



# MUSEUM NEWS

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Steyning Museum Newsletter

November 2020

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## 200 Club

### October Draw:

- 1<sup>st</sup> prize = Marion Emery
- 2<sup>nd</sup> prize = Russell Bowman
- 3<sup>rd</sup> prize = Patricia Hill

### November Draw:

- 1<sup>st</sup> prize = Brian Boyd
- 2<sup>nd</sup> prize = Jean Meanley
- 3<sup>rd</sup> prize = Mary McFarlane

## Chairman's Report

*from Muriel Wright*

Following the "socially distanced" AGM held on 26<sup>th</sup> September, we received 95 voting slips. Consequently, the current Trustees were re-appointed. They then approved the appointment of the current Management Committee.

Regarding the closure over Christmas, the Museum will close at the end of the session on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> December And re-open on Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> Decem,ber

## Curator

*Andrew Woodfield*

As you are all aware, the lock down meant that we had to postpone our "Victory in Europe 75" exhibition (and related fun Street Party that Maggie Hollands and her team were organising).

The lock down also meant that the Exhibition Team were unable to do all the necessary research and preparation.

So, having spoken with Muriel Wright, our Chair, I came up with the idea of reversing WW2 with what would have been the Christmas/New Year exhibit. The WW2 exhibition has been renamed "Victory" so that it can cover both the victory in Europe and the Far East. It is now scheduled for mid January 2021 until mid May -

## BUT HELP IS REQUIRED!

Within the Museum archive there is only one photograph of V.E. Day celebrations. It is of the house opposite Chantry House, showing all the windows blown out by the blast of the bomb that fell on Church Street. Despite this, the house was decorated with bunting!

We have another photograph of a street party in Upper Beeding (with a young Paul Norris in view) that has kindly been loaned by Pat Nightingale and the Beeding and Bramber Historical Society.

SO, HAS ANYONE OUT THERE GOT ANY PHOTOS OF **LOCAL** STREET PARTIES OR CELEBRATIONS? If so, please contact me via the Museum. It is strange that the archive has a vast quantity of WW1 records of celebrations and none for WW2 - perhaps film for cameras was on ration?

So Christmas has come early to the Museum and we have an extended Yuletide exhibition already installed.

Some of you will know of my passion for model railways, puppets and theatre. Whilst isolating during lock down, I have prepared, at home, an exhibition of my Victorian Toy Theatre collection. Initially, it was going to be a small exhibition for Christmas, but now has extended into the entire available rear area of the Museum. It gives a history from the late Regency to present times. The oldest theatre displayed is circa 1880 and most are illuminated by pressing buttons.

There are some other changes to our exhibits, so please have a good look round. A new permanent exhibition has been installed regarding Steyning Registry Office. Births, deaths and marriages were registered at the office until it closed in 1935. The exhibition

includes a map that highlights the large area that it covered.

The Museum often has requests from the public for information, but the person being researched may not have lived in Steyning, but in the registration catchment area.

The exhibit demonstrates this with a display concerning the wedding of Charles Parnell and Katherine O'Shea who were married in the Office in 1891.

Also highlighted is a birth registration in 1885 of a man who became known as "The King of Lundy". Come into the Museum and learn more about his.

## **Activities**

*Joan Denwood*

### **Audio Visual Project**

Our year's work has been achieved. We are very pleased that our last piece, Screen 2, is up and running in the museum. We are getting lovely favourable comments too.

*'New photo screen much appreciated by many visitors of all ages'*

*'New screen great success much appreciated by visitors and stewards alike. Family also commented about how good all the interactive activities are for the children'*

It all started with Erica Gayler (committee member) achieving a grant for us from Horsham District Council and matching it with money from our own 200 Club. The Oral History team of Pamela Platt, Vivien Kingston Jones, Jon Young, and Lois Roemer have been researching and recording anecdotes and have been very supportive. Then with the help of Nick Quinn and Mike Denwood, we now have our 4 pieces of equipment up and running.

They are the 2 listening posts (one by the farming display and one by the railway display) and 2 screens (Screen 1 in the entrance hall and Screen 2 near the library books). There is additional information in paper form alongside the listening posts and Screen 2 as well.

That doesn't mean that the project is finished, because we can change the contents of the listening posts and move them to other relevant positions in the Museum. The content of the screen in the entrance hall is added to and

changed often. Also the content of Screen 2 in the Museum can be changed to include other subjects.

So all in all we are delighted to have finished, for now, and hope you will all enjoy the fruits of our labour.

I have been very pleased with the response I have had to the Coronavirus Memories file. Thank you so much to those who have contributed so far.

Those of you who have returned to stewarding will, I hope, have read some of it. It is on the table in front of the books for sale. It contains, a number of excellent articles by local people, a poem about the Treasure Tree in the Lower Horseshoe and some photos. I also received 2 monologues and a play, which has been on Radio Sussex, from members of the Steyning Drama Group. There is ephemera of the time too, with cards, newspaper articles, adverts offering help etc.

It is not too late to contribute. In the entrance of the museum there is a display of extracts from some of the contributors and a 'memory cloud' where a few words can be written, or you can still send me any other written thoughts you have on the on-going pandemic, by either popping them in the Museum letterbox, or sending them to me (Joan Denwood) at [education@steyningmuseum.org.uk](mailto:education@steyningmuseum.org.uk)

This is a record of how people in our area have been affected and what they think about it all. A friend I spoke to about it the other day said "what a marvellous idea" and within a few days had sent me a written article and she is not even involved with the museum. It does not have to be long. Together we are making a record to help future generations understand what it is like to live through these strange times.

*Request* - If you have any Julia Donaldson books, in good condition, which you no longer need, please could we have them for the Children's Corner in the Museum. Please leave them in the Museum for the attention of Joan Denwood. We are going to develop a display to

celebrate our local children's author.

Keep safe and well.

### **Education**

We have had some interesting and varied sessions recently with a visit from Shoreham College year 1 class, with the topic 'Homes'. The following is an email from their class teacher - *'Many thanks for the wonderful session you ran for Year 1 last week. The children were delighted to speak of the trip and wrote and drew some wonderful ideas from the things they had learnt in the afternoon.'*

We had visits from 22 French Students (ages 14,15,16) and 17 German students with their teachers, on an exchange visit with students from Steyning Grammar School.

### **Fund Raising**

*Maggie Hollands*

It has been such a shame due to the present situation we have been unable to hold any fundraising events. Hopefully, next year we will be able to hold our Spring Coffee Morning in April and very popular Cream Tea in June. Watch this space.

From 1st December we will have our usual Christmas Hamper in the Museum with second and third prizes. Tickets are £1 each.

This will be drawn Wednesday 23rd December.

### **Audio Guide**

*Nick Quinn*

During the 'lockdown' period, whilst the Museum was closed, it became apparent that a few changes would have to be made before the Museum could reopen safely to visitors. The laminated guides handed out to visitors were quite obviously one thing that would have to go: stewards could not be expected to sanitise them after every use and visitors would probably not want to handle them anyway. Was there an alternative? Yes, an audio guide." Wait a minute", I hear you cry, surely audio guides are even worse to keep clean than laminates? Museums with such systems in place were

planning to withdraw them from use on reopening. Indeed so, but the functions provided by 'traditional' audio guide devices can now be replicated by 'smartphones' which many of our visitors have in their pockets.

Brighton Pavilion launched an audio tour 'app' which can be installed before visiting. In fact you can experience the tour from home without even visiting the Pavilion! Ok, that sounded promising, visitors would be happy using their own 'phones. However, professional 'app' development would probably require skills and consultancy provided by third-parties – sounds expensive!

Enter the Raspberry Pi. No, not something you would see on 'Bake Off'; a small, matchbox-sized computer, (ok, I've exaggerated a bit – the larger Cook's matchbox). Low-cost (~ £50 depending on model), low-power and versatile. Have a look on the Internet – used in many projects including data collection, controlling model railways and as media players to name but three. It requires a bit of work to set up, but the benefit is that it will do exactly what you want it to do not what a West Coast USA mega-corporation (take your pick) 'thinks' it should do. We can quite easily use a Pi as a 'web server' on an internal wi-fi network in the Museum and our visitors can connect to it with their own 'phones, to access our audio guide. 'QR codes' placed next to each of the featured objects trigger the associated audio file. By now, you will have seen QR codes everywhere - they are used in many places (including the Museum) for the 'COVID-19 Test & Trace' app. That's good, what about the actual guide itself, how do we develop the content?

Well, the Museum might not have deep pockets, but it does have a large pool of people with diverse skills and enthusiasm. Lynda Denyer quickly identified the objects and areas that we wanted to highlight in the guide and wrote the scripts. Arms were twisted and Muriel Wright and John Burstow were persuaded to record the scripts. Additional pieces were voiced by Catherine Mant, Andrew Woodfield, Simon Zec (local tree surgeon turned poet) and Joe

Butcher (a young professional actor, for the John Launder piece). The system was completed and ready to go when the museum reopened in September.

I would encourage you to visit the Museum and try the guide, especially the video of Simon Zec reading his COVID-19 inspired poem 'Treasure Tree' and Andrew's humorous reminiscence about his childhood adventures entertaining his family. These feature as part of the two current temporary exhibitions until the end of January, although both recordings will still be accessible in the 'archive' afterwards. The QR code for Andrew's piece is at the back of the Museum where the wi-fi signal is quite weak. However, all of the audio files and scripts can be accessed through your phone's web browser from anywhere in the Museum – you don't have to be near the objects. So long as your 'phone (or tablet) has wi-fi and a browser you can listen to or read the guide; a QR code reader is helpful but not essential.

Full instructions are posted in the entrance to the Museum below the 'welcome' screen. I have tried to make the system as easy to use as possible, but it does rely to a certain extent on visitors being familiar with the slightly more-advanced features of their phones. A key point is that you need to connect to the Steyning Museum wi-fi network to access the guide; it won't work (by design) from any other network or 'roaming' service.

Enjoy the guide and please feel free to contact me with any questions, comments or (constructive!) criticisms.

Please note:

**FOR THOSE WHO WOULD LIKE TO RECEIVE THE MUSEUM NEWSLETTER BY EMAIL -**

Please Contact the membership secretary [membership@steyningmuseum.org.uk](mailto:membership@steyningmuseum.org.uk)

### **Christmas Raffle**

We are having our usual Christmas raffle with 1st prize Hamper, 2nd prize 4 bottles of Wine and 3rd prize Box of Shortbread.

As you will see we have included 5 sets of raffle tickets with your newsletter.

If you would like to buy some at a £1 each ticket. Please retain one or however many you want and put the corresponding numbers with your name and telephone number on the back of each and post in an envelope into the letterbox at the Museum with the money. Cheques made payable to Steyning Museum.

Winner would need to arrange collection if not from Steyning and district area.

The raffle will be drawn at the Museum on Saturday 19th December at 2pm



### **Membership**

*(from Erica Gayler Membership Secretary)*

Dear Members, I hope you are all safe and well. As many of you know there was a lot of confusion with the Membership payments last January following our change of Bank details and increase in our subscriptions.

For those of you that have online banking it would be very helpful if you could check your standing order details to ensure they are correct. The payment should be for £10 each member on 1st January 2021 with the bank details sort code 20 79 31 Account Number 50766216. These can be corrected now online if needed.

## 200 Club

There are spaces for new members. The December draw will take place on the 8th December and this draw will be for the usual Christmas prizes of £100, £50 and £25. There is still time to join and be entered into this draw either email

*membership @steyningmuseum.org.uk*

or telephone me 01903879958 for an application form which I will deliver and you will need to return to the Museum by 5th December.

The annual amount to join the 200 Club is £10 and the normal monthly prizes are £35, £25 and £15.



## Silent Auction

Willow Tree Figurines

Irish Charm. May luck or laughter brighten your day

True. A keepsake box Truly a friend

If you wish to bid for one or both all you need to do is put a note in an envelope stating how much you wish to bid and include your contact details.

Post this into the Museum letterbox before December 12th and the winner will be notified soon.



## STEYNING POLICE STATION AND THE BLUE LAMP

from Janet Pennington



As a fan of the early broadcasts of *Dixon of Dock Green* on BBC TV (1955-1976) I became familiar with the blue lamp above the door of the fictional Dock Green police station. Jack Warner (born Horace John Waters, 1895-1981) played the leading role of PC George Dixon. He was the brother of 'Gert and Daisy', two of Steyning's well-known former residents, Elsie and Doris Waters. His character first appeared in the film *The Blue Lamp* (1950) which also starred Dirk Bogarde. So the blue lamp of Steyning's Victorian police station always reminds me of PC George Dixon's character and I can hear his voice now.

However, last year our police station was scaffolded and building work was going on. As I passed by one day, not long after the scaffolding had been erected, I realised that the blue lamp had gone. I spoke to the builders enquiring what had become of the lamp. It had apparently been 'taken down for safety'. I made an enquiry at the Steyning Centre's Parish Council Office but nothing was known about it. In December 2019 I called into the Police Station and met PS Lynn Nocton who had also been wondering about the lamp but the estate team did not recall the lamp being there. I was able to supply her with two photographs of the lamp in situ that I had taken early in 2000 for my *Steyning Scandals* books, and said that as a local resident for many years I knew there had been a lamp, and that Steyning Museum would have earlier photographs. PC Nocton was quickly on the case (just as PC Dixon would have been) and hoped that the lamp could be located. She wrote 'Many thanks for your interest in our lovely building. The staff who work there or have worked there in the past love the place and its history. They will also look forward to the lamp going back where it belongs.'

I informed Muriel Wright, Chair of the Museum Committee, of this good news. I contacted Lynn again on 17 February 2020 and she immediately replied that a blue lamp had been sourced and the facilities team would be erecting it when they could. Then came Coronavirus...at the beginning of October I had again been wondering about the lamp, thinking that I could email PC Nocton about it, but perhaps now was not the time, as the Police have other more important things to attend to. Lo and behold, on 16 October an email came in from Lynn saying 'I know it has taken a long time but the blue lamp has been put back up this week'. This good news had me writing to thank her very much for bringing the matter to a happy conclusion. I then informed the Museum and took some new photographs. So please have a look next time you pass Steyning's Police Station, and admire the historic blue lamp. If somebody would like to do some more research on these lamps, please feel free. 'Evenin', All'! [Incidentally, a very good website on Gert and Daisy for anybody interested is [www.voicesofvariety.com/elsie-and-doris-waters](http://www.voicesofvariety.com/elsie-and-doris-waters) There are endless websites about *Dixon of Dock Green* - though always check sources for Wikipedia]