



STEYNING MUSEUM

The Museum, Church Street, Steyning, West Sussex BN44 3FJ Registered Charity 1169540

Message from the Chairman - Muriel Wright

Welcome to our first newsletter of 2021; we hope this finds you all safe and well. At the end of this newsletter there is an important message from the Museum's Trustees that requires your attention.

200 Club

December Draw

1st Prize Barbara Hanson £100
2nd Prize Mike Denwood £50
3rd Prize Alan Edwards £25

January Draw

1st Prize Phil Alexander £35
2nd Prize R J Woolgar £25
3rd Prize Alec Harden £15

Curator of Exhibitions - Andrew Woodfield

STEYNING NIGHT OUT is a permanent exhibit installed in the former research area (above the dead rat!). This exhibit looks at films made in the town, amateur dramatics, concerts, and a brief history of the towns pubs. The Chequer Inn sign, donated by the hotel, is also displayed.

In the same area, on the opposite wall is a temporary exhibit giving the results of the recent survey by **STEYNING GREENING**. This is due to be on display until Easter but any further closures due to the pandemic will see it on show longer.

The large painting of the **Parish Church** (that hung above the research table) is being returned to its original position. Underneath the painting will be displayed a large print of a map of Steyning which, owing to its size, has never been displayed.

At the time of writing this (early January) it is difficult to say when the current Toy Theatre display will be replaced by the delayed **VICTORY** exhibition as the Exhibition Team, like everyone else, have another lockdown interruption.

As we are having to use the hallway for our Visitor registration and sanitisation point, the planned Poppy Cascade, and the model of the Bridge on the River Kwai (used in the last Church Flower Festival) will, regretfully, be omitted from the exhibition.

Social & Events Committee - Maggie Hollands

Christmas Raffle

Thank you to all who contributed to the raffle prizes drawn at the museum on December 19th. We had nine prizes in all which was fantastic. **Wow** what a success it was. Thank you to you all who made this possible by buying raffle tickets, as the final amount we raised towards Museum funds was £637.

1st prize Hamper was won by Ray Powell, 2nd prize of Four bottles of Wine won by Harold Bradley, 3rd prize of Shortbread Carol Laithleif, 4th and 5th prizes of two bottles of Mulled Wine each won by Margaret Holloway and Anne Ketteman. Pack of Local beer and glass won by Flo (surname unknown), Muriel Wright won the Chocolates, Jane Johnson won the Gift Set and Sylvia Hampton won the Country File calendar. The prizes were all donated by members for which we are very grateful.

Christmas Card Delivery

Erica and I raised £45 delivering Christmas cards locally at 20pence a card. It gave us lots of fun and exercise whilst raising funds. We aim to do it again next year especially as postage has gone up to 75p for second class! Although we will limit it to members only.

Plans for 2021

2020 was such a quiet year for our events, and so sad we have been unable to do any since the Coffee Morning last March which we only just got in in time before lockdown.

Hopefully, this year it would be wonderful if we are able to have our Spring Coffee Morning on Saturday 10th April. We will just have to wait and see.

We do aim to have our successful Cream Tea in Sarah Leigh's garden on Saturday 26th June so watch this space. Lois Roemer and I are making bunting for this event. If anyone has any material suitable, we would be extremely grateful. I usually borrow bunting, but we aim to have our own this year. Please let me know on 01903 812583 and I will collect it.

Happy New Year to you all and hoping I and the social committee will be able to see more of you this year.

Membership Secretary - Erica Gayler

200 Club

At the beginning you will see the lucky winners for December and January. Do not forget you can join the 200 Club at any time. It costs £10 annually, just pick up an application form at The Museum (when we are able to open) or email and I will happily deliver a form to you membership@steyningmuseum.org.uk

Museum Trust Membership

The majority of you pay by regular payment/ standing order which is very much appreciated, and these payments would have been made by your Bank on 1st January 2021 or thereabouts. However, for those who prefer to make cash or cheque payments a note is

attached to this newsletter as a reminder that your 2021 subs are now due. It would be helpful if you could arrange for this to be paid as soon as possible. Post is regularly checked at the Museum, even when we are closed, so you can use the post box to hand deliver. We are grateful to those members who have agreed to have future Newsletters by email as this gives us a substantial saving on printing costs and at the same time is improving our sustainability by saving on paper. If you are happy to have your newsletter by email then please email me at: membership@steyningmuseum.org.uk or telephone me and leave a message on 01903 879958. There is also, the 'old fashioned' way of dropping me a note into the Museum

On this theme it has also been decided that in future Membership Cards will only be issued to those members that pay by cash or cheque as Members that pay through their bank have a receipt on their bank statements. However, if you would still like to receive a membership receipt card and pay through your bank account please let me know and I will arrange this for you.

Education -Joan Denwood

Coronavirus Memories

Well, who would have thought it! Lockdown 3 is happening as I write this. How long will all this go on?

After my request for any more memories in the last newsletter, I had a couple of useful additions. Although this awful virus is going on a lot longer than anyone expected, you can still write an entry for our file, which will act as a record for future generations. Any experiences from relief, to fear, to the horror of catching it, can be recorded, so if you feel strongly about any aspect of this virus please send your written thoughts to me at

education@steyningmuseum.org.uk or pop them in the

Museum letterbox. The file can be found on the table near the shop, whenever we can get back in the Museum and re-open again!

New Stewards' Guide

We now have a New Stewards' Guide which is available to read at the back of the Steward File on the shelf, behind the shop counter. I always give a new steward a checklist on locking, unlocking, lighting, keys etc, but this Guide contains more information than that. It includes a lot of general information such as who is responsible for what in the museum, facilities we have in place for answering visitors' questions, the role of the museum diary, a note on the history of the museum as well as most importantly all about Fire Safety. This Guide is an important update and will be given to all new stewards in the future and has been sent to all existing stewards. I do hope that if you are an existing steward that you have read and inwardly digested it!

Children's Corner

We have developed a display to celebrate our local children's author, Julia Donaldson. She actually visited our museum just before lockdown 2 and stayed for an hour, being shown around by Jacquie Buttriss and me. She approved of the colourful display of her book covers and offered her thoughts and ideas.

I hope you all saw the programme on TV at Christmas time about her life and her work, it was very interesting.

Jacque Buttriss - Family Historian

A Haven for Huguenots

Although Steyning Museum itself has been closed during the Coronavirus lockdown, our family research team have been working at home, answering the increased volume of email and phone enquiries. One such query was from a family who knew the names and dates of some of their forebears but wanted us to help them fill in the gaps. Most of all, they were puzzled by the surname of these ancestors – **MICHAUX**. Where did it come from? Does it have a meaning?

After some preliminary research in our archives, we discovered that Walter Michaux arrived in Steyning around 1760, but at first, we could not find any clues to where he was born or where he had lived before Steyning. Indeed, we could find no record of him anywhere in England. Perhaps he had arrived from across the sea.

The name Michaux suggests French origins, so we asked ourselves what was going on in France at this time? Could our Walter Michaux have something to do with the persecuted French Protestants - the Huguenots? In 1685, a change in the law had generated deep religious intolerance and hatred for the protestant Huguenots, many of whom were forced to live in palisaded villages (the precursor of ghettos), deprived of their work, frequently starved and tortured to try to force them to become Roman Catholics. Over the next century, many of those who tried to escape were hunted down and killed, but a few brave souls did manage to find secret ways to flee, often splitting up families in the process.

Two of these escapees were Abraham Michaux and his fiancée Suzanne, who lived in Sedan, close to the Belgian border. When she was younger, Suzanne and two other members of her family had attempted to flee by hiding in a goods wagon. But soldiers stopped them and her sister's baby cried, giving them away. They were sent back to the cruelties being heaped on their village. Now Suzanne and her fiancée concocted a new plan.

In 1692, Abraham Michaux hired a 'guide' to help them plan their escape. The guide insisted they had to leave separately, so he arranged for Suzanne to travel in a barrel in the cold and rat-infested hold of a ship, bound for protestant Holland, whilst the guide would lead Abraham on foot at night, hiking through the rough terrain of the forests and hills across northern France and Belgium to the Dutch border. Both journeys were perilous. Suzanne's account of her escape is hair-raising, describing her two days and nights in a dark, musty barrel, with only the spigot open to let in a little air, no food or comforts and the increasing stench. At one point the barrel was turned over and butted repeatedly by the rifles of soldiers searching for escaping Huguenots. She stifled her screams and remained undiscovered. Meanwhile, Abraham hid in various hollows and crevices on his hazardous route, finally reaching safety in Holland where they were reunited.

In 1692 Abraham and Suzanne were married in a protestant church and settled in Amsterdam. They had several children and grandchildren, some of whom stayed on in Holland, whilst others moved on to England or America.

Walter Michaux was one of Abraham and Suzanne's grandchildren. As a young man, he took ship with a contingent of Dutch-born Huguenots from Holland to the south coast of England, from there Walter and some of his friends found their way to Steyning. Despite many English people's historic fear of foreigners, Walter Michaux and the others in his group seem to have been warmly welcomed into our community and given work. In 1761, Walter met and married a young Steyning girl, Diana Hull, and they had a family of at least eight children. Walter must have worked hard and done well for himself, as the land tax records show he rented a good house in Steyning for his family and also 'The Mill' where he set up his own business.

Meanwhile, Abraham and Suzanne emigrated to Virginia in America, where Abraham was killed by a native Indian's arrow and the small town of Michaux remains to commemorate him.

AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM THE TRUSTEES

A Proposed change to the Constitution of the Steyning Museum Trust

As you may recall, our Constitution states that the tenure of the Chairmanship of Steyning Museum is for a maximum of five years. In the heady days before the pandemic, we could not have envisaged the unsettling upheavals and changes of arrangements we have had to manage over the past year, and still continuing in early 2021. As if the impacts of Covid 19 on the museum were not enough, our current Chair, Muriel Wright has also overseen the building of our new extension, the Carman room, together with all the knock on effects which are still ongoing. Even now, there remain issues the Chair must continue to steer us through.

I am sure that many of you will agree with the Trustees of the Museum that Muriel has done a wonderful job of overseeing and managing all these disruptions and re-arrangements with great dedication and skill. She has remained calm and caring in all circumstances and has, as always, been approachable to our volunteers throughout this time.

In these exceptional circumstances, the Trustees have given considerable thought to the fact that, as things stand, Muriel's five year term as Chair will come to an end in March 2021. Not only do we need continuity at this difficult time for all museums, but also, we recognise that, for a new person coming into the role of Chair, it would be particularly difficult to take over smoothly in the midst of such uncertain circumstances and changing regulations.

For all the above reasons, the Trustees have explored the possibility of extending Muriel's term as Chair for another two years. The Charity Commission and Government documents allow us to make such a change and our own Constitution gives us that power. We have therefore asked Muriel if she would be willing to stay on for a maximum of two additional years if our members vote for this resolution. In that event, Muriel has agreed that she would be happy to stay on to ensure continuity in these exceptional times.

So, this is where you come in:

Please read through the proposed amendment in the 'Resolution' below and vote by putting a tick or a cross in the appropriate box.

Then either post or return your slip in the museum's letterbox by **Friday 19 March 2021**



Steyning Museum Trust CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation)

Resolution: That the first part of existing clause 15 (4) which currently states:

"The Chairman of the CIO shall serve as Chairman for not longer than **five** years"

should be amended to say:

"The Chairman of the CIO shall serve as Chairman for not longer than **seven** years."

Yes, I agree with the above resolution

No, I don't agree with the above resolution

Name /s

Signature/s.....

Return to The Trustees at: Steyning Museum, Church Street BN44 3YB or through the Museum's letterbox addressed to 'The Trustees'