



FORUM NEWS

NEWS FROM THE LEICESTERSHIRE & RUTLAND MUSEUMS FORUM

SPRING 2006

Welcome to the Spring 2006 edition of the Newsletter. We have a new member of the Forum, the Diseworth Heritage Trust, based at Diseworth in Derbyshire, and we look forward to welcoming them to our open meetings, and hearing what their aspirations are for their particular Heritage Trust. That makes our Forum the largest in the East Midlands, and certainly one of the best, if not the best in England. Heritage matters to more and more people now even more than in the past, the rise in families tracing their history is just one aspect of this, and the preservation of our past is another, whether it is through buildings, artefacts, records or tracing your family tree. It makes for a lot of work for many enthusiasts but their interest in their own particular project is saving our history for the future generations.

Editor

News from the Museums

Leicester Royal Infirmary Medical Museum

One of the more unusual museums in the Forum is the Medical Museum at Leicester Royal Infirmary which is housed in the recreation room of the former nurses' living quarters in Knighton Street, within the complex. In 1766 the Rev William Watts a Northamptonshire doctor and vicar of Medbourne started a campaign by writing to newspapers to gather support for his idea. £2,000 was collected and by 1771 the original 40-bed building was completed. Patients were charged 12/6d when admitted and this was returned if they recovered, but if not, it was retained to bury them! During construction a number of skeletons were discovered as the area had previously been used as the gallows. Like all hospitals of the time, it had its own brewery because of impure water and a herb garden for making medicines.

Dr Watts, who obtained his MD in 1753 at Kings College, Aberdeen and died on 17th December 1786. He was a pioneer as Leicester was

among the first 12 to 15 provincial towns to have a hospital.

In 1782 an asylum for lunatics was added and in 1820 a fever hospital was built on Freakes ground opposite the present LOROS. 1889 saw a children's hospital built on site and continued expansion thereafter. The use of 'Royal' was granted in 1912.

The museum has many early photographs and the expected grim instruments. Surprisingly most do not differ greatly from those in use today, except modern ones are often smaller and made of different materials. Glass medicine bottles came in different colours according to contents, green for liniments, purple for dangerous substances and clear for normal remedies. Acid was stored in stone pots and had different grooves on to assist the blind.

Dr Aubrey Stewart, the Curator, believes the three greatest medical advances have been the 3 'A's, anaesthetics, antiseptics and antibiotics.

(Extracted article taken from the Greater Wigston Historical Society Bulletin, with thanks. Thanks also go to Dr Stewart for his permission to adapt the article – Ed.)

Whitwick Historical Group

Whilst carrying out some DIY, a local resident was amazed to find Whitwick Colliery roof tiles on their property. From discussions with other residents, they have ascertained that the tiles must have been produced pre 1930.

A sample of the roof tile has been donated to the group for inclusion with their display of many other local artefacts. If anyone has any further information about the production of these tiles please contact the Hon Secretary, Doreen Worth. Her telephone number is 01530 831418



The picture shows the Whitwick Colliery Clay Roof Tile

Dates to remember:

- 16th February: Medieval Castles of Leicestershire and Rutland – Peter Liddle
- 16th March: Framework Knitters – Jack Smurfitt
- 20th April: Gardens with a History – Kate Ward.

All meetings are held at the old Station Building, Whitwick.

Ashby-de-la-Zouch Museum

Christmas came early to Ashby Museum when it was announced on 14th December last that they are to get a makeover, thanks to a grant of £425,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

The award will fund a much needed extension to the museum creating new exhibition space, new

education facilities and improved storage for the collections.

The additional space will allow the museum's full collection to be displayed for the first time, enabling the museum to tell the story of the history and development of Ashby-de-la-Zouch and its surrounding villages. The exhibitions will be presented in three themes; place, people and the past. They will examine locally important personalities, stories associated with the town and an overview of important episodes in the town's history. Additional space will be given over to temporary exhibitions allowing the museum to tackle new and important issues.

Current facilities mean that school groups can only be accommodated in the foyer causing huge disruption to the museum's other visitors and staff. Existing space limitations also means that the museum cannot cope with a whole class of school children at one time. The new 'Education for All' room will provide the children with a dedicated learning space big enough for a full class and allow evening classes and lectures to take place.

Explaining the importance of the award HLF's regional manager Sheila Stone said, "Ashby-de-la-Zouch museum is much loved and well used. I'm delighted that we are able to offer our assistance to help the museum move into the 21st century and provide an improved service to the local community."

Commenting on the award, Chairman of Trustees Kenneth Hillier said, "The Trustees are delighted that all their hard work on behalf of Ashbeians has led to this success and we look forward to 2006 with renewed vigour."

The museum has raised £53,000 in funds thanks to the generous support of local councils, businesses, organisations and individuals. In particular large donations have been received from Ashby Town Council, North West Leicestershire District Council, Leicestershire County Council Heritage Services, K.P Foods, U.B Distribution Centre, the Helen Jean Cope Fund, the East Midlands Airport Community Fund, Ashby Rotary Club, ASH Players, Ashby Image & Print and Fisher's.
Paul Monk

The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) enables communities to celebrate, look after and learn more about our diverse heritage. From our great museums and historic buildings to local parks and

beauty spots or recording and celebrating traditions, customs and history, HLF grants open up our nation's heritage for everyone to enjoy. Since its conception, HLF have supported 16,000 projects allocating over £3.3 billion across the UK. In the East Midlands we have awarded almost £150.7 million to over 1,250 projects.

For further information, please contact:

Nicky Price, Heritage Lottery Fund – Tel: 020 7591 6046, email: nickyp@hlf.org.uk
Website: www.hlf.org.uk

Wigston Framework Knitters Museum

Work is well under way at the Museum, with the new Interpretation Centre now up to the roof stage, although work is a little behind the original schedule, mainly due to weather difficulties. Filming for the audio-visual displays have taken place, and equipment is being purchased, through the grant funded by the Local Heritage Initiative. The photographs below show work in progress at varying stages.



This view shows the internal view of the Centre, taken on 27th January 2006.

This view, taken on 8th February, shows the new building from the back of the Museum, looking towards the garden.



Railway Vehicle Preservations *(part two, carried over from our Christmas 2005 edition)*

RVP to have a new home.

Plans are at an advanced stage for RVP to move to a new home at Swithland. Adjacent to the landmark reservoir are the Great Central Railway sidings, from where there is the former Nunckley Hill quarry branch line. Though disused for the past 30 years and heavily overgrown, there is still all the potential to meet our future needs. This project seeks to satisfy our single most important need - to provide secure weatherproof storage for our collection of historic vehicles. In so doing we'll also be reinstating part of the former Mountsorrel branch, and recreating Swithland Sidings original purpose as the interface between a private branch line and GCR main line

RVP's overriding aim is to see all of its vehicles (and those on loan to it) stored undercover. Ideally we'd like this storage to be laid out in museum fashion and open to the public. Our ultimate aspiration is to see vehicles displayed in a well laid out museum building with associated displays and workshop facilities (the excellent Vintage Carriage Trust museum at Ingrow provides something to aspire to). Equally though our vision also firmly includes the continuing regular operation of our stock on the GCR main line.

To get there from our current position requires several major leaps for RVP; some of which have already been achieved (e.g. charitable status). We cannot hope to change overnight from a small group of vehicle restorers to the operators of a significant sized museum. What we can definitely do is break the task into several steps; then attack each in turn.

Project Aims:

1. To restore the branch line and connect to the GCR main line.
2. To provide a site(s) for storage sheds, allowing RVP's collection to be stored undercover.
3. In the longer term we intend to develop facilities to allow public display of our vehicles on the site.

Generally speaking the plan looks like this:

1. Acquire our own site

2. Clear, level and reinstate trackwork to site
3. Erect an "interim" shed
4. Develop more shed space for the whole of the collection.
5. Develop display space and improve facilities

DESIRED OUTCOMES:

Short term:

1. The re-instatement of the branch, to allow access and also possible demonstration use as part of GCR galas.
2. The storage undercover of at least those vehicles in our collection at greatest risk.

Medium term:

1. Undercover storage space for the whole of our collection

Long Term:

1. Reconfigure the shed for display of our vehicles, with public access, and suitable interpretive displays.
2. The possibility of passenger carrying on the branch and further extension to be re-examined.

RVP has obtained the lease of the site. Preliminary clearing of some of the undergrowth has already taken place to allow environmental surveys to take place. Informal planning advice suggests reintroduction of the line will be acceptable and that we shall be able to comply with all requirements and we will be seeking grant aid and an appeal for £50,000 has already been launched to fund the branch reinstatement.

All museums can claim to be unique in some way but RVP's TPO and Postal Museum is somewhat unique among museums. It is, on the one hand, a mobile spectacular event as the train pulling the travelling post office races through Quorn station and the demonstration mail exchange takes place. This spectacle only occurs as often as the railway can fit it into their Gala events and, of course, it is a great crowd puller. The Post Office ceased line side mail exchanges in 1971. On the other hand, the Postal Museum part of the train and the internal working of the TPO are difficult to make available to the general public, being on railway property with restricted access. Only on rare occasions can the railway provide circumstances that will allow for the static location of the carriages without causing operational problems of running

the railway itself. Recently, the TPO and Postal Museum was able to be located at the Leicester North Station, which is on the ring road near to Red Hill roundabout, over the weekend of the railway Autumn Gala and we are hopeful this will be possible again.



The 1937 Built TPO Sorting Carriage.

(external)

TPO Sorting Carriage

(internal)



The Nunckley Hill project, as we have called it, opens up great expectations, not just for RVP and the Great Central Railway, but also for the museum movement in Leicestershire by the provision of new and accessible location for the RVP award winning collection of historic railway vehicles and Postal Museum. *Neville Goodman*



The travelling Post Office at speed, approaches the mail exchange apparatus situated at Quorn and Woodhouse station. Heritage steam engine and carriages recreating a historic scene.

Christmas Meeting

A very successful and well attended meeting was held on 8th December at Age Concern, Wigston; this venue was substituted for the Framework Knitters Museum where building work is in progress.

Education Project. Claire reported that the education project is continuing into next year by a further allocation of funding from the County Council. Museums that have been successful with Local Heritage Initiative grants have received assistance from the County Council in other ways, as have all museums who have applied, with grants of up to a maximum of £1,000. Project grant requests should still go through LHI and CB will be able to match fund in some cases.

Production of Guidelines.

Claire reported that Good Practice Guidelines will be produced so that all museums can have access to successful project funding, someone will be employed in Spring 2006, so that the leaflets will be available by the AGM.

VAQAS

Claire Browne and Mike Beech attended a recent conference on the above, which is Visitor Attraction Quality Assurance Service. Led by Visit Britain, all museums are advised to register, in a similar manner to Bed & Breakfast establishments, and will be graded according to visitor amenities, such as disabled access etc. An independent representative from Visit Britain will visit sites and judge on all aspects of the museum. If museums apply to join the scheme, they will be registered and receive a detailed debrief from the Visit Britain representative; this VAQAS registration forms part of the new Accreditation Scheme. There is an annual subscription and EMMLAC and the County Council may be able to assist with this funding.

Further detailed information on this scheme will be available later in the Spring.

At the end of the formal meeting the Chairman, Paul Monk, welcomed the speaker, Dr Steve Weston, Curator of the Charles Moore Collection of Museum Instruments at Leicester University. Dr Weston spoke about the history and development of brass instruments, and in particular on Charles

Moore, and his support for the development of brass instruments and bands in Leicestershire in particular. Charles Moore had a long connection with brass bands throughout his life and the history of brass instruments and their development made fascinating listening, and completed his talk with demonstrations on various instruments. The instruments can be viewed by appointment.

The Chairman thanked Dr Weston and concluded the meeting by wishing everyone a very happy Christmas.

News from AIM

- Don't forget the AIM Bob Harding Training Fund which provides AIM with about £2,500 each year to help members with costs associated with training including course fees, accommodation and travelling. Activities include courses, seminars, and workshops training visits to other museums etc. The fund is currently run by Rob Shorland-Ball, but will be run by Michael Cates from May. Contact Rob at AIM Bob Harding Training Fund, 216 Mount Vale, YORK YO24, tel/fax 01904 632751, email at robsb@wfmymork.demon.co.uk.
- In November the Government's consultation on how lottery money should be shared out between the 'good causes' of arts, sports and heritage was launched. Heritage Link, the umbrella organisation for heritage and cultural bodies, of which AIM is a member has called on everyone who cares about heritage to support the case for maintaining or increasing the share to heritage good causes. AIM Chairman, Bill Ferris, urges AIM members "to do what they can to support HLF in this Government consultation..."

MDA, the UK's lead organisation in documentation and the management of collections information has launched *Collections for All* a national campaign to create a dialogue with and understanding collections. The campaign has the backing of the Culture Minister and will build on the MA's recent *Collections for the Future* report. The first outcome of the campaign will be *Documentation for Diversity* a new range of products and training resources which will encourage museums to apply documented information to the needs of diverse audiences. For further information please go to: www.collectionsforall.org.uk/.

The new Charity SORP

A revised version of the *Accounting and Reporting for Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP)* was published last March and applies to financial years commencing on or after 1 April 2005. Copies of the new SORP can be found on the Charity Commission's website at www.charity-commission.gov.uk

The new SORP applies only to accruals accounts such as those produced for charitable companies, and the Commission publishes separate guidance, including pro-forma reports and accounts packs, for charities operating on a cash-based receipts and payments basis. Their trustees may rely on these packs as providing comprehensive guidance.

Of particular relevance to AIM members, a new category of 'heritage asset' has been introduced. This is now used in place of 'inalienable and historic assets' and is more narrowly defined as 'tangible fixed assets that are of historical, artistic or scientific importance held to advance the preservation and conservation objects of a charity' (ie assets held as 'stores of wealth' are excluded). Heritage assets have to be capitalised unless no reliable cost information is available, or valuation would be insufficiently reliable, or where significant costs in producing valuations outweigh the benefits of valuation. Putting the value of heritage assets on Balance Sheets is a controversial issue, and the Accounting Standards Board has announced a review of the whole issue, with a consultation paper expected by year-end. For further information contact the author:

Adrian Babbidge
Egeria Advice & Training Consultancy
tel: 0208 926 0442

Gift Aid Logo and branding announced

A brand and logo for the new Gift Aid on day visits scheme to be introduced in April 2006 has been developed by AGLAG (Attractions Gift Aid Liaison Group) of which AIM is a member.

Available for free use nationally by all attractions participating in the Gift Aid scheme, the logo can be used for all variations of the scheme, notably the annual membership and +10% options. London Zoo and Cravens Advertising played a major role in the design. The suggested text for all

point-of-sale print can be adapted by individual attractions to suit their own circumstances.

AGALG hopes organisations will use the logo on all relevant materials, such as posters and notices, at the point of sale. "The more the logo is used, the greater public recognition will be, and we believe the easier it will become to persuade visitors to participate" says AGALG chairman, Ken Robinson.

A number of AIM members are considering going down the annual membership route, rather than the +10% ROUTE. (It is thought that those with large Friends' memberships and a high incidence of repeat visits are likely to prefer the +10% option). Two important points have been confirmed for those interested in the +10% option –

- Vouchers given in return for the +10% donation. HMRC will not give written guidance but has agreed that AFALG can advise members that attractions can offer a gift (up to the defined value) via a redeemable voucher, subject to the maintenance of an adequate audit trail.
- Attractions can promote an admission charge to all visitors that includes the +10-% element, subsequently only claiming Gift Aid from eligible UK taxpayers who agree to make a donation of an equivalent amount. It must be made absolutely clear that the +10% Gift Aid-able donation is voluntary, and the normal admission charge must be clearly advised, with visitors choosing to pay this amount if they wish.

AGALG stresses that the definitive sources of information on the scheme are the legislation itself, the Finance Act 1005, at www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2005/500220-c.htm#11 and the HMRC guidance, at www.hmrc.gov.uk/charities/chapter3-insert.htm.

AIM advises members to satisfy themselves of the legality of their chosen texts by contacting HMRC for approval. The texts are shown below.



Suggested explanatory text developed by AGALG to be used alongside logo in promotional print for the +10% option.



Gift Aid Logo



Suggestion for adaptation of AGALG's text for the annual membership option.

COMMENT: A Museum Development Officer's Perspective

Small independent museums are constantly under threat. Their staff feel backed into a corner. Small museums value their independence, and this is vital to the communities that they serve. Working as Museum Development Officer for Herefordshire for the last two years I have witnessed the ups and downs of many small, independent, volunteer run museums. To help them we must understand the issues they face.

The main issue is money, particularly the current trend for project-led funding. Museums are forced to be constantly aware of the shifting funding available and flexible enough to take advantage of it. There is a lack of funding for everyday costs, and for those museums who rely on solely donations this is a major problem. Although Renaissance in the Regions has brought more money into the regions, this is being ring-fenced to achieve specific targets.

The knowledge gap between the paid and voluntary sectors within museums is widening and small museums can find it difficult to keep up with changing jargon. Staff are constantly frustrated by lack of plain English in communications which can mean that important information is binned. I am increasingly acting as a jargon translator, enabling

those in small museums to understand vital information.

A serious threat is the lack of understanding of how small museums work, resulting in a misunderstanding of their viability and the professionalism with which they are run. During my short career I have come across people who are shocked to discover that some small museums don't have an inventory, and that some have fully computerised catalogues. Never judge a museum by its size.

Small independent museums rely on volunteers. Increasingly people work beyond retirement age and often have childcare responsibilities. With the growing need for volunteer staff, most volunteers work for at least two organizations. Small independent museums are usually reliant on the enthusiasm of key volunteers. People working with volunteer museums need to understand that decisions often cannot be taken without a committee meeting and forms generally cannot be filled in and returned within twenty four hours. As an Museum Development Officer I am able to not only offer advice but also time to work alongside volunteers. Small independent museums need more people to be involved and 'get their hands dirty'.

Not all museums have computers, email or access to the internet; many curators feel more comfortable with traditional means of communication; costs of technology are prohibitive. The current agenda of e-governance, is not helpful to these museums and is in fact exclusive. Museum Development Officers can act as a communications link, turning ICT based resources into paper. However this is not an ideal solution.

Discontinuity is a major issue, as many advisory services including the Museum Development Officers are grant funded. Many museums feel that they receive irrelevant and unwanted advice from what seems to be a duplication of sources of information. Small museums need relevant advice from people they know and trust.

In total these threats combine to disempower those working in small museums. They are compounded by the continually changing approaches to advice and guidance.

But small museums can thrive. Among the exciting developments in Herefordshire, two museums

have received substantial Heritage Lottery funding for building projects.

The Museum Development Officer Project will probably have a finite life. In Herefordshire the Museum Development Officer Project supports and encourages an independent, sustainable, support network for all museums. But an Museum Development Officer can only do so much, and there are only 24 hours in a day

Virginia Mayes-Wright

(Reproduced by kind permission of Virginia Mayes-Wright, the Museum Development Officer for Herefordshire, supporting 22 non-local authority sites. The Museum Development Officer is funded by the Renaissance West Midlands, MLA West Midlands and Herefordshire Council; and Diana Zeuner, Editor of AIM Bulletin).

Did You Know?

- Museums & Galleries Month 2006 is from 29th April – 4th June. There is an invitation to take part and each museum can choose the level of their participation dependent on their time and resources. The Month is about building audiences and further information by email can be obtained from the following email address: info@campaignformuseums.org.uk.
- Museums and galleries have been awarded top marks in a survey of customer satisfaction with public services. They scored the best rating of 95% in a *Playlist for Public Services*, published by the National Consumer Council which aims to safeguard the interests of customers. It is the first time public services have been ranked according to customer satisfaction.

Forum Meeting Dates

Open Meetings - 2006

6 th April – AGM	venue to be confirmed.
7 th September Museum	Loughborough
7 th December	Fleckney

Heritage Awards - 2006

20 th July	Grand Central Railway /Railway Preservation
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All venues are provisional and are to be confirmed.

Please remember to send your articles for the Newsletter, and all information about events that you want publicised.

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