

**Friends of the
Windsor & Royal Borough
Museum**

Newsletter 107

Spring 2024



Chairs' Report

Gerald Hyder

Hello Everyone,

Len has stepped back from being Chair of the Friends. He's held the role for 5 years or so, and has given generously of his time, and his wisdom! He's written a piece explaining why he has stood down on page 6. We all wish you well Len, and hope that you'll feel able to get involved again at the right time.

Louisa - a stalwart of the Museum team - has moved on after nearly 15 years at the Museum. Her knowledge and enthusiasm are remarkable! Colleagues, friends and volunteers gathered in the Guildhall on 8th March to present her with gifts and wish her well. She moves on to the Royal Collection Trust at the Castle. We'll miss you! Louisa has written a few words on page 8.

The Museum faces the most serious threat to its survival since its opening in 2011. The Council decided on 29th February to go ahead with the cuts outlined in the draft budget. The Economic Growth Team (where the Museum sits) must save £140k over 2 years. £90k of that falls to the Museum, and most of it has to be found in 2024/25. The Museum's current annual budget is around £100k, mostly staff costs. Remarkably, the Council did not allocate any budget to the Museum in 2023/24. This was only discovered when budget-setting began for 2024/25.

Are you still with me!

I delayed publishing this newsletter by a few weeks in the hope that the future of the Museum might be clearer by then. I speak regularly to Stephanie. Progress so far is slow. There is no commitment to keep the Museum in the Guildhall from either Councillors or RBWM senior managers. No alternative locations have been suggested. It's crucial that the Museum remains in the Guildhall, particularly if they are to significantly increase income. I've heard that the library is being mooted as an alternative - it's wholly unsuitable with insufficient space and is far too remote. External funding has been mentioned by Cllr Reynolds and senior managers, but staff experience suggests that organisations are loathe to support museums without a reliable income stream.

Trust status may be an option in due course.

Cllr Reynolds (Cabinet Member for Communities and Leisure) mentions partnership opportunities, the use of technology, better exposure to residents and visitors, and engagement with a wider demographic - all of which we support. I suspect that the Museum 'forward plan' will provide huge opportunities for all of these - but change requires time and adequate funding. The 3 part-time staff equate to just over 2 full-time staff in terms of hours worked!

Your committee decided in January that it would be counter-productive to get involved in a public spat with Councillors. It is gratifying to see the support the Museum has from residents - a petition with over 1100 signatures, the largest single issue of concern in the Budget Consultation (65 residents) and significant social media support. We contacted Friends and made them aware of developments in mid-January. We then engaged with all 41 Councillors, believing that raising awareness of the huge range of benefits the Museum provided - together with public support - might lead to a review. I attended the Cabinet meeting on 20th February and spoke for my allotted 3 minutes. The response by Cllr Reynolds made clear that our efforts were not going to be successful.

Our hope is that the Museum will be given an initial 12 months to develop a viable plan. A small 'reference group' comprising 2 staff, 2 volunteers, 2 Friends and 1 Windsor Local History Group representative has been formed. Change is inevitable - it's challenging but often beneficial! We will now concentrate on supporting our Museum staff, getting involved in the 'forward plan' and advocating for a fully-functioning Museum which reflects the wonderful story of Windsor and the surrounding areas.

Thank you, Stephanie, Louisa, Becky and Alex, for your commitment over the last few months, contending with budget issues and the Tinkers Lane flooding, as well as the normal running of the Museum!

AGM - Tuesday 25th June 2024 - 7-9pm at Woodies, Pirate Park, Dedworth, Windsor SL4 5AY. More to follow - including speakers - in the next newsletter. We really need Friends to attend at this critical time for the Museum.

Apologies for such a lengthy Chairs' Report!

Gerald Hyder

Museum Encounter

Visitors - Len Nash

Although I haven't met anyone that you could call famous at the museum and I certainly can't beat Richard's story, I have met some really interesting visitors.

Just before lockdown I did a tour with an elderly Australian couple. When we reached the council chamber the gentleman said, "Oh yes, I recognise some of these portraits. We have that one and those two over there and this one." By now I was rather bemused! His wife smiled and said, "He's the Governor of Queensland and we're dining at the Castle tonight with the Queen." We had a very pleasant tour and, shaking my hand as they left, he said that they had enjoyed it immensely. About two weeks later a parcel arrived at the museum addressed to me. Inside was a beautiful book about Government house, Queensland showing photos of all the portraits and a very nice 'thank you' note.

Amongst others that I've met unexpectedly was the grandson of one of the crew of the Dornier from which we have a piece of wreckage on display. He didn't expect to see or hear anything about the incident and was overjoyed when we gave him a copy of our research none of which he knew about and I gave him directions to the crash site.

A retired American lawyer was amazed to see our exhibit concerning Roderick Maclean and his attempted assassination of Queen Victoria. He had studied the case in detail at law school many years ago!

The First 10 Years

In 2021 the Museum showcased some of the objects and stories collected over the previous decade. It's an appropriate time to applaud the Museum's achievements over the first 10 years!

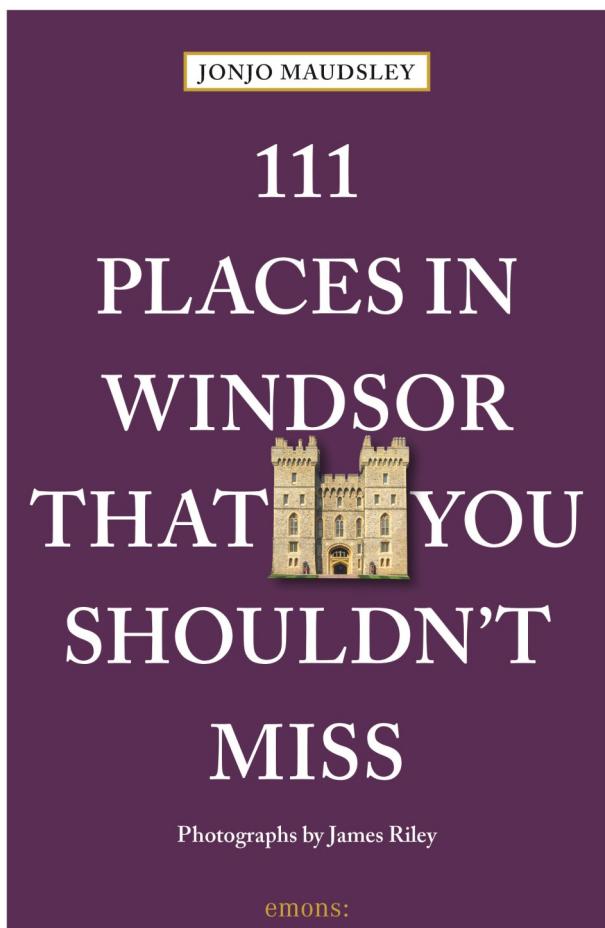
<http://windsormuseum.org.uk/exhibitions/exhibition-10-years-of-our-museum/>

Picture - Maitland Underhill - first curator 1951



Book Review - '111 Places In Windsor That You Shouldn't Miss' - Jonjo Maudsley

A fascinating book, beautifully illustrated by James Riley. It's a recent addition to the '111 Places,,,,,' series of guidebooks that now cover 30+ locations and themes across the UK. About half of the entries are in Windsor or Eton, the others are in or just outside the Borough. It's a book aimed at locals or perhaps visitors who are here for more than a couple of days. An eclectic mix, containing not only the obvious sites but also locations as diverse as the Cinnamon Café, the Death Warrant of King Charles I (well, a copy to be precise!), the Windsor pavement clock, the Union Workhouse in Old Windsor, and the Ankerwycke Oak. I discovered places worth visiting - although maybe I'll skip the house in Martins Heron that doubles as '4 Privet Drive' in a 2000 Harry Potter film! I learnt about Elizabeth Stile - accused of being one of 4 Windsor witches in 1579. She was paraded through the High St and later hung at Abingdon (there is some debate about whether she was hung or pardoned).



The Museum features with (of course) the story around the Cornmarket columns and the Hernes Oak exhibit.

It's not a history book as such; nor is it really a tourist guide. I thoroughly enjoyed reading it, and although I've lived in the Borough since 1988, I was surprised at what I didn't know!

How much do you know?

I've put together a quiz (with Jonjo's permission). It's on the next page. This fascinating book is available in Waterstones for £13.99 and online.

Gerald

How Well Do You Know Windsor And The Local Area?

1. On which feast day is the Eton Wall Game played?
2. What was the name of the Harry Potter film that used a house in Martins Heron as a location?
3. Where in the Borough will you find a Stock Exchange?
4. Where do cyclists finish the 'Bun Run'?
5. What two magnificent institutions did Thomas Holloway build?
6. Where - in around 1677 - was the first pineapple believed to have been cultivated in England?
7. Where in Windsor can the two green 'Penfold' letterboxes be found?
8. Where locally will you find a convent that survived the 'Dissolution of the monasteries' relatively unscathed?
9. Sir Edwin Lutyens designed the Cenotaph, the Thiepval Monument in France and the India Gate in New Delhi. What did he design in Windsor?
10. Where did the Beatles last photoshoot take place?

Answers on page 9

Standing Down - Len Nash

For some time I have had some medical issues that need attention. The stress and worry about the museum has not helped and I was not putting in as much effort as I should have been. Therefore I reluctantly decided to stand down from the committee at least for the time being and my health has to come first.

Gerald has very kindly agreed to act as Chair until the AGM and has already proved that he is more than capable of doing the job of steering us through these difficult times.

I still intend to do my usual shifts at the museum and some of the admin. for the Friends. Hopefully things will have improved by the AGM and I may return.

Louisa's Farewell

I already knew of the museum collection when I started in May 2009, working as museum assistant under Caroline McCutcheon. I had met some members of the Friends in the 1990s, when I was a child and my mother first joined the Friends, during which time I also met our honorary curator, Judith Hunter - although, sadly, I can't remember the meeting clearly.

I worked as a funeral arranger at Pymm & Hooper in Maidenhead (2002-2009). On the office wall there was a print illustration of a very elaborate gate, and the words, 'In memoriam Charles Knight' and 'new gateway... adjoining 'Bachelors' Acre', Windsor'. For years I kept admiring the print and thinking, 'who is Charles Knight' and 'where is Bachelors' Acre'?

We have a modern copy of that print in the museum collection. It introduced me to the collection before I was even here and is currently one of the many museum objects being stored safely off site, while we clean and reassemble the roller racking storage bays at the Tinkers Lane store (2023-2024 Flood Recovery Project) which will be completed after I leave.

I entered the world of museums at Wycombe Museum in March 2005, firstly as a volunteer and later as a part-time museum assistant. I wrote a children's trail for the 'Vile Victorians' exhibition in 2007. The exhibition travelled and was installed for a period of time at Windsor Guildhall, as a joint arrangement with Windsor & Royal Borough Museum. It featured objects from



The Museum Team

Stephanie

Louisa

Becky

Alex

both museums, including the Knife Polish, a wooden peg (currently in 'Childhood' Case 6) and the Gas Ledger (currently in 'Working Life' Case 5A). When looking through a box in the store in 2013, I found a copy of my trail which Caroline had edited on the last page to make it more Windsor-themed. My museum work had made it to Windsor & Royal Borough Museum before I did!

When Queen Elizabeth II opened the museum at Windsor Guildhall in December 2011, I got to meet her by the 'Working Life' display case. Having spent over a year accessioning many of the 100 or so items on display in the museum, I quickly forgot everything I knew when in the slightly intimidating presence of Her Majesty, and had to sneakily glance at the captions in the case. The Charles Knight memorial brooch, and a Windsor Crested china ornament in the shape of the Round Tower (accessioned by me in September 2009) were two of the objects in the case.

My last exhibition is 'Heraldry Here' (2024), now on display in the museum and brings my career at the museum full circle, featuring a Royal Coat of Arms and carved wooden crest of the Prince of Wales Feathers. A new addition to the museum collection on display is a small china urn, featuring the Eton crest. On the bottom of the urn it reads, 'Urn found at Old Windsor...Published by Dyson & Sons, Thames St., Windsor'. With the help of eBay, I now have my very own replica of this urn and a little crested china Round Tower, which will sit on my bookshelf as mementoes of my time at the museum.

That's 15 years of objects...well, 14 years 9 months and 25 days. But who's counting? And I have loved every minute. Thanks to all the staff, volunteers and Friends for their support and friendship over the years. I will miss you all.

Louisa Knight, Museum, Arts and Local Studies Officer.

Due to a lack of space in this issue, Len's follow up to his article in the December issue about his brush with death at White Waltham will appear in the June newsletter.

'Mine's A Pint Of Castrol' should be interesting!

Sir Sydney Camm

In the Winter 2023 newsletter I mentioned that I'd recently seen Sir Sydney Camm's drawing set from the 1950's at Brooklands Museum. Len has shared further info.....

'Did you know that the museum owns Camm's first aircraft engine? Built by A.V.Roe it was initially bought by a lady aviatrix in Ireland but later sold to the Windsor Model Aircraft Club, who intended to install it in their man-carrying glider in about 1910ish. They never flew it but the museum has an excellent sound archive about their adventures with it. It's on loan to Brooklands although we borrowed it back along with an undercarriage wheel from the glider and some of Camm's personal items, (like his drawing instruments) in 2016 when we commemorated the 50th anniversary of his death'. Len

Quiz Answers

1. St Andrew's Day
2. 'Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone'
3. Sunninghill - 'The Stock Exchange' is a very upmarket second-hand clothes shop. In 2012 Kate Middleton - whilst Princess of Wales - was seen wearing a dress from the store (apparently!)
4. Cinnamon Café in the Royal Station - famous for their cinnamon buns!
5. Royal Holloway College (now University) at Egham, and the Holloway Sanatorium in Virginia Water (now high-end housing)
6. Dorney Court
7. An 1988 replica is adjacent to the Guildhall; the other - in the Royal Station - is an original
8. Burnham Abbey, Taplow
9. Queen Mary's Dolls' House, Windsor Castle
10. Not in the book but hopefully a future article in the newsletter!
Tittenhurst Park near Ascot in Aug 1969. Home to John Lennon 1969-71, and to Ringo Starr 1973-88. Also Thomas Holloway (1860s - 1883)

Museum Update March 2024

Museum Accreditation

The Arts Council considered our application to renew museum Accreditation at their panel meeting in January. They felt that overall, we had provided a good application meeting most of the requirements of Accreditation, with clear priorities outlined. They recognised that we have plans to increase self-generated income. However, unusually, the panel was not able to come to a decision at this stage due to the uncertain nature of the budget for 2024-25. Once we have more clarity internally, we will be able to share more information with the Arts Council to get our award renewed.

Flood to the museum store

The remedial work at the museum store following the low-level water leak back in September continues. Mould was found under the roller racking unit flooring which needed to be removed. This required moving 400 + boxes of objects to an offsite storage facility, dismantling the roller racking unit and sanitising the area. Unfortunately, the section of flooring supporting the roller racking unit needs replacing so the project to reassemble everything has been delayed by 6-8 weeks.



Other news

As you will have read, after nearly 15 years, Louisa Knight has left the muse-

um and the Council as she has secured a full-time role at Windsor Castle. What is our loss is the Royal Collection Trust's gain. She will be missed tremendously particularly for her collection's expertise. She had a lovely send off – thank you to all those who contributed to her collection – she was presented with an English Heritage membership amongst other things.

Alex, Becky and myself are hopeful for a transition year of funding whereby we work with senior officers on a more self-sustaining operating model for the future. We will be consulting with the newly formed Reference Group as we develop plans further.

Stephanie Lewis
Museum Manager

Alex, Becky
Museum, Arts & Local Studies Officers

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I hope that you have enjoyed the Newsletter. Would you like to contribute - an article perhaps, or an interesting old photo? An encounter in the Museum ?Please contact me - geraldhyder@outlook.com



On 27th Feb 2023 the Guildhall was the setting for Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and President of the European Commission Ursula Von Der Leyen to announce the historic Windsor Framework. RBWM produced an annotated picture for the media. The Museum team supplied the detail.

The web address is very long but you should be able to view it here
<https://tinyurl.com/yrr7syxs>

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