey, Interpreter

In memory of Val Seagrave

It was with sadness that the staff and volunteers at the Museum heard about the passing of one of our stalwart Toll House stewards, Val Seagrave, at the beginning of February.

Help and support, no matter what the job

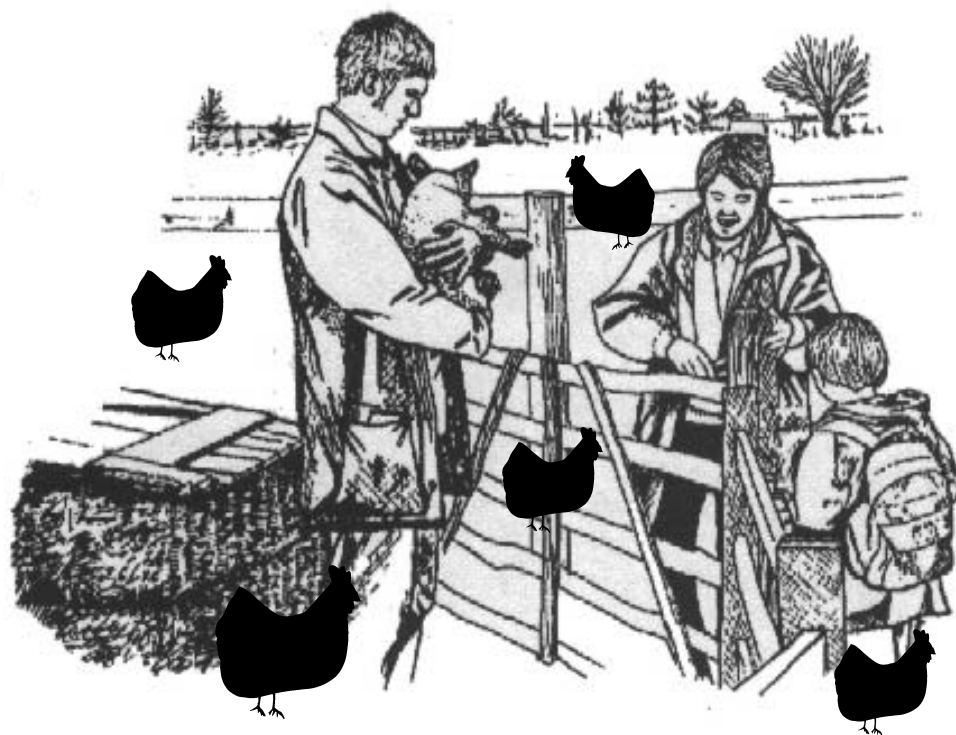
Val will be remembered for her dedication to the Museum – still volunteering last year between chemotherapy treatments, whenever her health would allow – but, more importantly, for the cheerful smile she always carried (no matter what the weather!), and for the way she always welcomed a chat with staff, volunteers and visitors alike. Although we may all remember her as a steward, I am also very grateful for all the help and support she gave all of us staff, no matter what the job. For me, it was helping with activities at special events, and for Conway it was helping to research, develop and design the new dairy display in Borehamwood Cattle Byre that was finished last season.

We all have our own personal memories of Val, and I know that we will all miss her.

Melissa Maynard, Education Officer

Fun pages for kids!

Under fives



The chickens have escaped and are lost in the farm. There are five of them. Can you help the Farm Manager to find them? Circle them when you find them. You could also colour the picture in when you have found all the chickens.

Age 6 to 11



















See if you can find in the word search below all the names of things that you can see at the Museum. Why not have a look at our website and learn more about what there is to do here - and come for a great day out!






F	B	C	R	O	C	S	H	T	A	P
U	I	I	C	L	A	T	O	V	U	V
D	F	E	F	G	F	R	O	O	P	U
P	A	T	L	E	E	V	O	L	U	R
E	R	B	U	D	T	J	X	U	U	R
E	M	I	U	T	S	D	P	N	S	E
H	E	H	O	R	S	E	L	T	H	D
S	R	U	V	B	C	U	I	E	O	C
O	A	P	O	H	S	B	N	E	L	U
E	H	O	U	S	E	S	M	R	A	F
O	P	S	N	R	A	B	V	S	X	Y
P	O	N	D	U	B	S	T	A	O	G

- FIELDS
- GOATS
- FARMER
- BARN
- HOUSE
- VOLUNTEERS
- HORSE
- FARM
- PATHS
- POND
- SHEEP
- SHOP
- CAFE

Over 12s

Try your hand at our buildings Sudoku! You can draw the buildings, or use the letters given in the key on the left. Have fun! The solution will be in the next issue of Update. Why not go to our website – www.coam.org.uk – and find out more about our buildings .

-  Henton (H)
-  Leagrave (L)
-  Arborfield (A)
-  Forge (F)
-  Iron Age House (I)

Competition time!

Age 6 and over

We would like you to design a poster to advertise one of the following events:

Prelude to D-Day, 26-28 May

Heavy Horse Show, 24 June

Classic Vehicles Show, 21 & 22 July

Mediaeval Pageant (The Lion Rampant), 11 & 12 August

If you are one of the lucky winners, your poster will be displayed in our shop. There are two age categories: age 6-10; and age 12 and over. Please do have a look at our website too, to get some ideas. Please send in your poster well before the first of the events listed above, so that we have plenty of time to judge and make good use of it!

Send your entries to Laura Smith at the Museum

There are lots of events for all ages at Chiltern Open Air Museum this season - have a look on our website, and plan your summer with us!

I'd also love to hear from you with your ideas of what fun things you would like to see in the Kids' pages of the next issue of *Update*. Contact me by email on admincoam@btconnect.com or write to me at the Museum.

Laura Smith, Administration Officer

Who's who at Chiltern Open Air Museum

President

The Rt. Hon. The Lord Carrington,
K.G., C.H., K.C.M.G., M.C.

Patrons

Paul Daniels Esq
James Elles M.E.P.
Sir Frank Gibb
Cheryl Gillan M.P.
Sir John Johnson
The Hon. Sir William McAlpine Bart.
Viscount Norwich
Lady Wilson

Museum Board Chairman

The Reverend Derek Upcott
01494 837505

Vice Chairman and Company Secretary

Verena Clark

Treasurer

Helen Hall

Museum Director

Sue Shave

Buildings Manager

John Hyde-Trutch

Site and Farm Manager

Conway Rowland

Visitor Services Officer

Jenny Simmonds

Education Officer

Melissa Maynard

Events Officer

Paul Hannon

Catering Manager and IT Co-ordinator

Chris Maynard

Press and Marketing Consultant

Phil Holbrook

Administration Officer

Laura Smith

Museum Assistant

Jennie Booth

Volunteer Co-ordinator

Tom Crosby – 01923 774637

Hawk and Owl Trust – Education Officer

Rhona Taylor – 01494 876262

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01844 344461

Treasurer

Dick Lister
01494 675419

Membership Secretary

Beth Neill
(Contact through the Museum)

Charity no. 286534

