

MUSEUM NEWS

Steyning Museum Newsletter

June 2007

Museum Diary

- 04.08.076 Garden Coffee Morning
Rosebank, Jarvis Lane -
10.30am
- 19.01.08 Stewards and Volunteers
Social
Penfold Hall - 11.30am
- 15.03.08 Annual General Meeting
Penfold Hall - 2.30pm
- 12.04.08 Spring Coffee Morning
Penfold Hall - 10.30-12.00

200 Club

April Draw:

- 1st prize = Betty Calloway (£35)
2nd prize = Mrs Y Goacher (£25)
3rd prize = Pamela Hazell (£15)

May Draw:

- 1st prize = Joan Drew (£35)
2nd prize = Gillian Downham (£25)
3rd prize = Laurie Keen (£15)

Garden Coffee Morning

Helen Coutrouzas reports on our last coffee morning:

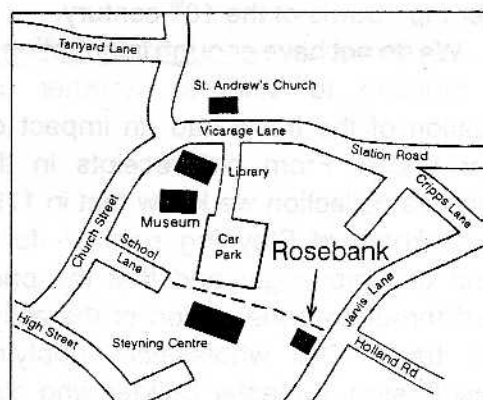
The April coffee morning was a success, raising over £300 before expenses and this is the third time that has happened. If we can keep on improving like this we shall be contributing more to the increased running costs of the enlarged museum. The introduction of a modest plant stall run by Diana Duffell was a profitable idea and we will repeat this next April.

We are always looking for new venues for the summer garden party and this year we have accepted the kind invitation of Sarah Leigh.

The garden coffee morning will therefore be on Saturday 4th August starting at 10.30am

at Rosebank, Jarvis Lane. The house is on the corner of Jarvis Lane and the twitten that runs down to the Steyning Centre. Entry is either on Jarvis Lane or the iron gate near the top of the twitten. Parking can be in the Steyning Centre car park or Holland Road.

We usually have a good cake stall at this function so please brush off those baking trays, cake tins and preserving pans and see what you can contribute. Raffle prizes are also needed as usual (as is a sunny morning of course).



Quilting Exhibition

If you haven't visited the Museum lately I would advise to go, as you are in for a treat. As part of the Steyning Festival, Anna Fraser and her talented group of quilters have worked with Chris Tod to make a stunning display of their work. Visitors were impressed a few years ago when we last mounted such a display, but the extra space provided by the extension means that the wealth of colour from the quilts and patchwork is even greater this time.

The Slave Trade and Steyning

Much is being written this year about Britain taking the lead in the banning of the slave trade in March 1807. Rather less is being written about the fact that the keeping of slaves in Britain's West Indian colonies was not outlawed for a further 28 years. It has been estimated that maybe 100,000 slaves were still being shipped out of Africa each year to supply the needs of plantation owners throughout the Americas. It was not until the 1850's that the British Navy's anti-slavery squadron became effectively active, boarding British and foreign ships to suppress the trade.

What had Steyning to do with this dreadful trade? Chris Tod has looked at our records and found that there was certainly an indirect impact. The whole economy benefited and products such as sugar and tobacco became cheap and easy to obtain. You can see the effect of cheaper tobacco by comparing the tiny clay pipes of the mid 17th century in our collection with the much larger pipe bowls of the 18th century.

We do not have enough information at the moment to discover whether the cessation of the trade had an impact on sugar prices. From old receipts in the Museum's collection we know that in 1794 Mr. Peckham of Steyning paid 1/- for a pound of lump sugar and that the price varied throughout the period of the active slave trade. The wholesaler supplying Daniel Easton, a master builder who also seems to have dealt in large quantities of groceries, apologised when he had to put the price up from 66/- for a hundredweight of lump sugar to 70/- and eventually to 87/- in the 1780's, noting on his bills comments such as "*Sir, Sugars are extravagantly dear*" or "*Sir, Lumps are rather dearer than when you had some last*". It must also have been true that people with the money to invest would have shared in the benefits of investment in the West Indian trade - even if the evidence for this is still hidden from us.

Hidden in the Records

Chris Tod gave me a piece earlier in the year which I didn't have room for at the time. There is room this month, however, so here is what he had to say:

An article by John Townsend in the Ashurst Parish News has prompted me to delve into our own records. John was spurred into action by a "Timewatch" television programme in January 2007 which examined the massive volcanic eruption in Iceland in June 1783. A vast cloud of toxic gasses spread across much of Europe causing illness but, more seriously, wreaking havoc with the weather. Harvests were spoiled and the winter which followed was one of the worst on record. The programme drew attention to the unusually large numbers of people who died as a result, not only in Iceland but throughout Europe.

John decided to test this assertion locally and found that in the year from July 1783 to June 1784 death rates more than doubled in the parishes of West Grinstead and Shipley, compared with the previous twelve months, and that in Ashurst the numbers shot up from 2 to 11.

What I have discovered in our own parish records is that in the four months of October 1783 to January 1784 there were 22 people buried in our churchyard. This compares with 6 who died during the same period twelve months earlier and 5 in that four month period a year later. Unfortunately the ages of people buried here were not recorded at that time so we can gather no other information to help us understand what the impact on the community might have been.

Next News Letter

As is our custom, we don't publish a newsletter in midsummer. Your next copy therefore will be delivered in October.

End Piece

I hope you enjoyed the extracts from Phyllis Gilbert's diaries in the April news. This month's edition provides a second extract which carries us to the end of Phyllis's first volume.

Tony Kettelman (Editor)