

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

## **Newsletter 110**

### **Winter 2024**



**Winter Sunshine - Henry VIII Gate**

**26th November 2024**

## Chairs' Report

### Gerald Hyder

Hello Everyone,

As the year draws to a close may I on behalf of the Committee wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. We are approaching a critical period for the Museum. The draft budget is normally published in mid-December, followed by a public consultation. It will be approved by the full Council in late February/early March 2025. The Council's financial position remains perilous

A meeting involving Jack Rankin MP, Councillor Jack Douglas (Communities & Leisure lead) and others took place on 15th November. I attended on behalf of the Friends. It was very positive, and I felt some reassurance over the Museum's future. A return to full operation will take some time, and funding remains a huge challenge. There were strong indications that the whole Guildhall operation might be considered as one entity and that there could be flexibility in using income from the profitable parts (weddings and events) to subsidise the museum. I suspect that this might be a 'stop-gap' solution' with a need to be self-supporting fairly quickly.



The museum team, Friends committee and others are already progressing initiatives from the Action Plan created after the July meeting. RBWM is funding some consultancy work by the Hampshire Cultural Trust. It is hoped that this will take place in December, and will identify further opportunities.

**Some excellent news - the museum has now extended its opening hours - with Christmas opening for four days from 17th - 20th December. Two-day opening on Tuesdays and Wednesdays will start on 7th January, Full details on page 9.**

Friends have been involved in tidying up the Ascot Room (which is now much more presentable), improving the retail offer, and moving objects salvaged from the flood back into the museum store. We have funded just under £500 towards 'Tap and Donate', and a similar amount for trolleys to assist with moving and storing larger objects in the museum store. We have also agreed £500 towards the costs of the 'Adopt an Object' initiative.

The museum has been successful in obtaining two grants from Museum Development South East; £500 to trial a 'Tap and Donate system, and set-up costs for 'Adopt an Object (to be launched in the New Year). They also obtained £5,000 for a project entitled 'Putting the jewel in the Royal Borough's crown at Windsor & Royal Borough Museum'. This will refocus some of our interpretation and displays to entice visitors in to see where HRH King Charles and Queen Camilla were married.

An earlier bid for a £50,000 Art Fund 'Reimagine' grant was unsuccessful; strong feedback and high scores indicate promise for future applications.

## **Missing Newsletters - 75 and 76**

As you might know we keep copies of the Friends Newsletter in the Museum Archive. We had a complete set, but a recent check revealed that numbers 75 and 76 were missing. If anybody has a copy that they'd be willing to donate to the Archive we'd be extremely grateful! Len.

## **It's Popular!**

Have you ever wondered how many places around the world are called 'Windsor'.....10? 15? 20? You are way out!



Click on this [link](#) to discover the answer, where they are, and other info. Strangely, there's only 1 other in the UK (Windsor, a suburb of Belfast). There's 24 in the USA, 1 in Bolivia and 1 in the Dutch Antilles! Discover them [here](#) and impress your friends with your new-found knowledge!

# **The Festival of Britain 1951 Stained Glass Window, Ascot Room, Windsor Guildhall**

**Gerald Hyder**

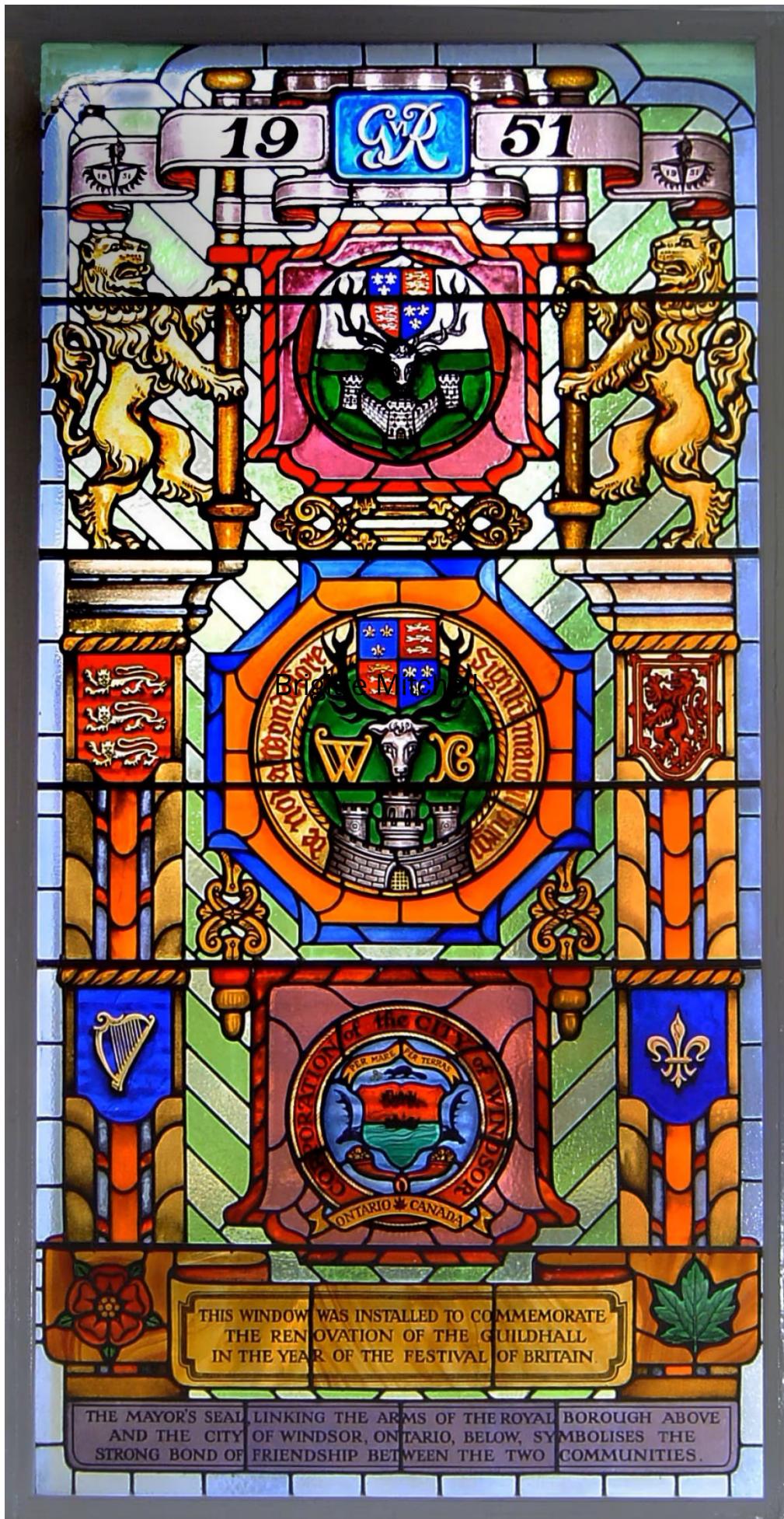
Museum volunteers were asked for their favourite objects. Here's mine. More to follow in future issues. **If you've got a favourite please let us know!**

My favourite object? I settled on something truly glorious! It's the stained glass window in the Ascot Room. It was installed to celebrate the renovation of the Guildhall in 1951 – the year of the Festival of Britain. It also recognises the strong bond of friendship between Windsor – in Ontario, Canada – and our own Windsor. The window dominates the room and is a riot of colour! It sits between the two formal portraits of Queen Victoria's youngest children – Prince Leopold and Princess Beatrice. It represents generosity, friendship, imagination and craftsmanship. Even on a dull day it brings a smile to my face, and when the sun streams into the room it is magnificent!

I've taken the liberty of using a full page to showcase the window. It deserves no less! The Festival logo appears in the top corners, the Mayor's seal fills the central medallion; above and below are the Borough Arms and the Arms of the City of Windsor, Ontario. British and Canadian national emblems appear at the side. I've been unable to establish where the window was made. The 'Stained Glass Works' at Old Windsor is long gone (they closed in 1890). If anybody can help solve this mystery, please contact me!

The Festival was initially intended to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Great Exhibition of 1851. It rapidly became a celebration of Britain and its achievements. It highlighted the best of British manufacturing, technology, design, and culture. The country was still recovering from the war, and the economy was struggling. Some foods were still rationed and large areas of London and other cities were still disfigured by bomb sites. The Festival centred on what is now the South Bank; the Royal Festival Hall is the only significant remnant.

Councils were encouraged to arrange initiatives. The Guildhall was dilapidated. Through the war it served as a command centre for the civil authorities, and a food store where residents got their ration books. The cost of renovation was estimated as over £7000. This included removing the windows enclosing the Corn Market, installing electricity (yes!), and a general refurbishment. The Mayor and citizens of Windsor, Ontario offered to help and made a significant contribution.



Picture courtesy of Brigitte Mitchell

The then Princess Elizabeth opened the refurbished building on 15th May 1951.

I'm a child of the 50's. I didn't quite make it in time for the Festival but I was around for the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953! Well, not at the event - I was only 3 weeks old at the time! I'm a proud Londoner and lived there until 1979. Many of my memories of London through the 50's and early 60's seem to be in black and white. Is that just me? I had a wonderful childhood, but the city was dreary and dirty. Just looking at the 1951 window reminds me that the 1950s were in fact full of light and a wonderful time to be a child!

In 2018 the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation highlighted the existence of the window. The article - "A stained glass window shows the "bond of friendship" between Windsor, Ontario and Windsor, UK" is still available online.

Brigitte Mitchell (then Chair of the Friends) met Mayor Dilkens on a visit to Windsor on her 2016 trip to Canada. She presented him with a photo of the 1951 window and a newspaper cutting. Both he and the local museum were unaware of the existence of the window! The mayor of Windsor could not come to the unveiling in 1951 but subsequently came to the UK and attended the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. Mayor Dilkens knew nothing about this and took the opportunity of a visit to England in 2019 to see Windsor (and the window) for himself.



Brigitte Mitchell, Mayor Drew Dilkens (Windsor, Ontario), and Sayonara Luxton (Mayor, Windsor and Maidenhead) in 2019.  
(courtesy of Brigitte Mitchell)

## Our Friends in Canada

At our last Friends committee meeting I was asked to contact our counterparts in Canada. I will be sending this newsletter to them, as well as seasonal greetings. I'll also highlight the longer article about the 1951 window in our website (in the 'Friends' Favourites' section). Hopefully I'll be able to include their reply in our next newsletter!

'Museum Windsor' consists of 3 three museum facilities within the City of Windsor, Ontario - the Chimczuk Museum, Maison Francois Baby House and the Duff-Baby Interpretation Centre. Their website is at

<https://www.citywindsor.ca/residents/culture/windsors-community-museum/chimczuk-museum>

Gerald Hyder

## Windsor Local History Group Open Day



Len and I attended the Open Day organised by our friends at the Windsor Local History Group (WLHG) on Saturday 2nd November. It was well-attended with visits from the Cllr Simon Ward (Mayor) and Jack Rankin (MP). We enjoyed engaging with the many local people there.

Gerald Hyder

## More about Fort Belvedere

Leslie Grout

Following on from the article (Newsletter 109) about Edward VIII and Fort Belvedere it might be of interest to explain the fort's origins.

It was built in 1750 to a design by Henry Flitcroft in brick and painted white and was part of the improvements begun by the Duke of Cumberland (of Culloden notoriety) to Windsor Great Park of which he was Ranger. It also included the creation of Virginia Water Lake.

The Fort is situated on Shrubbs Hill through which the Devils Highway ran. This was the Roman road to Silchester and at one time part of its course through the grounds of the fort could be made out after a shower when the line of the road dried out more quickly than the surrounding area. A visitor in 1754 stated that the main room was decorated with flowers and festoons in stucco with marble bas-reliefs over the doors. Cupboards leading off this room contained china for tea and coffee as well as a small library. John Wesley visited in 1771 and found many of the Duke's books 'not only religious but admirably well chosen.'

Belvedere was evidently a favourite retreat of the Duke, and it features in his portrait by Reynolds.

In the reign of George IV, it was given its present appearance by Wyatville who rendered the exterior and added the octagonal dining room where the Abdication document was signed.

The design was copied by owners of other estates; however, many went out of fashion and were either demolished or allowed to fall into decay, thereby creating the next fashionable feature.

One survival can be found in Devon and is on Haldon Hill in the parish of Dunchideock south-west of Exeter. It was built by Sir Robert Palk in 1788 as a tribute to his friend and benefactor General Stringer Lawrence whose statue stands inside. In 1989 it was described as being in a bad state of repair but was restored in 1995-6. Unlike the Fort the Haldon Belvedere is easily seen and is also open to visitors.

<https://www.haldonbelvedere.co.uk/about-hb/>

# Museum Update November 2024

There has been a lot of work going on over recent weeks and the volunteers have been kept fully informed. The highlights are as follows:

## Museum gallery opening hours

As from the 26 November we are now open on Tuesdays 10-4pm with a short closure of 30 minutes for lunch.

As a special pre-Christmas offer (to enable people to purchase last minute gifts or cards) we will be open on Tuesday 17 to Friday 20 December from 10-4pm.

We will then close for Christmas from 21 December 2024 to 6 January 2025. From 7 January 2025 we will open every Tuesday and Wednesday from 10-4pm with a short closure of 30 minutes for lunch.

## Museum store.

All the objects that were affected by the low-level water leak to our museum store last year have now been moved back from their temporary location.

There is still a lot of work to be done to put items away in their normal locations and update our database. This forms part of our documentation backlog (every museum has one) so we will be planning regular time to continue this work. However, this will be paused for a few weeks so we can support volunteers to take on more of the operational tasks involved with opening the museum gallery. Store volunteers will help with some collection related tasks at the museum instead for a few weeks.

## Grant funding

We have been successful with the following two small grants from Museum Development South East:

£500 to trial tap & donate system in the gallery and set up costs for an adopt and object scheme. The Friends of the Museum agreed to match-fund this grant so they will be contributing just under £500 towards this project which is now underway.

Also £5,000 for a project entitled 'Putting the jewel in the Royal Borough's crown at Windsor & Royal Borough Museum'. This will help us to refocus some of our interpretation and displays and entice visitors in to see where HRH King Charles and Queen Camilla were married.

### Future planning

Hampshire Cultural Trust have been engaged to carry out a review of our business model and operations and a customer-orientated review of our current museum offer. We hope to receive their final report by mid-January 2025.

Thank you to all the volunteers and the Friends Committee who continue to work hard to support us. We can't do what we do without you, so we are extremely grateful for everything you do.

Stephanie Lewis  
Museum Manager

## **Totem Pole - Windsor Great Park**

The Windsor Totem Pole was gifted to Queen Elizabeth II by the Government of British Columbia to mark their centenary in 1958. It has stood close to Virginia Water Lake for over 60 years, reminding us of the links and friendship between Canada and the United Kingdom.

It will now be laid to rest and slowly deteriorate and decay. This decision has been reached after discussion with Chief Mungo Martin's family. It was agreed that as the Pole was gifted to the late Queen and has spent its life in Windsor Great Park, it is appropriate and right that it should be laid down at a location in The Great Park, where it will remain an attraction for years to come.



Image GH

# Our New Website

[friendsofwindsormuseum.org](http://friendsofwindsormuseum.org)

**Our new and exciting website went live on Monday 23rd September.**

Our 'old' website hadn't been updated for several years. Ken Sutherland - who had already designed websites for the [Windsor Local History Group](#), and [The Swan in Clewer](#) - has been instrumental in creating a fantastic new website. In the last few months he has added additional content, including some more 'Friends' Stories' recounting memorable encounters with museum visitors. There's a very useful 'Noticeboard' where you can keep up-to-date with news from the museum. You can even have updates sent straight to your email inbox!

Please take a look - it's well worth a visit, and there's more to come!

**We are keen to increase membership of the Friends, and to remain a key player in ensuring that our Museum thrives.** A larger Friends of the Museum allows us a bigger voice. It allows us to engage more effectively with RBWM and others. It allows us to better support the Museum financially. A new website will hopefully increase membership (we currently have 60+ members, with several joining in the last month or so). We are also going to add more content to a rejuvenated Facebook page, and create a new Instagram presence.

Thanks as ever for your support.

Gerald

**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? Feedback about the new website is also helpful.**

**Volunteers - don't be shy! If you've a story to tell of an encounter at the museum, or an exhibit that you particularly like - share it !**

**Please contact me at**

**wrbmfriends@gmail.com**



## **Dexter - Probably Our Favourite Visitor!**

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