



FRIENDS OF THE WINDSOR & ROYAL BOROUGH MUSEUM NEWSLETTER 100 SPRING 2022

The Museum has reopened

The museum reopened its doors to visitors again on Thursday 3rd March 2022 with the Royal Windsor Information Centre sharing the space.

We saw a record number of visitors during the first month of reopening and have received some lovely positive feedback from visitors. The team have worked tremendously hard to enable the doors to open again. We'd also like to express our thanks to the volunteers for their support and help during this time – we could not have done it without you.

We are now working towards getting the tours of the Guildhall up and running via a bookable system to enhance the visitor experience and volunteer role.



Left to right:

Debbie: Information Assistant,

Claudia: Information Centre Manager,

Stephanie: Museum Manager,

Massimiliano: Information Assistant

CHAIR'S REPORT

Welcome to the 100th edition of our newsletter! To celebrate this special event we have invited some of the original Friends to record their memories of the early days and, perhaps re-kindle your own recollections of our group. Please enjoy and thank you to all those who contributed.

Our first evening meeting will take place on April 12th, and I'm delighted to say that the inimitable Richard Snailham has agreed to present a talk on 'Camel Trekking in Kenya' – the mind boggles!

The museum is now well and truly open and has proved to be very busy although, sadly, we are not as yet doing tours. Hopefully, once someone makes a decision, they will begin in the near future.

Gordon Marshall has kindly volunteered to join the Committee and we thank him very much. I'm confident that he will be a great asset .

Hope to see as many of you as possible in April.

Len.

A note from the Treasurer:

Subscriptions

It has to be said, we must be one of the very few organisations that have, once again, kept their subscriptions the same as previous years, and there a few ways listed below to pay for those who do not pay by standing order.

Membership fees:

Individual £10

Joint Spouse/Partner £15

Family (2 adults & children under 10) £15

Should you wish to pay by standing order:

Sort Code 01-08-15 Account No 73372323

Start Date 1st June (Continuing payment on an annual basis payable 1st June every following year)

Payable to Friends of the Windsor & Royal Borough Museum

Use your own name as reference

Should you wish to pay direct into our bank account:

Sort Code 01-08-15 Account No 73372323

Due date 1st June 2022

PAYABLE TO Friends of the Windsor & Royal Borough Museum

Use you own name as reference

Should you wish to pay by cheque:

Make payable to; Friends of the Windsor & Royal Borough Museum

Post to C Regale-Day (Treasurer)

33 Holly Crescent

Windsor SL4 5SL

Queen Victoria's Visit

Leslie's piece in the January 2022 Newsletter mentioned the Clewer Sisters.

I thought readers might be interested in the following story about Queen Victoria, told to me by Rev Ainslie Swift during an interview in March 2014:

From 1850 - 2001, the Clewer Sisters provided valuable services to the Clewer community.

Queen Victoria was the supreme governor of the Church of England and saw herself as a devout but broadminded Anglican who was also Head of State over a multi-racial and multi-ethnic empire.

At some point during the reign of Queen Victoria, it was suggested that she might like to acknowledge the good works of the Clewer Sisters, by visiting their convent. She eventually agreed but only on condition that her visit was a private one and not in her official capacity as Head of State.

On the day of the visit, about 100 sisters lined up as Queen Victoria and the Mother Superior slowly walked along the line. As each sister was introduced, they curtsied – which seemed to cause the Queen some anguish. Eventually, the Queen stopped, turned to the Mother Superior, and said rather testily:

“We thought it was made perfectly clear that this visit was in a private capacity and not officially as monarch, yet your sisters are curtseying”.

“I am most terribly sorry, said the Mother Superior, “may I explain”?

“Please do”, said the Queen.

“The sisters”, said the Mother Superior, “are not curtseying to you, Ma'am, but to me”.

Stephen Simmons

Memories of Tinkers Lane

Before we had a museum, volunteers used to meet at the museum store in Tinkers Lane on a Wednesday morning to help the curator to look after the Royal Borough Museum Collection. The usual suspects were Leslie Grout, Hester Davenport, Pamela Marson, Brigitte Mitchell, Beryl Hedges and Malcolm and Gloria Lock, but each week there would be just four of us as space did not allow for more. There was always a lot of chatting and banter around the table, but mostly we talked about the museum we were all hoping for. On one Wednesday morning in May 2003 in an idle moment, Hester, Pamela, Leslie and Brigitte decided to write a poem about our plight.

We are the volunteers, the volunteers are we,
A-working down in Tinkers Lane, we do it all for free.
We are the knights of Tinkers Lane, but tinkers we are not,
Tho' when you come to see the store, you'll think that's what you've got!
The town has no museum, so everything's in store,
But packing things and stacking things, is a tremendous chore.
A place is in the pipeline, they say, but we ourselves,
Just hear the gurgling in the pipes, around the storeroom shelves.

Once a year we organised an open day at the store and everyone was invited. There was a hustle and bustle to get the place tidied up, artefacts were liberated from their boxes and off shelves and laid out on tables for visitors to inspect. We were allowed extra space in the Canteen and short talks were given during the day on different displays. There was always a steady stream of visitors throughout the day, and one could often hear the words "This should really be displayed in a proper museum."



Brigitte's Big Day

Chairman of the Friends at the time, Dr. Brigitte Mitchell, greeted the Queen when she came to open the museum for the second time, ten years ago.

We do not know who took this picture, but if it was you, please let us know and we will acknowledge it in the next Newsletter.

Windsor Express 1951

Judith Hunter, MBE

Judith Hunter took over as Honorary Curator in 1977. Many of the items that were mentioned in the newspaper article shown opposite were not there when I went in to help her. The catalogue was handwritten on cards. Reading Museum, as the County Museum had asked for several of the exhibits to be sent to them. Many had been returned to the people who had kindly lent them for the opening. Judith had an office just wide enough to have a typewriter in it. Nevertheless she managed to get a large number of people to help her. However, in 1982 the council wanted to have the use of the room on the ground floor to hire out for events, which (they thought) would bring in more money than visitors to the museum.

Judith arranged for the artefacts to be stored at the Council's Depot at Tinkers Lane. I remember the day in 1982 when we went into the Guildhall and, with Judith supervising, carefully wrapped the exhibits and packed them in brown cardboard boxes. (some of which are still in the store at Tinkers Lane.) I can still remember, walking sideways down the steps at the Guildhall with one person at each end of a box, and putting them on the tailgate of a council lorry. Everything was stored in half of the room that now has proper storage fittings.

At the suggestion of a member of the Friends, Judith was awarded an MBE for her services to museums, and as she received it from the Queen she said "But we don't have a museum in Windsor, Ma'am."

Only a few weeks later, Judith died of breast cancer.

Pamela Marson

Volunteering at the Museum

I have been a volunteer steward at the museum for the last two years—two hours every other Wednesday morning. At least that is what I very gingerly volunteered for, some five years or so after I had retired from a job in a busy London Hospital.

Little did I know that just two years on, I would have made new friends (and this after having lived in Windsor for 40 years, our 3 children attended local schools – I thought I knew every one) met such a variety of visitors, from home and abroad; gained knowledge and skills, and most importantly had lots of fun. What else do you need in your retirement?

So what do we do? Well, even if I were to stick to just my 2 hours every other week, I would have got to know the Museum very well. There is such a wealth of enormously interesting things to look at, learn about, to say to local people who pop in, and then in turn you listen to what they have to say and learn more. And then gradually I would get to know about the Guildhall itself, maybe going up to the Council Chamber with a more experienced steward and hearing how they interact with the visitors as they guide them around the building. Then you try it yourself and then you realise that each tour you give is really just a chat about what you are all looking at. I had a couple of lovely American ladies who knew *everything* about the Royal Family, so to be in the Ascot Room where Charles and Camilla got married and a family whose children stood in the dock, looking very sorry for themselves, and then sat in the Mayoral Chair up on the dais, looking very important and the people, often from New World Countries, who absolutely gaze in amazement at the Display Board in the Vestibule listing the Bailiffs, and Mayors from 1321 to the present day. Then there are the portraits of former Mayors in the Mayor's Parlour, all wearing the same chain of Office as Mayor George Davis in 1820. He didn't want a Knighthood, he asked George IV for something he could pass on to future Mayors.

Since then, a colleague, Chrissie, and myself found ourselves being more and more involved with the children's activities, for a further five years,

building up a loyal 'clientele' who would join us every Tuesday and Thursday during the school holidays, including half-terms, for some sort of activity - often chaotic, often noisy, often intense, often messy - always creative, always informative, always challenging and GREAT FUN. From demonstrating the circumference of the largest tree in the Great Park, using a piece of string and lots of children, on the Corn Market, thereby impeding the progress of people passing through on route to the bus stop, to using real feathers from a feather pillow (it seemed like a good idea at the time) for a craft activity - they flew everywhere - to getting the children to compile their own version of 'The Museum Chronicle' - including "Dexter's Diary", Windsor's Roving Reporter entitled 'My Story Today'. Do you all know of Dexter, the Windsor cat? He often visited the Museum. Well, what he got up to, according to our young visitors, beggars belief. I think there was one encounter with Royalty, and one encounter with the Law, as a witness to a dastardly deed. Making a model aircraft, the Hurricane, was very successful. The secret is to stick the smallest coin you can find - a farthing is best! - on the nose and this ensures that it maintains its height and flies for longer and farther. We tested this out, again on the Corn Market, and the competitive side of the children and the adults with them came out! The morse code activity, sending a message across the Atlantic via the first transatlantic telegraph cable, was great fun too. Sometimes we would find that the visitors to the Museum (it was always open on activity days) would be interested, perhaps bemused, and often contributed a snippet of information, as I believe happened on the Dot, Dot, Dash, Dash day. We were grateful to Malcolm Lock, (a former Chairman of the Friends) and to the local branch of the TA for the making, and loaning of the Morse Code units.

The other branch of my Museum involvement is as a curatorial volunteer at Tinker's Lane, where over 13,000 items (the Collection) are housed. Such an interesting area to volunteer in and I look forward to returning there as soon as it reopens to us and to members of the public.

Sue Richardson

Leslie's piece: **An episcopal achievement**

Over an archway in Grove Road is an interesting coat of arms: on one side of the shield are two keys crossed diagonally over a sword; on the other, three scallop shells. The shield is surmounted by a mitre, so clearly it is the coat of arms of a Bishop. Where a Bishop has his own coat of arms he displays it alongside the arms of his diocese. Very little colour remains, but reference books can supply the missing details.

The gold crossed keys are placed above a silver sword with a gold hilt all on a red background. There would have been a white martlet with the shells to indicate a fourth son (a martlet is a heraldic bird with no feet) Heraldically the shield is described thus:

Dexter: Gules a sword erect in pale argent the hilt in base or surmounted by two keys endorsed in saltire of the last (Exeter)

Sinister: Gules three escallops argent: a martlet for difference, (Keppel)

Crest : a mitre or.

The arms are, therefore, those of a member of the Keppel family who was the Bishop of Exeter.

Frederick Keppel, fourth son of the second Earl of Albemarle was born in 1728 and became Canon of Windsor at the early age of 28 In 1762 he was consecrated Bishop of Exeter and three years later appointed Dean of Windsor. He held both offices until he died in 1777 aged only 48 and was buried in St George's Chapel. At his request all his sermons were buried with him. His grandson, Frederick Walpole Keppel sold the extensive Keppel estate to the Crown in 1843 for £52,500 and it was George, 3rd son of the 7th Earl, whose wife Alice Edmonstone was mistress of Edward VII.

The archway may have led to a coach house and stabling though the date of 1799 is 22 years after the bishop's death.

Leslie Grout

References: Burke's Peerage, Woodward: Ecclesiastical Heraldry, Papworth: Ordinary of British Armorial, Bond: The Monuments of St. George's Chapel. Ollard, The Deans and Canons of Windsor.



Photograph by Jacqueline O'Brien

March 2022



Dr Judith Hunter MBE

The Friends—the Beginnings

For me, the beginning was a poster on a tree in the grounds of All Saints Church, Dedworth. It advertised a course of talks on the history of Windsor by Judith Hunter. My mother and brother were members of the Slough Historical and Archeological Society and they had spoken highly of this person. And the talks were on my day off, so I decided I to sign on.

Judith was surprised to find that the only books available to serious historians about the history of Windsor town were “The Annals” which was written in 1848 and highly academic, and several hundred bound copies of the Windsor Express which were huge, and awkward to handle. There were a few books aimed at tourists, and about the Castle and the Royal family. Judith had already written a booklet for the Castle Hotel, and knew that writing a history of Windsor would be a large undertaking, so she agreed to take this course of lessons in the hope that she would find people to help.

There was a good turn out including quite a few people who had recently retired and would be able to help, including the head of history at the local boys school. But when she proposed to start at the beginning there were a few people who said they were more interested in Sydney Camm and the surrounding villages, than medieval bakers. She completed the course to every one’s satisfaction but this did not make much progress with the book.

At the end of the course she asked for people who were interested in the project, either writing or drawing, to stay behind. This small group became “Windsor Local History Publications Group” and we wrote chapter 1, and published that on its own. However, people still wanted to write about what they were interested in and not what they were told to write. So it was suggested that we started a magazine and anyone could write what they wanted. And so “Windlesora” was born. I thought maybe we could collect all the articles together and make a book out of them. But so far.....

When Maitland Underhill, who was in charge of the Guildhall Exhibition since 1951 retired, and Judith took over, she needed people to help her, so I volunteered.

Pamela Marson

WASHING LINES.

I live in a Victorian terraced house in Bourne Avenue. They were built in the late 1880s as military married quarters and were originally of the standard two-up and two-down design of the period. Of course in the interim most have been modernised and have sprouted the usual 'add-ons' of loft conversions, extensions, conservatories, etc. The gardens are quite long and today back onto a large area of allotments although, in the past, would have had a view of the Park in the distance.

At the time of construction a closely spaced row of fir trees was planted all along the bottom of the gardens. Due to old age, disease and gales most have gone but they were put there for a specific reason.

Included in our original deeds is a very unusual, (if not unique), clause that states that each occupant is responsible for the upkeep of the trees along the width of their property so that Her Majesty, (Victoria) may not be offended by the sight of soldiers underwear hanging on washing lines as she drove through the Park.

All I can say is that she must have had very good eyesight!

On the subject of washing lines at the start of the first lockdown 'she-who-must-be -obeyed' decided to install a new one. The main problem was that the far end of the line was inaccessible due to our garden being more akin to a jungle than a cultivated plot. Masses of weeds, huge bramble bushes, holly and the remains of a long collapsed greenhouse (with contents), made up the major components. It was decided that something drastic had to be done so we spent the whole of the summer clearing the overgrowth and general detritous resulting in numerous trips to the Council tip and, in the end, a very presentable garden including a large patio that had been buried under a foot of weeds and soil for many years.

Finally I decided to make a pond in a suitable place near the house. So more digging commenced. Oh, how I love Thames Valley clay! Not long after I started there was a sudden metallic clang as the spade hit something hard. Not knowing what I'd found I went into Time Team mode, (including a Phil Harding hat) and carefully excavated around the object. To my surprise this appeared to be a large cast-iron sphere. "Canon ball!" I thought "Maybe someone lobbed one over from the barracks?" Finally I got the thing free and began to clean it up. It became apparent that this wasn't a cannon ball as it had a square tapered hole through its centre. The object weighed 52 lbs and was about 7 inches in diameter. (Sorry, I only do proper units!) What I had was the ball from a ball-and-chain. This used to be a common method of tethering horses. A manacle around the fetlock was attached to a long chain which in turn was connected to a tapered pin which was secured through the hole in the ball.

Resuming Time Team mode I excavated around in the hope of unearthing the missing parts but, alas, to no avail.

What was it doing there? Who knows. Perhaps the original owner kept his horse in the garden?

Len

P.S. We never did fit the new line!

Town and Crown

Town and Crown was on the first floor at 24 High Street in Windsor. The ground floor was the councils Information Centre, and there were council offices on the floors above. Our front room had a splendid view of the castle and Queen Victoria's statue. There were two cases of artefacts on display and the back room was used for events.

It was opened for members of the Friends to look round on 19th June 1995 and two days later the public were allowed in. So many events were held there—Friends talks, the Big Draw and Caroline McCutcheon led Children's Story Time, which my grandchildren loved. On one Saturday afternoon event, we had a cave man, who showed us many of the techniques he used to acquire his food. However, the council moved their Information Centre to the Central Railway Station and we had to move out in Feb 2006.



*Ron Hudson and
Hester Davenport
packing up at
Town & Crown*

The volunteers packed up all the exhibits which went back to the Tinkers Lane store and the glass cases were taken to the reading room in the Windsor Library where they remain today. The exhibitions in them are regularly changed.

The Information Centre is once again in the same building as the Museum in the Guildhall.

Museum Opening Hours

The museum is now open:

Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays
and Sundays

From 10am until 4pm.

Friends Meetings are held in the Community Room at Dedworth Library which is in the grounds of the Dedworth Schools, and begin at 7.30. There are plenty of parking spaces very close to the building in the evenings.

Friends Meetings in 2022

12th April Richard Snailham:

“Camel Trekking in Kenya”

Richard really is a splendid speaker and
not to be missed.

21st June (AGM) 2022

13 September 2022

This Newsletter is published by

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