

Newsletter

Autumn 2018

From the Chair, Elizabeth Poskitt

Welcome to a new season of monthly lectures and other Friends' activities. In reality, however, many of you have been extremely active all summer either invigilating *Mischief & Mayhem* the Beatrix Potter/Peter Rabbit exhibition, or volunteering in the Museum to support the many summer visitors. Thank you to all who helped in this way. Congratulations to all Museum staff for such a successful summer and to all those who worked to make the garden so lovely.

This newsletter focuses on volunteer roles. A Museum volunteer does not have to be **you**. He or she could be a friend or relative or the person new to the district who has just come to live next door and is hoping to get involved in the community. Volunteers do not have to live in Woodstock. It is the Museum of **Oxfordshire**, not of Woodstock and we are its Friends.

News from the Museum

A great summer

The Museum enjoyed a fantastic summer. The Peter Rabbit exhibition and the associated programme of family activities proved very popular. Thank you so much to everyone who volunteered over the summer whether in the café or reception, invigilating Peter Rabbit or helping with family activities. We are all very grateful for your support and couldn't have run the exhibition and events without you.

We always welcome volunteers, both for weekdays and weekends. If you would like to know more about what is involved in volunteering at the Museum please do get in touch with Claire Cadwaladr on 01993 814101 or email Claire.cadwaladr@oxfordshire.gov.uk.

What's new in the Museum this autumn?

It's all change in the **Ark Gallery** with the return of some objects from the popular *50 Objects* exhibition originally put together to mark the Museum's 50th birthday. The amazing variety of objects includes a mammoth jaw found by a boy swimming in the Thames, a miniature model garden and a human vertebra with a flint arrowhead embedded in it. Each object was selected from the Museum Service's collections by individuals, communities from across the County, Friends, volunteers and museum staff, to celebrate Oxfordshire's rich history. Labels explain why objects were chosen and, in one case, why the community contributed a colourful traditional costume to fill a gap in our collections.

The programme of changing exhibitions in the **Garden Gallery** included, in September, an exhibition of work by Ronny Loxton depicting landscapes and animals from the Oxfordshire countryside. Ronny's original works were complemented by a range of merchandise all evoking elements of rural Oxfordshire.

Ronny's exhibition showed it's never too early to start your Christmas shopping!! The next exhibition *The Diversity of Silver* is a display and sale of work by members of the Jewellery and Silver Society of Oxford (JASSO). Their membership includes both professional silversmiths and hobbyists, The exhibition closes on Sunday 4th November (the Editor apologises that this newsletter comes too late for this exhibition) but is followed by the Oxfordshire Craft Guild's Christmas exhibition and sale from Saturday 17th November until December 30th. In the new year we explore another tradition: taking tea. More about that in the next newsletter.

Carol Anderson, Museum Director

In the Garden

After the very dry summer we have had a good range of autumn colour. October included a wonderful display of autumn crocus on the lower lawn, thanks to bulbs naturalized over 80 years ago. This was achieved by three years of feeding and not mowing between September and June. We knew the crocuses were there, but they needed this treatment to flower successfully. Will we collect our own saffron in the future?

Watch out for the flowers which appear around the old chestnut tree over winter and early spring. The autumn crocus and small cyclamen will be followed in January by aconites, snowdrops, spring crocus, chinodoxa, scilla and then narcissi and daffodils. Avoiding mowing the grassy areas with bulbs in them until at least four weeks after the daffodils have flowered will allow time to feed and bulk-up the bulbs for next year. Untidy in May - but more flowers year-on-year.

We are putting wallflowers tête-a-tête with daffodils between the winter and spring shrubs planted by the wooden steps earlier this year. The previous shrubs had succumbed to age and overwhelming ground cover.

There were autumn colours in both trees and borders. The ginkgos in the dinosaur garden turned to gold. The walnut, pear and apple trees fruited well as did the medlar by SOFO's rear door. When possible we put the fruit to good use.

In January the borders will be full of the scent of the Christmas box (*Sarcococca*) surrounded by the hundreds of Hellebores, self-seeded and increasing in number every year.

We planted 10 *Rosa gallica versicolor*, the Rosa-Mundi of old gardens reminiscent of ancient legend. 'Fair Rosamund', mistress of Henry II, lived (in secret?) in the old Woodstock Palace. Expect the red-and-white Lancaster/York roses in May and June.

This autumn we added some clumps of plants with strap-like leaves to give variety to the border beside the Garden Gallery. *Hedychium*, *Crinum*,

Canna and *Agapanthus* were all used in Victorian and Edwardian times but interest in them waned in the 1940s and 50s when heavy frosts and lack of skilled gardeners led to them overwintering poorly. With a good covering of leaf mulch and, perhaps, global warming giving more warmth throughout the year, we hope to provide real interest and contrast in this border. However, if the drainpipes are blocked beneath them, everything will have to be dug up and we shall have to start all over again!

Our thanks to: The Friends who have contributed over £500 in plants and supplies this year; Carol Anderson for encouragement and support; and our five volunteer gardeners for their unstinting support and weekly attendances. Fred Thomas, our 'heavy', has dug many holes in the garden over the years, dragged hose pipes around all summer and provided invaluable help. He is now moving out of the district so we thank him for all his help and wish him and Maureen all happiness in their new home.

We do need new volunteers to join us on Monday mornings for the rewards of company and tea at 10.45 - contact Claire Cadwaladr at the Museum. You do not need to know much about gardening. Learn with us and from us.

John Banbury. Volunteer Garden Group Leader.



The Museum garden: a haven of green in the centre of town (and there's the café as well).

An afternoon in the life of a Front of House TOM Volunteer

My wife and I moved to Woodstock in February 2018 leaving behind a 22-year life in rural North Oxfordshire. Just after we moved here, I spotted 'Volunteers Needed' on a central Woodstock notice-board. What could be better? Walk to work, help the Oxfordshire Museum, free tea and coffee. I signed on as a volunteer.

A trouble-free application process and a gentle induction session left me facing the public for the first time in May. We work as 'Front of House' pairs, one paid staff and one volunteer. Duties include keeping an eye on the galleries via the live screen and occasional walk-arounds; answering phone calls; dealing with gift shop purchases and, primarily, helping visitors enjoy their visits.



Front of House: David and Louise Barrett

It's not all hard work and there's lots of fun!

This summer, the Peter Rabbit temporary exhibition kept us busy with 10,000 visitors. The dinosaurs - for once demoted by Peter Rabbit to second place - still enthralled and terrified the young. Children's drop-in activity sessions and a stream of visitors just enjoying tea and cake in the café and gardens added to the visitors.

We are no longer a tourist information point but 'Front of House' personnel are often asked about accommodation, transport, the best places to eat in Woodstock and good walks around Woodstock, Wootton or Bladon. Most visitors are British. Some come regularly. Many have stories to tell. One couple I met had been WWII evacuees to this area and were returning to Woodstock after many years. They had fascinating tales of Woodstock during and just after the War.

For a beginner, the cash register for shop sales seemed daunting. Typing in the wrong price was too easy. I had to remember the register operated in pennies - £5.00 frequently went down as 5p. However, it is actually quite simple and, although the register has its own foibles, after a few sales using it became second nature.

Quieter periods are interspersed amongst the rushed times. Then front of house volunteers can relax; drink their tea calmly; put the world to rights in discussion with their desk companion; or check on a favourite item or gallery. However, for us all, the best moments are when the door by the reception desk opens and wide-eyed children and contented parents come over to thank us for the experience of their visits *and* to promise they will be back!

David Wharton (Friends' Treasurer & Museum Volunteer)

Friends' Committee

Please do not let these interesting descriptions of volunteering actually *in* the Museum take away from the on-going need for new blood on the Friends' Committee. Being on the Committee is enjoyable and not very strenuous. We meet about five times a year in the Museum usually on a Wednesday at 7pm. We would welcome your interest and can co-opt willing volunteers to the committee at any time.

Contact e.poskitt@btinternet.com to learn more.

Other Contact Information

Address:

The Oxfordshire Museum
Fletchers House, Park Street
Woodstock
OX20 1SN

Email: FriendsOfTom@live.co.uk

TOM e-newsletter:

If you would like to keep up to date with Museum events and exhibitions why not sign up to the email newsletter (e-newsletter):

<http://eepurl.com/ker5P>

PROGRAMME

Friends' Wednesday evening talks.

All talks start at 19.30; doors open 19.00

Friend: free. Visitors £4 on the door

2018

November 7th Hoards and Treasures

Jude Barrett, Education Officer, Ashmolean Museum

December 5th Beacons of the Past: Examining Hillforts – the Chiltern Hill Fort Project

Wendy Morrison, Institute of Archaeology, Oxford University

2019

January 9th (Please note this is the second Wednesday in the month)

Twenty Centuries of Decorative Glass

John Banbury, Honorary Townsman, Woodstock

February 6th Ticket to Ride: the Perils and Pleasures of Early Victorian Rail Travel

Judy Rouse, 'Wyvern' Railway Ancestry Research Advice

March 6th Children's Experiences of the Second World War in Oxfordshire

Liz Woolley, Department of Continuing Education, Oxford University

Activities over the Christmas Holidays Make & Take Away Drop Ins

There will be 'make and take away' fun activities for children of all ages on the following afternoons over Christmas and the New Year:

Thursday December 27th 2 - 4pm

Thursday January 3rd 2 - 4 pm

Just come along with young friends or relatives.

Child £2 Family £5

There will be no TOM Tots events* over the Christmas holidays as the relevant Tuesdays are both Bank Holidays. The Museum is closed December 24th, 25th, 26th, open December 27th-30th inclusive then closed December 31st and New Year's Day. After that 'normal service resumed'..

* (For readers, Drop Ins and TOM Tot activities are only possible through financial support from you - The Friends).

Easy Fundraising

Christmas is on the horizon...and so, in all probability, is your Christmas shopping. If you ever buy anything on line you can raise money for The Friends of the Museum without spending anything other than for your particular purchase. Just sign up to *easyfundraising*. Then, when you buy something from a retailer who is also signed up to *easyfundraising*, that retailer will pay a certain amount into the Friends of The Museum funds if you indicate that is where you wish the donation to go. It is really easy. You do not need to give any banking or secure financial information but can raise funds for The Friends when booking holidays, grocery shopping, buying a new TV or washing machine - the list is endless.

Over recent years *easyfundraising* has brought Friends over **£700!** Think of the time required to collect that by rattling a tin outside the Co-op or the effort required in a Coffee Morning to raise that sum. All **you** need to do to contribute is set up an account by visiting the website: www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/friendsoftom/ and then remember *easyfundraising* when you purchase on line. Happy Online Shopping!

SATURDAY TALK

Dr Katherine Bradley will speak on
Votes for Women in Oxford & Oxfordshire

2.30 pm Saturday December 1st

in the Coach House, The Oxfordshire Museum

Tickets £8 from:

- the Museum front desk or
- 01993 814 106 or
- www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/museums or
- at the door on the day.

It is wise to buy early or pre-book your tickets as the Coach House has a limit on numbers and occasionally we have had to turn people away.