

STEYNING MUSEUM TRUST

The Museum, Church Street, Steyning, West Sussex. BN44 3YB

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Registered Charity Number: 1169540



Newsletter May 2026

Dear Members,

Welcome to our May newsletter. One of the things I truly love about compiling this newsletter is the sense of energy that comes from those who contribute, not only for the newsletter, but to the growth of the museum, and their passion for sharing this wonderful asset with as many people as possible.

Read on to find out all about our exciting new 'Tea-time Talks' initiative, the first of which was a great success. I am very much looking forward to the next one on the 20th May!

Also, we need your help! Can you help with the question posed by Shirley in her 'Collections' article? Do get in touch if you have an answer.

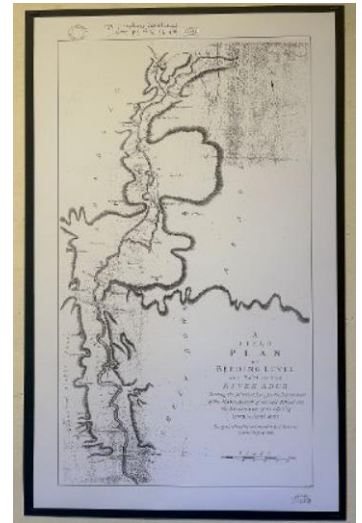
I hope you enjoy reading!

Leonie (newsletter compiler)

Exhibition news – Rachael Rainbow

In early February we put up a new display in the museum entrance about the White Bridge and Bramber Brooks. Alongside some history of this stretch of river and its banks, we found an interesting old map of the proposed alterations to the river's course published in 1806 and have been able to display a chunk of the old White Bridge that was donated to the museum when the bridge was removed last year.

The Museum has a lot of information about the river and the pivotal role it played in the founding and prosperity of Steyning and surrounding villages, so we've decided to do a larger exhibition about it later this year when we take down the current Bunker exhibition. Bunker will be removed in mid-May to make way for the annual Art Trail, so if you are interested in the history of our area during the Second World War, this is your last chance to see it.



We have also started a 'Picture of the Month' feature to highlight some of the paintings and photographs that we have in our archive but don't have space to display permanently. We started the rotating display with a view of the High Street in around 1912 by an unknown artist.

Events & Fund-Raising Committee – Lois Roemer

Spring Coffee Morning

Our annual Spring Coffee Morning was held at the Penfold Hall on Saturday 4th April. We were pleased to see 37 visitors, who enjoyed coffee, tea and biscuits as well as a chance to have a chat. We raised £180 towards the Museum funds, by offering delicious homemade cakes for sale and a very chocolatey assortment of raffle prizes.

We have another coffee morning planned for the autumn, so pop a note in your diary. We hope to see lots of you there.

The Social Events Team

The Museum's Tea Time Talks – Barbara Chandler

I hope that most members will by now know about our latest venture – 'Tea -Time Talks'; illustrated short lectures with long Q & A time, timed for the lull between school and supper. The idea is to showcase the Museum's collections, with interesting stories, to try to attract more younger people to our museum. We are offering free tickets for everyone under 19 and including a cuppa and a bite as part of the deal!

Because the Talks' location, the Steyning Centre, is in such a sunny, relaxed spot, we hope younger people will be happy to mooch about there after school and enjoy the break before taking a happy hit of history!

We were prompted to start this gamble as a result of the Stewards' survey we conducted in the autumn; our Arts Council Accreditation process threw up the need for regular consultations with volunteers: and then one of the survey responses suggested offering lectures!

The first of these is about the history and restoration of the 'White Bridge', as we have a delightful porch exhibit about it, and our excellent Ray Powell will be doing the talking. By the time the newsletter reaches you, it will have happened.....

Then John Burstow, a long – time archivist for Steyning Grammar School, will take us back to its very earliest days and help people imagine life for youngsters in Steyning when all its architecture was Tudor or older.



We had a great turnout for our first Teatime Talk

Ray's stalwart publicity people are busy ensuring posters are going up round our area, and Muriel and I have been contacting Schools and museums round us. (The receptionist at Lancing College said our museum was 'lovely'!)

So, I do hope many of you will come and support our sessions!

Flyers at reception in the Museum list every Talk session, but I am adding the list below as well.

Almost as importantly, please, please, please, can you check round your family friends and neighbours and see what school or younger college students they have in their households?!

If you find one, could you either tell them all about the Talks, or, better, see if you can make sure they are given a copy of our flyer for the talks, (or a print out of the page below) to take in to School and wave at their history teachers and fellow scholars??

Many best wishes in support of our lovely museum

Barbara Chandler, Steward & Trustee



STEYNING MUSEUM
TEA-TIME TALKS
Third Wednesdays in the month
April – September
Talks start 5.15pm
Tickets £5 from museum or at the door
Under 19 and students FREE
Refreshments from 4.15pm
SAXON ROOM, STEYNING CENTRE
BN44 3XZ
Ample parking
Short walk from No. 2 Bus

TEA-TIME TALKS

April 15th *The story of the White Bridge*
The origins, history and restoration of the pedestrian Adur bridge between Steyning and Beeding.
Ray Powell

May 20th *Steyning Grammar School in its early days*
Life for scholars in Tudor Steyning.
John Burstow

June 17th *Researching your family history*
How to get started.
Lois Roemer

July 15th *Young and conquered: 1066*
Steyning life for teenagers from Conquest to Domesday.
Barbara Chandler

September 16th *How Your Library Helps YOU*
Using Steyning Public Library's resources to support your studies.
Julia Nixon (provisional)

Collections – Shirley Blomfield

I have been in New Zealand for several weeks, rather longer than originally planned owing to problems with travel through Dubai. Lois Roemer and Nick Quinn dealt with enquiries while I was away, for which many thanks.

The Newsletter of May 2025 described our discovery of a painting of 'A Steyning Courtyard', by Edith Blanche Blunt, which is in the collection of the Art Gallery in Christchurch, New Zealand. We also outlined the information which we had researched about Edith's life in both New Zealand and the UK.

While in New Zealand I was very pleased to go to the Art Gallery where the Curator, Peter Vangioni, brought out this painting and the St Michael's Mount painting also by Edith. The Courtyard painting is unframed and had some interesting information on the reverse. Together with the Art Gallery Librarian, Tim Jones, we looked on Google Earth to show them the High Street here in Steyning and where we believe the courtyard is. They were also able to give me more information on Edith's life in New Zealand.

I also made contact and met with Edith's great-grandson, Tony Blunt, who has a number of her paintings and filled in with more detail about the Blunt family and showed me family photographs. He very kindly let me take photographs of these with my mobile phone. Subsequently, Tony has been in touch with a cousin here in the UK who has another Steyning painting, titled 'A Steyning Cottage', see image below. I had expected to see Saxon Cottage, but no it is not! Does anyone recognise this cottage? We would love to hear from you if you do!



I also know of a painting by Edith of St Andrew's Church, it was put up for auction in Christchurch in 2005 and unsold. The whereabouts of this are unknown and I would very much like to track it down. It has been a very interesting journey of discovery, with still a few unanswered questions relating to Steyning which I hope further research may answer.

Shirley Blomfield

Steyning Museum to feature on BBC Sounds - Andrew Woodfield



Recently, BBC Sounds contacted the Museum regarding the history of the Steyning Mint. This is for a radio series called "Hidden fortunes-hidden treasures". It is a sort of magazine programme that looks at what may be described as "Whacky" subjects.

I was asked by the Committee to get back to the BBC. The result was that a recording team visited Steyning on March 26th to record approximately 20 minutes of the history of the Mint.

This photograph taken by Andrew Anthony shows the recording in operation by the Saxon Exhibit which actually contains a Steyning minted coin.

Andrew's co Steward, Yve Payne was requested to "Welcome" the BBC team into the Museum.

I then gave the team a quick tour of the Museum which they found very impressive. Consequently, they are planning to come back, maybe as soon as May, to record two other subjects - The Riot at the Workhouse and Potters Museum. We don't have a date of broadcast yet, but we will keep you posted!

Shop news - Muriel Wright

The shop has some new postcards for sale. The cards show some of the Museum exhibits. They are priced at £1 each or 5 for £ 4.00. We also have some new Lavender bags and glasses cases.

News from the Research Hub – Lois Roemer

Research Enquiries

People:

- Mothersill/Walpole Families
- St Cuthman
- Boyd/Cooper Families
- James Stout and Margaret Jones
- Hilton Family
- Dr Clement Wheeler-Bennett
- Bertram Nicholls
- Ernest Edwin Tracy
- Elizabeth Butler White

Places:

- Erringham Farm
- Workmen's Cottages, Steyning Station
- 1 Rock Lane
- Thistledown – dealt with by Chris Hendricks

Other:

- The Sundial, who is the Averil that it is dedicated to?
- How many faces are there on the Town Clock?
- JU88 crash near Wiston
- What are the dots on the Steyning map for?

The Steyning Festival is fast approaching with the full programme of interesting events.

The Museum was approached by Nick Linfield, one of the festival organisers, who suggested a joint project which will highlight the history of some of the High Street shops. Based on the English Heritage blue plaques, individual vinyl plaques will be displayed in certain shop windows giving a hint of the history of the building and hoping that this will encourage people to visit the Museum to find out more. There will be a map and photos of the shops in the Museum so that people will be able to find them.

This has been an exciting project to work on, discovering more about these and indeed all the buildings on the High Street.

Lois Roemer
Chris Hendricks
Ron James

And finally.....

On the 1st April Muriel and Maggie were delighted to present one of our loyal stewards, Harold Bradley, with a bottle of wine to celebrate his 90th birthday. I am sure you will join us in sending him many congratulations!

