



Interesting Times

Remarkably we are at the beginning of the third year in the life of the Friends of Wandsworth Museum. Not only remarkable because it seems like only yesterday that we launched this new association, harnessed a committee, set up our constitution and applied for and were granted charitable status but also, and most remarkably, we have sustained a healthy level of support in the absence of a physical Museum. The Friends have generously given time and money to what is now the established Wandsworth Museum Company Ltd. This month I was proud to hand over a cheque for six thousand pounds to Andrew Leitch, our first donation to the Museum. It will go towards the costs of the exciting and extensive education programmes which continue this month with a re-enactment of a journey taken by some of Wandsworth's evacuees in World War II. I believe it is shaping up to be quite an event which will attract widespread attention. You may wish to wave them off at Wandsworth Common Station on the Wed 29th September at 9.20am.

Last month the Museum's Board of Trustees approved a plan to move the Museum into the now closed West Hill Library. Arrangements are at a fairly advanced stage but negotiations with the Council for favourable terms and conditions still have to take place. All being well we may soon have a home, albeit an interim one until the Ram

Brewery Site in the town centre is developed. So, being positive by nature, I feel we can at last begin to recruit volunteers for specific tasks. We have already sent a Friend to assist at a Museum session in a local Primary School, by all accounts a very successful and rewarding morning, see below. **Now we need help from you to sew replica period costumes, under guidance.** The education team will be offering Roman, Victorian and WW II projects to schools and are looking to the Friends for help. Sewing skills and experience an advantage but not essential.

I hope when you read this and Andrew Leitch's report, also below, you will share my sense of optimism and even excitement at the prospects ahead. Our Council needs to enter the negotiations for West Hill with an awareness of the civic value the Museum will bring to Wandsworth and that public support is considerable and, demonstrably, enduring. I look forward to seeing you at our AGM on the 2nd of November when, following the business, there will be a preview of the Museum's first exhibition, Wandsworth Through Art, given by curator Pat Astley-Cooper and also a major review of future plans and prospects for the Museum. We look forward to interesting times.

Sheila Allen

Museum Update – September 2009

From the Director of the new Wandsworth Museum

These past few months have seen several significant developments towards opening a new Museum in 2010. Chief amongst these, a decision to locate the new Museum at the West Hill Library site for the next five years, was agreed by the Trustee Board. The agreement by the Director and the Trustees established a budget and a timetable to deliver the 'interim' Museum open to the public at West Hill by the summer of 2010. It is still hoped that the ongoing understanding between the Museum and the developer, Minerva, would allow the Museum to move into the historic end of the Ram Brewery site post-2015. Lease negotiations are now under way with the Council for the West Hill location. Development of the new Museum's interior design and operational phasing

is also under way and is expected to be presented at the Friends AGM this November.

On other fronts the Museum has made significant progress in collections acquisition, public and school programming as well as re-accreditation of the museum with the UK Museum, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA).

We have recently received some wonderful treasures including personal items that highlight stories and contributions made by individuals and organisations to the story of Wandsworth, from 1919 School Good Attendance Medals to the red granite foundation stone of the Wandsworth Town Public Baths (torn down in the early 1960s). We are still anxiously awaiting the coroner's jury

awarding the 1680 *Memento mori* ring (a Latin phrase meaning "Remember you must die") found on the Thames river bank near Putney. The kind donation of monies from the Friends allowed us to secure the item for our collections. We expect that it will be one of the first items seen when visitors enter the new Museum. The Museum is interested in your personal treasures and items that have special significance to the history of Wandsworth so drop us a line if you feel there may be something you might donate.

In June the Museum exhibited at the Wandle Festival and, with the huge support of Pamela Greenwood, Nick Fuentes and the Wandsworth Historical Society, we presented Wandsworth WW2 and Roman history to more than 600 visitors. From grinding grain in a stone Roman mill to experiencing a Roman market stall to crawling into a Morrison shelter, visitors had a terrific and informative time. It also afforded a chance to broadcast our plans for the new Museum. We were happy to see many Friends visit us and we intend to participate again next June.

Our Education and Outreach programmes have also been under way for several months. Stevie Edge, our new Senior Educator, and Lisa Geelhood (freelance consultant and former Head of Education at the old museum) created two new Key Stage 1 & 2 programmes to be prototyped with six schools in Wandsworth. Over two months they were tested with 300 students resulting in helpful feedback from teachers and kids helping us make improvements and add new ones for Key Stage 3 & 4. In late July a request was made to the Friends for volunteers to help sew some costumes. Friends who are interested please let me know. We'll supply the pattern and materials.

At the end of this month is the Wandsworth re-evacuation of students to Shamley Green in Surrey, recreating the WW2 evacuation of Magdalen (Beatrix Potter), Swaffield, and Wandle (now closed) schools on 1 September 1939. Working closely with Steph Neale (Head at Beatrix Potter School) we will be taking 300 students and teachers by train, drawn by 'Tangmere' a Battle of Britain class steam locomotive, down to a series of activities at Shamley Green in Surrey. The afternoon events will recreate school games and tours of the billeting houses and schools. We have been able to trace five of the original evacuees and three will be joining us as guests of honour. A small number of Friends have also been invited and we look forward to the day. The event will be covered by the BBC as well as recorded by us for inclusion on our website as well as in an exhibition to be held in 2011 at the museum. This project has received £5000 in funds from the Friends of the Museum and couldn't happen without their kind support.

I would like to make a personal thank you to all the Friends for your continued support, guidance and patience as we move forward. The Museum seems well on its way to becoming a tangible entity again, in no small part due to your efforts. I look forward to updating you with even more exciting news in November.

Andrew

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Green Shoots

The work of Wandsworth Museum's Education Team

There may be some doubt about *green shoots* in the economy, but there are clearly some visible as far as the Museum is concerned as I discovered recently when I joined the Education Team of Stevie Edge, full-time Educator, and Lisa Geelhood, Education Consultant, at John Burns Primary School, Battersea for a KS2 Outreach session called *Bags of Time*. This is one of two sessions (the other being *Toys and Noise* for KS1) researched, designed and created by Stevie in conjunction with Lisa and Andrew Leitch for the Wandsworth Museum Prototype Schools Outreach Programme. Sessions have been conducted in a small number of Wandsworth Primary schools this summer, and it is hoped that the Pilot Phase due to begin in September will involve a larger number of schools and students and a wider range of programmes.

I thought I was there to watch, but Stevie and Lisa had other ideas and I found myself "working", carrying boxes, getting out the tables and helping with a group of children. In fact, I got off lightly as we only had half a Year 6 class to deal with.

So, 14 children, Stevie, Lisa, the teacher and I set off to discover how various kinds of evidence are used in the historical process. Using a darning mushroom – I recognised it! – Stevie embarked on a lively discussion session about what it could be which threw up a whole series of ideas to help identify an object and what it could tell us about the past. The children's responses formed the basis of their investigations later on. Forming a timeline from *BC* to *Modern* in the 10 minutes before break caused a few hiccups with *Victorian* finding itself the wrong side of both World Wars at

one point, but eventually chronology prevailed and the right order established to everyone's satisfaction.

After break, the class, and adults, divided into groups to investigate the *Bags of Time* – baskets, a trunk, a suitcase and a kitbag – to be found on the various tables around the room. These treasure chests contain artefacts, replicas, photographs and images from different eras and are accompanied by relevant documents. My group scored the trunk full of Victoriana – Snap cards a sailor suit, a top hat, a collar, coins, a spinning top, a slate and photographs – while other groups were discussing Roman items or wartime selections. The items gave rise interesting examples of the effects of time and social context. The children identified a child's slate as a blackboard rather than a slate initially, and one of the group said that today we would call it a whiteboard; in fact boards *are* white nowadays but in the early days of political correctness even blackboards had to be called white! The pictures on the cards were of people doing a variety of

work, a flower seller and a sweep being two examples the group found them difficult to identify. Still, the coins were a great help in establishing our period.

Unfortunately, I had to leave before the end of the morning and so I missed examining the documents and the feedback from the groups but I am sure they enjoyed this part too. I was told that feedback from teachers who have been involved in earlier sessions has been enthusiastic and appreciative. Several have wanted to book sessions for next school year but this is not possible at the moment. Having listened to the introductory session and participated in the group work, albeit for a comparatively short period, I can understand why schools are keen to invite the team back. The children clearly enjoyed the experience but I would also be interested to learn how they build on the Outreach programme in the curriculum and whether the investigative skills Stevie and Lisa are trying to teach bear fruit as the children move through the education system.

Christina Dawson

Museum of London Visit

Wed 28 October – Museum of London. A private tour of the London Before London Gallery with Senior Curator (Prehistory), Jon Cotton, who spoke so entertainingly at our July meeting in Emanuel School. The gallery is full of objects – many dredged from the Thames – which tell the story of London's 'lost' half a million years before the arrival of the Romans. The tour starts at 3 pm and will last about an hour and a half. Participants should gather in the entrance hall of the museum.

As there is no charge for this visit and places are limited to 15, early booking is advised.

The Museum of London is at: London Wall, EC2
The nearest tube stations are: Barbican, St Paul's, Moorgate. Or train to Waterloo and a No. 4 bus.

To book a place please contact
simonmcnr@aol.com or phone on 07958-657522.

Visit to the Ram Brewery

The Friends' visit, organised by Wendy Cater, took place on Friday, June 12th. We were greeted by our guide, John Hatch, the site manager who, since Youngs Brewery shut down two and a half years ago, has been operating his own micro-brewery to keep the beer-making tradition alive in Wandsworth. He welcomed us to "these dangerous and unsightly works", which turned out to be fairly accurate on both counts. "Well, I used to be the brewery's health and safety officer," said John.

There was no hint of the old familiar yeasty smell as we were ushered through the derelict yard and into the elegant Georgian House Board Room to watch a video featuring John Young and the history of the Youngs brewery, founded in 1831 – though there is evidence of a much longer history of brewing on this site. We were then led round the works: the large square open fermenting tanks (in one of which the brewery cat once met

an untimely end); the two huge beam engines which powered the whole brewery process still greased up and ready to re-start one day; the gigantic, handsomely polished copper brewing vats, which are listed; along narrow passages and up and down clanging stairs ("mind your heads!") and shown a well in the floor, discovered by a water-diviner.

There was a film unit camped in the yard as we were taken across to the deserted stable block, dating from 1896. Once the home to forty heavy drays, it is now decommissioned and destined – it is thought – to become a restaurant. A notice on the wall read "Please do not feed the animals."

Our visit ended in John Hatch's micro-brewery, housed in the old sample room built from the timber of salvaged sailing ships. There we were invited to pull our own pints.

Postscript: The suggested location for the future Wandsworth Museum on the brewery site would be the space now occupied by the fermenting

tanks on the first floor, leading directly into the micro-brewery.

Christine Willis

Summer Meeting report, 7 July

A two-fold treat lay in store for members who were able to attend the July meeting at Emanuel School. Thanks to Head Mark Hanley-Browne members were given rare access to the School's exquisite 16th-century chapel, accompanied by the School's own archivist, Tony Jones.

Our speaker was Jon Cotton, Senior Curator (Prehistory) Museum of London, who took us on an entertaining and educational voyage along the Thames. The title of Jon's talk – Liquid History: The 'Golden Age' of Thames Finds – was drawn from two quotes made by local luminaries eighty years ago.

'The St Lawrence is mere water. The Missouri muddy water. The Thames is liquid history.'

So said the radical Battersea MP, the Rt Hon John Burns, in 1929 and the truth of his words became clear as Jon regaled us with the stories behind the great archaeological finds along our own stretch of the river.

Arguably, the most important of these finds were made in a fifty-year period spanning the mid-19th century, starting with the discovery of a bronze head **of the Emperor Hadrian** in the Thames near London Bridge in **1834 and ending with the Fulham Sword and the Kew Tankard.**

Indeed, the diversity and richness of the finds during this period prompted our second quote – again in 1929 – by G F Lawrence, an antiques dealer on Wandsworth's West Hill: 'I fear the 'Golden Age' of Thames finds is now past.' Jon's talk demonstrated that these discoveries were not the result of careful digs undertaken by Victorian archaeologists, but everyday building work. Our own Battersea Shield, for example, was dredged up from the bed of the River [Thames](#) in 1857 during excavations for the previous [Chelsea Bridge](#).

Members have a second chance to hear Jon talking about the archaeology of the Thames during our visit to the Museum of London in October.

Simon McNeill-Ritchie

Treasurer's Report

Funds stood at £13,403 as at the end of August. Recent income has been from late payers of last year's annual subscriptions – our subscription year runs from 1st October to 30th September and we recently sent a rather delayed reminder to those who had not renewed last October. In my last report I mentioned that we had agreed to make two donations to the Wandsworth Museum

Company and the first of these, for £6,000 will now be paid. This sum will go towards an Education Partnership Project focused on World War II school evacuees. Meanwhile, our Gift Aid reclaim forms have been submitted and if paid in full we can expect some £2,765.65 back from Alistair Darling, although it will be some weeks yet before we will know for sure.

Diary dates

29th Sept (9.20am): Wandsworth Common Station. Re-enactment of Wartime Evacuation to Shamley Green. Depart by steam train.

28th Oct (3.00pm): Visit to Museum of London.

02nd Nov (7.30pm): Friends of Wandsworth Museum AGM at National opera Studio
Followed by:
- "Wandsworth Through Art" Preview by Pat Astley-Cooper
- Museum Review by Andrew Leitch, Director



Friends of WANDSWORTH MUSEUM

Annual General Meeting of the Friends of Wandsworth Museum

7.30pm on 2 November 2009

The National Opera Studio

2 Chapel Yard, (off Buckhold Rd) SW18

The Secretary wishes to give notice of the above meeting for the following purposes:

- **to receive reports from the Chairman and Officers**
 - **to receive and approve the annual accounts and to appoint an examiner**
 - **to elect the Officers and ordinary members of the Committee**
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Following AGM business,

- **A Preview of the Museum's 1st Exhibition "Wandsworth Through Art" presented by Pat Astley-Cooper**
- **Museum Review by Andrew Leitch, Director**