

## Woodstock Museum and Woodstock Library 2019

Dear Friends of the Oxfordshire Museum,

The Friends' committee would like to update you with the committee's views on the recent changes in Woodstock to the Library and Museum. We hope you will find this interesting and informative and we should welcome any comments or queries which you may have about the new situation.

The changes.....

Many of you will be aware that the Woodstock library, operated by Oxfordshire County Council, was closed in late 2018 on account of structural problems. In order to provide a library function for the town, the Council used space in two galleries of the Museum, and a reduced library was set up by early January. The two galleries used were the Innovations Gallery and the Learning Centre. The former is now the reduced library with a self-service machine. The latter has changed into a library computer centre. The previous contents of the Innovations Gallery have been totally removed. Some of the previous contents of the Learning Centre have been removed and the rest joined by new computer equipment from the Library.

The previous galleries.....

The Innovations Gallery had included a variety of interactive displays featuring magnetic effects, sound effects in a vacuum, and examination of insects using microscopes. In addition, there were static displays on a theme of 'local technology made good' including Owen Mumford, Oxford Instruments, Morris Motors and innovative farm implements. The interactive displays provided younger visitors with enjoyable access to learning about some basic scientific principles – magnetism, sound and insect biology. Unfortunately, it must be said that the displays were 'dated' and prone to breakages.

The second gallery, the Learning Centre, was primarily a study space equipped with a library of Oxfordshire materials and a small computer which was set up to access heritage and family genealogy sites.

The new 'galleries'.....



Reduced town library in the Innovations Gallery.



Library Computers in the Learning Centre.

## On the plus side.....

- Moving a reduced library to the Museum was one of the few ways of keeping the library in the town.
- It is intended to be only a temporary change, ~2 – 5 years.
- Increased library footfall will be to the overall benefit of the Museum and its café.
- It provides Museum visitors with a far greater computer access, courtesy of the library.

## On the minus side.....

- The Museum has temporarily lost two galleries of display space. If this were to become permanent, it would represent a serious loss to the display of our county's heritage.
- The only child-friendly, interactive, science and technology style displays have been removed.
- The Friends' committee, recognising the dated nature of the Innovations Gallery, had already started an upgrade programme working with local hi-tech companies, which we have now had to abandon.
- The Friends' committee was not consulted ahead of time about these changes.



The committee also understands that one of the Museum's icons located in the foyer will be replaced by a second steel, self-service library return machine. The committee opposes this quite strongly and sees no point in a second book return machine in the foyer.

The Gloveman (left) is beloved of children, and one of the few working automata the Museum has left. We have asked for the Gloveman to remain to continue attracting children into both the Museum AND the Library.

Though not consulted, the committee has been supportive of the Council's project. Both Museum objects and Library books are important to the people of Oxfordshire. But our support is with the caveats that it is only the two designated galleries and only for a temporary period.

We are also disappointed that the Museum and Oxfordshire will not see our updated Innovations gallery, and, lastly, we hope our Gloveman, a symbol of our Woodstock heritage, will be left in peace.

Please let us know your views on these changes and their potential impact on the Museum's future. We can always be reached by e-mail at [FriendsOfTom@live.co.uk](mailto:FriendsOfTom@live.co.uk) or by post at:

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The Friends' committee