

**FOR  
REFERENCE ONLY**

FRANCIS CLOSE HALL LEARNING CENTRE UNIVERSITY OF GLOUCESTERSHIRE Swindon Road, Cheltenham GL50 4AZ Tel: 01242 714600
--

**VOLUNTEER – RUN MUSEUMS IN ENGLISH  
MARKET TOWNS AND VILLAGES**

**BRIDGET ELIZABETH YATES**

A Thesis submitted to  
The University of Gloucestershire  
In accordance with the requirements of the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
In the Faculty of Education, Humanities and Sciences

December 2010

# **ABSTRACT**

## **VOLUNTEER-RUN MUSEUMS IN ENGLISH MARKET**

### **TOWNS AND VILLAGES**

Volunteer-run museums in English market towns and villages have been largely over-looked by scholars examining the history and development of museums in England, and work on contemporary museum volunteering or the relations of museums to their communities have not distinguished between volunteer-run and volunteer-involving museums. This thesis attempts to redress the balance by examining a number of volunteer-run museums in Dorset and the characteristics and motivations of the volunteers involved in their development. This element of the project included a survey of museum volunteers in the county and studies of a selected group of museums through interviews and through archival research in museum records.

The thesis also presents a historical analysis, through a number of case histories, of the development of volunteer-run museums in English market towns and villages from 1884, demonstrating clearly how the development of these small museums reflects larger changes in the rural community from the paternalism of the late nineteenth century, through growing independence and democracy after 1918, to the counter-urbanisation of the second half of the twentieth century.

Changing perceptions of rural identity are also apparent in the history of these museums.

The second element of the project was largely undertaken in the archives of selected institutions founded at different periods, an unexplored source of extraordinary richness.

Contextual discussions include an account of three unsuccessful attempts to set up an English folk museum, the importance of the growing interest in local history at a popular level, and the impact of the Festival of Britain in focussing attention on the history of towns as enshrining civic pride and liberties.

Taken together, these two elements have enabled a clearer picture to emerge of the importance of volunteer-run museums to their communities, to the participants themselves and to the wider museums community.

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of the University of Gloucestershire and is original except where indicated by specific reference in the text. No part of the thesis has been submitted as part of any other academic award. The thesis has not been presented to any other education institution in the United Kingdom or overseas.

Any views expressed in the thesis are those of the author and in no way represent those of the university.

Signed

A black rectangular box redacting the signature of the author.

Dated 12<sup>th</sup> September 2011



## Acknowledgements

This project would not have been possible without the kindness and support of many people, nor would I have had so much enjoyment, fun and interest along the way.

First of all I owe an enormous debt of gratitude to all the many dedicated volunteers working in the museums that I have visited. Barry Jackson, Mrs Mary Herbert, Leslie Herbert and Alan Broadhead at the **Victoria Jubilee Museum, Cawthorne**, and John Coldwell, Local Studies Librarian, Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council; Mrs Barbara Edward at **Winchcombe Folk and Police Museum**; Peter Greener at **Ashwell Village Museum**; Mrs Diane Blackett at the **Swinford Museum, Filkins** ; J. Kent Tomey at **Clun**; Chris Morley at **Cricklade Museum**; Ken Perkins at the **Northgate Museum, Bridgnorth**; Gerald and Helen Heath at the **Almonry Museum, Evesham**; Bob Roberts and Tony Moore at the **Lanman Museum, Framlingham**.

In Dorset, I would particularly like to thank Murray Rose and Jenny Cuthbert of **Beaminster Museum**; Peter Andrews and Sylvia Hixson Andrews of **Blandford Forum Town Museum**; R.J. Saville and Sandra Brown of **Langton Matravers Museum**; Lisa Gravett and colleagues at **Portland Museum**; Sue Turner, Elisabeth Bletsoe, Alex Oxford and Hibbert Binney

at **Sherborne Museum**; and Mike O'Hara at **Wareham Town Museum**. All of whom made time to talk to me, and allowed me access to the museum archives, a privilege which is deeply appreciated.

David Tucker, Dorset County Museums Adviser, gave me whole-hearted support and encouragement from the start, as did the members of the Dorset Museums Association who, with David, formed a steering group to guide and advise me on the development of the Dorset Survey of Museum Volunteers, Emma Ayling, Trudi Cole, Sylvia Hixson Andrews, Murray Rose, and Judy Lindsay.

Other museum colleagues who have contributed to the project at various points are: Matthew Alexander, Guildford Museum; Dr Roy Brigden, Museum of English Rural Life, Reading; Nigel Cox, Gloucester Folk Museum; Tony Cross, The Curtis Museum, Alton; Hugh Hornby for St Michaels-on-Wyre Museum; Brian Ives, Nidderdale Museum; Nichola Johnson, former Director of the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts and Head of Museology at the University of East Anglia; Dr Nick Mansfield, former Director of the National Museum of Labour History; Louise Pullen, Museums Sheffield (Ruskin Collection); Chris Reeve, Bungay Museum; Julie Reynolds, Gloucestershire Museums Development Officer; John Stevenson, Champs

Chapel Museum, East Hendred; Alex Woodall, Manchester City Galleries.

I could not have embarked on this project without the help and support of my friends, particularly Anne and Alan Jones and Jean Mayne who have looked after house and garden when I have been in Cheltenham. My family have put up with my fascination with museums for a very long time especially Chris and Sue Yates, Robin Yates and Grace Fong, and Alex Yates and Airlie Fleming. They might, I think, be rather hoping that this will be The End.

Finally I would like to thank my supervisors at the University of Gloucestershire Andrew Charlesworth and James Derounian without whose indefatigable support, guidance and encouragement, mugs of tea and poached eggs on toast (twice), none of this would have happened.

**This thesis is dedicated with love to my brother**  
**Christopher St John Yates, 1943-2009**

CONTENTS

Abstract	1
Author’s Declaration	3
Acknowledgements	4
Dedication	7

SECTION A: INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 The origins of the research	18
1.2 The research journey	21
1.3 The key research questions and themes addressed in the project	28

Chapter 2: The scope of the study

2.1 Introduction to Chapter 2	31
2.2 Why study ‘market town and village museums’?	32
2.3 Working definitions of ‘market town’ and ‘village’	34
2.4 Definition of ‘volunteer-run’ museum for the purpose of the study	36

SECTION B THE LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction: Museums and Museum Volunteering	40
---	----

Chapter 3: Volunteer-run museums – a literature review

3.1 Theorizing the history of museums	41
3.2 The New Museology	50

## **Chapter 4 Volunteers and Volunteering in Museums – a literature review**

4.1	Surveys of volunteering in museums	56
4.2	The Mattingly and Holmes Surveys	59
4.3	The Institute for Volunteering Research Surveys, 2002 and 2005	65
4.4	Volunteering in Museums- the academic literature	67
4.5	Does Organisational Context Matter?	71
	<b>Summary of Section B</b>	<b>78</b>

## **SECTION C: VOLUNTEER- RUN MUSEUMS - UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT**

<b>Introduction to Section C</b>	<b>579</b>
----------------------------------	------------

### **Chapter 5: Volunteer- Run Museums - Understanding the Context**

5.1	Governing Volunteer-run Museums	81
5.2	The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council Accreditation Scheme and Volunteer-run Museums	92
5.3	The Renaissance Programme, the Museum Development Fund and Museum Development Officers	97
5.4	Other Museum Networks and Organisations	101
5.5	Funding Sources and Support for Volunteer-run Museums	103
	<b>Summary of Section C</b>	<b>108</b>

## **SECTION D: THE DORSET SURVEY OF MUSEUM VOLUNTEERS**

<b>Introduction: the Museum Landscape in Dorset</b>	109
<b>Chapter 6: The Dorset Survey of Museum Volunteers</b>	
6.1 The Dorset Survey of Museum Volunteers – Introduction	113
6.2 The Survey responses: some essentials	116
6.3 Why do they do it? Some motivations explored	122
6.4 Volunteer-run museums and the development of social capital	131
<b>Summary of Section D</b>	140

## **SECTION E: THE ORIGINS OF VOLUNTEER-RUN MUSEUMS**

<b>Introduction to Section E</b>	143
<b>Chapter 7: Museums and the Everyday – Museums <i>for</i> the People or Museums <i>of</i> the People?</b>	
7.1 Museums in England in the Nineteenth Century – a brief overview	144
7.2 Early Village Museums	148
<b>Chapter 8: The Victoria Jubilee Museum, Cawthorne, 1884- 1915</b>	
8.1 Introduction	152
8.2 Background	154
8.3 The origins of the Museum	156

8.4 The Cawthorne Museum Society	162
8.5 Collecting for the Museum – Pratt, Ruskin and the wider world	166
8.6 The Museum Visitors	173
<b>Summary of Section E</b>	176

## **SECTION F: CHANGING THE SUBJECT**

<b>Introduction to Section F</b>	177
<b>Chapter 9: A Growing Interest in the Everyday</b>	
9.1 Appreciating the everyday: the influence of Gertrude Jekyll	179
9.2 An English Folk or Open Air Museum?	185
<b>Summary of Section F</b>	198

## **SECTION G: THE INTERWAR YEARS 1918-1939**

<b>Introduction to Section G</b>	202
<b>Chapter 10: The Growth of Popular History in the Interwar Years</b>	
10.1 Background – the place of history	205
10.2 History in schools	207
10.3 Popular Local History	212
10.4 The Women's Institutes and Village History	217
<b>Chapter 11: Going Local</b>	
11.1 The 'Turn to the Everyday'	224
11.2 The 'turn to the everyday' - The Curtis Museum	228



11.3 An English Folk or Open Air Museum? The quest continues	235
---	-----

**Chapter 12: Volunteer-run Museums in the 1920s and  
1930s – Paternalism or Personal Possession?**

12.1 Introduction	244
12.2 Paternalism or Personal Possession: Westmill, Winchcombe, East Hendred	246

**Chapter 13: Volunteer-run Museums in the 1920s and  
1930s – *By the People, For the People***

13.1 Introduction	271
13.2 Ashwell Village Museum	273
13.3 Filkins	287
<b>Summary of Section G</b>	295

**SECTION H: A NEW DEMOCRACY**

<b>Introduction to Section H</b>	297
----------------------------------	-----

**Chapter 14: Building a New Democracy – Volunteer-run  
Museums in the 1940s and 1950s**

14.1 The English Folk Museum – finale	299
14.2 The continuing rise of local history	309
14.3 The 1951 Festival of Britain: Local History and Popular Art	316
14.4 Volunteer-run Museums and the Festival of Britain	330
14.5 Changes in the Countryside	337

## **Chapter 15: The Local History Society Museum**

15.1 Introduction	339
15.2 Cricklade Museum, Wiltshire	341
15.3 The Northgate Museum, Bridgnorth, Shropshire	353
15.4 The Lanman Museum, Framlingham, Suffolk	360
15.5 The Vale of Evesham Historical Society and the Almonry Museum, Evesham, Worcestershire	365
<b>Summary of Section H</b>	<b>378</b>

## **SECTION I: TOWARDS THE PRESENT – VOLUNTEER-RUN MUSEUMS FROM THE 1960s TO THE 1980s**

<b>Introduction to Section I</b>	<b>380</b>
Chapter 16: The Museum Context	381
Chapter 17: Change in the Rural Community	390
<b>Chapter 18: Volunteer-run Museums from the 1960s – Some Examples from Dorset</b>	
18.1 Introduction to the case histories	395
18.2 The first steps	398
18.3 “Go forward with faith”	407
18.4 Contacts with other museums and museum networks	413
<b>SECTION J: CONCLUSION</b>	<b>418</b>

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

i	Primary and Manuscript Sources	434
ii	Secondary Sources	437
iii	Newspapers and Periodicals	462
iv	Government Publications and Publications by Public Bodies	464
v	Theses	467
vi	Websites	468

**APPENDICES**

1.	By the people themselves? Social class and a volunteer-led museum 1884 – 1915 <i>forthcoming publication</i>	469
2.	Victoria Jubilee Museum, Cawthorne Visitors' Book	498
3.	Independent Museums in Towns and Villages with a Population of less than 30,000	501
4.	Dorset Survey of Museum Volunteers Questionnaire	513

## INDEX OF TABLES

Table 1: Age breakdown of volunteers in museums, libraries and archives in the south west region taken from Chambers (2002) and Howlett et al. (2005)	66
Table 2: Accredited Museums in Dorset with paid staff	109
Table 3: Accredited museums in Dorset – volunteer-run	110
Table 4: Museums in Dorset that are outside the Accreditation Scheme	110
Table 5: Number of questionnaires sent to and received from Volunteer-run museums in Dorset, 2007	114
Table 6: Percentages of volunteers in museums, libraries and Archives in the south west region	118
Table 7: Percentage of volunteers who responded to the Question <i>Why did you become a volunteer at the museum?</i>	124
Table 8: Population of towns and villages with volunteer-run Museums in Dorset at the 2001 census	397

## INDEX OF IMAGES

Image 1: The Victoria Jubilee Museum, Cawthorne, external view, from a postcard	158
Image 2: Reverse of postcard shown in Image 1	158
Image 3: The Victoria Jubilee Museum, Cawthorne, internal view	160
Image 4: Front cover of the Cawthorne Parish Magazine	160
Image 5: The Curtis Museum, Alton	230
Image 6: Gloucester Folk Museum	242
Image 7: Westmill Museum catalogue front cover	255
Image 8: Pages from the Westmill Museum catalogue	255
Image 9: Westmill Museum, exterior	260
Image 10: Westmill Museum, interior	260
Image 11a & b: Ashwell, postcard sent by E.O. Fordham	279
Image 12: Ashwell, invitation to the boys' museum	281
Image 13: Ashwell, appeal handbill	281
Image 14: Ashwell Village Museum shortly after opening	284
Image 15: Albert Sheldrick and John Bray, Ashwell	284
Image 16: Filkins Museum	290
Image 17: George Swinford with Stafford Cripps	290
Image 18: The Moot Hall, Elstow	321
Image 19: The Moot Hall, Elstow, upper floor	321
Image 20: The Old Weigh House, Cricklade	343
Image 21: Leaflet, Cricklade Historical Society	343
Image 22: Ticket for the Annual Dance, Cricklade	345

Image 23: Poster for the Grand Annual Rummage Sale	345
Image 24: Poster for the opening of Framlingham Museum	363
Image 25: The Almonry Museum, Evesham	372
Image 26: Fundraising event for Beaminster Museum	409
Image 27: Cream Tea, Beaminster Museum	409
Image 28: Cawthorne Museum Visitor's Book	498
Image 29: Cawthorne Museum Visitor's Book, 5 <sup>th</sup> September 1891	500

# SECTION A: INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 The Origins of the Research

The interest that I have in museum volunteers and especially in volunteer run museums is one of long-standing. I started working in museums in 1968, and for the majority of my career, I was involved in the collection and management of rural social history material. Indeed, as a trustee of two rural life museums, which between them involve over 200 volunteers, I still maintain these interests. From 1976, I was the founding curator of the Norfolk Rural Life Museum, now known as Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse, a new museum set up during a period of rapid growth in the number of museums and of changes in approach to museum audiences and to the role of volunteers.

During the eighteen years I spent at Gressenhall, years in which progress at the museum was almost entirely dependent on a remarkable cohort of volunteers, I became increasingly involved in the growing number of small volunteer run museums that were being started in the county, providing both

advice and encouragement, and occasional discouragement, as well as arranging, with colleagues, various training and development opportunities. Later, as there began to be a sea change in attitudes to and a growing acceptance of volunteer-run museums, this role became more formalised, and I became responsible, on behalf of the Norfolk Museums Service (NMS), for liaison with all the museums in the county that were not part of the NMS, with a modest budget for training and other projects. I was also part of a group of local authority officers who shared similar responsibilities in the other counties of the East of England region, Cambridgeshire, Bedfordshire, Essex, Hertfordshire and Suffolk, and through this group I became aware of the commonalities between volunteer run museums, and also their differences and idiosyncrasies.

Increasingly, I tried to understand the motivations of those who dedicated so much of their time and invested so much emotional effort in working for their museums, often for apparently very small returns. Why did they start such a long term venture? What did they get from it? What did they feel they were achieving for their communities? Later, I began to wonder about the earlier history of volunteer run museums, when and why they were set up and why they were distributed so unevenly not only in the county but throughout England as a whole.



During my time at Gressenhall, I had been involved in a few projects with the Norfolk Rural Community Council, (and, later, served as a board member) as well as with a wide range of other county-wide rural organisations, such as the Women's Institutes, the pre-school association, agricultural associations, enthusiasts clubs and societies and local history groups. I became deeply interested in rural communities and in their problems and opportunities, as well as in the role of the museum in expressing, promoting and sustaining a rural way of life for today and for the future and not solely in recording the past.

When I finished full-time work, it seemed a good moment to bring together my twin interests of small museums and rural communities and this study, which has been driven largely from the experience and understanding of a practitioner, is the result.

## 1.2 The Research Journey

When I began this project, the focus of my research and study was to be volunteer-run museums in the present day and, more particularly the volunteers themselves. I wished to understand who they were, where they had come from, why they first became involved in their museums, and to what extent they were involved in other activities in their own communities. I also wished to discover why there were more small volunteer-run museums in some parts of England than in other regions<sup>1</sup>. My purpose was, from evidence based research, to provide some information and even recommendations to the wider museum community, to ensure that volunteer-run museums were sustained and encouraged by policy and strategy, and not ignored or damaged by inappropriate action.

My concern was with the small museums, dedicated to the history of their own geographical communities, rather than with museums supported by a community of interest, such as aviation or motor transport. It seemed clear to me that I would not be able to conduct my research in Norfolk or the East of England, as I had been based there for many years and had been involved, and was still involved to a lesser degree, in a number of strategic studies, training initiatives and advice and

---

<sup>1</sup> The study was never intended to embrace either Scotland or Wales, where the museum framework is different.

guidance in various forms. There might be a confusion of 'hats' for my respondents, and indeed I might find myself facing ethical dilemmas with 'privileged' knowledge. It therefore seemed more appropriate to locate the research elsewhere.

The criteria that I adopted were:

- ❖ The two areas should be unfamiliar to me either as a visitor, an employee or consultant or through personal contacts or friendship
- ❖ The first area should have a mix of museum provision, including local authority and independent museums both staffed and volunteer-run
- ❖ The second area should have contrasting provision to the first, although it should still have small volunteer-run museums
- ❖ The museums to be studied should be in rural areas, either small market towns or in villages

I also had to decide whether the areas should be regions or counties; I decided to choose to work with counties, because in my experience volunteer-run museums were more familiar and comfortable with that level, through county-wide museum fora, than operating at a seemingly more impersonal regional level.

Eventually, after deliberation and discussion, the two counties chosen were Dorset, which, as we shall see in Section D below, has a varied museum landscape, and Northumbria, which by contrast has a large local authority museum presence and very few small volunteer-run museums. The research project plan was to undertake the research in Dorset first, and evaluate the results, and then to move on to Northumbria, using some, but not all, of the same tools.

However, once the results of the Dorset Survey of Volunteers came in, it provoked other questions which could not be answered using the methodology I had opted to use:

- ❖ Only a minority of the volunteers involved in the museums I was studying were born and bred in Dorset. Was this an indication of wider changes in the rural community? Or an indication of a demographic particular to Dorset? Or both?
- ❖ Very few of the volunteers had been involved in their museums since the foundation, so when *had* these museums first been set up? Were they products of the years of the 'heritage boom' or were other factors at work?

- ❖ If there were other factors, what were they? Could I identify other trends or movements that pre-dated the 'heritage boom' of the 1970s and 1980s?
- ❖ And if there were other trends or movements, were these aligned with the history of the rest of the museums community? If there was a distinctive history, what was it?

As Chapters 3 and 4 will show, volunteer-run museums are largely overlooked in museum literature, so I could not turn to other scholars for answers to my questions. I began to investigate their origins for myself, turning first to the Miers Report to the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust of 1928 (Miers, 1928) which included a list of museums, the date of foundation and their governing body. The Victoria Jubilee Museum at Cawthorne immediately stood out; it was the oldest (1884); it was in a village; and it was run by a society. A preliminary visit quickly established that I had stumbled upon the quite extraordinary story of a museum which had managed to keep almost all records from its beginning to the present day (Chapter 8). However, in its early years Cawthorne did not display the story of the village nor any objects reflecting the daily lives of its people, as did the village museums with which I was familiar. Further questions now arose – when, how and why did this change come about?

I recollected that I had learned that Ashwell Village Museum (Chapter 13.2) had been set up in the inter-war years from some work that I had done previously, and so I contacted the curator and arranged to study their archives, where, *inter alia*, I was shown the catalogue of Westmill Museum (Chapter 12.3) and the photographs of the museum in Guy Ewing's *Westmill* (Ewing, 1928). Both Ashwell and Westmill<sup>2</sup> were collecting primarily local material, rather than the natural history, geology and ethnography I had found at Cawthorne<sup>3</sup>, so the change had happened and appeared to be uncontroversial.

At this point I developed two lines of enquiry, one to try to establish how many other museums survived from the inter-war period in market towns and villages, and the second, to attempt to unravel what changes had happened that legitimated the collection of ordinary, everyday items by museums. The results of my researches are given in Section G, Chapters 10 to 13.

I now had two ends of the story – the Dorset museums, and the museums set up before 1939, which were still, in many cases, very different from the self-governing, democratic museums

---

<sup>2</sup> It was about this point that I met Alec Hamilton, formerly a fellow research student at the University of Gloucestershire, at a seminar. It transpired that, by extraordinary coincidence, Hamilton also had an interest in Westmill, as he was studying the architect who restored the parish church under the patronage of Mrs Mary Greg. It was Hamilton who gave me the link between Mrs Greg and John Ruskin, for which I am most grateful.

<sup>3</sup> Cawthorne has, of course, changed since its early days. See Chapter 14.4.

with a range of volunteers with varying skills and life experiences that I recognised from my personal experience and from my Dorset researches. The link turned out to be local history and local history societies, which although it seems obvious now, was not known, or at any rate not stated (Section H).

Along the journey an extraordinary series of links and coincidences illuminated the path, which could not have been envisaged, predicted or planned for at the outset of the project. Peter Medawar in *Induction and Intuition in Scientific Thought* describes some of the forms that intuition can take in science and mathematics, and the properties that these forms share: “the suddenness of their origin, the wholeness of the conception that they embody and the absence of conscious premeditation” (Medawar, 1969, p 56). He also asks what is to be made of the role of *luck* in the methodology of science: “In the inductive view, luck strikes me as completely inexplicable; it can arise only from the gratuitous obtrusion of something utterly unexpected upon the senses; it is like winning a prize in a lottery in which we did not buy a ticket” (ibid. p33). “The lucky accident” suggests Medawar “fulfils a prior expectation, however vaguely formulated it may have been” (ibid. p52). Some of my own “lucky accidents” have been Ruskin’s connection to Cawthorne, the Ruskinian Mrs Greg’s connection

to Westmill, her friendship with E. O. Fordham, his role at Ashwell, his brother Montague Fordham's involvement with rural reconstruction, Mrs Greg's correspondence with Miss Eleanor Adlard of Winchcombe, and Adlard's connection to H.J. Massingham, who knew Montague Fordham through a shared interest in rural issues. The butterfly had flapped its wings.



### **1.3 The Key Research Questions and Themes addressed in the Project**

I have indicated in the foregoing sections of this chapter, which serves to introduce the project, that some of the objectives of the research have altered and shifted during the course of the enquiry from those originally set out at the beginning. What had started as a relatively straightforward project comparing and contrasting two geographical areas of volunteer-run museum activity has evolved into a more complex discussion of the development of volunteer run museums over time and of the nature of the relationship between these museums, their collections and their volunteers to their communities within the broad parameters of rural change and development, and of perceptions of rurality. What has stayed as a constant has been the wish to understand more about those involved, their motivations for devoting so much time and energy, both physical and emotional, to the museums where they work, and the benefits that they feel they have accrued from their engagement. The argument for retaining this element at the core of the project stems from my wish, as a practitioner, to be able to offer conclusions from my research that could be of value to the museums community as a whole, and that might help to support the long-term sustainability of rural volunteer-run museums.

Flowing from this has been the desire to understand how changes within the rural community and in constructions of rurality from 1880 to the present day are reflected in the establishment of volunteer run museums in English villages and market towns, and again my hope and belief is that at least some of my findings and conclusions will be of value to practitioners, and perhaps especially to those who provide support and guidance, so that if policy and strategy need finessing, it can emerge from knowledge and evidence.

I remarked earlier, and it will be noted again in the literature review that follows in Section B, that although the history of museums is beginning to attract greater notice among scholars, little attention has been paid to volunteer-run museums. So a further theme that runs through this project is a wish to identify where the history of small museums differs from that of their larger, mainly urban colleagues, and whether this distinctive history can offer insights into the relationship between museums and communities, and into the role of museums in asserting a sense of place and locality, now such strong foci of museum practice.

This chapter is not an attempt to protect the fact that the project has changed direction, and now obviously contains two parts. That cannot be hidden, but I hope it has been explained, and

excused, by the richness of the material that has been revealed. The whole story is greater than the sum of its parts and the light that is shed on the role of volunteer-run museums and their volunteers in their own communities is far brighter than any study of volunteer motivation alone would have yielded.

## CHAPTER 2: THE SCOPE OF THE STUDY

### 2.1 Introduction to Chapter 2

This chapter defines the compass of the study. The first sub-section (2.2) looks briefly at the legislative framework that has ensured that the early history of museums has been primarily an *urban*, rather than a rural history. It also suggests that the attention of scholars examining the museum enterprise has overlooked the small, rural organisations later discussed in Part Two of this project.

The second sub-section (2.3) offers some brief definitions of 'market town' and 'village' for the purposes of this study only, the key feature being the small town's ability to act as a hub for a neighbouring rural hinterland.

The final sub – section in this chapter (2.4) describes the museums that will be included in the study, partly by describing what they are *not*. It also notes the inconsistency of nomenclature, which may, perhaps, have contributed to the disregard of these museums by the academy.

## 2.2 Why study 'market town and village' museums?

The history of museums in England is primarily an *urban* history. Museums are not, and never have been, a statutory service which local authorities are obliged to provide or support. The nineteenth century legislation which empowered authorities to establish or fund museums in their areas, starting with the Museums Act of 1845, applied to towns with a population of 10,000 or more (Lewis, 1984a & c). County Councils, established in 1888, were not empowered to support museums until the Libraries Act of 1919 (Lewis 1984a). From that date, County Borough, Urban District and Parish Councils were also able to fund museums, provided that they adopted the Libraries Act, but Rural District Councils were not so empowered (NIAE, 1956; Lewis, 1984a & b). In practice, few of the smaller authorities did so, and, despite the encouragement of the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust (CUKT) in the 1920s and 1930s, which helped to set up museum educational services in Leicestershire and Derbyshire (Miers, 1928; Robertson, 1964) small rural communities were rarely served by a museum.

Most of the interest that has been shown in the history of museums in England has been concerned with institutions of national significance (Caygill, 2002; MacGregor, 2001), or with individual museums or groups of museums in the larger urban

communities (Durbin, 1984; Markham, 1990; Hill, 2005) or with the history of specific collections, types of collection or individual collecting activity (Belk, 1995, 2005; Pearce, 1995). Much of the theoretical work on the evolution of museums and their role has also been premised on large, national and urban institutions (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992; Walsh, 1992; Bennett, 1995). This study is an attempt to redress the balance, both by looking at organisations which have, broadly speaking, escaped attention, except of course to themselves (Curtis, 1955; Marchant, 1987; Lynn, 2005) and by reflecting on how the story of these museums and of those who work for them is linked to changes in the rural community and to perceptions of a rural identity.

### 2.3 Working definitions of 'market town' and 'village'

In November 2000 the Deputy Prime Minister presented a Rural White Paper to Parliament *Our Countryside the Future: A Fair Deal for Rural England* (CM4909). The White Paper stressed the importance of market towns to the economy, health and social well-being of rural England:

Market towns play a critical role in helping rural communities to thrive and in regenerating deprived areas. They are small rural and coastal towns many of which serve a rural hinterland whether or not they have ever had traditional agricultural markets. Some may have grown up around a canal or railway junction or as a coastal resort while continuing to be an important commercial and leisure focus for a rural hinterland. There are over 1,000 towns in England with populations between 2,000 and 20,000. Many have suffered from the decline of agriculture, mining, textiles or other industries. (CM4909, 2000, p74)

Since then, a number of Government studies have provided further analysis of what constitutes a rural area and what an urban area, based on the 2001 census output areas (DEFRA, 2005 revised 2009; CRC49, 2007), taking account of both population size and population density. The statement taken from the White Paper quoted above was based on earlier work by the then Countryside Agency:

We define 'market towns' by their capacity to act as a focal point for trade and services for a rural hinterland. We use the term to cover towns with a wide variety of backgrounds, not just those that host a traditional agricultural market or are historic. They include seaside resorts and fishing ports as well as mining and manufacturing towns.

Population size is less important than the town's potential to act as a hub for its local rural economy. However, the Countryside Agency is broadly looking at market towns with populations of between 2,000 and 20,000, of which there are about 1,000 in England. (CA26, 2000, no page numbers given)

Based on these definitions, and for the purpose of this study, a market town is defined as a small town which acts as a rural hub. Indeed, museums in market towns frequently and explicitly take on a role in respect of their surrounding villages in addition to collecting and exhibiting material from the town itself.

Examples include Witney and District Museum, Oxfordshire, Beccles and District Museum, Suffolk, Maldon District Museum, Essex and Beaminster and Blandford Forum Museums in Dorset. Villages, with smaller populations and a less extensive range of services and facilities, are less likely to act as a hub for other villages, and village museums are therefore more likely, but not exclusively, to confine their collecting activities to the village itself. Examples of such museums include Bloxham Village Museum, Oxfordshire, Ashwell Village Museum, Hertfordshire and Langton Matravers Museum, Dorset.



## **2.4 Definition of 'volunteer-run' museum for the purpose of the study**

The museum landscape is a complex one with a wide range of governance structures. To add to the complexity, different descriptors have often been used at different times for the same range of institutions. Prince and Higgins-McLoughlin (1987), for example, refer interchangeably to the non-public sector, by which they mean museums run by neither national nor local authorities, and to the 'private sector'. Today, a museum in the private sector would generally be accepted as one that was run for private benefit and not in the public domain<sup>4</sup>. 'Independent' is the term most widely used today (Cossons, 1984) and Babbidge (2005a) distinguishes between 'independents' and 'national', 'local authority', 'university', 'National Trust' and 'English Heritage' museums in his analysis of the numerical distribution of museums in the Museums, Libraries and Archive Council Accreditation Scheme<sup>5</sup>.

There was no widely accepted definition of a museum in Britain until 1984 when the Museums Association (MA) Conference adopted the following:

'An institution which collects, documents, preserves, exhibits, and interprets material evidence and associated information for the public benefit.'

---

<sup>4</sup> Crooke (2007) continues to use the term 'private museum' in reference to independent museums with accredited status (Crooke, 2007, p8)

<sup>5</sup> The Accreditation Scheme is described in Chapter 5.2.

This definition, which is mainly descriptive of the tasks undertaken by museum staff, was superseded in 1998 by:

Museums enable people to explore collections for inspiration, learning and enjoyment. They are institutions that collect, safeguard and make accessible artefacts and specimens, which they hold in trust for society.

In 2002, the Museums Association *Code of Ethics for Museums* further expanded the definition:

Society can expect museums to:

- ❖ hold collections in trust on behalf of society
- ❖ focus on public service
- ❖ encourage people to explore collections for inspiration, learning and enjoyment
- ❖ consult and involve communities
- ❖ acquire items honestly and responsibly
- ❖ safeguard the long-term public interest in the collections
- ❖ recognise the interests of people who made, used, owned, collected or gave items in the collections
- ❖ support the protection of the natural and human environments
- ❖ research, share and interpret information related to collections, reflecting diverse views
- ❖ review performance to innovate and improve (MA 2002)

The changes between these two definitions in many ways encapsulate the changes between the 'old' museology and the 'new' museology<sup>6</sup>, and both definitions have, in turn, been used as criteria for acceptance into the MLA Accreditation Scheme, described below.

---

<sup>6</sup> The New Museology will be discussed in Chapter 3.2.

'Independent museums' is a term inclusive of a wide range of institutions from large, nationally recognised institutions such as Ironbridge and Chatham Historic Dockyard, which employ a range of staff with different skills and accountabilities, to small village museums with no paid staff. In between are a large number of small and medium sized museums which employ a few paid staff, but remain largely dependent on volunteers. There are very few museums in any sector which do not involve volunteers (Howlett et al. 2006); those which have both paid staff and volunteers could be described as 'volunteer- involving' organisations. As Cossons wrote "a clear distinction needs to be made between these *voluntary* museums and the bigger independent museums and public authority museums in which *volunteers* often work" (Cossons, 1984, p86)

Independent museums are concerned with a very wide range of subjects, more particularly with subjects that are outside the once traditional collecting areas of art, archaeology and the natural sciences, such as transport, industry and technology and other communities of interest and shared enthusiasm (Cossons, 1984; Prince and Higgins-McLoughlin 1987; Middleton 1990, 1998). There are also a significant number of independent museums, predominantly in rural areas, that are concerned with their own geographical community, the history of their town or village and, for the purposes of this study, and

to attempt to draw parameters for the work, the 'volunteer-run museums' which are the primary subject of this thesis describes institutions that are within the MLA Accreditation scheme, that meet the 1998 definition of a museum, that are run, and have always been run, by volunteers without paid staff and that are concerned with the local and / or social history of their own community. It excludes, therefore, small market town museums such as Ely Museum, which has paid staff, and includes museums where the work of the museum is entirely voluntary, even though the running costs are met by the Town or Parish Council, a 'local authority', such as Evesham's Almonry Heritage Centre. It also excludes volunteer-run museums of railways, cars, boats and other single subjects or sites, even though the museum might be situated in a rural area.

It should be stressed that these parameters were drawn to contain the research, to enable fair comparisons to be made and to ensure that museums could be identified for individual case histories. It also, incidentally, indicates the wealth of research that still remains to be accomplished to increase understanding of this significant element of the museums community.

## SECTION B: THE LITERATURE REVIEW

### Introduction: Museums and Museum Volunteering

This project is situated at the junction of a number of areas that have become of increasing academic interest in recent years, and which serve to provide the context for this project. These areas include museology and the history of museums; the study of volunteers and voluntarism, the history of voluntary action and discourses of civil society; discourses of rurality and Englishness and discourses of identity, community and social capital. However, in none of these do volunteer-run museums or their volunteers feature in any significant way.

Section B will examine the literature on the history of museums (Chapter 3.1) and touch on the development of the New Museology and ecomuseums (Chapter 3.2), and consider the place in this literature of volunteer-run museums. Chapter 4 discusses a number of surveys of volunteering in museums since 1984 (Chapter 4.1 – 4.3), the academic literature concerned with museum and heritage volunteers (Chapter 4.4) and ends with a consideration of whether the type of organisation in which museum volunteers are found actually matters(Chapter 4.5)

## CHAPTER 3: VOLUNTEER-RUN MUSEUMS - A LITERATURE REVIEW

### 3.1 Theorizing the History of Museums

Randolph Starn, in his review article *A Historian's Brief Guide to the New Museum Studies* (Starn, 2005) refers to a 'tidal wave of museum studies' since the late 1980s, so much so that the 'problem these days is how to navigate a flood of literature on the theory, practice, politics and history of museums' (Starn, 2005, p1). The literature review that follows does not attempt to navigate across the whole field, rather it is an attempt to ride the tide by singling out only those studies which can contribute to an understanding of the museums which are discussed later in the project, most frequently by drawing attention to a parallel or oppositional history, a history that has been overlooked.

The 'classical' history of museums in Britain is exemplified by Lewis in his two chapters in *The Manual of Curatorship: A Guide to Museum Practice* (Lewis, 1984a & b). Here he describes a straight-forward genealogy from the late renaissance 'cabinets of curiosity', such as Tradescant's Ark in Lambeth, through royal and elite collections to the foundations of the first 'public' museums (The Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, 1683, and the British Museum, opened in 1759) and on

to the rapid growth in museums during the later eighteenth and nineteenth century. In this latter period, Lewis describes three elements of museum development: the museums established by provincial learned societies, primarily for their own benefit, the museums established by Mechanics' Institutes and, from 1845, the growing number of museums which were established through a series of enabling Acts of Parliament by municipal authorities. By the end of the nineteenth century, many of the two former categories of museum had been taken over by the municipalities. Lewis ascribes the interest of both national and local government in museums to the fact that 'museums were seen as a moral benefit to society and that their collections would be a means of contributing to better industrial design.' (Lewis, 1984a, p29)

This 'classical' account of the origins and development of museums in Britain has been widely challenged, although it remains, despite its limitations, as the only attempt at a comprehensive history of museums, perhaps because much current work in museum studies is undertaken within fields other than history, such as cultural theory (Mason 2006) and sociology (Fyfe, 2006). Hooper-Greenhill (1992), for example, describes this type of account as 'blind history' (Hooper-Greenhill 1992, p8), something that takes 'the existing relationships in museums and plac[es] them as far back in time

as possible, and then identif[ies] a forward, linear development'

(ibid.). She sees three difficulties with this approach:

Firstly, there is a difficulty in accommodating a plurality of histories. This is particularly acute in relation to museums, as there is an extreme diversity of forms, with varying funding and administrative arrangements, varying 'collections', and varying scales of operation. Each of these different material manifestations can be related to a different set of constraints and possibilities. (ibid.)

The second difficulty she identifies as a lack of historical specificity, a search for similarities rather than differences so that 'different historical manifestations [are] rendered invisible, and ... therefore effectively lost' (ibid.). As will be demonstrated later in this study, one such 'lost manifestation' is the history of volunteer-run museums.

The third drawback is that change cannot be understood if everything is done because it has always been done, and that a single undifferentiated history renders the present immutable; museum practices become beyond the possibility of change.

Hooper-Greenhill took insights from the work of Michel Foucault, especially his ideas of 'effective history' which emphasises discontinuity, rupture, displacement, and dispersal (Foucault, 1974: 4 quoted in Hooper-Greenhill 1992: 10) to identify a number of breakpoints or moments of change when old practices were abandoned. She also employs his theory of



*epistemes*, the unconscious set of relations in which knowledge is produced and defined. Foucault describes three major *epistemes*, the Renaissance, the classical and the modern, in which Hooper-Greenhill discerns and describes 'the disciplinary museum'. Shifts from one to the other caused 'massive upheaval' and the 'complete rewriting of knowledge.' (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992, p12) In her Foucauldian analysis of the development of museums, Hooper-Greenhill describes:

The basic structures of knowledge of the modern *episteme* are totality (a story, a theme, a history, organic relationships) and experience (relationships of things to people, knowledge evolved through the study of and activity in empirical events). Knowing and knowledge have become three-dimensional, all-involving, and all-encompassing. The main themes of knowledge are people, their histories, their lives and their relationships. (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992, p198)

She believes that these themes and structures underpin, and help explain, 'the shifts and changes in museums and galleries that can be observed today' (ibid.).

The disciplinary museum, for Hooper-Greenhill, shapes 'both knowledge and bodies' (ibid. p189). Within the museum, active processes of classification and the ordering of material marked a significant shift from older forms of knowledge:

Earlier, collecting and viewing were different aspects of the same practices and were carried out by the same small group of people, whether scholars, aristocracy or merchants. Objects were obtained and shown largely within the same social network. (ibid. p190)

Now, the museum was to become not only an instrument for the democratic education, but also an instrument of control of the 'masses'. Hooper-Greenhill is one of a number of scholars who have used Foucault to illuminate museum studies (Walsh, 1992, Sherman and Rogoff, 1994, Bennett, 1995, and Mason, 2006, for an overview) and Starn (2005, p4) identifies this as 'the Foucauldian turn' in museum studies.

Walsh, for example, leans on *The Order of Things* (Foucault, 1970) in his explorations of museums and heritage in the post-modern world. In seeking the origins of what he calls 'the first museums boom' of the nineteenth century (Walsh 1992, p30), he finds them in 'the processes of modernisation, industrialisation, urbanisation, and empire-building [which] brought a vast new populace into increased contact with the developing political, economic, and cultural networks which were a part of modernity.' (ibid. p21) Museums became concerned with the delineation of time and space and with inculcating modernist ideas of progress, discipline and order.

Museums were, and still are, part of this modern experience. However, this was clearly a class-based experience, and museums, although partly an educational provision, were never really successfully 'sold' to the working classes. (ibid. p31)

In making this claim, Walsh is ignoring not only the many museums of the Mechanics Institutes set up during nineteenth

century (Lewis 1984a; Roderick & Stephens, 1985; Cunningham, 1990) some of whose collections still survive<sup>7</sup>, but also the small museums that were set up and managed by members of non-elite classes, a few of which will be considered later in this project.

Probably the most influential of the scholars working within the 'Foucauldian turn' is Tony Bennett, whose study *The Birth of the Museum: history, theory, politics* was published in 1995. In this work, and in previous writing (Bennett, 1988 a & b), Bennett develops the idea of the 'exhibitionary complex' in which culture was brought forward and exhibited in many different forms by nation states and governments not so much as overt displays of power, although that was inherent, but in order to involve the public in the creation of a shared identity (Anderson, 1983). The institutions involved:

History and natural science museums, dioramas and panoramas, national, and later, international exhibitions, arcades and department stores – which served as linked sites for the development and circulation of new disciplines (history, biology, art history, anthropology) and their discursive formations (the past, evolution, aesthetics, man) as well as for the development of new technologies of vision (Bennett 1988a, p73, quoted in Dicks, 2003, p5)

What Bennett describes as the 'direction of movement' of the exhibitionary complex 'helped to form a new public and inscribe in it new relations of sight and vision', it effected 'the transfer of

---

<sup>7</sup> Such as the Curtis Museum at Alton in Hampshire, that will be discussed later (Chapter 11.2).

significant quantities of cultural and scientific property from private into public ownership where they were housed within institutions administered by the state for the benefit of an extended general public' (Bennett, 1995, p73). From this perspective, the institutions became 'new instruments for the moral and cultural regulation of the working classes' (ibid), part of a governmental imperative towards civic reform. This worked at two levels: by 'othering' the exhibits to create a sense of identity amongst those who viewed 'the other' and by creating environments in which the working classes could learn and emulate models of correct behaviour and deportment from the middle classes with whom they shared the exhibitionary space. 'Museums, according to Bennett, were one of the institutions that produced culture as a tool for managing a public in need of moral regulation' (Witcomb, 2003, p17).

Witcomb, in *Re-imagining the Museum: beyond the Mausoleum* (2003) finds Bennett's analysis of the development of museums helpful but with limitations. Firstly, that

The museum space is seen as oriented exclusively towards the construction of a national (or imperial) community. The relationship can only be a political one. There is no recognition of the way in which museums can relate to a variety of communities, understood not in terms of opposition but in terms of cross-cultural forms of communication. The second limitation is that the social function of the museum can only be considered in terms of governmentality to the exclusion of other relations such as popular culture, consumerism and the pursuit of pleasure (Witcomb, 2003, p17).

The third limitation for Witcomb, is that by reducing all cultural practices to an effect of government, Bennett prevents any recognition of non-cultural contexts for museums. 'The total effect of these limitations is ... an inability to conceive of the museum as an institution that may not always be concerned with relations of power.' (ibid.) Some of these limitations will become apparent later in this study in the case studies of the volunteer-run museums, where shared pleasures and enthusiasms, and shared celebration and loss are of primary importance.

Witcomb is an Australian scholar who is also a museum practitioner, and it is in analysing her work both with indigenous communities within a state museum and gallery space and with independent community-run museums that she finds Bennett's thesis least satisfactory:

Bennett's description of the relation between museums and communities did not offer an answer to my problem because his approach does not recognise that there can be a number of different interests. ... The problem is that in throwing out the notion of community, Bennett loses the ability to recognise the co-existence of different cultures. (ibid. p88)

Instead, Witcomb turns to the work of James Clifford, drawing in particular from his essay 'Museums as contact zones' (Clifford, 1997)<sup>8</sup>. Although Clifford is particularly concerned with exploring the relationships between museums and colonial

---

<sup>8</sup> Clifford borrows this concept from the work of Mary Louise Pratt (1992) *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* London, Routledge

peoples, his ideas do have some resonance in exploring the interactive relationship between volunteer-run museums and their communities, particularly his view that museums are not monolithic, but also responsive, and change their perspectives and practices as a result of contacts with communities (Witcomb, 2003, p89). For Mason, 'The real advantage of Clifford's conception of the museum is that it accounts for the diversity of museums by stressing how they are changing continually in response to their own changing contexts.' (Mason, 2006, p25) It also allows for a foregrounding of the visitor and audience as active consumers of and participants in the museum (ibid) and this where his theory intersects with the concerns of the New Museology.

### 3.2 The New Museology

In 1989, Peter Vergo edited a volume of essays entitled *The New Museology* drawing attention to some of the many changes that had taken place in museums in recent years. In trying to define the 'new' museology, Vergo placed it in binary opposition to the 'old' museology, with which there was 'widespread dissatisfaction' both within and outside the museums profession. (Vergo, 1989, p3) The old museology was concerned with techniques and methods, and was well encapsulated in the Museums Association definition from 1984<sup>9</sup>, which, apart from stating that these methods were employed for the 'public benefit', paid scant attention to the outcomes of all this activity, or to the museum's visitors and users. Museum work, in the 'old museology' was object centred, it was 'too little about the purposes of museums' (ibid.).

The 'new' museology, by contrast was seen to be much more 'people-centred'; the second Museums Association definition quoted above clearly puts the museum visitor first: 'Museums enable people to explore collections for inspiration, learning and enjoyment' (MA1998). This was a move away from the handing down of received wisdom and of a single voice, it was

---

<sup>9</sup> See Chapter 2.4 above.

an acknowledgement that there might be multiple interpretations and meanings, and that visitors bring their own histories and perceptions with them into the museum.

The *MA Code of Ethics* (MA, 2002) extended this further with the expectation that museums would 'consult and involve communities', although what is meant here by 'communities' is not clarified. Definitions, of course, tend to summarize recent practice, rather than open out a new world, and the 'new' museology that was now encapsulated in the definition had been developing over many years. The museum and the material displayed there were no longer seen 'as fixed and bounded, but as contextual and contingent' (Macdonald, 2006, p3)

One important strand of the 'tidal wave' (Starn, 2005, p1) of literature concerned with analysing the new museology and with providing guidance and models to museum practitioners, has been that examining the relationships between the museum and the communities they serve; those communities which are or are not among their visitors, and how these might be more closely and more actively involved in the work of the museum and lend their voice to its activities (Crooke, 2006; 2007; 2008; Watson, 2007). In *Museums and Community* Crooke (2007) distinguishes between what she describes as the 'official museum sector', equated with the 'professional



museum sector' and an 'unofficial sector' (Crooke, 2007, p8). 'Many of the established, state-run and 'official' museums are willingly involved in community activity, be it community consultation or working with communities on exhibitions; or they may take seriously the impact they have on their community.' (ibid.) The 'unofficial' sector is that 'emerging from the communities themselves'; when 'longer established' such an unofficial heritage initiative can 'take on the characteristics of the official sector' (Crooke, 2007, p9).

However, Crooke acknowledges the diversity of meanings attributed to the term 'community museum': 'the idea of the community museum differs in different contexts' (ibid.) she writes, and draws attention to the differences between the United Kingdom context, exemplified by the Leicestershire Community Museums Strategy, and the ideas current in Australia and South Africa. She describes this strategy as having been 'set in place to support voluntary and independent museums in the region. Most of these receive no regular funding, are run by volunteers and are very closely linked to the local communities' (ibid.). Apart from a brief discussion about voluntarism in the public policy context, this is the sole reference to volunteer-run museums; the greatest part of the book is concerned with community activity within her 'official' museum sector.

But this distinction between an 'official' and 'unofficial' sector is not entirely helpful, and in many ways under values, and certainly under-represents, the continuing relationship between volunteer-run museums and their communities even though they may have entered the 'official' museum sector through accepting and implementing museum standards.

Watson's edited volume is focused

mainly on museums that work with and for a variety of communities rather than those that arise from, belong to, and are controlled by one particular community or group. It thus, on the whole, examines the relationship of the paid professional with communities. (Watson, 2007, p3)

So in the two most recent publications on museums and community, the small museums that are run entirely by volunteers in the United Kingdom are almost entirely invisible; a far greater amount of academic attention has been paid to the concept and development of ecomuseums in Europe, Quebec and the developing world (Davis 1999; 2005; 2007; 2008; Corsane et al. 2007a & b) and it is to this that we now turn.

Both Walsh (1992) and Davis (2008) draw attention to the very different understanding of the term 'new museology' that was shared by many European nations and by many in the

developing world but was completely absent from Vergo's *The New Museology* (1989) In this definition, the new museology was fundamentally concerned with community development and progress and with sustainability; it therefore had societal and environmental goals as well as museological ones. The authors of the essays in Vergo's anthology viewed the new museology, according to Davis, as 'the development of new theories, critical approaches and techniques to enable museums to communicate more effectively with their visitors' (Davis, 2008, p399) rather than adopting more radical ideas concerning the role of the museum in society.

Davis provides a detailed account of the development of the concept of the ecomuseum (1999; 2008) and identifies its key elements as 'local identity, territory, landscape, a sense of history and continuity' all important in creating a sense of belonging (Davis, 2008, p401). He quotes from the man many considered to be the founder of the ecomuseum movement, Georges Henri Riviere, who defined an ecomuseum as 'an instrument conceived, fashioned and operated jointly by a public authority and a local population' (ibid.) For Riviere, the 'museum should be a mirror, which a local community holds up to its visitors so that the visitors may develop a respect for that locality as it is constituted by its people and their interaction

with their environment through time and space.' (Walsh, 1992, p163)

Although many small volunteer-run museums in England could claim to share many of the same ideals as ecomuseums (local identity, a sense of history and continuity as well as the democratic ability to chose the content and interpretation) it is perhaps the greater emphasis on place (landscape and environment) that distinguishes the two manifestations of community museology.

## CHAPTER 4: VOLUNTEERS AND VOLUNTEERING IN MUSEUMS - A LITERATURE REVIEW

### 4.1 Surveys of Volunteering in Museums

The majority of the literature concerning volunteers and volunteering in museums has been produced for the benefit of practitioners, either through defining the nature and extent of the involvement of volunteers in the sector at a national level (Mattingly, 1984; Klemm et al. 1993; Holmes, 1999; Chambers, 2002; Howlett et al. 2006), or through developing 'best practice' guidance on the management of volunteers (Millar, 1991; Goodlad and McIvor, 1998; Osborne, 1999; Yates, 2005; Hill, 2009). In neither area have clear distinctions been drawn between the differing types of organisation in which museum volunteers are found, ranging in size and workplace culture from national museums or large local authority museums to volunteer – run museums in market towns and villages. This holds true even where similar surveys have been conducted at a more local level, such as that in Gloucestershire and South Gloucestershire in 2009 (Reynolds, 2009)<sup>10</sup>. In some studies,

---

<sup>10</sup> The aim of the project for which this report, *Valuing Volunteers*, was produced was "to provide quantitative data on the possible impact museums can have on the stretch indicators LI24 (The number of people recorded as or reporting that they have engaged in formal volunteering on an average at least two hours per week over the past year) and NI6 (Participation in regular volunteering)" (Reynolds, 2009, p4) A further purpose was capture data which could "illustrate the economic value of volunteering in museums." (ibid.) Indicator NI6 forms part of *New Performance Framework for Local*

the results are further clouded by the inclusion of 'heritage volunteers' (Klemm et al., 1993; Holmes, 1999; Phillimore, 2001) without disaggregation from museum volunteers, defining what is meant by this term or fully describing the organisations where they work. In the two studies undertaken by the Institute for Volunteering Research on behalf of the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council in 2002 (Chambers 2002) and 2005 (Howlett et al. 2005)<sup>11</sup> the organisations surveyed included libraries and archives as well as museums. Although the three domains are disaggregated, the responses from volunteer-led museums, which made up 32% of the responding museums in 2005, and 13% in 2002, are not separated out from the museum domain as a whole. In both these last cases the surveys were concerned solely with English organisations, whereas the earlier surveys cited above covered the United Kingdom as a whole.

The scope and emphasis of the surveys also varies; both Mattingly and Holmes are interested in volunteer motivation and benefit; the other three surveys are more concerned with numbers, characteristics and issues around the management

---

*Authorities and Local Authority Partnerships* (Dept. of Communities and Local Government, 2007); it is intended to contribute to the forging of 'stronger communities'. I am grateful to Julie Reynolds, Museum Development Officer, for providing me with an electronic copy of the report (18<sup>th</sup> February 2010).

<sup>11</sup> The *Survey of Volunteers in the Cultural Sector* (Chambers, 2002) was commissioned by Re:source, which shortly afterwards became the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA).

of volunteers, for example whether or not the organisations provided a policy on volunteers, training or induction. All of the other three surveys, Klemm et al. (1993), Chambers (2002) and Howlett et al. (2005), appear to have sought responses only from *organisations*, and not from the individual volunteer. On a number of counts, therefore, it is difficult to make comparisons or to draw more than indicative conclusions.

## **4.2 The Mattingly and Holmes surveys**

The earliest of the surveys, that conducted by Jenny Mattingly in 1984 on behalf of the Volunteer Centre UK (now the National Council for Voluntary Organisations) with sponsorship from the Museums and Galleries Commission (now MLA) and funding from the Office of Arts and Libraries, used evidence sourced from the Museums Association's Annual Returns for 1982-3. In addition, two questionnaires were sent to the curators of 140 selected museums and to ten individual volunteers in fourteen of those museums. The report categorises the museums as national, local authority (both county and district), regimental, university, independent (charitable trust) and independent (non-charitable trust), although it is not clear which museums were contained within this final category, for example whether it contained private or society museums. It notes that the largest numbers of volunteers were to be found in the independent (charitable trust) museums and that this group had also shown the largest increase in volunteers; 29% of the independent (non-charitable trust) museums were run entirely by volunteers, which was only 2% of the total number of museums included in the survey (Holmes, 1999).

Other findings which will have considerable resonance with the findings from the Dorset Survey, to be discussed later, are that



- ❖ 38% of the volunteers were retired people
- ❖ 54% were believed to be university graduates, with the majority drawn from professional or managerial backgrounds
- ❖ In independent (non-charitable trust) museums 66% of the volunteers were women, 34% men, whilst in the independent (charitable trust) museums 56% were women and 44% men.
- ❖ 47% of volunteers were involved in other voluntary work<sup>12</sup>

The questionnaires sent to both the curators and to the individual volunteers asked what motivated the volunteers to work in the museum. 59% of the curators thought it was interest in the subject, 40% to obtain museum work experience, 29% to support the museum, 22% to fill spare time, 12% liked the actual work involved, 11% social need and 21% thought it was for other reasons, which included 'pleasant lively atmosphere' and 'helping the community' (Mattingly, 1984, adapted from a table on p30). The responses from the individual volunteers reveal some interesting differences. Here, although interest in the subject remained the strongest motivation at 64%, the contribution to community was the next strongest motivating factor at 44%, followed by using skills 36%, to obtain museum work experience 34%, to fill spare time 30%, meeting people 30%, learning new skills 24% and other 14% (supporting the museum, indulging hobbies and in

---

<sup>12</sup> Holmes later described these as 'career' volunteers, citing Stebbins's concept of 'serious leisure' (Stebbins, 1996) (Holmes, 1999, p27)

response to requests for help) (Mattingly, 1984, adapted from a table on p31).

The questionnaire sent to the individual volunteers also asked them what benefits they derived from working in a museum, primarily to assess whether their expectations on becoming a volunteer had been realised. 75% of the volunteers gained benefit from 'learning about a subject which interests you'; 65% making a contribution to community; 63% meeting people with similar interests; 57% using skills; 49% learning new skills; 39% 'learning about your community' 17% other, which was not enlarged (Mattingly, 1984, adapted from a table on p32).

Unfortunately, it appears that neither the original questionnaires, nor the responses have survived (Holmes, 1999) so it is not possible to disaggregate the responses from the volunteer led museums for comparison with the Dorset material, but nevertheless Mattingly's survey does provide the earliest evidence of the importance attached *by volunteers* to providing a service to their community, and to the social and personal benefits they obtained from their work with a museum.

In 1998<sup>13</sup>, Kirsten Holmes attempted to replicate Mattingly's survey of fourteen years earlier (Holmes, 1999), although,

---

<sup>13</sup> The Klemm, Scott and Wilson report to the Museum Training Institute (Klemm et al. 1993) was concerned with ascertaining the number of volunteers in museums and other heritage and arts organizations, and the tasks that they were undertaking. It was not concerned with why volunteers

apparently unlike Mattingly, she also included National Trust properties and she now found that a quarter of her respondents were all-volunteer museums, “clearly the result of the growth in independent museums” (Holmes, 1999, p23). Holmes had 188 ‘usable responses’ (ibid.) to her survey, which reconstructed as far as possible the 1984 questionnaire to curators, “supplemented by volunteer interviews at ten case studies”<sup>14</sup> (ibid.). She found that 51% of the museums had more than 50 % female volunteers, although she also found some (16) all male workforces and a few (five) all female workforces, which may be a reflection of the growth in the number of ‘special subject’ independent museums, for example for transport or costume. 43% of the museums reported that most of their volunteers were aged over 61, an increase from the 1984 survey (20%).

Like Mattingly, Holmes’s respondents described their volunteers as ‘generally middle class’ (27%) or professional and managerial (14%), while a high percentage (39%) had received tertiary education. When asked what motivated their volunteers, the 1998 respondents gave a slightly different order of reasons:

---

were motivated to work in museums, nor with the benefits that they might gain. However, they did record that “many voluntary museums are dependent on retired people, in some cases very elderly ones. This was mentioned as a cause for concern in thirteen cases” (Klemm et al. 1993, p51)

<sup>14</sup> It is not clear whether this describes interviews with ten volunteers or interviews with volunteers at ten museums.

- ❖ Interest in the subject
- ❖ To support the museum
- ❖ They like the work involved
- ❖ To gain museum work experience
- ❖ To fulfil a social need
- ❖ To fill spare time

Holmes used the interviews to gain additional insights from the volunteers themselves:

Although the fulfilment of social needs comes low on the list of suggested reasons why people volunteer, a quarter of respondents said that social interaction was the main benefit that volunteers derived from their work; thirty-five respondents mentioned job satisfaction or a sense of achievement, and fifteen mentioned pride in their heritage or a chance to give something back in return for the pleasure they have derived from their heritage. ... The interviews with volunteers supported the survey findings. ... Of the interviewees who were retired, many said that they volunteered to fill their time in an interesting way, to keep their minds active, and to meet people now that they no longer had the opportunities for socialising provided by paid work. (Holmes, 1999, p27)

Holmes concluded, when reviewing the motivations of museum and heritage volunteers against those revealed through broader surveys such as Davis Smith's *The 1997 National Survey of Volunteering*, that "heritage volunteers could not be considered as a homogenous group distinct from other sectors" (Holmes, 1999, p28), they expressed enjoyment and benefit in similar terms to volunteers working for other types of organisation.

However, the other places where volunteers choose to donate their time differ according to the type of museum: the interviews showed that volunteers at industrial and transport museums are most commonly to

be found at another preserved railway or transport museum (although some had worked as, for example, a scout leader, a Red Cross driver or a helper in a cathedral tea-room) (Holmes, 1999, p28).

### **4.3 The Institute for Volunteering Research Surveys, 2002 and 2005**

Under the Labour administration, all Government departments, including the DCMS which holds the portfolio for museums, and to whom both the MLA and the National Lottery (Heritage Lottery Fund), are answerable, were charged with increasing the number of volunteers and volunteer opportunities within their sectors; local authorities were similarly encouraged to do so through sets of performance indicators. The Institute for Volunteering Research surveys, undertaken on behalf of MLA (Chambers, 2002; Howlett et al. 2005) were a response to this demand, and the later survey offers comparative figures to demonstrate that the percentage of museums, libraries and archives using volunteers had increased from 75% to 83% overall, with volunteering in museums being significantly stronger than in the other domains with 95% of organisations using volunteers compared to 92% in 2002. No attempt was made in either survey to refer back to the earlier undertakings discussed above and direct comparison would have been impossible as both the scope and the methodology were different.

Both IVR surveys incorporated responses from volunteer-led museums and the 2002 survey report lists at least twenty

responding museums which would fall within the parameters of this project. The 2005 survey report does not provide a list of responding museums although it explicitly refers to “totally volunteer managed museums” (Howlett et al. p15). Neither report, as has been mentioned earlier, attempted to examine the motivations and benefits of volunteering. Both reports, however, tabulate the findings by Government region, but do not go so far as to separate out the three domains of museums, libraries and archives at a regional level. In the South West region, for example, the age breakdown of volunteers is given thus:

Age	U18	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+
2002	0%	1%	5%	3%	11%	31%	41%	7%
2005	2%	2%	2%	4%	6%	32%	35%	7%

*Table1: Age breakdown of volunteers in museums, libraries and archives in the south west region taken from Chambers (2002) and Howlett et al. (2005)*

However, as the number of responding organisations varied from 34 in 2002 to 68 in 2005, these results are probably best treated as indicative.

#### 4.4 Volunteering in Museums- the academic literature

In the discussion of the surveys of museum and heritage volunteering discussed above, two factors were noted: firstly that the body of literature, whilst acknowledging volunteer led museums, did not disaggregate them from those museums which had paid staff, of whatever size or constitution; secondly, that it is not always clear what is being described- museum volunteers or heritage volunteers, or if both then what type of 'heritage' organisation is included? This conflation also permeates some of the sparse academic literature on museum volunteering, for example Smith's study of volunteers at literary heritage sites (Smith, 1999; 2002) "included sites governed by local authorities and charitable trusts, including the National Trust" (Smith, 2002, p11) but did not include any sites that were entirely volunteer led.

Holmes's study on the motivation of front-of-house volunteers (Holmes, 2001) used case studies from ten museums and heritage attractions specifically selected from those with the largest number of volunteers, and included National Trust properties, open air museums and transport preservation museums, including the National Railway Museum. In studies which have looked exclusively at *museum* volunteers, the sites chosen have almost invariably been from among the larger



museums. Graham and Foley, for example, looked at volunteers in Glasgow Museums Service (Graham and Foley, 1998; Graham, 2000) and Geohegan (2008) studied three groups of technology enthusiasts with close associations with the Science Museum. Graham's later study of the role of volunteering in relieving social isolation (Graham, 2001) looked at a wider group of museums in Glasgow, and included public sector, university and independent museums, but the organisational context in which the volunteers operated was not foregrounded.

A number of the studies mentioned above, and others (for example Holmes, 2003; Orr, 2006) examine museum volunteering as a leisure practice, in some cases exploring Stebbins's concept of 'Serious Leisure' (Stebbins 1992; 1996). Stebbins briefly defined serious leisure as "the systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist or volunteer activity that is sufficiently substantial and interesting for the participants to find a career there in the acquisition and expression of its special skills and knowledge" (Stebbins, 1992, p3). He identified a number of characteristics which distinguished serious from casual leisure: the occasional need to persevere; the tendency for volunteers to have careers in their endeavours; a significant personal effort based on specially acquired knowledge, training or skill and sometimes all three; a unique ethos manifested in

the "idio cultures" of a group's special beliefs, norms, events, values, traditions, moral principles and performance standards; participants tend to identify strongly with their chosen pursuits (ibid.p6-8). Stebbins went on to identify eight durable benefits from the pursuit of serious leisure: self-actualization, self-enrichment, self-expression, re-creation or renewal of self, enhancement of self-image, social interaction and belongingness and lasting physical products of the activity and a ninth benefit self-gratification and pure fun (ibid.).

There is much here that does provide useful insights into museum volunteering, and perhaps particularly into volunteering in staff-led organisations. So far as volunteer led museums are concerned there is also much synergy, for example the need to persevere and the effort to acquire specialist knowledge, training and skills are recognisable attributes of the volunteer led museum workforce. But there are also areas where serious leisure is a less useful paradigm for understanding small museums. One is that those who are in pursuit of serious leisure are self-interested and are "mostly unaware of the broader social ramifications of their actions" (Stebbins, 1996. p212), and the second is the belief that volunteers who undertake their work as 'serious leisure' develop careers *as volunteers*.

As mentioned above, Holmes (1999) briefly touched on the latter in her discussion of Mattingly's findings that 47% of museum volunteers also volunteered elsewhere (Mattingly, 1984). In their discussion of *Retirement and Serious Leisure* Long and Scraton (Long and Scraton, 2002) question Stebbins's preoccupation with career, especially in the context of older volunteers, and point out that it is accepted that *all* volunteering yields some benefit to the volunteer. As will be shown later, some of the Dorset museum volunteers are involved in other volunteering activity, largely within their own community, and they see their volunteering as 'doing something for the community'. It is in the community context that their volunteering should be understood, and not as a purely self-interested pursuit<sup>15</sup>.

---

<sup>15</sup> The museums examined through the Dorset survey are all concerned with the history of their own communities. The concept of 'serious leisure' may well be more useful in discussing volunteering in museums such as railway or motor transport museums and in other museums concerned primarily with the preservation of a single group of historical objects.

## 4.5 Does Organisational Context Matter?

The museum sector is not alone in ignoring the size and nature of the organisations in which volunteers are active. Rochester, one of the few scholars in the United Kingdom<sup>16</sup> who has stressed the importance of studying volunteering within its context, points out that the “principal themes” in the national literature on volunteering

pay scant attention to that variety of organisational contexts in which voluntary action takes place. These range across the whole spectrum of human activity from the private, informal world of family and friends<sup>17</sup> to the highly formalised bureaucracy with its detailed rule book and its sharply differentiated statuses and functions. (Rochester, 2007, p49)

At the ‘bureaucratic end of the spectrum’ (ibid.) Rochester cites statutory agencies such as hospitals, and large formally organised voluntary agencies, which, translated into ‘museum’ and ‘heritage’ terms, would equate to national or large local authority museums and to the National Trust; at the other end of the spectrum voluntary action takes place “where groups of people with common interests ... band together in self-help groups or grassroots associations to produce a collective

---

<sup>16</sup> David Horton Smith’s study of ‘grassroots associations’ in America is similarly concerned with very small organizations, operating at local level (Smith, 2000)

<sup>17</sup> The Department for Communities and Local Government’s *Citizenship Survey 2007-8* defines this as informal volunteering: “Unpaid help given as an individual to someone who is not a relative” (DCLG *Citizenship Survey 2007-8*, p10). Formal volunteering is defined as unpaid help given as part of a group, club or organization to benefit others or the environment” (ibid.)

response to perceived needs” (ibid.), which would equate to the volunteer led museums which are the subject of this project. Along the spectrum is a multiplicity of organisations, or museums, operating with different combinations of paid staff and volunteers and with different levels of formality.

Rochester identifies two possible reasons for this neglect of organisational context, firstly an assumption that “volunteering is volunteering is volunteering, that what is being measured or described is essentially the same activity, regardless of context” (ibid.) and secondly that it is a consequence of the direction of social policy in recent years, which has been towards a greater role for voluntary agencies and organisations, and therefore a perceived need to strengthen their efficiency and effectiveness in carrying out functions on behalf of government or where funded by government at all levels<sup>18</sup>, and to treat all organisations within the workplace paradigm.

Research into the characteristics of smaller voluntary organisations by Rochester and his colleagues at the London

---

<sup>18</sup> For example, the *Cross Cutting Review of the Role of the Voluntary and Community Sector in Service Delivery* (HM Treasury 2002) recognised that the sector and Government have a mutual interest in building the capacity of voluntary and community organisations. The Home Office response was published as *ChangeUp: capacity building and infrastructure framework for the voluntary and community sector* (Home Office, 2004) which provides funding mainly at a regional level, for activities such as training and governance reviews.

School of Economics Centre for Voluntary Organisation<sup>19</sup> led them to identify “four distinctive kinds of volunteer involvement in small voluntary organisations”, which Rochester describes as:

- ❖ *The service delivery model*, where the lion's share of the operational activities of the organization are carried out by volunteers
- ❖ *The support role model*, where the role of the volunteer is to support and supplement the work of the paid staff
- ❖ *The member / activist model*, where all roles are played by volunteers
- ❖ *The co-worker model*, where the differences in role and distinctions of status between paid staff and volunteers are unclear (Rochester, 2007, p51)

All of the organisations studied within this project fall within the member / activist model; however, personal experience of the difficulties encountered by some small museums in making the transition from that model to the other models where paid staff are employed, and perhaps particularly to the service delivery model where staff become responsible for organising the work of the volunteers, would suggest that this would be a fruitful area for research for the future.<sup>20</sup>

Rochester describes the member / activist model as

---

<sup>19</sup> Later the Centre for Civil Society. The Centre closed in September 2010 (<http://www2.lse.ac.uk/CCS/closingStatement.aspx>)

<sup>20</sup> In recent years, a number of funding bodies, including the HLF, have made the appointment of staff a condition of grant, without any real consideration of the consequences for the organisation, whether good or bad.

The phenomenon described by Billis (1993) as an association, a group of people who have come together to pursue a common goal, have drawn a boundary around themselves by distinguishing between members and non-members, and have accepted a set of rules by which their affairs are regulated. (Rochester, 2007, p54)

However, the work is not shared evenly within the member / activist organisation, as there tends to be an inner core of highly active members and the more passive members who support the organisation with subscriptions. For many of the volunteer led museums discussed later, this spectrum would also include a 'mid-point' mainly consisting of front of house volunteers who, for example, might give one afternoon a month to meet and greet visitors or man the shop, but are not otherwise engaged in the running of the organisation.

Using the word 'member' might suggest that the organisation exists solely to benefit those involved, but, as Rochester points out, this is far from the case. All the museums studied here are run for public benefit, attested by their achievement of museum accreditation, although a number, such as Bridgnorth's Northgate Museum, started solely for private benefit displaying their collections at their members' meetings and not publicly, and only later made the transition to a public-facing organisation.

Involvement in member / activist organisations, Rochester suggests, “can be seen as a journey with an unknown destination” (Rochester, 2007, p54) and no one’s role can be defined in advance. At Beaminster, the present Chairman of the Museum Trust, described how his wife went to the inaugural meeting as she was interested in history; she found herself elected as Hon. Secretary and he became involved as he wanted to see “something cultural” in Beaminster, where they had recently moved. As the project to set up a museum progressed and premises were found, he became the Project Manager for the two phases of the building restoration project and heavily involved both in fund-raising activities and in physically doing much of work alongside other member volunteers on Saturday mornings. Now as Chairman, he is still actively involved on a range of other tasks, as well as in other community organisations, and at the time of my visit was mounting an exhibition of paintings by a local resident and preparing for the opening that evening<sup>21</sup>. As Rochester describes, in such organisations less emphasis is placed on the formal definition of roles and responsibilities, and “more about inviting people to find out what contribution they can make” (ibid. p55).

---

<sup>21</sup> Oral communication, 9<sup>th</sup> September, 2010



In summarising the great diversity of ways in which volunteering can be experienced even in small organisations, Rochester describes some of the key differences between the four models he identified, which are described above, and the key points that distinguish the member / activist model, which is the most appropriate model for the museums discussed in this project, from the others, are given below:

To *become involved* volunteers

May be encouraged to associate themselves with the aims and purposes of the organisation and given a series of opportunities to play a more active part in its work in a role that will be defined to a large extent by the volunteer herself or himself<sup>22</sup>.

They may be *motivated* to volunteer to

Develop or maintain a particular service or activity  
... and remain active as a result of the opportunities they find for personal growth and development

In the *organisation and management* of the work roles are not prescribed in advance, but negotiated and changeable, and the organisation operates on teamwork and personal leadership.

Finally, "the members of the *governing body*, the volunteers carrying out the work of the organisation and at least some of those using its services are one and the same" in a small organisation within the member / activist model. (adapted from Rochester, 2007, p56-7)

---

<sup>22</sup> As the Collections Curator at Beaminster said "We take people on to fulfil their needs as well as ours" (Oral communication, 9<sup>th</sup> September, 2010).

One further point from Rochester's analysis of small organisations is worth stressing, which is his finding that many volunteers within the member / activist model "are driven by a deeper set of values about the importance of active citizenship and the idea of community" (Rochester, 2007, p54). This motif will occur and recur throughout the discussions of individual museums that follow. Indeed, I would suggest that for most, and probably all, the museums discussed in the case histories, their horizontal relationships with other individuals and organisations in the community, first in establishing the museum and then in sustaining its development, are of equal if not greater importance than the vertical relationships they may develop with other larger museums or museum organisations or which may be obligatory in order to maintain status or achieve funding.

So if we are to believe Holmes's assertion that museum volunteers are not a homogenous group (Holmes, 1999, p28) and evidence is not available on a national scale to uncover any differences that might exist between volunteers in large or small organisations, and with or without paid staff, we must look to the organisational context to help to explain why small museums are set up, why volunteer commitment is sustained and how many of them have achieved such longevity.

## Summary of Section B

In this Section, the literature on the history and development of museums, and that on theories of museums and community and the new museology have been discussed. It was discovered that small volunteer-run museums are almost entirely over-looked in the literature, although their presence might be, briefly, acknowledged.

Turning to the literature on museum volunteers and volunteering, we found that once again there was little acknowledgement of any distinction between volunteer – run and volunteering – involving organisations (Cossons, 1984).

Finally, in the work of Colin Rochester (Rochester, 2007), from outside the world of museums and heritage and in the broader field of volunteering, we found a discussion of organisational context that appears to frame this project with greater truth and coherence than the literature on museums or museum history or even museum volunteering.

# SECTION C: UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT

## Introduction to Section C

In Section A of this study, the type of museum which is its concern was defined (Chapter 2.4), as was the nature of the communities in which such museums are to be found in England (Chapter 2.3). The second section, Section B examined the presence, or not, of such museums within the literature on museums and museum history (Chapter 3) and in the literature on museum volunteers and volunteering (Chapter 4). This section, Section C, will look at the context in which volunteer-run museums operate today. This provides a frame of reference for the two chapters that follow, which discuss the Dorset volunteer-run museums and their volunteers. Section D, Chapter 6 examines the results of a survey of the volunteers undertaken in 2006-7 and Section I, Chapter 18 looks at case histories of four of the museums that were the subject of the survey, setting them within the context of the recent history and development of volunteer-run museums.

Chapter 5.1 examines the wide range of governance structures that it is possible for volunteer-run museums to adopt, and the

importance of registration with the Charity Commission and notes the inclusion in this study of museums governed by Town Councils. Chapter 5.1 is supported by an appendix (Appendix 3) listing museums in small towns and villages in England, which in turn is analysed and discussed.

Chapter 5.2 looks at the impact of the MLA's Accreditation scheme, touched on earlier in Chapter 2.4, on volunteer-run museums, and linked to that, the MLAs Renaissance programme and the work of Museum Development Officers in supporting small museums.

Chapter 5.3 looks at the wide range of other museum networks and organisations available to volunteer-run museums and the people who work in them for social contact, advice and development support.

Finally, Chapter 5.4 looks more specifically at the range of funding sources and financial support available for volunteer-run museums.

## CHAPTER 5: VOLUNTEER- RUN MUSEUMS

### TODAY- UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT

#### 5.1 Governing Volunteer-run Museums

The Association of Independent Museum (AIM) was established in 1977 to provide a voice for the growing number of museums independent of national or local government that had been set up in recent years. It provided, as it continues to do today, a range of services to its members, including the publication of useful guidance in managing and running a museum. The first of these 'Guidelines' covered the management of loans and gifts, the second *Setting up and Running a New Museum*' (Greene, 1980) and the third, published in 1981, *Charitable Status for Museums*. The forward to this booklet, which provided model legal documents as well as guidance, stated that "The Council of the Association of Independent Museums believes that most of their members should be striving to obtain Charitable Status" (AIM, 1981, no page number given).

At that time, charities were regulated by the Charity Commission under the Charities Act of 1960, which had simplified previous legislation and established a Central Register of Charities (Alvey, 1995). The four categories of

charitable purpose remained unchanged: the relief of poverty; the advancement of religion; the advancement of education and other uses of benefit to the public. The provision of a museum was held to be a charitable purpose, both because it was a public amenity, but more usually because it advanced education.

In 2002, as part of an ongoing review of the Register of Charities, the Charity Commission provided specific guidance for museums and galleries in which it was suggested that museums might express their charitable object as, *inter alia*, 'to establish and maintain a museum and / or art gallery for the benefit of the public' or 'to advance education by the establishment and maintenance of a museum' (Charity Commission RR10, 2002, p2). The Commission concluded that in order to demonstrate 'public benefit' a museum must provide 'sufficient public access'; it must also satisfy a criterion of merit:

That is, there is sufficient evidence that the collections and exhibits and the use made of them either will educate the minds of the public whom the museum or art gallery intends to serve, or at least will be capable of doing so. What is conveyed to the public is an idea, emotion or experience which is enlightening and which is, or is capable of being, of value to them (ibid.).

Although existing charities were not required to change their objects as a result of this new guidance, trustees were encouraged to review their operations in the light of the 'merit criterion'. Further changes came with the Charities Act of 2006

which extended the number of charitable purposes from the four listed above to thirteen headings, and now includes 'the advancement of the arts, culture, heritage or science' (Cabinet Office, 2007, URN 07/Z2).

Broadly speaking, there are two types of constitution appropriate to volunteer-run museums included in the Register of Charities, either 'incorporated' as a company limited by guarantee or 'unincorporated'. Unincorporated charities, such as an association or trust, have no legal personality, and the members are individually and collectively responsible for any liabilities. Incorporated charities do have a legal personality and this is the favoured route for larger museums, especially those that employ staff, own buildings or land, or which seek to develop their activities using external funding sources, such as grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund. Some museums are both Registered Charities and Charitable Companies. A further category, Charitable Incorporated Organisation, has been introduced by the Charities Act 2006, but it is not yet apparent whether this will be adopted by the museums community.

There are a number of significant advantages to a museum in obtaining charitable status. Firstly it demonstrates clearly that the museum is not run for private profit or for the sole benefit of its members or supporters; secondly, it opens up a wide range



of potential funding sources including grants from local authorities and other public bodies, the National Lottery and from other charitable trusts and foundations; thirdly, it enables the museum to benefit from mandatory and discretionary National Non-Domestic (business) rate relief<sup>23</sup>, currently 80% and 20% respectively; fourthly, charitable status brings certain fiscal advantages, including Gift Aid; and, finally, it also enables the museum to take full advantage of the support and development opportunities available to the museums community as a whole, as well as those that might be available to all voluntary organisations at a District or County level, for example through Rural Community Councils or Volunteer Councils or Bureaux.

**Appendix 3** provides a list of two hundred and thirty one small independent museums in market towns and villages with a population of less than 30,000 people<sup>24</sup>, which are concerned primarily with the history of their own communities. The baseline source for this compilation is the *Museums Yearbook* for 2008 (MA, 2008) supplemented by the lists of museums participating in the Accreditation Scheme run by the Museums

---

23

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/localgovernment/pdf/1178787.pdf> downloaded 12/2/2010 All the costs of mandatory relief are met from the National Rates Pool, whereas only 75% of Discretionary relief comes from the pool. This represents a loss of income to the council.

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.defra.gov.uk/evidence/statistics/rural/documents/rural-defn/laclassifications-techguide0409.pdf> downloaded 10/2/2010

Libraries and Archives Council (MLA 2008; 2009)<sup>25</sup> and by searching the Register of Charities as it appears on the website of the Charity Commission<sup>26</sup>. Additional information was also sought from the websites of some individual museums. No claims are made for the completeness of this list; it has not captured any museums which are not registered as charities for example, even though they may be run by an organisation rather than an individual. That information is too fugitive and widely scattered and is largely dependent on a chance encounter. Litcham Village Museum in Norfolk, for example, run under the auspices of the Litcham Historical Society does not appear in the list as neither organisation is a Registered Charity, nor is the museum Accredited, although the author is aware that this particular museum has existed for a number of years. The list also excludes the following categories of museum:

- ❖ Museums run by first and second tier local authorities (County and District Councils)
- ❖ Museums run by other public bodies, such as a National Parks Authority
- ❖ The medium sized and larger independent museums which benefit from a paid core staff, often with a variety of roles including curatorial, learning, conservation, marketing and administration and here it must be admitted that considerable dependence has been placed on the author's prior knowledge of the museum community
- ❖ Museums which are concerned with a single site or industry, such as coal mining, or with a collection of objects such as fans or tramcars, or with a landscape feature such as a canal. So for example Westonzoyland

---

<sup>25</sup> The Accreditation Scheme will be discussed in Chapter 5.3 below.

<sup>26</sup> [www.charitycommission.gov.uk](http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk)

Pumping Station Museum in Somerset is excluded and the Fakenham Museum of Gas and Local History is included because at least part of the museum, which is situated in the last surviving town gasworks in England, is concerned with the broader history of Fakenham itself.

No attempt has been made in this list to distinguish between the museums that employ staff and those that are entirely dependent on a volunteer labour force. Despite these caveats, inclusions and exclusions, the list is helpful in understanding the world of the small volunteer-run museum, which is at the core of this research.

Analysis of the governing bodies of the organisations included in the list of Accredited museums (Appendix 3) demonstrates the complexity of the museum landscape. The great majority of these small museums (one hundred and sixty two, 70%) are run by charitable trusts or companies for whom the main charitable object is the provision of a museum, although the words 'museum' and 'heritage centre' are used interchangeably and sometimes even together. However, as was shown earlier in the discussion of the definition of a museum and as will be discussed later, to be Accredited an organisation must own and care for a collection. Organisations without a collection, such as the Tolpuddle Martyrs Museum in Dorset, are therefore excluded. Seventy-three museums are governed by societies, associations or groups(32%), including

twenty seven museums are governed by local history societies (12%), fifteen by civic or amenity societies (6%), which implies a membership, and three museums by nineteenth century 'literary and philosophical' societies<sup>27</sup>. In addition, four museums (2%) are run by Town Trusts<sup>28</sup>, and there are two museums are run in association with churches (1%).

The remaining eighteen museums (8%) are governed by third tier local authorities, town and parish councils. These have been included in the list of small independent museums because they have greater synergy with them than with the larger local authority museums. Only rarely do these small town councils employ curatorial staff; in many cases, as at Evesham, the town council owns and manages the building and pays for 'front of house' staff perhaps fulfilling a tourist information role, but the care of the collection and the displays are the responsibility of a voluntary organisation, in this case the Vale of Evesham Historical Society. At Launceston the situation is even more complex: the building, Lawrence House, is owned by the National Trust, leased to the town council, and

---

<sup>27</sup> Louth, Whitby and Wells. Wells Museum was started by the Wells Natural History and Archaeology Society in 1888 and only assumed its present name when registering as a charity. Dereham Antiquarian Society, despite its anachronistic name, is to all intents and purposes a local history society founded in 1963 (Lynn, 2005).

<sup>28</sup> Town Trusts inherited some of the property revenues and the regalia, but not the powers, of unreformed boroughs when abolished in 1883, such as at Corfe Castle, East Looe, Clun and Winchcombe. At Wotton-under-Edge the museum was established by the Town Trust in the interwar period, but handed over to the Wotton-under-Edge History Society shortly after its foundation in 1945.

the museum provided by the Lawrence House Museum charity, a voluntary organisation.<sup>29</sup>

Town and parish councils as originally established in 1894 were not empowered to raise revenue to support museums, and they were not included in the Public Libraries and Museums Act of 1964 which gives these (discretionary) powers to county and district councils. Even today their powers for funding museums are less straight-forward than for other local authorities, which may partially explain the comparative sparsity of this type of governing body.<sup>30</sup>

One further point can be made concerning this list of small museums: their uneven geographical distribution across

---

<sup>29</sup><http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/ShowCharity/RegisterOfCharities/CharityWithoutPartB.aspx?RegisteredCharityNumber=276656&SubsidiaryNumber=0>

<sup>30</sup> "Entertainment and the Arts: A parish council has the power to provide entertainments of any nature or the facilities for dancing. It can provide a theatre, a concert hall, a dance hall or any other premises suitable for entertainments. It can spend money on maintaining a band or orchestra. It may do anything which furthers development of the arts and local crafts. A parish council may set apart any part of its parks or pleasure grounds for any of these purposes subject to any covenant. It can also contribute to the expenses of any other local authority or anyone who is providing any of these facilities." (Local Government Act 1972, s145)" Clayden, 2007: 88-9 "Museums and Art Galleries: A Parish Council may contribute to a local museum or art gallery through its powers to contribute to the arts." Clayden, 2007:142

"Tourism: A parish council has power to encourage persons to visit its area, by advertisement or otherwise, for recreation, health purposes, conferences, trade fairs and exhibitions. It may also improve or encourage other persons or bodies to improve, any existing facilities for these purposes. (LGA 1972 s144 as amended by LG(MP)A 1976, ss19 (5), 81 (1) and sch. 2)" Clayden, 2007:200 The Act (LGA 1972 s 137) also allows a town or parish council to spend money on any purpose which they consider to be of benefit to their community provided that the total spend under this general power does not exceed £5.30 per elector per year (Babbidge, 2007)

England. The highest number, seventy-six (33%) are to be found in the South West region, there are forty-seven museums in the South East and forty-six in the East of England regions (20% in each), twenty-three in Yorkshire and Humber (10%), eighteen in the East Midlands (8%) and only nine in the West Midlands and North West regions (4% in each), and the remaining three (1%) in the North East. In other words, seventy-three percent of small museums concerned with the history and development of their own communities are to be found in the south of England and the proportion would be even higher if similar museums in London had been included in the list. It is inconceivable that villages and small towns in the West Midlands, North West and North East have histories that are less rewarding to research and celebrate, so reasons behind this distribution would merit further investigation.

Among the factors may be the greater historic strength of the local authority sector in the West Midlands, North West and North East, the number of industrial and transport museums in these areas, and the presence of large museums and museum services governed by national bodies such as the National Museums in Liverpool, by local authorities as in Tyne and Wear, or, in the case of the North of England Open Air Museum at Beamish by a consortium of local authorities, or of

large independents as at Ironbridge and the Black Country Museum.

However, according to the *2005 Citizenship Survey: Active Communities Topic Report Department for Communities & Local Government*,<sup>31</sup> "People living in the northeast of England....have been found to be less likely to volunteer than those living in England as a whole" (Kitchen et al. quoted in Rochester et al. 2010, p48). Williams (2003), however, suggests that the northern regions of England possess different cultures of community participation. Based on an analysis of the General Household Survey, 2000 (Coulthard et al. 2002), he concludes that "active involvement in local organisations is thus very much part of the participatory culture of regions such as the South East but is poorly developed in other regions such as the North East and North West" (Williams, 2003, p536) where the orientation is far more towards an informal engagement between neighbours.

Fyfe and Milligan (2003) also draw attention to the "uneven local geographies of voluntary action" (Fyfe and Milligan, 2003, p400) within the context of health and social welfare organisations, where studies have shown that "voluntary sector development ... is often piecemeal and sporadic, owing as

---

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/452564.pdf>  
downloaded 17.3.10

much to the availability of resources as it does to any planned action based on an identified need" (Milligan, 2001, p160 quoted in Fyfe and Milligan, 2003, p400)<sup>32</sup>.

No doubt there are other factors at work too. Parker, for example, has shown "that the concept and practice of serious leisure is mainly a middle-class phenomenon" (Parker, 1996, p332) and it might be expected that there might be more volunteer run museums in those rural areas which have been particularly attractive to middle-class in-migrants, such as the south west of England. Howkins, in his essay on *The Discovery of Rural England*, suggests that it was the rural 'south country' of England which became embedded in the national consciousness as the epitome of Englishness from the late nineteenth century onwards, and reached its height in the inter-war years (Howkins, 1987). The ideal was elastic enough to include a county such as Shropshire, which with its half-timbered houses and village greens, could appear sufficiently 'Tudor' to conform; the only inter-war village museum in the northern part of England is at Clun in Shropshire, surely no coincidence.

---

<sup>32</sup> Further research into the geographies of museum provision in England might reveal whether or not nineteenth and early twentieth century museums were actually based on perceived cultural needs, or whether it was the availability of private benefactions that influenced where they were established and thus led to the complex landscape and haphazard provision which Markham first drew attention to in 1938 (Markham, 1938) (see also Bryson et al.'s study of almshouse distribution, 2002)



## **5.2 The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council Accreditation Scheme and Volunteer-run Museums**

The museums that are the subject of this project, where they still exist today, are all members of the MLA Accreditation Scheme. This provides the framework within which they work, and membership links them in to the wider museum network locally, regionally and nationally, and gives access to support from public bodies and local authorities. Membership of the scheme distinguishes volunteer-run museums from other organisations concerned with local history or heritage, and provides an assumption of permanence and longevity. Achieving Accreditation is a matter of considerable pride for all museums, but perhaps especially for those which are volunteer-run, and is an endorsement of competence and professionalism. The brief description of the scheme that follows provides the context for understanding the small organisations that will be discussed later *as museums*.

The Accreditation Scheme was launched in 1988 when it was known as the Registration Scheme. It is the standards scheme for museums<sup>33</sup> in the United Kingdom, open to museums of all sizes that meet the eligibility criteria, from national museums to volunteer-run village museums. The scheme was first revised

---

<sup>33</sup> The term 'museum' is held to include art galleries.

in 1995 (Registration Phase 2) and substantially revised with the introduction of new elements in 2004 when it became known as the Accreditation Scheme. It is currently (2010) once again the subject of a further review. The Scheme has three main aims:

- ❖ To encourage all museums and galleries to achieve agreed minimum standards in museum management, user services, visitor facilities and collection management
- ❖ To foster confidence in museums as bodies which (a) hold collections in trust for society and (b) manage public resources appropriately
- ❖ To reinforce a shared ethical basis for all bodies which meet the definition of a 'museum' (MLA, 2004, p4)

To be eligible for the scheme, a museum must meet the Museums Association definition of a museum, which has been discussed above. This would normally exclude historical and archaeological sites, historic buildings, exhibition centres and heritage centres unless those also owned permanent collections.

The requirements for Accreditation are organised into four sections: governance and management; user services; visitor facilities; and collections management. Without describing the whole standard, it is nevertheless useful to draw out a number of points which are of direct relevance to this project.

Firstly, eligible constitutions are deemed to be “those based on an acceptable memorandum and articles of a company with charitable status limited by guarantee and with no share capital”; “those based on an acceptable deed of trust of a charitable trust” and “any constitution which is charitable, which meets the criteria ...including the non-distribution of profits...”(MLA, 2004, p15).

Secondly, the museum should have “Staff appropriate in numbers and experience to fulfil the museum’s responsibilities” (MLA 2004, p18); and that these staff should have opportunities for “continuous training and staff development” <sup>34</sup> (MLA 2004, p19).

Thirdly, museums must have access to professional advice from a professionally qualified or experienced person. If such a person is not employed by the museum, even if there is a paid museum manager, then the governing body must formally appoint a curatorial adviser. Curatorial advisers generally provide their services free of charge or for the payment of expenses only. For volunteer-run museums, their curatorial adviser is often the first point of contact for advice and support on a wide range of issues, including the care and conservation

---

<sup>34</sup> Throughout the standard the term ‘staff’ is deemed to include both paid staff and volunteers.

of the collections, display and interpretation, education and learning, sources of appropriate materials and supplies, and for access to more specialist advice and to training opportunities. The curatorial adviser will attend the meetings of the governing body, and give advice on the requirements of the Accreditation standard. However, it is not a policing role and curatorial advisers are expected to work through support and encouragement to their museums.

Preparing a submission for Accreditation is a lengthy and time-consuming process even for those museums which were already within the former Registration Scheme, and yet it retains the loyalty and commitment of the majority of small museums. There must therefore be some clear perceived benefits to the scheme over and above access to curatorial advice.

In 2009 MLA commissioned research to examine the impact of the scheme (MLA, 2009). This identified three principal motivations for seeking Accreditation:

- ❖ The opportunity to access funding
- ❖ For smaller and / or voluntary run museums it provides an opportunity for them to show that they operate to the same standards as larger museums
- ❖ It seemed like a logical progression for museums which were Registered (MLA, 2009:i)

Accreditation is seen by volunteer-run museums as “verifying the professional approach that many of these organisations take to the management and care of their collections” (MLA, 2009, p5). In addition, the report noted that for independent museums one of the main benefits has been “the stimulus to formalise or standardise working procedures and policies” and that this would also “deliver a benefit in terms of succession planning”, an area which is frequently a significant concern for volunteer-run museums (MLA, 2009, p ii).

However, for the majority of museums, the benefits of Accreditation accrued mainly to the museum itself, and to enhancing its standing within the museum sector as a whole; it appeared that the scheme had no profile among museum visitors or users, or in the museums' local community.

### **5.3 The Renaissance Programme, the Museum**

#### **Development Fund and Museum Development Officers**

There are two elements of the Renaissance programme that have been targeted at small museums, and more specifically at volunteer-run museums, the Museum Development Fund and the establishment of a wide network of Museum Development Officers. Like the Accreditation scheme outlined in the previous section, the intention in describing these here is to clarify the environment in which the museums which are the subject of this project currently operate.

The MLA Renaissance in the Regions programme is described as “the most important intervention in English non-national museums since the Museums Act of 1845”<sup>35</sup>. Since 2002, £300million has been made available by Government for the programme, mainly from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), the funding body for the MLA. Renaissance is delivered through Regional Museum Hubs, which are clusters of four to five museums in each region, selected on a number of criteria including their existing profile, visitors and collections and, interestingly, the deprivation and rurality scores for the region.

---

<sup>35</sup> MLA website <http://www.mla.gov.uk/what/programmes/renaissance> downloaded 14/02/2010

Renaissance comprises a number of different strands, many of which are focussed primarily on the forty two hub museums and on the most important collections in the region; for the purposes of this project, the most significant of these strands is the Museum Development Fund (MDF), which is intended to spread the benefits of Renaissance to the wider museum community. Originally the MDF was administered through the MLA's Regional Agencies, but since these were disbanded in March 2009, it has been delivered through the Renaissance hub museums. Each Regional Agency distributed their share of the fund, allocated on the number of Accredited museums in each region, in the manner which they felt was the most appropriate for their region. In two of the regions, for example in the East Midlands, the funding was used to support the Museum Development Officers (MDO) network so that there is now (2010) one MDO in each county whereas previously only Leicestershire had had such a post, known as the Community Museums Officer. These are dedicated to working with the smaller museums, providing advice and training opportunities, supporting their development and promoting their interests. In the majority of the regions the MDF has been used to provide a small grant fund for projects which are consistent with the aims and objectives of the Renaissance programme as a whole, which in turn are determined by Government agendas and

priorities for museums articulated by the DCMS<sup>36</sup>

(MLA/Holberry 2009).

Holberry found that “remarkably most counties are covered in some shape or form by museum development support (with the exception of the North East and North West) but there is an intricate patchwork of funding streams and levels of provision.” (MLA / Holberry 2009, p12). Although generally known as Museum Development Officers, different titles are used in different areas (in Dorset, for example, the post holder is called the County Museums Adviser), and there is a complex mix of funding streams with some MDO posts funded entirely by local authorities at either County or District level, or jointly funded, and some wholly by Renaissance or partly by Renaissance with additional local authority funding (the Norfolk post holder is funded jointly by Renaissance, Norfolk County and North Norfolk District Council). To quote Holberry again:

It appears that MDOs have a common purpose and a common outcome – bookends at the beginning and end of their work – the way in which they deliver the middle depends upon a range of factors, such as the nature of the museums in the region, the nature of the funding for their posts and operational budgets, their status within the wider organisation (such as a local authority) and personal preference. (MLA/Holberry 2009, p13)

---

<sup>36</sup> DCMS *Understanding the Future: priorities for England's Museums* (2005) and *Understanding the Future: museums and the 21<sup>st</sup> century* (2006)



In most regions there is a wide variety of training and development opportunities available for all museums, including volunteer-run organisations, both at county and at regional level co-ordinated by the Renaissance hub museums and by the MDOs. Topics can range from the practical such as collections care workshops, to the strategic, such as developing a business plan, but all are intended to help raise standards and to support museums in achieving and retaining Accreditation, and ultimately to improve the museum experience for visitors and users. Advice from museum specialists is also available, usually through the MDO, on subjects such as retailing, conservation, interpretation and learning.<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup> East of England Renaissance *Share* programme for 2009-10 lists forty seven courses or masterclasses across the region open to all museums plus opportunities for one-to-one advice from specialists:  
<http://www.renaissance-east.org.uk/UserData/root/Files/SHARE%20Training%202009-10.pdf>

## 5.4 Other Museum Networks and Organisations

In addition to the opportunities provided by the Renaissance programme and by MDOs, volunteer-run museums can participate in many other informal networks and organisations, should they choose to do so. In most counties there is a county wide network with a membership from both staffed and volunteer-run museums, such as the Dorset Museums Association, the Suffolk Museums Forum, or the Surrey Museums Group, often facilitated by the MDO but with an elected committee, and a programme of meetings, visits and social events and a newsletter. In addition, there are specialist groups based on museum collections, such as geology, aircraft, maritime or social history, or on museum activities such as learning or retail, although usually operating at a national rather than at a regional level.

At a regional level there are Museum Federations, membership organisations open to anyone working in museums, such as the North West Federation and the South West Federation, both of which started in the inter-war years, providing networking opportunities, events, training, newsletters, e-groups and blogs<sup>38</sup>. The primary national 'voice' for volunteer-run museums is the Association of Independent Museums (AIM) which

---

<sup>38</sup> [www.nwfed.org.uk](http://www.nwfed.org.uk) and [www.swfed.org.uk](http://www.swfed.org.uk) The North West Federation started as the Lancashire and Cheshire Federation in the 1920s.

publishes a bi-monthly *Bulletin* and occasional focus papers of practical guidance, currently operates three grant schemes, holds an annual conference and acts as an advocate for the membership with Government and other bodies.<sup>39</sup>

---

<sup>39</sup> [www.aim-museums.co.uk](http://www.aim-museums.co.uk)

## **5.5 Funding Sources and Support for Volunteer-run Museums**

The 'independence' of independent museums is often cited as their greatest asset. These are museums which are 'light on their feet', where decisions can be made quickly, and where full advantage of can be taken of opportunities as they arise. Some rely entirely on their own skills to raise funds, for example from visitors through admission fees, sales of gifts and souvenirs or profits from a café, through membership fees or a 'Friends' organisation, or through a range of fundraising activities and events that are common to many other community organisations, from coffee mornings and jumble sales to lectures and outings. Cricklade Museum, for example, which is run by the Cricklade Historical Society in a building owned by Cricklade Town Council, has run an annual 'Fayre' to raise funds since the 1950s (Chapter 15.2).

However, most small museums do receive significant support from their town or parish council, and in some cases from the district council, even if that does not come in the form of a direct grant. Relief from business rates has already been mentioned; other forms of support can include provision and maintenance of the museum building or leasing at a low or peppercorn rent, signposting and publicity, payment of utilities,

joint purchasing, and in some cases, as we have seen at Evesham, provision of staff for front of house roles. Financial support can come either as an annual revenue grant that covers the greater part of the running costs of the museum (core funding), as at Diss in Norfolk<sup>40</sup>, or in the form of a one-off capital grant, perhaps in support of a Heritage Lottery Fund application or other external funding bid. As Babbidge pointed out in his report to AIM (Babbidge, 2007) the structure of town and parish councils has remained relatively stable and unchanged in England over the last thirty years compared to the upheavals in first and second tier local authorities since the Local Government Act of 1972, and they remain comparatively approachable and understandable organisations. It is not clear whether the introduction of the Quality Parish Council Scheme in 2003, following the Rural White Paper of 2000<sup>41</sup>, has had any direct effect on small museums, although seventy-four (32%) of the towns and parishes with such museums are now members of the scheme. However, as Babbidge warned, the support of town and parish councils, particularly where the support is practical rather than financial, is often insufficiently acknowledged by the museums themselves (Babbidge, 2007).

---

<sup>40</sup> Personal knowledge from acting as the museum's Curatorial Adviser.

<sup>41</sup> *Our Countryside: The Future – A Fair Deal for Rural England* downloaded from <http://www.defra.gov.uk/rural/documents/policy/ruralwp/rural.pdf> 18/2/2010

Although some support is forthcoming from county and district councils for volunteer-run museums, most frequently for Accredited museums, or those working towards the standard, this is often given in practical terms of advice and help from Curatorial Advisers, or Museum Development Officers, or from external funding officers.<sup>42</sup> Direct financial help towards core funding is more likely to be directed at large and medium sized museums.

Within local authorities there have been changes both in their internal structures with numerous committees now streamlined into cabinet style government with 'portfolio holders', and in the way that they now work through Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP). LSPs bring together all levels of government with other agencies, such as primary care trusts, with representatives of the voluntary and community sector, mainly from the health and social care sectors, in order to develop and deliver Community Strategies. Funding is now linked to supporting the local authorities to deliver on their objectives, as expressed in Local Area Agreements, which are centred on the four policy fields of children and young people, safer and stronger communities, healthier communities and older people and economic development and enterprise (Babbidge, 2007). This is not language that readily commends itself to volunteer-run

---

<sup>42</sup> It should not be forgotten that there is also a significant number of County and District Council run museums in market towns, such as in Much Wenlock and Ludlow (Shropshire CC) or Saffron Walden (Uttlesford DC).

museums, and interpreting the activities of the museum in the appropriate way in pursuit of annual funding is often difficult for all but the most determined.

The most widely accessed source of external funding for small museums, after local authority support, is the National Lottery's Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), mainly the *Heritage Grant* programme (for projects of £50,000 and above) and the *Your Heritage* programme for grants of £3,000 to £50,000, but also occasionally the *Young Roots* programme for projects which are led by young people.

Applications can be made individually for projects that are specific to one museum or as a partnership project with a group of museums, sometimes led by the Museum Development Officer. The HLF will only fund capital projects, it does not support revenue costs, and all projects must meet the Fund's aims of "Conserving the UK's diverse heritage for present and future generations to experience and enjoy" and either "Help more people, and a wider range of people, to take an active part in and make decisions about their heritage" or "Help people to learn about their own and other people's heritage"<sup>43</sup>

The HLF gives priority to not-for-profit organizations and is noticeably enthusiastic about the involvement of volunteers in

---

<sup>43</sup> <http://www.hlf.org.uk/HowToApply/Pages/starthere.aspx> downloaded 18/2/2010

projects as a means of increasing involvement in heritage.

*Thinking about Volunteering*<sup>44</sup> is one of a number of Guidance Publications produced to help applicants and the first number of *Heritage Focus*, a newsletter for grant holders, is dedicated to 'Broadening the Diversity of Your Volunteer Team'<sup>45</sup> HLF does not give grants to set up new museums, unless these are based on an existing collection, and preference is given to Accredited museums.

---

<sup>44</sup>

[http://www.hlf.org.uk/HowToApply/furtherresources/Documents/Thinking\\_about\\_volunteering.pdf](http://www.hlf.org.uk/HowToApply/furtherresources/Documents/Thinking_about_volunteering.pdf) published in February 2009

<sup>45</sup>

<http://www.hlf.org.uk/grantholders/heritagefocus/diversity/Pages/diversity.aspx> published on 1/10.2009 and downloaded 18/2/2010



## Summary of Section C

Section C has attempted to elucidate the context in which volunteer – run museums operate today, although it has also been included as at least some of the discussions will have resonance in the case histories that follow of museums that were founded in earlier periods. It will provide the background for the discussion of the Dorset Survey, which follows in Section D.

# SECTION D: THE DORSET SURVEY

## Introduction: the Museum Landscape in Dorset

This section will describe and discuss a survey of volunteers involved in museums in Dorset that was conducted during 2006 and 2007. However, before doing so, it will be helpful to give a brief account of the museums in Dorset that participated.

The complexity of the museum landscape in England is well illustrated by the range and scope of the twenty-eight museums that are known to be open to the public in Dorset<sup>46</sup>, twenty-one of which are accredited or registered with the MLA:

The Keep Military Museum, Dorchester	Priest's House Museum, Wimborne Minster
Lyme Regis Museum	The Tank Museum, Bovington
Bridport Museum	Royal Signals Museum, Blandford
Waterfront Museum, Poole	Dorset County Museum, Dorchester
Nothe Fort, Weymouth	

*Table 2: Accredited Museums in Dorset with paid staff*

<sup>46</sup> This number excludes National Trust and English Heritage properties, as well as the museums in Bournemouth (Bournemouth Borough Council) and Christchurch (The Red House is now part of Hampshire Museums Service). It also excludes private museums such as the Mill House Cider Museum at Overmoigne.

Beaminster Museum	Blandford Town Museum
Blandford Fashion Museum	Gillingham Museum
Gold Hill Museum, Shaftesbury	Langton Matravers Museum
Portland Museum	Shaftesbury Abbey Museum
Sherborne Museum	Sturminster Newton Museum and Mill
Swanage Museum and Heritage Centre	Wareham Town Museum

*Table 3: Accredited museums in Dorset – volunteer-run*

Castleton Waterwheel Museum, Sherborne	Swanage Railway Museum, Corfe Castle
Tolpuddle Martyrs Museum	Corfe Castle Museum
Tudor House Museum, Weymouth	Water Supply Museum, Sutton Poyntz
Weymouth Museum	

*Table 4: Museums in Dorset that are outside the Accreditation Scheme*

Of these, only the Waterfront Museum in Poole is wholly provided by a local authority, Poole Borough Council. The oldest museum in the county, Dorset County Museum, was established in 1846 as the Dorset County Museum and Library; it merged with the Dorset Natural History and Antiquarian Field Club in 1928 and the two organisations became the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society<sup>47</sup>. The museum continues to be managed by the Society to the present day but it does, however, receive a grant from Dorset County Council

---

<sup>47</sup> [www.dorsetcountymuseum.org/history\\_of\\_museum](http://www.dorsetcountymuseum.org/history_of_museum) downloaded 21/10/2010

and is the leading repository for county wide collections of archaeology and natural history material as well as holding significant art collections and literary material.

Other museums, such as Bridport and the Priest's House at Wimborne Minster, receive funding from their District Councils<sup>48</sup>. Of the unaccredited museums, one is run by a public utility, one by the Trades Union Council, one by a Town Trust, and two are 'privatised' local authority museums.

Of the volunteer led museums, Portland, the earliest, began as a volunteer effort, led by Dr Marie Stopes<sup>49</sup> who initially purchased and restored the buildings and became the first Honorary Curator; Portland Urban District Council assumed responsibility for the buildings and for the wages of a caretaker in 1931, under powers delegated to them by Dorset County Council Education Committee (Perry, 1990). It later became part of Weymouth and Portland Borough Council's museum service but in 2009 the museum was disengaged from the local

---

<sup>48</sup> Although Lyme Regis now (2010) has paid staff, this has not always been the case. John Fowles, the writer, who moved to Lyme in the mid 1960s, was Honorary Curator for ten years and later the archivist for the museum. The museum is the second oldest in Dorset, and was built in 1901.

<sup>49</sup> Dr Stopes (1880-1958), although better known today as a campaigner for birth control, was a distinguished paleobotanist and a Fellow of the Linnean Society (Hall, 2004). She and her second husband Humphrey Verdon Roe, had bought the Old (Higher) Lighthouse on Portland in the early 1920s as a holiday home. She initiated a move to establish a museum on the island in July 1926, and it finally opened in August 1932. The cottages which she bought were known as 'Avice's Cottage' after the characters in Thomas Hardy's novel *The Well-beloved* (1897) Hardy and Stopes knew each other and there are photographs of them together in the collections of the Portland Museum, given by Stopes's son, Dr Harry Stopes Roe in 1997.

authority and registered as a charitable trust. It continues to receive a grant from the Council which supports the employment of a part time member of staff.

The governing body for the Wareham Town Museum is the town council, although it is entirely volunteer staffed, and to all intents and purposes operates as a volunteer led museum, similar to the Almonry Museum at Evesham which will be discussed later. All of the volunteer led museums, with the exception of the Blandford Fashion Museum and Shaftesbury Abbey Museum, are concerned primarily with the history of their own communities and it is these museums which are the main focus of the analysis drawn from the Dorset Volunteer Survey.

## **6. 1 The Dorset Survey of Museum Volunteers -**

### **Introduction**

The Dorset Survey of Museum Volunteers was devised during the autumn of 2006 with the help and input of a Steering Group of members of the Dorset Museums Association and the Dorset Museums Adviser. The survey questionnaire was sent out from January to March 2007. The majority of forms were delivered to individual volunteers by the appropriate contact in each museum, except at Wareham and Sturminster Newton where surveys were posted direct to volunteers using names and addresses supplied by the contact. The questionnaire was devised within the parameters of both the University of Gloucestershire Code of Ethics<sup>50</sup> and the Museums Association Code of Ethics (MA, 2002). An accompanying letter to participants asked them not to add their names to the survey, and assured them that individual responses would not be made available to the museum were they worked.

Originally, as has been explained earlier, the survey was sent to all the Registered and Accredited museums in Dorset, but for the purposes of this project only the returns from the volunteer-run museums will be considered. A copy of the survey questionnaire is included as Appendix 4. It should be noted that

---

<sup>50</sup>

<http://resources.glos.ac.uk/shareddata/dms/42B83EECB42A03968908DF8AD4A0EB.pdf>

not all respondents answered all of the questions and that 10.4% of the total returns did not give the name of the museum where the volunteer worked. No returns were received that could be identified as coming from either museum in Shaftesbury, and so the Gold Hill Museum is not included in the analysis that follows.

The number of surveys sent out and the number of valid returns from volunteer-run museums are given below:

Number sent	Museum	Number returned	% from Museum	% of Total
35	Beaminster	19	54	18
42	Blandford	17	40	16
11	Gillingham	7	64	7
20	Portland	3	15	3
60	Sherborne	14	23	13
22	Sturminster Newton	13	59	12
30	Swanage	11	37	10
25	Wareham	13	52	12
27	Langton Matravers	10	37	9
100	Shaftesbury Abbey & Gold Hill	0	0	0
Total: 372		107		100.0

*Table 5: Number of surveys sent to and received from volunteer-run museums in Dorset, 2007*

Survey forms were returned to the researcher at the University of Gloucestershire from late February until the middle of July 2007. All data was entered onto a database using SPSS 14.0 and a preliminary analysis of all returns was undertaken and

discussed with the Steering Group in September 2007;<sup>51</sup> subsequently, the data for volunteers working in volunteer-run museums was extracted and analysed on a separate database and it is this which forms the basis of the study which follows.

---

<sup>51</sup> It is intended that further work should be done on this larger survey during 2011, culminating with a presentation to the Dorset Museums Association in late 2011 or 2012.



## **6.2 The Survey responses: some essentials**

A total of 107 responses to the survey questionnaire was received from volunteers working in volunteer-run museums, although not every respondent answered all of the questions, and a number of questions seeking a free text response, rather than a simple tick, went unanswered.

There were ninety-nine responses to the question asking whether the respondent was a museum trustee or equivalent, a museum worker or both: seventy seven were museum workers, twenty were both trustees and worked in the museum and two responded as trustees, results which accord well with Rochester's description of the member / activist model of small voluntary organisations described earlier in Chapter 4.5 (Rochester, 2007).

Eighty people had volunteered for ten years or less (75.5% of 106 responses); twenty six people had volunteered for longer, with seven having served more than twenty years. Only nine of the 105 respondents to the question said that they were among the founders of their museum.

The majority of the volunteers have not been born in Dorset (84 of 104 respondents) although thirty-seven have lived there for

over twenty years, twenty-one for between ten and twenty years, and thirty for less than ten years of whom only four had been in Dorset for under two years. According to the *Dorset Data Book 2008* published by Dorset County Council (Dorset CC, 2008) there are more deaths than births in Dorset and the overall population of the county would decline without inward migration. Between 1985 and 2005, Dorset experienced 14.6% growth in population compared to 7.1% for England and Wales as a whole, and this trend is predicted to continue (Dorset CC, 2008). North Dorset, which includes Blandford, Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton, experienced the highest rate of population growth between 1996 and 2006 – 15.7%; West Dorset (Beaminster and Sherborne) 7.3%; Weymouth and Portland (Portland) 2.9%; Purbeck (Langton Matravers, Swanage and Wareham) 2.4%.

The majority of the volunteers at these volunteer run museums live in the same town or village where the museum is situated (88 or 82. 2% of 99 respondents<sup>52</sup>) and of those who travel (twenty-two), the greater number live within five miles, with only four travelling between six and ten miles; no volunteer travelled more than ten miles. These small museums would therefore

---

<sup>52</sup> In the overall survey, 63.9% of respondents lived in the same town or village. Of those who did not, 51 of the 115 respondents travelled over ten miles to their museum, with volunteers at the Tank Museum, a 'special subject' museum which would attract enthusiasts, travelling noticeably long distances, including from London.

appear to be very dependent on their own community, or on the immediate hinterland.

In contrast to Mattingly’s 1984 survey of museum volunteers discussed above, which found that 38% of volunteers were retired people (Mattingly, 1984), in the nine volunteer run museums which are considered here 74% of the respondents are aged over 65, with a further 14% aged between 55 and 64, a total of 88%. This also contrasts with both of the surveys undertaken on behalf of the MLA by the Institute for Volunteering Research in 2002 (Chambers, 2002) and 2005 (Howlett et al., 2006):

Age	55-64	65-74	75+	Total
2002	31%	41%	7%	79%
2005	32%	35%	7%	74%

Table 6: Percentages of volunteers in museums, libraries and archives aged over 55 in the south west region taken from Chambers (2002) and Howlett et al. (2006)<sup>53</sup>

However, neither the Chambers (2002) nor the Howlett et al. (2006) reports distinguished between urban and rural areas in their breakdown of statistics by region, nor did the earlier Mattingly report (Mattingly, 1984). The figures shown above for the South West region therefore include both the urban areas

<sup>53</sup> The information is not available for the museums domain alone, nor at county level.

of Bristol and Bath and Bournemouth and Poole as well as a number of other urban centres, such as Taunton and Plymouth.

It is worth noting, too, that, between 1996 and 2006, the population of Dorset aged over 55 rose from 129, 313 to 156,161, with the most significant rise being among the 55-59 year olds, accounted for by the number of “older people moving in to the country in preparation for retirement” (*Dorset Data Book 2008*, p10). Only fourteen of 105 volunteers who answered the question about employment status, were either employed or were unemployed and seeking work.

The *State of the Countryside Report for 2007* noted that “Twenty years ago, rural districts had a very similar demographic profile to urban districts, but now there are significant differences ... Compared to urban areas, rural communities, especially the smaller ones, now have a higher proportion of people in the age group between 40 and 65. Rural communities also now have higher proportions of people in the age group above 65 than is the case in urban settlements.” (CRC46, 2007, p14) The *Report* went on to mention that “the concentration of older people in the South West is particularly striking” (ibid. p15) and noted that, although

inward migration to rural areas was generally slowing down, between 2002/3 and 2004/5 both North and West Dorset were among the top ten districts experiencing the greatest rates of inward migration, with North Dorset experiencing the second highest rate (ibid. p17). The age range of the volunteers in the museums considered here should therefore, it is suggested, be considered within the demographic context of rural Dorset. It might not reveal the spread of ages that organisations such as MLA might consider desirable, but it certainly reveals what they should expect, particularly if the decline in the number of younger people in rural areas is although taken into account (CRC46, 2007).

There are more female volunteers (64 of 105 respondents, 61%) than male volunteers (41, 39%). In Dorset 52% of the total population is female, and 48% male, with a higher number of females aged over 55 (85,328, 55%) compared to males (70,833, 45%) (Dorset CC, 2008), so the gender balance in the volunteer workforce is different from the demographic profile for the county. There may be a number of reasons for this. Little, for example, considers that volunteering is an important part of identity formation among rural women, that it is what rural women 'do' (Little, 1997) and it forms an important part of the construction of the 'rural idyll' of peace, security and community

mindedness for those moving to the countryside (Little and Austin, 1996).

Seventy-six people had achieved further qualifications since leaving school; only twenty-five of the 101 respondents had not. Twenty-six of the sixty-three people who gave details of their qualifications have achieved a degree, with a number holding postgraduate degrees. Others held professional qualifications in teaching, law, accountancy and nursing.

Sixty-eight people gave their present or previous occupation of which only six were recognisably 'rural' occupations (a farmer, a farmer's wife ("We never retire!"), a grain trader, a smallholder / freelancer, a blacksmith / agricultural engineer and a stonemason / carver). Of the others, fifteen had been teachers including some at university and college level, five had worked in health settings and five had experience in museums or in museum conservation. Overall, the majority had worked in a professional or managerial capacity, with a minority working in administration or in commercial settings such as a post office or shop.

### 6.3 Why do they do it? Some motivations explored

Initially, one of the foci of this project was an attempt to understand the motivations of volunteers who were committed to volunteer –run museums. In part, this was because in the more recent surveys of volunteering in museums and other cultural services such as Chambers (2002) and Howlett et al., (2006) the responses to the questionnaires had come from the museums rather than from the volunteers themselves.

Understanding motivation is one of the keys to successful recruitment and retention of volunteers and there seemed to be a lack of literature on *museum* volunteering that would actually help practitioners to develop better recruitment practices. There is, though, a vast body of literature on volunteer motivation generally, but as Rochester et al. point out, the evidence is sometimes “hard to decipher and use practically” (Rochester et al., 2010, p119).

In trying to clarify this, Rochester et al. (2010) suggest that there are, broadly speaking, two perspectives for theorizing motivation, the psychological and the sociological. For the first of these, the psychological, they draw on the work that Clary et al. (1996) and others have done in developing a Volunteer Functions Index (VFI). This identified six categories of motivation:

1. *Values*: People volunteer through altruism or concern for others
  2. *Understanding*: People volunteer to experience new learning experiences, develop or practice skills or increase knowledge
  3. *Career*: People volunteer to further their career
  4. *Social*: Volunteering affords the opportunity to be with friends
  5. *Protective*: People volunteer to escape 'negative feelings' and protect the self
  6. *Enhancement*: Personal development and growth and self-esteem
- (adapted from Rochester et al., 2010, p123)

A second psychological approach, drawing again on Rochester et al. (2010), is that of Batson et al. (2002) who suggest four motivational types, egoism, altruism, collectivism (the welfare of groups) and principalism (to uphold moral principles).

The Survey questionnaire (Appendix 4) set out a list of potential motivations and asked the respondent to mark all those that they felt applied to them. In the table that follows the responses have been listed according the percentage of volunteers who identified with that particular reason, in descending order, with the ten highest scoring responses indicated in bold:



<b>Why did you become a volunteer at the museum?</b>	<b>% response</b>
<b>General interest in the subject of the museum</b>	<b>67.3</b>
<b>To do something for the community</b>	<b>60.7</b>
<b>Particular interest in local history</b>	<b>59.8</b>
<b>To learn something about the locality</b>	<b>57.9</b>
<b>To keep busy and active</b>	<b>43.0</b>
<b>Because someone asked me to help</b>	<b>39.3</b>
<b>I was asked and had time</b>	<b>39.3</b>
<b>It seemed interesting</b>	<b>36.4</b>
<b>Member of the society or the organisation that runs the museum</b>	<b>33.6</b>
<b>To learn something about the subject</b>	<b>32.7</b>
To 'put something back'	28.0
I knew other volunteers	26.2
Companionship / friendship	23.4
To use my work skills in a new way	22.4
To meet new people	21.5
To try something new	18.7
To do something completely different	17.8
To develop things for the museum that weren't in place before	16.8
It seemed fun	15.9
To take up a new challenge	13.1
Member of a like-minded society in the locality,	10.3
To hand on skills or knowledge	10.3
To be involved in a respected organisation	6.5
Because it helps me to remember my lifetime	6.5
To learn a new skill	6.5
Other.	6.5
To add structure to the working week	5.6
It's a stepping-stone back to employment	4.7
I enjoy role play / acting	4.7
To try a new career	3.7
The Volunteer Bureau (or similar) suggested it	2.8
Member of a group which volunteered, ie a branch of NADFAS	0.9

*Table 7: Percentage of volunteers who responded to the question **Why did you become a volunteer at the museum?** In descending order, with the ten most popular responses highlighted in **bold**.*

If we were to follow the VFI suggested by Clary et al., cited above, among the leading ten reasons to volunteer at the museum (i.e. all those with a more than 30% response highlighted in bold in Table 7), half could be said to relate to the function of '*Understanding*: People volunteer to experience new learning experiences, develop or practice skills or

increase knowledge' (adapted from Rochester et al., 2010, p123)

If, instead, the suggestions of Batson et al. were followed to group the same ten reasons, six would be described as egoism, and two each as altruism and collectivism.

The survey also asked volunteers to identify the most important reason they became involved with the museum, to which there were seventy-eight responses. Twenty-five identified their interest in local history; another ten each identified a 'general interest in the subject of the museum', 'doing something for the community' and 'because someone asked them to help'.

However, the reasons people become volunteers may not be the same as the reasons people give for staying, and of the ninety-two people who answered this question the highest number, twenty-eight, gave a variant of 'enjoyment':

*I like the work; enjoyment; I love the job; enjoyment and a sense of duty; because I enjoy the challenge; like meeting people – short of custodians; enjoyment and helping visitors; pleasant enough way to spend two hours a week; enjoy helping with the Saturday Club for the children; being part of a community and wanting to be involved in something I enjoy; I*

*enjoy using my spare time for a good cause; I love what I do; I  
enjoy the work and enjoy meeting and helping people; I like  
being an active member of the museum trust*

are some examples of the responses.

This response accords well with the findings of Moseley and Pahl given in their report on *Social Capital in Rural Places* (2007):<sup>54</sup>

What we found in rural and small town England was that it was fun things like festivals, carnivals, arts programmes and other cultural and recreational activities that often motivate people to make things happen, not an abstract sense of duty ... Fun is crucial in two quite different respects – as the goal of endeavour and as an element of its pursuit. ... whatever the goal, volunteers want their involvement to be enjoyable (Moseley and Pahl, 2007, p30)

Nineteen people indicated that it was 'interest' that encouraged them to continue to volunteer, but only two of these specified an interest in local history:

*Interesting to do and meeting a lot of interesting people every day the museum is open; interest and friendship; friendship and interest in the museum; I find it interesting and it keeps me busy - value to visitors of a local museum. Interest / enjoyment in collection management; an outside interest; interest in*

---

<sup>54</sup> To DEFRA, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

*people; interest in local history (and) like meeting people; my continuing interest in local history & development of the museum.*

It should be noted that a number of these responses mention 'people' and 'friendship', and this will be considered further in the discussion that follows on social capital (Chapter 6.4).

Only ten respondents put a wish to help the community as their main reason for a continued commitment, although 60.7% of respondents, the second highest percentage, had included it among their motivations for getting involved initially. It is clearly of greater significance overall than this number of responses (10) would suggest; possibly because other factors, such as interest or enjoyment, which were unpredicted at the start, came into greater prominence as involvement deepened:

*To help in the locality, particularly charity accounting; support community; worthwhile service to the community; desire to help the community; being part of a community and wanting to be involved in something I enjoy; doing a worthwhile job for the community and at the same time making new social and business contacts.*

The last of the responses quoted above is interesting, as it is quite unambiguous about the exchange of benefit that the volunteer expects to receive in return for the time and effort that s/he puts in on behalf of the museum.

Among the respondents to Question 18 (*What is the most important thing the museum does for you?*), thirty-six people, the largest grouping, gave very personal and in some instances moving responses, of which a selection is given here:

*Gives me enhanced self-esteem; gives life a meaning; provides interest and motivation for activity; gives me a chance to leave something for future generations to enjoy; now retired, a purpose; keeps my 85 year old brain active; keeps an 80 year old interested in life; I have [a life-limiting condition] and it gives me a reason to leave the house; it gives structure to my life; gives me an opportunity to keep serving the community; sense of worth; keeps my body and brain active (most important at age 72!); it gives me a chance; teaches me; feeling useful; use my brain; feeling I have been of some help; motivation; gets me out of the house into a different sphere; it inspires me; allows me to be myself in a contributory way.*

In 2008, Volunteering England commissioned a report from the University of Wales, Lampeter, *Volunteering and Health: What*

*Impact Does It Really Have?*<sup>55</sup> from which they found that there was:

qualified evidence that volunteering can deliver health benefits both to volunteers and to health service users. Volunteering was shown to decrease mortality and to improve self-rated health, mental health, life satisfaction, the ability to carry out activities of daily living without functional impairment, social support and interaction, healthy behaviours and the ability to cope with one's own illness" (Casiday et al, 2008, p3)

The responses given above would certainly seem to indicate that some respondents recognised an impact on their personal health and well-being of their volunteering activity at the museum.

Some respondents identified the need of the museum itself for volunteers as their primary reason to continue:

*Needed; the need for keeping the museum open; essential to maintain museum for the benefit of the town; no one else to take on my job at the moment; it wouldn't work without volunteers; it is important to keep this small museum going; the town's need; need for volunteers.*

---

<sup>55</sup> (Casiday et al, 2008, <http://www.volunteering.org.uk/NR/rdonlyres/AB46F9EC-CADB-4ABB-AEFE-8A850F09AE32/0/FullReportLampeter2ndJuly2008.pdf>)

However, not everyone was sure why they kept volunteering: "lassitude" was one response; "Sometimes I wonder about that myself!" was another, although the last of these might have been more in the nature of a 'throw-away' remark than an indication of unhappiness or dissatisfaction.

## **6.4 Volunteer-run museums and the development of social capital**

In an earlier chapter (Chapter 3.2) it was noted that although ecomuseums have received considerable academic attention, museums that are volunteer-run, and their volunteers, have received little notice, in England at least. However, volunteer-run museums do share some of the characteristics of ecomuseums, such as the emphasis on community control and direction, decision-making and involvement, and a focus on the importance of place to the local community. It therefore seems appropriate to inaugurate this chapter, which will discuss the survey findings on the development of social capital, with a short discussion of a paper on *Ecomuseum Performance in Piemonte and Liguria, Italy: the significance of capital* (Corsane et al., 2007b).

In this study, Corsane and his colleagues describe the project, undertaken under the auspices of the Istituto Recerche Economico Sociali del Piemonte, in which they examined five small ecomuseums which focussed on different former industries. The research combined desk studies and interviews with the participants, in most cases volunteers. An account of



each of the sites and of the interviews is given in the paper.<sup>56</sup>

At the *Ecomuseo della Canapa, Carmagnola*, a former ropeworks, "a strong volunteer force has been established that manages the site and gives demonstrations" (Corsane et al., 2007b, p226). Here they found that:

The respondents cited the significance of the enthusiasm and support of local people, invitations to give rope-making demonstrations elsewhere in Europe, recognition by the local municipality and an increasingly important educational remit. *While these outcomes were surprising, perhaps the most unexpected result of the project was the benefits gained by the volunteers;*<sup>57</sup> the respondents indicated that their personal skills and confidence had grown, they have travelled to new places and met new people, widened their horizons, and have a sense of achieving a personal vision (ibid.).

The researchers' conclusions at this small site, which attracts about 800 visitors from April to August, were that:

Although the site is historically important, it appears that *the process of working together to conserve and interpret it was arguably more significant, bringing local people together with a common purpose.*<sup>58</sup> The site has become a focus for collective community pride in place, a means of celebrating the past, and demonstrating pride in the history of the industry (ibid. p227).

In summarising their findings from all five ecomuseums,

Corsane et al. noted that:

One essential and somewhat surprising piece of information that emerged from the discussions with ecomuseum personnel related to the benefits that accrued to themselves, and to all members of the associations involved. These benefits varied from the acquisition of unexpected skills ... to simply meeting

---

<sup>56</sup> Further details of the sites were given in an earlier paper, Corsane et al., (2007a).

<sup>57</sup> Author's emphasis

<sup>58</sup> Author's emphasis

new friends ... or building knowledge or understanding of a place or former industry ... (one respondent) sums up these feelings by suggesting that all ecomuseum volunteers acquired intangible benefits from being involved in ecomuseum development, and this fact seemed to be more important than any other outcome (ibid. p235)

Reading this, one is left with a sense of profound regret at the gap that exists between museum practitioners in England on the one hand and the academic community on the other. It would be astonishing if a Museum Development Officer<sup>59</sup>, for example, working with volunteer-run museums, found any of the above findings a matter of surprise. It has been accepted for many years that volunteering is rarely a purely altruistic activity, and that the benefits to the users of the services, in this context the museum visitors, and to the organisation are counterbalanced by the

rewards experienced by the volunteer in terms of the acquisition of knowledge, understanding and skills; personal and social development; involvement in an enjoyable leisure pursuit; and the opportunity to meet and share the company of other people (Rochester et al., 2010, p179).

The responses to the survey, which have been described above (Chapter 6.3) and will be described further below, make this abundantly clear.

Social capital has been the subject of an “explosion of interest” in recent years and the number of articles describing or

---

<sup>59</sup> Or for that matter any other community-based development worker.

analysing it “is said to have increased approximately tenfold in the 1990s” (Jochum, 2003, p7). The concept itself has a long pedigree (Portes, 1998), but recent interest can largely be traced back to the success of Robert D. Putnam’s book *Bowling Alone: the collapse and revival of American Community* (Putnam, 2000; Jochum, 2003). Social capital has been defined many times; Putnam’s own definition was “features of social life, such as networks, norms and trust, that facilitate coordination and co-operation for mutual benefit (Putnam, 1993, p13 quoted in Moseley and Pahl 2007, p7). Further, Putnam identified two types of social capital, which he described as ‘bonding’ and ‘bridging’. Jochum (2003) describes the first as serving “to unite groups ... with group members sharing one or several factors in common (aspirations, values, experiences, interests, locality etc” and bridging social capital which “involves overlapping networks where a member of one group accesses the resources of another group” (Jochum, 2003, p9). A third type of social capital, ‘linking’, was identified by Woolcock (2001, quoted in Jochum, 2003), which relates to the connections between individuals or groups with others in a hierarchical relationship. In *Faith in Rural Communities: Contributions of Social Capital to Community Vibrancy* Farnell et al. suggest that

it may be best to conceive of these types as three perspectives on the resources and assets that people bring to villages to give, maintain and enhance their vibrancy. In other words, the focus of our attention is not

the economic structure and work activity of these communities, but the quality of relations between people as they engage in everyday life. These everyday relationships are expressed through family, friendships, organised social activity and participation in local governance (Farnell et al., 2006)

In the context of this project, the third type, 'linking social capital', is most easily perceived in the relationships between museums, for example between the volunteer-run museums and the wider museum community, networks and organizations providing advice and support, and the relationship between the volunteer-run museums and their funding partners, such as the local authorities or grant giving bodies<sup>60</sup>. The identification of 'linking social capital' was not the purpose of the survey of Dorset Museum Volunteers, although it will be apparent throughout much of Part 2 of this project, but a small suggestion of it might be found in one response to the question "What is the best thing about being a museum volunteer?: Local contacts –county and regional".

So far as the other two types of social capital are concerned, these can be identified indirectly in the responses to Questions 16 (What motivates you to continue to be a volunteer?), 17 (What is the best thing about being a volunteer?) and 18 (What is the most important thing that the museum does for you?). Questions 28 and 29, which asked whether the respondent was

---

<sup>60</sup> Several examples of linking social capital can be seen in the case histories of the museums that follow in Part Two of this project.

a member of any conservation or preservation societies, and if they volunteered for them as well; Question 30 which asked if the respondent volunteered for any county wide organisations; and Question 31, which asked about active engagement with other organisations in the community, were all designed to identify bridging social capital.

To the question "What is the best thing about being a museum volunteer?" forty-two of the ninety-seven respondents cited either the visitors or the other people involved in the museum. Some responses that relate to the museum visitors, which might indicate bridging social capital were:

*You meet people who are visiting the area; meeting interesting people (and) fostering local history research; meeting new people; meeting people who wish to find out about the town; the interest of visitors; meeting and talking with visitors; seeing people enjoying their visit; I've met some very nice and interesting people and learned some local history; meeting people with stories to tell; meeting visitors and friendship with others;*

However, it is bonding social capital that comes across most strongly in the responses to these three questions (16, 17, and 18). Taking Jochum's definition of bonding social capital as

something that serves “to unite groups ... with group members sharing one or several factors in common (aspirations, values, experiences, interests, locality etc)” (Jochum, 2003, p9), the responses to Question 16 (What motivates you to continue to be a volunteer?), as discussed in the previous chapter (Chapter 6.3) clearly indicate that it is bonding social capital that is being created through the shared endeavour of creating and sustaining a museum, and the generation of ‘interest’ among the volunteers.

It is also clearly shown in those responses to Question 17 (What is the best thing about being a museum volunteer?) that foreground the respondents’ relationship with colleagues:

*local learning and working with friends; friendship – relationship with children and adults; meeting like-minded others; it has given me access to information and people that has definitely been an ‘enriching’ experience; being part of an innovative team; keeping in touch with the many friends I’ve made; meeting others with similar interests; companionship; we always have something new to challenge us; communication with fellow volunteers; talking with others; being one of a team.*

Eighty-nine responses were received for Question 18: What is the most important thing that the museum does for you?

Although one respondent chose to adapt John F. Kennedy's exhortation<sup>61</sup> "Do not ask what the museum can do for you, rather what you can do for the museum", others gave personal responses that related to their personal feelings of well-being (see Chapter 6.3 above).

Bonding social capital is also evident in the responses to this question:

*Involvement; social contacts; involves me in the local community; helps me meet new people from home and abroad & broaden my knowledge; I am working with people who share similar interests; meeting like-minded people; working with a group of like-minded enthusiastic people; it keeps me in touch with people; gives me interesting work with like-minded people; sense of being in a team; involves me in the local community.*

As mentioned above, three questions in the Dorset Survey of Museum Volunteers were designed specifically to help identify 'bridging social capital'. The first of these asked if the respondents volunteered for other conservation or preservation societies. Nine responses indicated the National Trust, eight wildlife or environmental groups, eight for a civic society or local buildings preservation group, seven for local history societies. The second question asked respondents if they volunteered for

---

<sup>61</sup> From Kennedy's Inaugural Address, 20<sup>th</sup> January 1961

other county-wide organisations, to which there were twenty-one responses. The majority of responses (twelve) indicated work within a social care or health setting, such as meals on wheels, although four people indicated the University of the Third Age (U3A).

By contrast, a much greater number of people, fifty-six, were actively involved in a wide range of other organisations in their own community, including fifteen people active in their local church in a variety of ways from bell-ringing to home visiting, and eight people involved in their village or community hall. Other organisations included gardening and allotment societies, fetes and festivals, arts groups including film and choral societies, and environmental activities. All of these activities have the potential to contribute to community vibrancy, and to the growth of 'connectedness' that comes from overlapping networks (Jochum, 2003).



## Summary of Section D

There are an unknown number of small community focussed organisations in England, operating in a wide range of fields including social care, education, religion, sport and leisure and culture. "Together they make a major contribution to the quality of collective life and living conditions. Yet they remain largely invisible" (Rochester, 1998). They are overshadowed by the larger voluntary sector organisations, those with paid staff and larger budgets whose value is often assessed using economic measures, such as their financial resources or their outputs, which in a museum context would include visitor numbers, website hits or school visit numbers. Rochester's study on the social benefits of community sector organisations (CSOs) suggested that, by contrast:

- ❖ CSOs offered considerable benefits to their members. The extent and nature of the benefits varied between three categories of member: the totality of largely passive members; those who worked together to achieve group aims; and an 'inner core' of leading activists
- ❖ CSOs also provided public benefits on three levels: to the community of those who shared the characteristics or aspirations of members; to the wider community who were directly affected by their activities; and to the public at large (Rochester, 1998, p3)

In examining the variations in the extent and nature of the benefits to members, Rochester's exploratory study identified that all members benefitted through

- ❖ personal education – opportunities to pursue a personal interest

- ❖ social- opportunities to meet other people, have enjoyment or fun
- ❖ social education –opportunities to learn social skills and gain confidence
- ❖ therapy – activities that may help relieve physical and mental suffering (adapted from Rochester, 1998, p10)

Active members, such as the volunteers who responded to the Dorset Survey, might gain additional benefits from working together for a common purpose:

- ❖ personal development
- ❖ social or group learning
- ❖ a growth in confidence and community involvement

We have seen all of these manifested in the responses given to the Dorset Survey questionnaire outlined above.

The purpose of Rochester's study was to initiate a process of developing a new framework for evaluating the value of CSOs, that placed greater emphasis on their distinguishing features, rather than use the same measures as for other voluntary sector organisations. We have already noted Moseley and Pahl's recommendation to DEFRA to 'Facilitate Fun!' (Moseley and Pahl, 2007, p29); they also urged DEFRA to reduce bureaucratic burdens so that "irrelevant output measures" would not "detract from enjoyment of the process" (ibid.p30).

In their study of the ecomuseums of Piemonte and Liguria, featured at the beginning of Chapter 6.4, Corsane et al. discuss whether the application of a standards scheme, such as the MLA Accreditation scheme (Chapter 5.2) would be appropriate to small volunteer-led associational ecomuseums (Corsane et al., 2007b). The conclusion that they reached was that it would be “fraught with difficulty”, but that a case could be made for “adopting measures that more closely reflect the philosophy of ecomuseums, with an emphasis on developing standards that reflect their role in community development and regeneration” (Ibid. p234). The majority of volunteer-run museums have indicated support for the Accreditation scheme (Chapter 5.2); whether the requirements should be finessed to take account of other measures of assessing their social and community benefits will be considered in the conclusion of this project (Section J).

## SECTION E: THE ORIGINS OF VOLUNTEER-RUN MUSEUMS

### Introduction to Section E

This section will explore the origins of volunteer – run museums. The initial sub-section, Chapter 7.1, will provide a very brief overview of museums in England during the nineteenth century, considering in particular whether museums were, in Bennett's phrase, being provided *for* the people or whether they were *of* the people (Bennett, 1988). The following sub-section, Chapter 7.2, notes that whereas municipal museums were being provided by an urban elite, in rural areas that role was undertaken by members of the landed gentry. An account of the former museum at St Michael's on Wyre, Lancashire is given as a prelude to the discussion of the Victoria Jubilee Museum at Cawthorne in Yorkshire.

The Victoria Jubilee Museum is discussed in detail in Chapter 8. Here a remarkable series of records survive, which provide wonderful and engaging detail of a museum which was established under a paternalistic regime, but which nevertheless has survived because of its organisational framework, a museum society.

## CHAPTER 7: MUSEUMS AND THE EVERYDAY – MUSEUMS *FOR* THE PEOPLE OR MUSEUMS *OF* THE PEOPLE?

### **7.1 Museums in England in the Nineteenth Century – a brief overview**

During the mid to late nineteenth century, an increasing interest in and enthusiasm for public museums (Walsh, 1992; Bennett, 1995) led to a series of enabling Acts of Parliament under which municipal authorities were empowered to support museums from the rates, should they wish to do so.<sup>62</sup> As has been discussed earlier, this Victorian growth in museums was primarily an urban phenomenon, a palliative response to the appalling conditions of many towns and cities, providing 'rational recreation' (Bailey 1978, p170) for the working man alongside public parks and gardens, libraries and swimming baths (Bailey, 1978; Cunningham, 1990; Bennett, 1995).

Funded by the heaviest of the fruits from Britain's industrial growth, the provincial museum became a credential of urban sophistication, the cultural goal of a rapidly expanding industrial nation. (Kavanagh, 1993, p14).

---

<sup>62</sup> The Museums Act, 1845; the Public Libraries and Museums Act, 1850; Public Libraries (Amendment) Act of 1866; The Public Libraries Act of 1892, all gave impetus to the movement and enabled municipal authorities to provide support to museums from the rates; none of the legislation required them to do so and the provision of museums is not a 'statutory' service in England. County Councils, established in 1888, were not empowered to support museums until The Library Act of 1919. As Cunningham (1990 p324) has said: "The public parks, museums and libraries were supported precisely because they were public, open to scrutiny and controlled by by-laws. They quite deliberately aimed to enforce a certain standard of behaviour."

Often, these new municipal museums were formed from struggling literary and philosophical societies or from the moribund collections of Mechanics Institutes (Lewis, 1984 a; Roderick & Stephens, 1985). They frequently attempted to be smaller provincial echoes of the national museums, such as the British Museum and the National Gallery, and their subjects were geology, natural history, art and archaeology (Lewis 1984 a; Kavanagh, 1990, 1994). As Bennett has said,

nineteenth century museums were thus intended *for* the people, they were certainly not *of* the people in the sense of displaying any interest in the lives, habits and customs of either the contemporary working classes or the labouring classes of pre-industrial societies (Bennett, 1988, p63).

What these museums were interested in was the education of the working- classes and in their moral improvement, intentions that were nicely encapsulated by Thomas Greenwood, a follower of John Ruskin, writing in 1888:

The working man or agricultural labourer who spends his holiday in a walk through any well-arranged museum cannot fail to come away with a deeply-rooted and reverential sense of the extent of knowledge possessed by his fellow-men. It is not the objects themselves that he sees there, and wonders at, that cause this impression, so much as the order and evident science which he cannot but recognise in the manner in which they are grouped and arranged. He learns that there is a meaning and value in every object, however insignificant, and that there is a way of looking at things common and rare, distinct from the regarding them as useless, useful or merely curious....He has gained a new sense, a craving for natural knowledge, and such a craving may, possibly, in course of time quench another and lower craving which may at one time have held him in bondage – that for intoxicants or vicious excitement of one description or another.” (Greenwood, 1888 p26)

Greenwood's book proved to be an influential advocate for the usefulness of museums, for a broadening of their activities<sup>63</sup> and for the role of the new class of paid curators who were slowly replacing honorary curators in municipally funded museums. A small number of these aspiring professional curators came together to form The Museums Association in 1889<sup>64</sup> (Lewis, 1989), and from then on there was, as Teather has said, "a growing association of curatorship with research or subject expertise" (Teather, 1990, p30). This expertise was, of course, primarily concerned with natural history and geology, art and archaeology, the subjects covered by the museums.

In 1913 Elijah Howarth, Curator of Sheffield City Museum, speaking of Great Britain as a whole, claimed that "255 towns and villages outside the capital cities possessed museums", many of them founded since 1890 (quoted in Kavanagh, 1994, p8). One hundred and fifty eight of these were run by local (municipal) councils. That these public museums had developed at all Kavanagh has ascribed to

a combination of political expediency, social need, economic expectation and moral pressure. Occasionally, the additional vital ingredients were: civic pride; the availability of interesting but redundant

---

<sup>63</sup> Greenwood supported Sunday opening, and the evening opening of museums for "cheerful and constructive conversatziones" (p177) and for lectures in which "the use of the lantern is most advisable" (p214). A section of his book was devoted to a description of the St George's Guild Museum at Walkley, Sheffield, set up by Ruskin in 1875.

<sup>64</sup> Museum curators were only one of many occupational groups in this period who felt the pull towards professionalisation (Millerson, 1964; Cheetham and Chivers, 2005).

collections; and, most crucially, industrialists and entrepreneurs with both money and a yen to have their names remembered. (Kavanagh, 1994, p8)



## 7.2 Early Village Museums

A small number of village museums had appeared in England towards the end of the nineteenth century and in the early years of the twentieth century before the outbreak of war in 1914. These were either established directly by paternalistic landowners and country gentry or through their influence, rather than by members of an urban elite, who had established the municipal museums (Kavanagh, 1994; Hill, 2005).

Ruskin himself had written concerning village museums in the *Art Journal* of June and August 1880:

A Museum, primarily, is to be for *simple* persons. Children, that is to say, and peasants. For your student, your antiquary or your scientific gentleman, there must be separate accommodation, or they must be sent elsewhere. The Town Museum is to be for the Town's People, the Village Museum for the Villagers. ... The Museum is to manifest to these simple persons the beauty and life of all things and creatures in their perfectness (Cook and Wedderburn, 1907, Vol. XXXIV p.251-2).

Two examples of such museums are the Victoria Jubilee Museum at Cawthorne, South Yorkshire, which is described in the following chapter, and the museum at St Michael's-on-Wyre, Lancashire, and in both cases the opportunities to attract an industrial or urban audience in addition to a primarily agricultural or rural one, is likely to have influenced the founders. At the time of the foundation of the Victoria Jubilee

Museum (VJM) in 1884, Cawthorne itself was an industrial village with a population that was largely employed in coal mining, quarrying, iron and brickworks (Coates, 1976; Jackson, 1991); in 1891, more visitors came to the museum from Huddersfield and Barnsley than from the village itself (Yates, 2008).

St Michael's-on-Wyre is situated

on the busy A586 tourist route from Garstang to Blackpool. Nowadays spoiled by an excess of traffic, St Michael's was always a popular destination for the charabanc trips of the early 20th century, particularly for tourists staying at Blackpool  
(<http://www.cottontown.org/page.cfm?pageID=1955>)<sup>65</sup>

St Michael's Museum, which was started in about 1890 by Hugh Phipps Hornby, a local landowner, opened on Sunday afternoons and at other times by arrangement (Miers, 1928). It displayed mainly local natural history and archaeology from what the catalogue described as 'our district', which was the area situated between the rivers Lune and Ribble, and the educational and instructive intentions of the founder towards what was probably a predominantly working-class audience are clear from examples of the text that he wrote:

---

<sup>65</sup> Downloaded 15/11/08. Text provided by Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council for use in the Cotton Town digitisation project: [www.cottontown.org](http://www.cottontown.org)

These invaders, led by Agricola, were the Romans, who were then as far ahead of the Britons in civilization as the English today are ahead of the Esquimaux. To them the unbanked rivers, fens and forests of "our district" were an even greater enemy than the wild Britons who hid therein;  
(*St Michael's Museum Catalogue*, nd, p2)

**Whinchat**, 39, was a regular S[ummer] visitor to St. M., nesting in several places a dozen years ago, but has not been seen since 1915. **Stonechat**, 38, Though till lately c[ommon] at Pilling, &c., at all seasons, has been r[are] at St. M. for many years. **Wheatear**, 40, One or two are generally seen at St. M. in Sp[ring] and A[utumn], and I've seen it on Turnover Moss in S[ummer].  
(*Notes on the Birds of St Michael's*, nd, p2.  
The numbers refer to specimens exhibited in the museum; there were 'bird pictures to show adult species, of which we have no specimens, or only in immature plumage'. *ibid*, cover note)

St Michael's Museum also displayed, as did the VJM at Cawthorne, material that reflected the lives and achievements of the rural elite, such as the sword and spurs formerly belonging to Colonel Wilson-Patten, MP for Lancashire in the mid-nineteenth century who "died in 1892, honoured and loved throughout all Lancashire", and the collection of "walking sticks belonging to the 1<sup>st</sup> Archdeacon Hornby (b.1810, d.1899)"<sup>66</sup>

Although St Michael's Museum lasted for some fifty years, it appears to have been largely dependent upon its founder. Like Westmill Museum, which will be discussed later in chapter 12.3 and which has also closed, St Michael's Museum had trustees

---

<sup>66</sup> Information taken from scanned copies of original museum labels. I am indebted to Hugh Hornby, great-great-nephew of Hugh Phipps Hornby for information about the museum and its founder and for scanned copies of the museum's Catalogue, labels and Notes. Surviving items from the collections are held by the Hornby family and by Lancashire Museums Service. The Museum is now a private dwelling (personal correspondence by email between September and November 2008).

but does not seem to have any wider network of support. The most striking, and probably the only survival of a nineteenth century village museum, is the Victoria Jubilee Museum at Cawthorne, and the key to its success lay not in its collections, its location or its endowments, but in the way that it was run by a museum society, despite the apparent control and longevity of its founding curator, with membership drawn from the village community, an organisational framework that is familiar, as has been discussed earlier in chapter 5, and remains appropriate today<sup>67</sup>.

---

<sup>67</sup> A recent leaflet *Cawthorne Victoria Jubilee Museum – A Brief History of the Museum and the Society* Anon, nd, acquired 2007, describes the present organisation: "A voluntary committee from the village run the Museum and decide general policy. Work is monitored by a body of Trustees and help with stewardship is given by some members of the society. ... Cawthorne is very proud of its Museum and we receive tremendous support in our efforts, especially from the villagers."

## CHAPTER 8: THE VICTORIA JUBILEE MUSEUM, CAWTHORNE, SOUTH YORKSHIRE 1884-1915<sup>68</sup>

### 8.1 Introduction

The Victoria Jubilee Museum at Cawthorne is believed to be the oldest museum open to the public that remains entirely volunteer-run. It is an Accredited museum and a registered charity with a trustee body and volunteers drawn from the village; there are even a few of those currently involved in the museum today who come from the same families as members of the original committee.

A truly remarkable series of records is held in the museum archives. This includes copies of the Cawthorne Parish Magazine from 1870 to 1915, which gives a detailed account of the foundation and early activities of the museum as well as of other village events, most of the Cawthorne Museum Society minute books and a near complete series of visitors' books from 1889 to the present day.

---

<sup>68</sup> This case study is based on a paper given at the Voluntary Action History Society Conference held at the University of Liverpool in July 2008. Publication is forthcoming in a volume of conference proceedings (2011; see Appendix 1). I am deeply indebted to the members of the Cawthorne Museum Society for allowing me unrestricted access to their archives which are held at the museum, and especially to Barry Jackson, Hon. President, Mary Herbert, Hon. Secretary, Leslie Herbert, Trustee, and Alan Broadhead, museum volunteer.

However, this study is not included solely on account of the long and undoubtedly fascinating history of the museum. These records serve to illuminate many of the themes, questions and motifs which will occur and recur throughout this project:

- ❖ Why are village museums set up by voluntary action and how is that maintained?
- ❖ Who are the volunteers? What motivates them and what benefits accrue to them from volunteering?
- ❖ What do the volunteers believe to be the benefits of their activities to the wider public?
- ❖ What is the relationship of volunteer-run museums to the wider museums community?
- ❖ How and when are feelings of local identity reflected in the museum?

## 8.2 Background

Cawthorne today is a pleasant, picturesque South Yorkshire village, but in the last quarter of the nineteenth century it had a rather different aspect. Much of the village, especially the park and woodland surrounding Cannon Hall was primarily rural, and was regarded even then as a place for recreation by people from the surrounding manufacturing districts, such as Huddersfield and Barnsley. Other parts of the village were mainly industrial, and included collieries, iron and brick works, quarries, and the canal basin (Coates, 1976; Jackson, 1991).

The Spencer Stanhope family, owners of the estate, Cannon Hall, were the largest of two principal landowners and the largest single employer in Cawthorne (Kelly, 1889; Jackson, 1991). They were members of the 'greater gentry' (Thompson, 1963), paternalistic landowners (Newby *et al.* 1978), exercising their benevolence and control through the church, the provision of schools and other village amenities which included a village library, a penny savings bank and an institute with a resident nurse. Colonel Spencer Stanhope was a Justice of the Peace and a member of the local Volunteers (a militia force). His younger brother, John Roddam Spencer Stanhope was a 'second generation' Pre-Raphaelite artist, a friend of Burne-Jones and a follower of John Ruskin (Christian, 1989;

Treuherz, 2007a & b). Politically, Cawthorne was a Conservative island in an otherwise Liberal constituency (Lynch, 2007).

The vicar, the Reverend Charles Tiplady Pratt first came to Cawthorne in 1866 as the Curate-in-charge, and succeeded a member of the Spencer Stanhope family to the living in 1874, remaining there until 1915 when a stroke precipitated his plans for retirement to Cheltenham, where he died in 1921. He was an energetic and imposing man, described as “an autocrat who commanded respect....He always wore a long, black frock coat and flat shovel-type hat, and carried a walking stick or crook.”<sup>69</sup> (Jackson, 1991, p35). From 1870 until 1915 he wrote, single-handedly, a monthly Parish Magazine<sup>70</sup>, frequently referring to himself as ‘we’, in which he describes in considerable detail the progress of the museum.

It is the Cawthorne Parish Magazine (CPM), therefore, which forms the primary source for the early history of the museum, together with the surviving Minute Books and the Visitors Books that are held in the museum’s archives.

---

<sup>69</sup> Miss Mildred Holroyd (1903-87) quoted in Jackson (1991, p35). Miss Holroyd was at one time the Museum Treasurer.

<sup>70</sup> The title of the magazine was changed from Cawthorne Parish Magazine to Cawthorne Monthly Magazine in January 1891. The abbreviation CPM will be used throughout. No page numbers are given.



### 8.3 The origins of the Museum

The first mention of the possibility of a museum for Cawthorne comes from the Parish Magazine in January 1884:

#### A Village Museum

A letter came to us from Mr Roddam Stanhope, now in Florence, very strongly advocating the establishment of a Village Museum "to be managed, of course, by the people themselves." It is not the first time that he has made a suggestion of this kind, and we strongly hope that the idea will be heartily taken up. "A Natural History Collection" he says "seems such an easy and inexpensive thing to start, and one in which so many might help. \*\* I hope the time is not far off when such a simple way of breaking the monotony of village life may be adopted, and, if it is started at Cawthorne, I shall be delighted to help both by subscribing and by sending anything that may appear to me to be of interest."

Some of our readers will have frequently heard us remark, that we believe that God would as surely have us study His works as His word; and that it is only through contemplation of God's marvellous creation, that we can have any intelligent idea of His Almighty power, and His majesty, and His glory.

All who are in the least interested in this Village Museum scheme will attend a public meeting, we hope, in the Boy's School on Monday 14<sup>th</sup>, at seven o'clock. The Meeting will be for a general discussion on the proposed Museum.

It is not intended, we believe, that it should become an exhibition of mere "curiosities", but of everything that is illustrative of Nature. (CPM January 1884, no.164)

A preliminary committee was formed and after the first few meetings, appealed for contributions:

It is only by a combination of many tastes and interests that our Museum can ever have a collection worthy of its name: and we allow that the attempt that is being made is a somewhat severe test of the education and intelligence of a Parish of this size. Still, there is no reason why it should not succeed, if even a very small proportion of our people show themselves in earnest (CPM March 1884, no. 166).

A start was made in April when 'the first fruits' of the museum would be on exhibition in the Boy's School although "Sensible people must be well aware that a local collection of this kind can make no great show for the first few years" (CPM April 1884, no.167).

Later that month, a circular went round the village appealing for members to join the Cawthorne Museum Society for one shilling a year and in May the Society elected their first committee of eleven people, the majority of whom had some connection with the Cannon Hall estate, including Pratt himself, the land agent and his son, Spencer Stanhope's private secretary, the Boys' School teacher, the head gardener and a colleague, the estate builder, and a wood agent<sup>71</sup>.

When it first started, the museum was housed in a cottage in the village owned by the Spencer Stanhope estate, but before long it outgrew this space and in May 1887 Pratt was able to write in the Parish Magazine

It was not altogether a dream when we imagined the other day that we saw it established ... in a charming black and white one story (*sic*) building, in a neat garden with iron rails open to the road, giving quite a pleasing look to the entrance to our Village. (CPM May 1887 no 204)

---

<sup>71</sup> Information about occupations is drawn from the census returns for Cawthorne accessed via [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk)

## The Victoria Jubilee Museum, Cawthorne



Image 1: The Victoria Jubilee Museum, Cawthorne. The Museum itself is on the right “plain but chaste” but nevertheless still incorporating some of Pratt’s hope for a “charming black and white one story building in a neat garden”. The house adjoining the museum building was, and still is, the caretaker’s house.

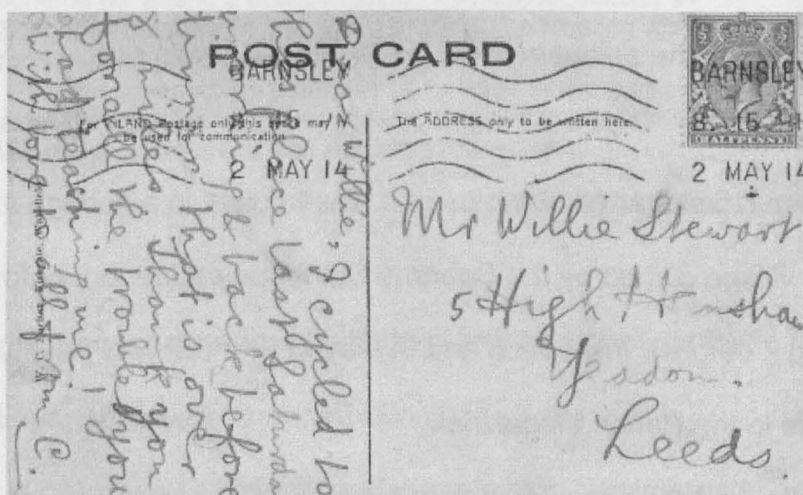


Image 2: The reverse of the postcard shown above, posted in Barnsley on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1914. The message on the card reads “Dear Willie, I cycled to this place last Saturday morning before dinner that is over 8 miles Thank you for all the trouble you had teaching me! With love to all from C.” (Author’s collection)

The new museum, funded by Roddam Spencer Stanhope and with the work done by the estate workmen in slack periods (BARNSELY CHRONICLE, Nov. 2<sup>nd</sup> 1889, no page number given) opened two years later and was re-named the Victoria Jubilee Museum. It is clear from the account of the opening ceremony given in the *Barnsley Chronicle* that the building itself was intended to have an instructive purpose:

The exterior is exceedingly plain, but chaste, and the interior is fitted up after an early English style, the roof being supported by large rough oaken pillars, which have been used formerly in old buildings on the estate. At one end there is an open hearth such as was formerly to be seen in all English homesteads. (BARNSELY CHRONICLE, Nov. 2<sup>nd</sup> 1889)

Colonel Stanhope, in his opening remarks deplored a general 'decline of taste' and Pratt himself read out a letter from Roddam Spencer Stanhope in which he made the same point:

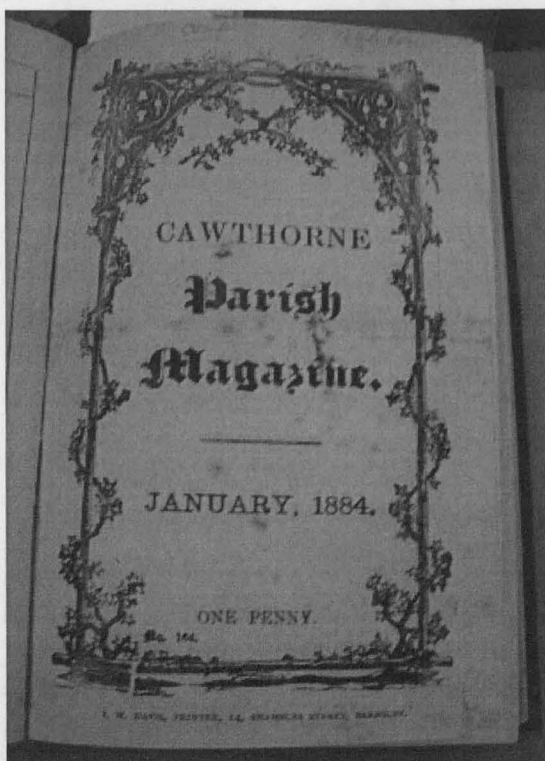
A wise lesson too, may well be learned from our forefathers, who, though they led rude and simple lives in comparison with the present generation of English, have left behind them proofs that their love of really beautiful things, executed with a care and patience not to be found now-a-days, was far away in advance of anything that the present generation can show. There was not a cottage round Cawthorne in past days that had not some piece of carved wood-work, admirable in its design and careful in its execution, doubtless done by the village carpenters of the day (ibid.)

As can be seen from the accompanying image, the building is constructed around fragments of a number of timber frames of different dates and types, including a cruck frame, which would

## The Victoria Jubilee Museum, Cawthorne



*Image3: the interior of the Victoria Jubilee Museum, Cawthorne in about 1900. The photograph shows very clearly the sections of timber framing from different buildings used in the construction. (Victoria Jubilee Museum archives)*



*Image 4: the cover of the Cawthorne Parish Magazine, January 1884 (Author's photograph from a bound copy in the archives of the Victoria Jubilee Museum, Cawthorne)*

probably have been seen as 'Tudor'. Howkins, in his seminal essay *The Discovery of Rural England* (Howkins, 1986) shows how, by the mid-1870s "the Gothic had become contaminated by its association with industrialisation, especially its 'vulgar' form" (Howkins, 1986, p73) and had been replaced by a turn to the 'Tudor' in a number of cultural forms, including music and architecture. As the above quotations demonstrate, 'Tudor' rapidly became synonymous with 'Englishness', mainly a southern Englishness, and with a particular form of rurality which was thought to embody, according to Howkins, ideas of continuity, community and harmony (Howkins, 1986, p75), and all the national virtues. It is interesting to note that these points were being made about a building in a semi-industrial village in the north of England.

Although the collections of the museum were not intended to reflect the lives of the ordinary people of Cawthorne, it is clear that the building itself was intended to demonstrate some aspects of a local (Yorkshire) identity as well as encapsulating something of the nature of England and what was felt to be an innate, but vanishing, sense of craftsmanship and right living that was inherently English<sup>72</sup>.

---

<sup>72</sup> This was a message that seems to have been taken to heart in Cawthorne, for when the Museum Society were able to purchase the museum building from the estate in the early 1950s, they approached the National Trust to try to persuade them to act as trustees. The National Trust replied that "as the Museum was a modern building they would not be able

## 8.4 The Cawthorne Museum Society

The Museum Society took the institutional form of what Morris, in discussing the Leeds and Manchester Literary and Philosophical Societies of the early nineteenth century, has characterised as a "subscriber democracy" (Morris, 1990, p412). A set of General Rules were written and published in the Parish Magazine in June 1884<sup>73</sup>, the date of their General Meeting was advertised each year, and for a few years, a summary of the Museum Society accounts was published, all practices which "set out a claim for legitimacy" (Morris, 2006, p156). The Cawthorne Museum Society began with eighty four members in 1884, including a number of the indoor staff from Cannon Hall, and peaked at one hundred and fifty two in 1893. After that, in the period under discussion, there seems to have been a steady decline in numbers to a mere 30 in 1904, including members of Pratt's family<sup>74</sup>.

However, many of the actual committee members were to have a very long association with the museum. John Fretwell, a coal miner, is one example; although illiterate, he had an extensive

---

to be of much help" (VJM Minute Book August 14<sup>th</sup> 1952), a response which may have surprised the committee but certainly did not daunt them as eight people from the village subsequently came forward.

<sup>73</sup> "It is the intention of the Committee that any Rules which may be made from time to time should be with the object of making the Museum as accessible and useful as possible to those who may be interested in it. The specimens will all be properly named, as soon as their permanent arrangement in cases can be finally made." (CPM June 1884, no.169)

<sup>74</sup> Information taken from the Cawthorne Parish Magazine and from the Museum Society Minute Books

knowledge of natural history and was responsible for bringing together the collection of local butterflies and moths (Jackson, 1991), and, later, for leading natural history rambles from the museum. Between 1884 and 1894 the results of the annual elections to the committee were reported in the Parish Magazine; after that date the committee seems to have been regularly re-elected *en bloc*. During this decade, twenty nine individuals served on the committee, including two women, of whom five were employed in mining, four as gardeners, a mason and a mason's labourer, a teamster, the postmaster and grocer, and a blacksmith, in addition to those working for the estate.

The committee appears to have been representative of the Museum Society as a whole; it has been possible to identify the occupations of 118 society members listed in the Museum Minute Book between 1888 and 1900, using the census records for 1891<sup>75</sup>. The majority were from the working and lower middle classes, including, as the largest block, 27 people involved in coal mining<sup>76</sup>, as well as tradesmen and indoor and outdoor staff from the estate, and the police constable. Ten farmers were listed, but the majority of these held small

---

<sup>75</sup> Using [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk)

<sup>76</sup> [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk) Nineteen coal miners, three colliery labourers, two weighmen, an engine man, an engine stoker and a colliery cashier. Trades represented included a blacksmith, boot and shoe makers, butchers, carpenters and a joiner, masons, two grocers, two linen weavers and an ironmonger.



acres.<sup>77</sup> Only two society members apart from the Spencer Stanhopes, were described in the census as 'living on own means' and there was one 'retired manufacturer'.

Although caution is imperative in using contemporary models to describe earlier organisational forms, the Cawthorne Museum Society would seem to conform to Rochester's analysis of one distinctive type of volunteer involvement in small voluntary organisations, the member / activist model that is found in associations and organisations without paid staff, as described earlier in Chapter 4.5.

In the case of Cawthorne, the members of the Museum Society who visited the museum and attended its numerous activities, particularly its talks and lectures, demonstrations and lantern slide shows, to which members had free entry and non-members paid, could be described as 'active members', and the committee as the 'inner group'<sup>78</sup>.

In addition to contributing to and arranging the collections, committee members were also responsible for organising and

---

<sup>77</sup> The 1861 census, lists 16 farms of less than 20 acres, including one of 4 acres. Accessed via [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk)

<sup>78</sup> Some of the committee showed remarkable longevity of involvement in the museum. John Fretwell, who has been mentioned earlier, was involved from 1884 until his death in 1933, Pratt himself was Curator from 1884 until 1915 when he was succeeded by Douglas Charlesworth, a smallholder, who had joined the Museum Society as a youngster in 1894, and later become its Secretary and Curator until his death in 1940

in some cases participating in or leading the other events put on for the society members and others, for example at a 'conversazione' held in November 1892 "Miss Beatrice Pratt will play some violin solos. Mr Jas. Balme's party will sing some Songs and Glees, and some short Recitations from Tennyson will be given by the Rev C.T Pratt" (CPM November 1892 no.270); in March 1894 it was announced that "Mr George Hindle and Mr John Fretwell will take charge of Field Classes of Members in Natural History as soon as the season is sufficiently advanced" (CPM, March 1894, no. 286).

Sociability is a key element of the volunteer-run museum, and one that is as important now as it was for Cawthorne, as will be shown later in the discussions of more recent foundations, such as the museums at Cricklade, Evesham and Beaminster. The responses to the Dorset Survey (Chapter 6.3) have also demonstrated just how important enjoyment and fun are in retaining the commitment of museum volunteers.

## 8.5 Collecting for the Museum – Pratt, Ruskin and the wider world

During the period of Pratt's curatorship, the collections made by the museum were primarily of natural history and geological material. It was made clear from the beginning that "it is not intended for mere natural curiosities only, but for everything illustrative of nature, science and art" (CPM, June 1895, no. 181)<sup>79</sup> and that it was to be educational and instructive:

Knowing what we do of Museums in other places and large Towns, we still feel it is a severe test to put the intelligence of Cawthorne to: for it is not intended only for a place of amusement: but for the encouragement of a taste for Natural Science, and that is a matter which requires a more active use of our brains than most people are prepared to make. The discipline and culture of our intellectual faculties does not come to us more naturally than the culture of our moral and spiritual powers. We are as responsible, however, for the use we make of our brains as of any other part of our nature (CPM, May 1896, no.192)

This emphasis was, as has been discussed earlier, entirely consistent with other museums at this period.

Like St Michael's Museum, the museum at Cawthorne also exhibited material given or loaned by members of the elite, primarily the Spencer Stanhope family, such as the "Arab shields, spears and knives, brought from the Field of Battle by

---

<sup>79</sup> "we are firmly convinced that, with a fair amount of intelligence in the Parish, it may become the pleasant means of diffusing useful knowledge, an interest in natural history, and a study of all those marvellous works of God which declare His glory to those who have eyes to see it." (CPM April 1884, no167).

W. Spencer-Stanhope, Lieut. 19<sup>th</sup> Hussars" (CPM, June 1884, no.169). Mr and Mrs Montague Stanhope's wedding presents were exhibited over three days in May 1890, attracting over a thousand visitors (CPM, June 1890, no 241) and in 1895

Miss Cicely Stanhope has sent the Museum a large packet of pieces from morning and evening Dresses that have been worn by Her Majesty the Queen. Besides their natural "curiosity," from their connection with our Sovereign, they illustrate very well the designs and fashions of royal dress some years ago. An arrangement will be made for temporarily exhibiting them, so that each pattern may be clearly seen, but probably not before the Summer season, when there are many visitors to our Museum who have a special interest in dress materials and designs (CPM February 1895 no 297).<sup>80</sup>

As at St Michael's on Wyre, elite material had a place in the museum, although the 'curiosities' of the people, the ordinary and everyday that reflected life in the village did not.

Although many of the collections came from Cawthorne and its surroundings, such as Fretwell's butterflies and moths and the coal fossils, they were certainly not expressive of the history of Cawthorne or of the lives of its people. An entry in the Museums Directory, published by the Museums Association as a supplement to the Museums Journal in June 1903, described the exhibition space of the museum as:

Minerals, 34 1/2 ft; coal fossils 7ft; birds nests 7 1/2ft; ancient pottery 6ft; coins 2 1/2ft; arts and manufactures 8ft; cases of birds are arranged against one wall for a

---

<sup>80</sup> Clearly Pratt is referring here to visitors coming out from the larger towns such as Barnsley and Huddersfield, many of them women, who he might expect to enjoy a display of fabrics. See Chapter 8.6 for a discussion of the Museum visitors.

space of 16ft by 8ft high; weapons and drawings shewing sections of neighbouring coal mines are hung from other portions of the walls, the moths and butterflies are in 20 small drawers, birds eggs in 5, shells in 14. (*Museums Journal*, Supplement to Vol.2, 1903, no page number given)

However, not all of the collections came from the area. Pratt was active in soliciting gifts mainly from his clerical colleagues and other acquaintances, but he also contacted John Ruskin:

It is a peculiar pleasure to us to make known that Mr John Ruskin has most kindly sent us some contributions for our Museum and promised us some more. "I shall have great pleasure" he writes, "in looking out some things for your Village Museum, and I have begun with a few minerals. \*\* I will look out later on some Prints and such things as are likely to answer your purpose." Those who know anything of Mr Ruskin will very greatly appreciate his kindly interest in our Museum. (CPM March 1886 no 190)

Since we wrote in last month's MAGAZINE, a Box containing a most beautiful and interesting collection of Minerals has been received from Mr Ruskin, who has also sent a second Box within the last few days. It is intended that these should be exhibited by Easter in a case specially reserved for them, to contain all Mr Ruskin's most generous contributions. (CPM April 1886 no 191)

Pratt, of course, must have been well aware of the iconic nature of such gifts; when he spoke at the opening of the new museum building on November 2<sup>nd</sup> 1889, he said " They had kind friends from the beginning...their old friend, Mr Ruskin, had from the beginning been much interested in the museum ... It was a great thing for them at Cawthorne to have had the interest of a man like Mr Ruskin, whose name was world-wide"

(BARNSELEY CHRONICLE, Saturday November 2<sup>nd</sup> , 1889, no page number given).

Pratt would certainly have seen the Ruskin minerals as a significant attraction for visitors; G.W. Hudson Shaw's Oxford University Extension lectures on 'English Social Reformers', which included Ruskin, drew an average attendance of 420 students at Huddersfield in 1887 and of 400 students at Barnsley in 1888 (Goldman, 1999). In this context the Easter opening is perhaps significant as that would have been a rare holiday for many working people.

Ruskin's interest in museums, in visual education and in natural history, particularly mineralogy was well-known (Hilton, 2000).

Wheeler suggests that:

Ruskin's legacy is nowhere more tangible than in the museums and galleries of Great Britain. His interventions in the mid-nineteenth century helped to shape policy on collecting and methods of display in the National Gallery. ... His prophetic teachings on the need for local museums, accessible to all, set ideals to which museum boards and local authorities have aspired in the twentieth century (Wheeler, 1994, p5)

Hilton notes that by 1883 Ruskin held about 3,000 mineral specimens at Brantwood, his house overlooking Coniston Water, Cumbria (Hilton, 2000). This collection had been built up over many years from his own travels and also through purchases from dealers. Museums both large and small

benefitted from gifts of minerals from Ruskin, including the British Museum, the St George's Guild Museum in Sheffield, the Museum of Kirkcudbright<sup>81</sup>, and the Coniston Institute and of course, the Victoria Jubilee Museum, although the connection with Cawthorne was unknown before the present project.

Pratt might also have seen the donations from Ruskin as raising the status of the museum<sup>82</sup>, not only with the local

---

<sup>81</sup> Unfortunately this collection no longer exists (personal communication to the author, September 2007) but the "Catalogue of Two Hundred Specimens of Familiar Minerals arranged by Professor Ruskin for The Museum of Kirkcudbright" was published in Coke and Wedderburn Vol. XXVI p459. In the Introduction Ruskin writes:

"The arrangement of minerals adopted in the following Catalogue, though unsystematic according to the views of modern mineralogists, is an old-fashioned one, which will be found far more useful, in familiarizing the student quickly and easily with the general aspects of the mineral kingdom. These he will find himself at liberty, as his knowledge advances, to systematize either at his own pleasure or under the direction of his tutors; - but I would request that the numbers, attached to my specimens, be preserved: because I am at present endeavouring to organize a system of mineralogical instruction for schools, in which the accessible specimens to which it will refer, in provincial towns, may be permanently connected by their numbers, both with each other, and with the great central examples of mineralogical structure, which have just been so admirably arranged under the windows of the north side of the mineral gallery in the British "Natural History Museum" at Kensington."

<sup>82</sup> Unfortunately it is no longer possible to identify the minerals in the museum which were donated by Ruskin, and no catalogue or list appears to have been sent with them, as had been the case elsewhere, probably because Ruskin was too unwell to undertake the task. There is a further twist in the story of Ruskin's connection with Cawthorne, which has yet to be fully explored. Ruskin was also an enthusiastic conchologist, and the young Sydney Carlyle Cockerell, later to be Director of the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, formed a collection of shells under Ruskin's direction, which appears to have been intended for the "little museum just forming" (Ruskin to Cockerell, Feb. 8<sup>th</sup> 1886, reprinted in Meynell, 1940, p23). Although Cockerell sent the shells to Ruskin, it is not clear whether or not they ever reached Cawthorne.

visiting public<sup>83</sup>, but also among the wider museum community with whom he was now making contact:

The death of Mr Ruskin reminds us of the generous kindness with which he responded to our request that he would send some contribution to our little museum at Cawthorne, when it first begun, in order that it might have at least some slight connexion with his name.  
(CPM February 1900 no 357)

Pratt was a member of the Barnsley Naturalist and Scientific Society and through that had contact with the Yorkshire Naturalists Union<sup>84</sup> and it was probably through this organisation that he had contact with a number of the leading proto-professional curators in Yorkshire, including some of those involved in the formation of the Museums Association in 1889 (Lewis, 1989). Among the speakers he invited to Cawthorne to lecture to the members of the Museum Society between 1884 and 1905 were H. Crowther, Curator of the Leeds Philosophical Society's Museum, W.W. Midgley of the Chadwick Museum, Bolton, who came from a Cawthorne family, S.L. Mosley of Beaumont Park Museum, Huddersfield, who also provided cases and exhibits for Cawthorne, and H. Platnauer of York. Platnauer also helped to name, classify and arrange the museum's collection of minerals in 1890:

---

<sup>83</sup> In the month following the opening Pratt noted in the *Parish Magazine* that "One of the many Cyclists who 'enjoy a run over to Cawthorne' – Mr H Mellor, of Holmleigh, Netherthong – has been kind enough to bring over a capital photograph of Mr Ruskin, nicely framed, as a present to the Museum. It is the photograph for which Mr Ruskin gave a sitting, to be brought out in "Men and Women of the Day" (CPM, December, 1889)

<sup>84</sup> I am grateful to John Coldwell, Local Studies Librarian, Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council, for information on membership of the BNSS.



In reply to a letter, Mr Platnauer, who has more than once lectured for our Museum, was good enough to say that he "will be very glad to arrange them. Professor Miall has overrated my abilities, but he cannot overrate my wish to help you. You are very welcome to my gratuitous services." (CPM July 1890)

Despite its location in a village the museum at Cawthorne was not isolated from the wider museums community, particularly in the early period of Pratt's curatorship. His successor, Douglas Charlesworth, seems to have maintained these connections.<sup>85</sup>

---

<sup>85</sup> Douglas Charlesworth kept in contact with Mosley of Huddersfield and knew Tom Sheppard of Hull Museums, probably the most charismatic and forward looking of the Yorkshire curators at this time (Brears and Davies, 1989), through his membership of the Yorkshire Numismatic Society (Charlesworth mss). Charlesworth's own interests appear to have been closely aligned to the museum collections of natural history and archaeology including coins (Charlesworth mss). When he died, the Museum Society Minute Book noted that "With his death the community sustained the loss of one whose exceptional understanding of the development of English country life it would be hard to equal." (VJM Minute Book 1924 – 1990, October 26<sup>th</sup> 1940)

## 8.6 The Museum Visitors

The information contained in the visitors' books for the Victoria Jubilee Museum at Cawthorne, gives us a rare insight into the role such a museum might have played in the lives of ordinary working people towards the end of the nineteenth century<sup>86</sup>, much as the analysis of the members of the Cawthorne Museum Society has done (see 8.4 above).

Initially, the museum was open on Monday evenings from 6.30 to 8.0 and Saturday afternoons from 4.30 to 6.0 for general visitors on payment of 'not less than a penny', in a cottage lent by the estate; members could visit on any day between 10.0am and 7.0pm and attend the winter evening lectures free of charge (CPM June 1884). Later, once the museum moved into its present building in 1889, the key could be had at any time by applying to the caretaker<sup>87</sup>. In 1890 it was agreed that members only could also visit on Sundays (CPM May 1890 no 240). The Museum was always open for general visitors on public holidays and special event days such as Easter Monday and the Cawthorne 'Feast' day and Pratt must have been

---

<sup>86</sup> The early visitors' books asked people to give their name and address and the date of their visit. Comments were not invited, as they are now. See Appendix 2.

<sup>87</sup> "The Committee have arranged that the Key of the Museum be left in the care of Mrs Hopcroft, at the house adjoining, who will show it to the visitors. Members may at any time have the key: visitors – i.e., all who are not members, are requested to put "not less than a penny" in the Box provided." CPM November 1889 no 234

aware that many of those who were already visiting Cawthorne for recreation would be drawn into the museum.

It is unlikely that many of the visitors came for the museum alone. They came to walk in the Park and surrounding woods, and around Tivy Dale. They patronised the two pubs and the temperance inn, and the small tea shops that catered for their needs at busy times. For many villagers, the opportunity for extra income was welcomed. Mrs Morley, widowed with six sons in 1903 at "Easter and Whitsuntide ... catered for wagonette loads of visitors to the village or for cycling club outings, providing plain teas at 1s 6d or ham and egg teas at 3s."<sup>88</sup> (Jackson, 1991, p77).

Remarkably, almost the entire run of visitors' books from 1889 has survived at Cawthorne (Appendix 2). Looking at the entries in the Visitors Book for 1891, it is clear from the order of the signatures that many visitors came together in groups, such as the group of neighbours from Blackmoorfoot Road, near Huddersfield<sup>89</sup> who came on July 17<sup>th</sup>, or the church outing led by Rev. William Surtees of Hoyland Common<sup>90</sup> on September

---

<sup>88</sup> Recollections of her son, Laurie Morley, (Jackson, 1991, p77)

<sup>89</sup> The group consisted of six women (two woollen weavers and the wife of an ironmonger's assistant) and two men, both stone quarrymen, and their wives. (Information from the 1891 Census accessed via [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk))

<sup>90</sup> Three coal miners, a colliery labourer and a deputy, a butcher and a blacksmith and their families have been identified from a group of 21 people. (Information from the 1891 Census accessed via [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk))

9<sup>th</sup>. It has been possible to identify some of the occupations of these visitors from the 1891 Census<sup>91</sup>. Two typical examples are the group of young women from Clayton West, (a dressmaker, a worsted spinner, a worsted weaver, a cashmere weaver and a manufacturer, boots and shoes) and the group of eighteen young men, members of the Skelmanthorpe Naturalists Society, who visited in May and were given permission to use the museum to arrange their specimens<sup>92</sup> (six coal miners, a banksman and a colliery trammer, five fancy weavers, a joiner's apprentice and a general labourer). During 1891, 2,609 people signed the book, of which 285 came from Huddersfield, fourteen miles away, and 193 from Barnsley, which is four miles away. Although there is a sprinkling of middle class signatures in the book, including those of visitors brought by the Spencer Stanhopes, it is clear that the majority of the visitors, as were the Museum Society members, were from what would now be described as social groups C2, D, and E, exactly the audience that Pratt and Roddam Spencer Stanhope (and Ruskin) would have hoped would enjoy and benefit from the museum.

---

<sup>91</sup> Using [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk) as before

<sup>92</sup> Victoria Jubilee Museum, Cawthorne (VJM) Minute Book April 13<sup>th</sup>, 1891. Information from the 1891 Census accessed via [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk)

## Summary of Section E

We have seen in the foregoing section, how the earliest village museums were established as paternalistic initiatives of members of the landed gentry. However, we have also seen that the museum which continues to this day, the Victoria Jubilee Museum at Cawthorne, benefited from the early establishment of a museum society, which ensured its survival.

Cawthorne has also demonstrated that ordinary village people were involved in the museum from the beginning, and that they thought of it as their venture, even though the collections did not, at that time, reflect their lives. The analysis of the members of the museum society and the committee, using the census returns for 1891 showed that this was primarily a working class membership. The analysis of the respondents to the Dorset Survey in the previous chapter (Chapter 6) gave a rather different picture, but it might be hasty to draw any conclusion other than that there has been a profound demographic change in rural areas.

## SECTION F: CHANGING THE SUBJECT

### Introduction to Section F

At Cawthorne, the long tradition of collecting primarily natural history and geology specimens seems to have been so important to the museum society and to its committee, that change was slow in coming. However, it does appear to be the last of its kind, and the increasing numbers of village museums in the next generation of growth in the 1920s and 1930s were set up primarily to collect and display everyday material reflecting daily life.

As Kavanagh has explored in *History Curatorship*, museums are not

institutions that are created in a moment of intellectual purity and professional worthiness but (are) forms of remembrance shaped, enabled or stunted by a range of intellectual and social forces. (Kavanagh, 1990, p13)

It is suggested here that among these social and intellectual forces of particular relevance to the development of volunteer-run museums was the growth of a general acceptance that everyday objects reflecting daily life and work in rural communities have an intrinsic interest and are therefore as

worthy of a place in a museum as elite material. This is the concern of the present chapter.

The influence of Gertrude Jekyll in enhancing and extending an appreciation of the everyday objects that were used by ordinary people, in this instance the rural inhabitants of what she termed 'Old West Surrey', will be examined and the chapter will also consider the attempts to set up an English Folk or Open Air Museum on the lines of those that had become increasingly popular in Europe following the foundation of Skansen in 1891(Rentzhog, 2007).

It will be suggested that these attempts legitimated the collection of the 'ordinary' in museums, and helped to accelerate the move to include local and social material, which had been neglected at Cawthorne, in addition to the classical disciplines of art, archaeology and natural history that had preoccupied Victorian museums.

## CHAPTER 9: A GROWING INTEREST IN THE EVERYDAY

### 9.1 Appreciating the everyday: the influence of Gertrude Jekyll

There was little interest in the systematic collection of items of historical interest at either a local or at a national level in the nineteenth century museum, as has been discussed above. The British Museum itself did not establish a Department of British and Medieval Antiquities until 1866, following pressure from archaeologists from outside the museum (Caygill, 1981) and even then 'British' material was primarily archaeological rather than historical.<sup>93</sup> Although a number of provincial museums did hold miscellaneous collections of what were known as 'bygones' acquired through antiquarian pursuits (Kavanagh, 1993), these were not collected with a view to reflecting the life stories of ordinary people. Rather these items were assembled haphazardly because they were no longer in common or daily use, or because they were merely curious.

---

<sup>93</sup> In 1929 Mr T.A. Joyce, Deputy Keeper, Department of Ceramics and Ethnography, British Museum gave evidence to the Royal Commission on National Museums and Galleries: "I am fully in support of the project (*for a national folk museum*). Time is getting short and specimens are rapidly disappearing. I have, in the British Museum, as a matter of fact, a series of folk objects which I have rescued. They are kept down in the basement and no Government money has been spent on them. They are not strictly the Trustees property, but they are available when such a museum is started." (*Royal Commission on National Museums and Galleries: Oral Evidence, Memoranda and Appendices to the Final Report, 1929, p38, para.3576*)



However, towards the end of the nineteenth century there was a flurry of publications on what was described as 'Social England' "a history of everyday things, ... a history with the politics left out, but with material culture, in the form of recipes, charms and cures, household chores, affectionately described" (Samuel, 1998, p64) and, in the early years of the twentieth century, there was an increasing number of individuals and collectors who became interested in the collection of everyday and working items within the broader fashion for collecting small domestic antiques and furniture<sup>94</sup> (Cohen, 2006).

One of the most influential and thoughtful of these was Gertrude Jekyll. Jekyll (1843-1932) is known today as a garden designer, colour theorist and plantswoman, but she was also a designer and craft worker who had attended art school and was strongly influenced by the ideas of John Ruskin and those of William Morris and the Arts and Crafts Movement (Batey, 1995). She spent most of her life in Surrey, where it was the changes that she observed within the rural community, mainly as a consequence of the outward spread of the London suburbs and the growth of commuter travel<sup>95</sup> that precipitated her into collecting:

---

<sup>94</sup> The 'Chats on....' Series of publications, for example, started in 1894, and a number of volumes continued in print until the 1970s

<sup>95</sup> George Bourne's *Change in the Village*, published in 1912, was also based on his experience of life in a Surrey village, where he had witnessed the decline of what he understood to be an independent English peasantry: "I understood at last that my elderly neighbours had seen with their own

So many and so great have been the changes within the last half-century, that I have thought it desirable to note, while it may yet be done, what I can remember of the ways and lives and habitations of the older people of the working class of the country I have lived in almost continuously ever since I was a very young child.....Common things of daily use, articles of furniture and ordinary household gear, that I remember in every cottage and farmhouse, have passed into the dealers' hands, and are now sold as curiosities and antiquities. Cottages, whose furniture and appointments had come through several generations, are now furnished with cheap pretentious articles, got up with veneer and varnish and shoddy material.....But when it became evident that the old articles of cottage furniture and equipment were being dispersed, I lost no opportunity, chiefly at country sales, of securing things that might be considered typical (Jekyll, 1904, pp vii-x)

Her collection was predominantly domestic in character, but also included a number of smaller agricultural tools such as reap hooks and harvest bottles which had disappeared from general use. Shortly after the publication of *Old West Surrey*, in 1904, the collection was given to the Surrey Archaeological Society's museum at Guildford, leading to the building of a new gallery in 1911 in which it could be displayed. One hundred and seventy one items which she had collected, mainly from around

---

eyes what I should never see - namely, the old rustic economy of the English peasantry. In that light all sorts of things shewed a new meaning.....I viewed the old tools - hoes and spades and scythes and fag-hooks - with quickened interest; and I speculated with more intelligence upon those aged people of the parish whose curious habits were described to me with so much respect." (Bourne 1912, [The Reader's Library Edition, Duckworth, 1920, p15-16]) Note: George Bourne was the nom-de- plume of George Sturt (1863-1927) – for a discussion on Sturt, see Howkins, (1986). Howkins suggests that by 1921 the 'white collar worker' was well on the way to domination in Surrey (Howkins, 2003, p176).

Guildford and Godalming, are still held in the museum's collections<sup>96</sup>.

*Old West Surrey* is copiously illustrated with photographs by Jekyll herself. It is an early, if not the earliest, attempt to describe the ordinary artefacts of a specific locality, to link those artefacts to the buildings in which they were used and the people who used them and to acquire what was typical rather than what was extraordinary or rare.

Her first chapter is devoted to 'Cottages and Farms' reflecting an interest in vernacular buildings and traditional materials which Batey attributes to Jekyll's contact with the Arts and Crafts Movement (Batey, 1995). She had photographed many of these cottages and farms on her travels around rural Surrey and Sussex in the company of her friend and collaborator, the architect, Edwin Lutyens (Angel, 1995; Batey, 1995): "Day after day they drove around the narrow lanes together in Miss Jekyll's dog cart, photographing details that appealed to them;" (Batey, 1995, p65). Jekyll and Lutyens were part of a growing enthusiasm for traditional and ancient buildings which lay at the heart of much of the early interest in 'folk' material, especially after the foundation of the open air museum at Skansen, Stockholm in 1891.

---

<sup>96</sup> Personal communication from Matthew Alexander on behalf of Guildford Museum, 20<sup>th</sup> March 2008

In 1925, much of *Old West Surrey* and a number of the original photographic illustrations were incorporated into Jekyll's *Old English Household Life* published by Batsford the leading publishers of 'countryside' books in the inter-war years.<sup>97</sup>

As Jekyll wrote in her Preface "As the interest was chiefly local it (*Old West Surrey*) went out of print, but, as time passes, the subject acquires a renewed value".

Jekyll had been wrong to consider *Old West Surrey* 'chiefly local' for from the time of their publication both books were to prove influential; the Surrey History Centre holds a collection of seventy-four contemporary reviews from newspapers and journals including *The Times*, *The Reliquary*, *The Tatler*, *The Times Literary Supplement*, *The Spectator* and *The Daily Express* as well as from regional newspapers such as *The Liverpool Daily Post* and *The Nottingham Daily Guardian*.<sup>98</sup>

Henry Balfour, Curator of the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, used his Presidential Address to the Museums Association in July 1909 to urge the establishment of a 'National Folk Museum':

If the pages of Green's 'History of the English People' could be supplemented by illustrations of the social

---

<sup>97</sup> "Characterized by their attractive, colourful dust-jackets, and liberally illustrated by prints, engravings and photographs, they helped to weave the countryside, villages, country towns and historic buildings into a tapestry of what was deemed to be peculiarly valuable in the nation's heritage. ... In a theme that was to become increasingly insistent over the course of the 1930s, almost anything that was old was seen as requiring recognition and preservation" (Stevenson, 2003, p193).

<sup>98</sup> Published between May and November 1904. I am grateful to the Surrey History Centre for supplying copies of the reviews ( 6521/2/3/1)

habits and domestic economy of our predecessors, through the medium of a systematic exhibition of the objects dealt with, how greatly would be enhanced the well-deserved popularity of this work. Under like favourable conditions, such popular works as Strutt's 'Sports and Pastimes,' Pepys' 'Diary,' Mitchell's 'Past in the Present,' or the more recent 'Old West Surrey'<sup>99</sup>.....would acquire added significance and attractiveness. There would, moreover, be developed a fresh stimulus to research in the investigation of the culture-history of our nation. (Balfour, 1909, p8)

Some years later, H.J.Massingham (1888-1952), a popular and prolific writer on the countryside from the 1920s to the late 1940s (Matless ,1998; Moore-Colyer, 2002), began a collection of what he referred to as his 'treasures',<sup>100</sup> after an accident in 1936 caused him serious physical incapacity (Massingham, 1942). As he was unable to explore the countryside for subjects for his writings, he wrote an account of his collection which he had displayed in a small building in his garden in Buckinghamshire that he called 'The Hermitage'. This account, published by the Cambridge University Press in 1939 as *Country Relics* (Massingham, 1939), makes several references to *Old West Surrey* and quotes from *Old English Household Life*. Clearly the books were on his shelves.<sup>101</sup>

---

<sup>99</sup> Author's emphasis

<sup>100</sup> This is the word that Massingham uses to describe the objects he acquires when in correspondence with his primary source of material, H.G.Greening of Winchcombe. The correspondence is held by the Winchcombe Folk and Police Museum (WIXFP 1998/886/1 & 2)

<sup>101</sup> The author recollects both books on the shelves of many museum libraries in the early 1970s and in use for object identification.

## 9.2 An English Folk or Open Air Museum?

More significant than Jekyll's pioneering work on English everyday culture was the first of a series of attempts to establish an English Folk Museum<sup>102</sup>. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the archaeologist and Egyptologist Sir Flinders Petrie (1853 – 1942) “put forward a scheme for utilizing an area of poor uncultivated heathland in Surrey for a museum to portray the natural and cultural history of the British Isles” (Higgs, 1963, p22<sup>103</sup>). This scheme, which Petrie had first described in an address to the British Association in 1896 (Haddon, 1897) and later elaborated to the Society of Arts (Petrie, 1900) was primarily intended as an extensive reference collection of archaeological and anthropological material, but also of British material:

Of our own architecture there is no collection... scattered piles of mouldings without a history may be seen in local museums, but there is no home for any remains of the innumerable buildings that have been wiped away by modern changes. ... What about the domestic life? Here and there are a few stray pieces of furniture, tools, pottery or dress. ... But nowhere can an old English room of each century be seen put in order; nowhere can a dated set of the pottery be seen; nowhere are there models of houses to show their form and development. (Petrie, 1900, pp526-7)

---

<sup>102</sup> Throughout, the titles varied - English or British Folk Museum were both used, as was English Open Air Museum. The final attempt aimed at a Museum of English Life and Tradition.

<sup>103</sup> Higgs's reference to the scheme in *Folk Life Collection and Classification* is based on information given to him by Sir John Myres, who, as a representative of the Royal Anthropological Institute, was to be closely involved in later schemes to set up an English Folk Museum.

Higgs was incorrect when he suggested that this was the first attempt to set up an English or British folk museum, as we shall see in this chapter. British material played only a minor role in the scheme and Petrie's suggestion was no open air museum or folk park, as can be seen by the drawings of the rather dauntingly large shedding included in Petrie's paper (Petrie, 1900).

Local and everyday subjects had failed to gain a strong foothold in English museums by the end of the nineteenth century, despite a growing interest in historical, archaeological and folk studies as such in the wider world manifested by the establishment of a number of national and regional societies dedicated to their pursuit, such as the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, 1877; The Folklore Society, 1878; the National Trust 1893-5; the Folk-Song Society, 1898; and the English Folk Dance Society, 1911. Myrone sees these societies as

intent on maintaining the physical remains of the past as expressive of a distinct national heritage, and of a wider... 'vernacular' revival in architecture and design, pioneered in Britain, of course, by Ruskin and Morris (Myrone, 2009, p29)

Kavanagh speculates on the reasons for this neglect by the majority of the museums community:

It may have been something to do with the calibre of person attracted to museum work, the pressure from

museum authorities for classical disciplines rather than local human interest and the relative buoyancy of imperialism, which kept attention away from local studies. It may also have been due to the lack of a charismatic figure who could provide both inspiration and example.” (Kavanagh, 1990, p16)

A ‘charismatic figure’ did emerge in Sweden. Artur Hazelius (1833-1901) began acquiring material that reflected a vanishing peasant culture in 1872 (Higgs, 1963; Rentzhog, 2007) and by 1873 had amassed large enough collections to enable him to open a museum in Stockholm. Two years later, the Swedish government agreed to support the museum financially, and by the end of the decade the King had donated land for the building of the new Nordiska Museet<sup>104</sup> (Kavanagh, 1990).

In 1891, Hazelius founded the first open air museum at Skansen, as a branch of the Nordiska Museet, incorporating buildings which had been gathered from across Sweden, re-erected, equipped and furnished appropriately. He also collected music, song, dance and oral traditions, and peopled the museum with staff in traditional costume who would ‘perform’ their daily lives. Skansen was an immediate success with large numbers of visitors,<sup>105</sup> unlike the increasingly moribund museums in Britain (Kavanagh, 1990) where visitor numbers were stagnating, and it attracted widespread attention

---

<sup>104</sup> The building of the Nordiska Museet began in 1888, but was not completed until 1907.

<sup>105</sup> 200,000 by 1893 (Rentzhog, 2007, p6)



and emulation across Europe, particularly in Scandinavia  
(Rentzhog, 2007).

In 1901, Georg Bröchner, a Danish art critic and author based in London, wrote an article in *The Studio* on “An Open-Air Museum for London: A Suggestion”

Other capitals possess or are about to possess, these delightful institutions; but surely no city in the world can boast such wide and magnificent possibilities for attaining to the very ideal of these present-day creations as the capital of the British Empire! (Bröchner, 1901, p160)

The article is illustrated with photographs from the several Scandinavian open air museums that he describes, Skansen, Lund, and Bygdo, and concludes with a further rallying call:

Is there any country with a more glorious past than England? Is there a land richer in ancient buildings and old-time relics? Is there a wealthier, a more generous city in the world than London? And where can more desirable sites be found for open-air museums than in the immediate neighbourhood of or perhaps even within London? And as for buildings – why, there are buildings in almost every part of Great Britain which would be the pride of any open-air museum, and which, in spite of their sundry centuries, look as if they might very well stand a journey to London. (Bröchner, 1901, p171)

Between 1901, when Bröchner’s article was published and 1951, when the Museum of English Rural Life was established at the University of Reading, there were three attempts to establish an English or British folk or open air museum, none of which succeeded. The first of these attempts, which crystallised

in the years between 1909 and 1912, attracted a group mainly from inside the world of museums, notably the distinguished geologist F.A. Bather of the British Museum,<sup>106</sup> Henry Balfour, Curator of the Pitt Rivers Museum at the University of Oxford, A. C. Haddon of the Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology,<sup>107</sup> W. Evans-Hoyle, first director of the National Museum of Wales, Count Plunkett, Director of the National Museum in Dublin and Ruskin Butterfield of the Hastings Museum. Members of the wider public who were involved included Sir Lawrence Gomme, the folklorist, and J.W. Robertson Scott, the journalist (Peate, 1949), but no-one, it would seem, with any significant political weight.

Of this group, Bather appears to have been one of the first to publicly advocate the establishment of a folk or open-air museum on the Scandinavian model.<sup>108</sup> He became President of the Museums Association in 1903, and used his Presidential Address to urge the establishment of open air museums:

---

<sup>106</sup> Bather (1863-1934) had been married in Stockholm in 1896 to a Swedish wife, Stina (Lang, 1934; [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk) 1901 census). He was elected President of the Museums Association in 1903 and had undoubtedly visited Skansen. He was not a supporter of Petrie's scheme: "Professor Flinders Petrie's acres of corrugated iron sheds, though they might preserve, could not attract" (*Museums Journal*, 1903-4, September 1903, p2)

<sup>107</sup> Coombes notes that Balfour and Haddon were "two of the anthropologists most concerned with popularising anthropology and probably the best known outside of specialist anthropological circles." (Coombes, 1994, p53).

<sup>108</sup> Although Myrone (2009, p29) asserts that "as early as 1901 he (Henry Balfour) was campaigning for a national institution in England which would similarly preserve the material culture of the past."

Many beautiful or interesting objects, threatened with early destruction in the rapid changes of the present day, are not suitable for preservation in the museums with which we in this country are familiar. There are half-timbered houses, thatched cottages, old-fashioned farm implements, smock-frocks, and Welshwomen's hats all passing away. .... Every great city should have one. It would not only preserve material objects, but would keep up and revive old customs, folk-songs, local costumes and peasant handicrafts. .... It is not merely for their historic interest that these things need preservation; but because, in its hasty clearances, our civilisation too often roots up the wheat with the tares, and it is the function of museums to sift out the wheat and garner it for future use. (Bather, 1903a)

With the published text of his address, Bather included an appendix for those "unfamiliar with these latter-day developments" (Bather, 1903b, p127) in which he outlined the characteristics of several Scandinavian museums. It is clear from this that Bather understood that these museums were underpinned by serious ethnographic research and focused collecting and classification,<sup>109</sup> and, at Skansen, a connection with the university in Stockholm. This understanding was not widely shared outside the small world of the museum profession, but there were aspects of his address that could accord with a wider public. Firstly, that the impetus behind many of the open air museums was nationalistic in purpose

the awakening of all that is best in the national spirit, in the belief that this can be accomplished less by talking than by showing to the people that which is noblest and most beautiful in their national past, and that which still

---

<sup>109</sup> "...in each instance....a classified collection continues to exist alongside that open-air section....Here will be the stores and material for specialists, as well as a systematically exhibited series for students." (Bather, 1903b, p128)

today makes the riches of the country (Bather, 1903b, p129).<sup>110</sup>

Secondly it expressed a concern for rural communities and the quality of village life, themes which were to become more prominent in the efforts to establish village museums in the interwar years

If, by any labour of ours, we can increase the intellectual attractions of village life, and so maintain a race of country-folk, or if, by accommodating art to the needs of the humble, we can mitigate the ugliness of town-life, then, in either case, we are doing a national service. (ibid. p131)

Henry Balfour became the first Curator of the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford in 1890 and held the post until his death in 1939. The Pitt Rivers Museum had been built by the University of Oxford as an annexe to the Natural History Museum following their acceptance of the collection of 20,000 archaeological and ethnographical objects amassed by General Pitt Rivers in 1882 (Petch 2005). Subsequently Pitt Rivers set up a further museum on his estate at Farnham in Dorset housing archaeological and ethnographic collections which he had amassed since his donation to the University<sup>111</sup>. Pitt Rivers had:

---

<sup>110</sup> The idea of a moral purpose behind museums, as noted above, had not vanished: "Skansen, at all events, with its wholesome recreation, is beating the neighbouring variety-halls out of the field." (Bather, 1903b, p129)

<sup>111</sup> This museum was one of a number of attractions in the pleasure grounds, known as The Larmer Tree Grounds that Pitt Rivers laid out from 1880 and opened to general visitors, which included a bandstand, open-air

always believed in the collection of everyday objects as well as 'work of art' and this is reflected in his collection. Pitt Rivers described the intellectual framework for his collection and museum displays as:

The objects are arranged in sequence with a view to show ... the successive ideas by which the minds of men in a primitive condition of culture have progressed in the development of their arts from the simple to the complex, and from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous. ... Human ideas as represented by the various products of human industry, are capable of classification into genera, species and varieties in the same manner as the products of the vegetable animal kingdoms ... If, therefore we can obtain a sufficient number of objects to represent the succession of ideas, it will be found that they are capable of being arranged in museums upon a similar plan. [Pitt Rivers, 1874: xi and xii] (Petch, 2005)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is tempting to see Hornby's reference to the 'Esquimaux' in one of his texts in the St Michael's Museum quoted earlier as an example of the influence of Pitt-Rivers' theories.

Balfour was steeped in these ideas of using objects to demonstrate their " 'evolutionary development' through history and across different cultures" (Larson, 2005). He travelled extensively, and visited Norway five times between 1905 and 1909 researching whales and whaling (La Rue, 2004) and "each of his journeys was driven by the quest for knowledge

---

theatre, extensive walks and gardens, Indian houses from the Earl's Court Indian Exhibition of 1890 and a large dining hall. (Buxton, 1929) "Unlike many museums - which may be called 'general museums' because they include all sorts of objects illustrating a wide range of subjects - this museum is a 'specialized museum'. The collections are intended primarily to illustrate the life and development of an agricultural community such as the village of Farnham is today. Such a subject may be approached from two points of view; we may either study the village historically, starting with the earliest relics of man in the neighbourhood and following the history on until to-day; alternatively we may compare the various types of modern peasant communities which still exist both among savage and more advanced peoples. Both these lines of approach to the subject are represented in the Museum." (Buxton, 1929, p30 from the chapter by Buxton on *What to Look At in the Museum*) Local people, it was thought, could learn about their own community by studying the collections of material from Brittany and Cyprus, and through archaeological artefacts. The collection was dispersed in the 1960s and 1970s.

and by a wish to add to the series of objects contained in the Pitt Rivers Museum” (La Rue, 2004, p530). It was no doubt on one of these journeys that he became familiar with Scandinavian open-air museums. In 1909 he too became President of the Museums Association, and, like Bather six years earlier, used the opportunity of a Presidential Address to urge the establishment of a “National Folk-Museum” (Balfour, 1909, p8), drawing attention to the fact that the

British Museum – of whose magnificent collections we are justly proud – is everything except British as far as ethnology is concerned .....there is a reticence in dealing with our own nation which is specially noteworthy in view of the name which is applied to this great institution.” (Balfour, 1909, p6)

Balfour also noted that “objects of local interest” in museums “appeal more readily to the ordinary museum visitor, than far more showy and more valuable specimens from, say, the South Seas or other foreign regions” (Balfour, 1909, p7) but he suggested that these local items would be better drawn together in a single national museum where “an illustrated developmental history of our national culture and characteristics” could be shown (ibid.) rather than remaining where they were in local museums where, he felt, they were too diffusely spread to give a proper representation (or sequence). His reference to Jekyll’s *Old West Surrey* in this Presidential Address was noted earlier in Chapter 9.1.

J. W. Robertson Scott (1866-1962) was a journalist who had worked with H.J. Massingham's father, the radical journalist H. W. Massingham, editor of *The Nation*, for a short while during 1899. He then became 'Home Counties' and under this nom-de-plume wrote for the *Country Gentleman*, *The Field*, and *World's Work*. He was a member of the Liberal Land Committee from 1923-5 and in 1927 started *The Countryman* magazine<sup>112</sup>.

As 'Home Counties' Robertson Scott championed the cause of open air museums through a series of articles in *World's Work* in 1910. In August of that year, he published 'Why not an Open-Air Theatre and an Open-Air Museum?' using examples from a visit that he had made to Denmark. "Of one thing I am sure" he wrote "and that is that there are some things well worthy of being preserved which are not now in our museums, and ought to be placed somewhere where we and those who come after us may see them", using an old mill, a Cotswold stone cottage and a "three or four or five centuries old building which has miraculously survived in the slums of a great city" as examples (Robertson Scott, 1910a, p316). He described an

---

<sup>112</sup> *The Countryman* was described by Robertson Scott's biographer, John Cripps as "the most successful venture in periodical publishing between the wars". (Cripps, 2004) Sir John Cripps (1912-1993) was the son of Sir Stafford Cripps, the co-founder and funder of the Filkins Museum (see Chapter 13.3) He joined the staff of *The Countryman* in 1938 and succeeded Robertson Scott as Editor from 1947 until 1971. He had a distinguished career in local government as a Parish Councillor and a Rural District Councillor, and was Chairman of the Countryside Commission from 1970 to 1977. He was knighted for his services to local government. (Hall, 2004)

open-air museum as a 'Museum on a New Plan' and gave his article the subtitle of 'How Beautiful Rural Buildings are Being Lost'. (Robertson Scott, 1910a, p316):

At a time when so much thought is being given to widening and deepening the interest of the nation in the countryside; at a time when so much money is being spent in giving enlightened assistance to agriculture and rural industries, and so many laments are heard over the modernisation of the architecture of our villages, it does seem a pity that characteristic examples of old-village and country dwellings should not be preserved beyond reach of harm. (Robertson Scott, 1910a, p319)

Robertson Scott acknowledged that preservation *in situ* was the ideal, recognising the work of the 'Society for the Protection of Ancient Monuments'<sup>113</sup> but also recognising that change was inevitable. He saw an open-air museum or museums<sup>114</sup> as offering an alternative to destruction or refurbishment for the preservation of buildings. Echoing Jekyll, he wrote, in a section titled "A Step beyond Curio Collecting", that:

The old curiosity shops, to be found nowadays in every county and market town in the provinces, have rifled the homes of the cottagers. But the things of which I suggest the preservation for the benefit of those who

---

<sup>113</sup> Robertson Scott was probably referring to the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB), founded by William Morris in 1877. The Ancient Monuments Society was not founded until 1924. The SPAB was involved with the restoration of the Ancient House at Thetford for a museum in 1925, and an SPAB architect, William Weir, was involved in the restoration of the Town House at Ashwell for a museum in 1930 (see Chapter 13.2) The Ashwell Village Museum featured in *The Countryman* in 1931, April, May, June, No 1, Vol.V, p37

<sup>114</sup> "It may be, too, that several local Open-Air Museums are a more desirable thing than one national Open-Air Museum. It would be a fine thing and a natural thing if there were one Open-Air Museum for the Northern Counties, another for the Midlands, another for the West Country, another for the Eastern Counties, and yet another for the South of England, with similar provision for Wales, Scotland and Ireland." (Robertson Scott 1910a, p319)



come after us are too large to be removed by curio dealers" (Robertson Scott, 1910a, p320)

Objects were to be collected primarily to furnish the re-erected buildings, in contrast to the miscellaneous collections of "old-time curios and furniture" to be found in some County and National museums, but if there was a surplus they could be exhibited in "the shedding accompanying the Open-Air Museum" until an appropriate home was found for them, assuring his readers that "a lot of money need not necessarily be spent on housing." (Robertson Scott, 1910a, p321)

Robertson Scott ended his article by challenging his readers to come forward with "practical suggestions, practical criticism – and the promise of subscriptions, if the right kind of committee comes into existence." (Robertson Scott, 1910a, p321) He saw no necessity for state aid for the plan and was dismissive of the practical and financial difficulties that might be encountered.

Two months later, in October, Robertson Scott reported that his plea for open-air museums had been "supported by distinguished architects, antiquarians and litterateurs" (Robertson Scott 1910b, p477) and had attracted the largest correspondence ever to the journal. Published extracts from the letters of support took up six pages in the October issue; in November, letters opposing the idea were published, but they

were greatly outnumbered by further letters of support and letters offering alternative suggestions. (Robertson Scott, 1910c)

The group, led by Balfour, put forward a proposal to use the derelict Crystal Palace and its grounds<sup>115</sup> through an open letter to *The Times* on 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1912. "This laid out" as Myrone states "what was to become a familiar line of argument: that there 'is no museum in this country illustrating in a comprehensive and educational manner the culture-history, and the modes of life in times past, of the English peoples" (THE TIMES, January 3<sup>rd</sup> 1912, quoted in Myrone, 2009, p30). The group, however, were not persuasive enough, despite a flurry of supporting letters to the paper, and appear to have lost momentum at the outbreak of war in 1914. The idea of an English, or British, folk museum did not entirely fade away, as will be discussed in later pages of this project, and comments on the lack of such a museum re-emerged even as late as 1969 (Jenkins, 1969).

---

<sup>115</sup> The fortunes of the Crystal Palace had been in steady decline for a number of years until, in 1909, it was put into receivership and ordered to be sold in 1911. Two years later it was bought by a fund set up by the Lord Mayor. It had various uses after the First World War, including as a temporary home for the Imperial War Museum, and finally was destroyed by fire in 1936 (Hobhouse, 1937, p161)

## Summary of Section F

It has been suggested in this section that the movement for an English Folk Museum, which might at first sight seem tangential to this project, did indeed have some bearing on the growth in the numbers of small museums in villages and market towns in the years following the First World War. It hastened the acceptance of the everyday as appropriate museum material, even if that was to be seen within an evolutionary and comparative context rather than collected and displayed to illuminate the lives of ordinary people and places through time.<sup>116</sup> The collections at the Victoria Jubilee Museum, Cawthorne until at least 1915 appear to have excluded the local and the everyday, preferring instead the more traditional collections (Kavanagh's 'classical disciplines' [Kavanagh, 1990,p16]); after 1918, a village museum has yet to be identified that did not concentrate primarily on their own community and on the everyday. This quite dramatic change of emphasis would have been difficult to achieve, it is suggested,

---

<sup>116</sup> Two examples of this approach are Flinders Petrie's proposals discussed earlier (Petrie, 1900) and the Pitt Rivers Museum at Farnham in Dorset: "Unlike many museums - which may be called 'general museums' because they include all sorts of objects illustrating a wide range of subjects - this museum is a 'specialized museum'. The collections are intended primarily to illustrate the life and development of an agricultural community such as the village of Farnham is today. Such a subject may be approached from two points of view; we may either study the village historically, starting with the earliest relics of man in the neighbourhood and following the history on until to-day; alternatively we may compare the various types of modern peasant communities which still exist both among savage and more advanced peoples. Both these lines of approach to the subject are represented in the Museum." (Buxton, 1929) This museum closed in the 1960s.

had it not been both for a significant change amongst the wider museums community,<sup>117</sup> and an equal acceptance amongst the elite outside of the museum profession, brought about through wide-spread discussion in newspapers and periodicals of the new form that a museum might take.

Within the museums community this change was led primarily by anthropologists such as Balfour and Haddon, who at this time were striving to establish their subject not only as a reputable academic discipline but also as purposeful and educative within museums and other public exhibition spaces (Coombes, 1994). Indeed Coombes suggests a wider negotiation and that anthropology “was courting opinion on three fronts: the state, the general public and academia” (Coombes, 1994, p109) and this may well account for the presence of prominent anthropologists in the group.

The inclusion of Gomme is a reminder that anthropology and folk life and ethnological studies were still closely linked at this

---

<sup>117</sup> “But more important than all our preaching is the fact that an increasing number of British visitors have been to Stockholm, and among them several active museum workers. They went, they saw, they were conquered.” F.A.Bather, writing in the *Museums Journal* for March 1911 on “Open-Air Museums: Progress and Prospects” (Bather, 1911, p250). Strangers’ Hall Museum, which was given to the City of Norwich in 1922, had been opened as a private museum by a local solicitor, Leonard G. Bolinbroke in 1900 (<http://www.museums.norfolk.gov.uk/default.asp?Document=200.23.001.01> downloaded May 2010). According to the 1933 *City of Norwich Abridged Guide to the Museums* “he visited the Scandinavian Folk Museums early in the present century and on his return to Norwich purchased a portion of this building and opened it to the public as the first Folk Museum in the country” (p30)

time, and that it was only after the First World War that a separation took place in England, although not elsewhere (Dorson, 1961; 1968), and that it was history, as a body of knowledge exemplified through material culture, rather than anthropology, that became the dominant practice for the inclusion of the everyday in local museums (Kavanagh, 1990; 1993).

The story of what would eventually become three attempts to set up an English Folk Museum<sup>118</sup> also illustrates very clearly the tensions between a modernist and an anti-modernist or romantic approach to rural living and the countryside, that was so strong a feature of the inter-war years (Cavaliero, 1977; Matless, 1998; Burchardt, 2002; Brassley et al., 2006; Rowley, 2006) and is also apparent in the small museums set up in villages at that time, as will be discussed in Chapters 12 and 13.

The trope of nationalism and the notion of the rural community as a bedrock of Englishness - what Georgina Boyes, in discussing the English Folk-Song revival, has referred to as the conflation of two major contemporary cultural processes, the invention of national traditions and the rehabilitation of popular traditions (Boyes, 1993) - will reappear in the discussion of the

---

<sup>118</sup> See Chapters 11.3 and 14.1 for the two later attempts.

museums set up in the interwar years. It is to the growth of history as a popular subject and particularly of local history and of the historical imagination at a local level, that we now turn as another of the preconditions for the expansion of volunteer-run museums in rural areas.

## SECTION G: THE INTER-WAR YEARS

### Introduction to Section G

This section will explore some of the significant changes that occurred during the inter-war period that had an impact on the development of volunteer-led museums in English market towns and villages. There was an increasing growth in the number of foundations of these small museums, the majority of which survive to this day, many remaining volunteer-run. These changes included the decline and ultimate disappearance of paternalism; the consolidation of changes in collecting practice to include the everyday; the importance of the developing interest in local history at a popular level; the connection that was perceived between an understanding of locality and citizenship; and, for those involved in small museums, an expansion of the opportunities for contacts with the wider museum community through the establishment of regional federations of museums and galleries, such as the South Western Group of Museums and Art Galleries (SWGpMAG), founded in 1931.<sup>119</sup>

---

<sup>119</sup> "The object of the group shall be to promote the welfare and efficiency of the institutions in the area by active co-operation in the exchange of information (and when possible of specimens), the discussion of difficulties and in such other ways as may seem from time to time available" Rule 2, SWGpMAG *Handbook 1931-4* (Somerset Record Office, A/BHT G/3211 Box 1)

It was also a period in which there developed an increasing interest in and concern for rural communities, predominantly as a response to rural population decline (Burchardt, 1999; 2002; Howkins, 2003; Rowley, 2006) and a recognition that these communities and their distinctive ways of life not only merit remembrance but active support, facilities and opportunities. It was, in fact, a period which saw many attempts at innovative solutions to rural issues and problems (Brassley et al., 2006) amongst which we can include the growing number of small museums in market towns and villages. Throughout this section, the tension between a modern and a romantic or anti-modern view of rural communities will be apparent, predominantly through the discussion of the second attempt to set up an English folk museum, and in the growth of folk museums and collections.

Chapter 10 will provide the context in which the discussion of the development of volunteer-run museums in the 1920s and 1930s will be set. It will explore the development of history, and particularly the changes in the teaching of history in schools; the beginnings of popular local history and the role of the Women's Institutes in encouraging an interest in the past and in the history of everyday objects.



In Chapter 11 we will see the continuing growth of the local in museums and the 'turn to the everyday' which will be examined in detail in a case history of the Curtis Museum at Alton in Hampshire. The second attempt to set up an English Folk Museum will also be discussed.

The final two chapters in this section, Chapters 12 and 13 will give case histories of five village museums which between them will illustrate the decline of paternalism and the growth of museums concerned primarily with the life and history of the village itself, and managed by people from the village.

# CHAPTER 10: THE GROWTH OF POPULAR HISTORY IN THE INTER-WAR YEARS

## 10.1 Background – the place of history

It is not the place in this study to develop a 'history of history' as such, beginning with the inception of the Oxford History School in 1850, nor with the growing acceptance of history as an academic discipline from the late nineteenth century onwards<sup>120</sup> (Burrow, 1981). The concern here is with the development and encouragement of an historical imagination and of history as a social or community practice amongst the wider population, and with the extension of historical endeavour beyond the elite classes. As Munby has said:

When history became a respectable university subject in the nineteenth century, academics had no interest in any kind of local history. Their concern was with the history of the nation state (Munby, 2005, p3)

However, Bentley suggests that after 1880, there was a 'marked acceleration' (2005, p186) of academic history and, more importantly, the beginnings of an extension from the

---

<sup>120</sup> Two references are important to the story: J.R. Green's *A Short History of the English People*, first published in 1874, which was immensely popular and had been reprinted sixteen times by 1886, and had been singled out for notice in Balfour's Presidential address to the Museums Association in 1909 (see Chapter 9.3), and F.E. Seebohm's *English Village Community* published in 1883, in which "he saw, in the study of the village community, a way of understanding and coming to terms with the problems of his own society." (Beckett, 2007) In 1918, the Historical Association published Seebohm's '*The Teaching of History and the Use of Local Illustrations* - a Paper read at Hitchin to the members of the Herts. Branch of the Historical Association in October 1910, at the Girls Grammar School'.

universities to the more general public, which was one of the preconditions for the development of a widespread interest in local history, evidenced by the formation of the Historical Association in 1906.

So it is relevant to the understanding of the development of volunteer-led museums in small towns and villages, as one aspect of history from below, to consider briefly the encouragement of a historical imagination in schools as a means of introducing the subject to rural children, the development of local history, and of an interest in village history and a broader appreciation of the everyday objects found and used in villages.

## 10.2 History in schools

Although history had been taught in public elementary schools in the latter part of the nineteenth century, it was only after the abolition of 'payment by results'<sup>121</sup> in the School Code of 1895 that history began to be taught to all ages from Standard I to Standard V<sup>122</sup>. By 1900, when the 'block grant' system was introduced by the Board of Education, history was among the subjects to be taken 'as a rule' by all schools (Batho, 1972). In 1908 the Board of Education published an advisory booklet on *The Teaching of History in Secondary Schools* which, although aimed at teachers of older pupils, must have had some influence on history teaching in elementary schools (Batho, 1972):

It is essential that in each school attention should be paid to the history of the town and district in which it is situated. This will generally be best done not by giving a separate course of work on local history, but by constant reference to the history of the locality as illustrative of the general history. ...explained by facts which are in the personal knowledge of the pupils.... There must in all cases be included a study of those actually existent historical remains, such as castles, city walls, monasteries, which are accessible from school.... For this purpose it is essential that the school library and museum should be well provided with books, plans, maps and pictures. (Board of Education (BoEd) Circular 599, 1908, p5).

---

<sup>121</sup> 'Payment by results' led to an almost total concentration on the '3Rs' of reading, writing and arithmetic between 1862 and 1895, to the exclusion of history (Batho, 1972).

<sup>122</sup> The 1895 Code recognised visits to Museums as school attendance, provided the Inspector was told of the arrangements in advance, and it also encouraged 'object lessons' for the lower standards.

The history syllabus and the methods of teaching history were changing too:

Moreover, experiments were taking place in the use of dramatization, the study of local history, and the introduction of lessons on the lives of ordinary people in the past, all aspects emphasized by the interest in 'pageants' which was very marked at the time. (Batho, 1972, p140)<sup>123</sup>

Further progress was noted in the Board of Education *Report on the Teaching of History of 1923*<sup>124</sup>

greater attention (is) now given to what is called 'Social History' ... It connects admirably....with the increased attention to Local History which is another growing feature of our present practice, ... The use of source books and of the 'dramatic method' was now increasing. (BoEd, 1923, p22)

The Board were encouraged by the greater use that was being made of historical and ethnographic museums<sup>125</sup>:

As to pre-history....there can be no doubt that the most effective way to commence or to enforce such study is to see and handle the objects - tools, bones, ornaments, etc - on which our still scanty knowledge is based..... There are few schools in the country from which, within a day's tramp, visits might not be paid to dozens of ancient sites and buildings, not only churches and castles, but the old houses, the old mills, the walls, the field boundaries, and so on. (BoEd, 1923, pp44-45)

---

<sup>123</sup> Pageants were popular activities for Women's Institute members (see below Chapter 10.5). The Framlingham pageants are likely to have been one of the factors that stimulated the first curator of the museum at Framlingham into collecting local material (see below Chapter 15.4)

<sup>124</sup> The Report noted "both in England and elsewhere.....that a deeper interest in History has appeared as a result of the Great War." (BoEd, Educational Pamphlets no 37, p8-9)

<sup>125</sup> This was probably optimistic for rural schools, and a number of them began to form their own collections. The 'Museum Cupboard' from North Elmham School in Norfolk, dating from 1903, is now in the collections at Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse, formerly known as the Norfolk Rural Life Museum.

Four years later, the Board published a revised version, *Handbook of Suggestions for the Consideration of Teachers and others concerned in the work of public elementary schools* reinforcing once again the importance of active learning from the direct experience of pupils:

Both social and local history, again, have a natural interest for children. Their curiosity is easily aroused by the story of changes in such matters of daily concern as houses and dress, food and means of transport, and they may be led on from this to some consideration of some difficult matters, such as changes in the condition of agriculture and trade, industry and war. Again, every child should know something of the history of his own village, town or county, and local history will then supply excellent examples of changes in the mode and character of life at different epochs. Visits too, where these are possible, to the actual scene of historic events or to the actual remains of times which have passed away are of great value in creating atmosphere and in making history live. (BoEd, 1927, p122)

History textbooks too were changing, with a shift from the recitation of dates and the deeds of great men, to books which encouraged the growth and employment of the historical imagination. The *Piers Plowman Histories*<sup>126</sup> series is one

---

<sup>126</sup> The 'Piers Plowman Histories' series was introduced in 1913 and rapidly became extremely popular. For example Junior Book III *Stories from English History from 1066 to 1805* by Margaret Keary and Phyllis Wragge went through five editions and seven reprints between 1913 and 1923. Junior Book IV by J. J. Bell was also first published in 1913: "Let us pretend we are visiting a Roman villa many years after the conquest." (p42); "Let us make believe we are in a village in Wessex when its new master rides into it." (p89); "Let us pretend we have a friend among the monks, who is willing to show us round the monastery." (p112); "Let us enter the gates (of a mediaeval town) with the crowd. Don't get tripped up by the farmer's young porkers, or get caught between two pack-horses." (p131) (Bell, 1924). This style of writing was a great distance from earlier textbooks, such as *Allison's Guide to English History and Biography* by the Rev Dr Brewer (Brewer, nd), written as a series of questions and answers, which had a wide sale and influence before 1900 (Chancellor, 1970): "Q: What alteration in bedsteads has become common in the second half of the nineteenth century? A: Brass

example of a livelier approach; *The History of Everyday Things in England* series, by Marjorie and C.H.B. Quennell, introduced in 1918 and in print until the late 1960s, is another.

There are parallels between this encouragement of the historical imagination as an important element in citizenship, with a similar fostering of the geographical imagination for the same ends in the interwar years, and again the focus is largely on understanding and appreciating the local (Matless, 1992).

David Matless discusses the development of the regional survey and its impact on the teaching of geography, from the ideas of Patrick Geddes and those of his followers, such as H.J. Fleure<sup>127</sup> and the early advocates of town and country planning, and describes this as an “outlook Geography, one of pointing and talking on high places” which “taps into and informs a much broader culture of landscape in the inter-war years” (Matless, 1992, p468). Geographers “through their educational work and involvement with youth and rambling groups played an important role in forming and guiding this

---

and iron bedsteads instead of wooden ones. They are cheaper, lighter to move about, cleaner and more commodious” (Brewer, p 443). I am grateful to the staff at Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse for access to the collection of school text books.

<sup>127</sup> Fleure was Professor of Anthropology and Geography at the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth from 1917 to 1930, where Iorwerth Peate, the first Curator of the Welsh Folk Museum, was one of his students. In 1948 Fleure became a member of the Exploratory Committee set up by the Royal Anthropological Institute to look into the feasibility of establishing an English Folk Museum [See Chapter 14.2] (National Library of Wales Welsh Biography Online <http://yba.llgc.org.uk/en/s2-FLEU-JOH-1877.html> and <http://yba.llgc.org.uk/en/s6-PEAT-CYF-1901.html?query=Iorwerth+Peate&field=name> downloaded 14/11/2010)

(landscape) culture” (ibid), but the main focus of education for citizenship through survey was the school:

Civic sense and initiative, trained thus on a basis of local knowledge, grows by conglomeration into a national sense and initiative. Devolution, or mastery over local conditions, is a necessary preliminary to effective political democracy.

If each before his door would sweep,  
The village would be clean

(F. J. Adkins, 1934, *The approach to citizenship through history and through regional surveys*, quoted in Matless, 1992, p472)

As will be shown later (Chapter 13.2) there were at least two museums that were set up in villages in the period between the wars that were founded by people who had been encouraged to develop their historical interests by their school teachers, and the inclusion of the local and of the history of objects that were familiar to village people would certainly have stimulated an environment in which a museum celebrating such things could flourish.



### 10.3 Popular Local History

Accounts of the development of local history, such as those of Munby (2005) and Beckett (2007), note the important influence of the Historical Association (HA) and of the National Council of Social Service<sup>128</sup> in the growth in the popularity of the subject before the Second World War. After 1945, Munby claims, interest in "local history really took off and began to influence the interpretation of all of English history." (Munby, 2005, p5) In a later section it will be shown that this explosion of interest, and the rapid growth of local history societies in small communities, led to the setting up of a number of volunteer-run museums by these groups, of which the Shaftesbury Town Museum, set up in 1946 and now known as the Gold Hill Museum, appears to be the first of twenty-seven museums currently run by local history societies (see Appendix 3).

The Historical Association (HA) was founded in 1906, and attracted a wide membership although it was aimed mainly at history teachers at all levels. From the beginning, it had had an interest in local history and in local research, and had been producing local history bibliographies before 1914 (Beckett, 2007); the Village History Committee was formed in about

---

<sup>128</sup> The National Council of Social Service (NCSS) was founded in 1919 to co-ordinate the work of voluntary organizations and to provide a single voice in representations to government. It changed its name to the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) in 1980.

1925, becoming the Local History Committee in 1928/9 (HA, 1955).

In 1930 the Historical Association republished Guy Ewing's *A Village History Exhibition as an Educational Factor*, first published in October 1922 in the *Journal of the Ministry of Agriculture*<sup>129</sup>. The prefatory note to this publication states that:

The Local History Committee of the Historical Association has for some time been considering the ways and means by which a living interest in history can be generated or stimulated throughout the towns and villages of our land. There is general agreement among the members of the committee that the best method of arousing interest in the story of the nation among villagers or townsfolk is to associate it, as far as possible, with the people, the sites, the buildings and the antiquities generally, of the locality." (Ewing, 1930, p2)

The National Council of Social Service (NCSS) had a Local History Sub Committee<sup>130</sup> by 1938, and published the first of its series of local history leaflets in that year on *Local History as a Village Interest*. This leaflet opens:

Recently there has been a remarkable growth of interest on the part of village groups and individuals in the possibilities of local history as a subject of study and practical work...it is only recently that local history has been approached from a different angle [to the traditional antiquarian one] as a subject for study,

---

<sup>129</sup> Guy Ewing was the son of the rector of Westmill in Hertfordshire. He knew Mrs Mary Greg the founder of Westmill Museum well, and wrote *Westmill: the story of a Hertfordshire Parish* (1928) and an introduction to the Westmill Museum catalogue. He was the Chairman of the Kent Rural Community Council from 1924 to 1929, and was involved in efforts to promote the study of local history in that county (personal communication from Dr Jeremy Burchardt, University of Reading, May 2009).

<sup>130</sup> The Local History Sub Committee became the Standing Conference for Local History in 1948, and, later, the British Association for Local History.

research and record by groups of village people not necessarily equipped with special knowledge or training. (quoted in Munby, 2005, p5-6)

However, the main focus of the work of the NCSS in the interwar years in rural areas lay in the facilitation and support that it gave for the provision of village halls. Whilst not denying that there was an element of “backwards looking rural nostalgia” in the NCSS, Burchardt argues that it is equally possible to “evoke the rural idyll in the name of progress” as in the cause of conservatism (Burchardt, 1999, p197), and the NCSS welcomed the growing discontent with the paucity of recreational and leisure facilities in villages. It saw the quality of social life in villages, for which village halls were essential, as particularly important as “there was an immediate link between co-operation and democracy and between self-government and a richer community life” (ibid.) which would lead to the erosion of paternalism and the end of the dominance of squire and parson over village life and leisure.

Many of the new Rural Community Councils (RCCs) were also concerned with the promotion of local history, including those of Kent under the chairmanship of Guy Ewing from 1924 to 1929<sup>131</sup>, and of Gloucestershire. Like the Women’s Institute movement and other new rural organisations of the inter-war period, the RCCs saw the promotion of local or village history

---

<sup>131</sup> Personal communication from Dr Jeremy Burchardt, University of Reading, May 2009

as one element of their broader encouragement of the development of citizenship:

An important aspect of the citizenship which the new rural social organizations attempted to foster was that, although citizenship clearly referred to a sense of national belonging, it was to be achieved through unity at a village level. Almost all the new social organizations had the village as their lowest unit of administration. Fostering citizenship was linked to, and dependent on, developing a stronger sense of community identity and cohesion. (Burchardt, 2002, p145<sup>132</sup>)

The Gloucestershire RCC, for example, established in 1923, first showed an interest in local history in 1926, when they took up a suggestion from Staffordshire WI to set up a network of village recorders (Jerrard, 1998). A Local History sub-committee was added to the GRCC Adult Education Committee in 1936<sup>133</sup> (Jerrard, 1998); it saw the encouragement of local history study as integral both to its wider educational role and to the promotion of active engagement that was the hallmark of citizenship:

annual records for 1937-38 show that a Local History sub-committee had success in sending two of its members to nine villages to start researching their own histories. A local history school was held in May 1939

---

<sup>132</sup> For a more contemporary account see Bourdillon, A.F.C., (1945) *Voluntary Social Services*, especially the chapter 'Voluntary Organisations to Meet the Needs of the Countryman' and the chapter 'Voluntary Organisations to Facilitate Co-operation and Co-ordination' in which he notes the NCSS's interest in local history: "Thus, with the help again of the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust and with the co-operation of the Rural Community Councils, the National Council (NCSS) has been able to provide skilled advice on music and drama; a specialist service is also available to encourage and instruct parish councils and a scheme has been initiated for the encouragement of the study of local history" (Bourdillon, 1945, p185).

<sup>133</sup> In 1948 the sub-committee became the Local History Committee. (Jerrard, 1998)

at Almondsbury. In this small respect one may see how much of the success of the general educational work was encouraging listeners to becoming active participants (Jerrard, 1998, p4).

However, one of the most effective and far-reaching organisations involved in the promotion of local history at a popular level in the inter-war period, but one which is now largely overlooked in this field, was the Women's Institute movement, and it is to this that we now turn.

## 10.4 The Women's Institutes and Village History

The Women's Institute (WI) movement began in 1915, under the auspices of the Agricultural Organisation Society, whose purpose was to start small scale co-operatives of farmers and growers to improve their profitability and provide appropriate education. Started in Anglesey, the WI movement grew rapidly so that by October 1917 when responsibility was transferred to the Women's Branch of the Board of Agriculture, there were 137 institutes. By 1922, there were 2,580 branches with 160,000 members. (Jenkins, 1953) Education, whether that was in citizenship, domestic or horticultural skills, or more generally, had always been a significant element of WI life:

In the Institutes, perhaps the most notable development of the 1920s was the spread of general education. Having learned to meet together, work together and talk freely together, Institute members now wanted to *learn* more and more about many things.....And what of the treasured possessions of many country homes, belongings of the past - the old chairs, the old implements, the cups and jugs, the dresses? How were they made? When were they used? What were the customs with which they were associated? That was part of England's history; and there was history, too, behind the village place-names and buildings, its very location, the words used for everyday things that were so differently called 'up north' or 'down south'. And the Institutes wanted to know it all. (Jenkins, 1953, p50)

The WI began its own magazine, *Home and Country*, in 1919. It contained articles of general interest to the members, book reviews, and reports of the activities of individual institutes and

county federations. Local history features strongly during the 1920s.

For example, in March 1921 it was reported that the Ashwell branch now had 125 members and that they had had a lecture on local history (Vol.III, No.1, March 1921), the same year that the group of Ashwell schoolboys first started their 'museum' (see Chapter 13.2). In June 1924 in the Report from the Staffordshire Federation "Local History engaged the attention of Mayfield, Great Haywood and Oakley WIs" (Vol.V1, No 4, June 1924, p588) and in the Wiltshire Federation "Lectures have been given on Village Life in Olden Days". (ibid. p 594) In August that year there was a report on West Kent Federation Historical Pageant held at Lullingstone Castle on July 9<sup>th</sup> 1924 which involved 78 institutes, 800 performers and included 13 episodes of which the last was 'Women's Work in the Great War, Armistice Day 1918' by the Sevenoaks District (No.1), (Vol. VI, No 6, August, 1924 p676-7) and in October that year South Newington, Oxon, had held a pageant of the History of the Village (Vol. VI, No 8 Oct. 1924 p754). In February 1924 it was noted that a correspondence course in Rural Social History was open to WI members, "led by Mr J. Orr, formerly of the School of Rural Economy, Oxford", (Vol.V, No 12, Feb.1<sup>st</sup> 1924, p411) and a year later, in February 1925, a series of monthly

articles on *The Village in History* began. (Vol.VII, No 2, Feb 1925).

In January 1927 national recognition of the importance of local history to WI members was given when it was reported that the BBC was to give a series of talks specifically for WIs on Wednesdays from 3.45 to 4.0. The first series of 6 talks was '*Village Life in Olden Times*' by Miss Rhoda Power. There was a recommended reading list which included the J.L. and Barbara Hammond's *Village Labourer* and Lord Ernle's *English Farming Past & Present*. (Vol. IX No 1 Jan. 1927, p7)

WI members also began to write and publish their own histories of their villages: "No finer work can be done by County Federations than the preservation of the Treasures to be found in village records" , a comment on the Village History of St Lawrence, Isle of Wight, by Daisy Evelyn Warne. (Vol. XII, No 2, Feb 1930 p68)

In this effort WI members were greatly helped by a publication of the Northamptonshire and Soke of Peterborough Federation *How to Compile a History and Present Day Record of Village Life* by Joan Wake<sup>134</sup>, which was first published in 1925,

---

<sup>134</sup> Joan Wake (1884-1974) was a distinguished historian and archivist who established the Northamptonshire Record Society in 1920 which led ultimately to the establishment of the Northamptonshire County Record



reprinted twice that year and a new edition published in 1935. It was, said *Home and Country*,

A New Book not to be kept on the shelf. Every Institute should send for a copy of Miss Joan Wake's book...Here is work for every Institute member. She can find out interesting details connected with the history of the village and help to keep alive the spirit of pride in what has gone to the making of England today<sup>135</sup>. (Vol.VII, No.10, October 1925, p374)

Wake's gift was to demystify history for a non-academic audience, and to give clear guidance on the sorts of topics that could be investigated by people with perhaps limited opportunities for travel and research in scattered repositories:

A village which does not know its own history may be likened to a man who has lost his memory, and the Women's Institutes will indeed be doing a good work if, by taking up the study of local history, they should succeed in restoring or strengthening a sense of tradition and continuity in their own villages.

History is no longer regarded as being merely the record of celebrities and of great events. These have their place, but the history of England is incomplete which fails to give an account of the ordinary man and woman and their doings in all walks and conditions of life. Such seemingly obscure and commonplace events as the inclosure (*sic.*) of the open fields or the coming of the motor 'bus have played as great a part in making England what she is to-day as the personality of Oliver Cromwell or the battle of Waterloo. (Wake, 1935 p10)

She also encouraged her readers to think more widely than documentary sources:

---

Office ([http://www.northamptonshirerecordsociety.org.uk/nrs\\_about.htm](http://www.northamptonshirerecordsociety.org.uk/nrs_about.htm)) downloaded 10.3.2009

<sup>135</sup> Wake's book was reviewed by Montague Fordham, founder of the Rural Reconstruction Association, in the same number (see the forthcoming discussion on Ashwell Village Museum in Chapter 13.2)

Written documents, old buildings, and earthworks are not by any means the only sources for the study of local history. Nothing brings us into such intimate contact with the past as objects of the everyday life of our forefathers. Could not the Women's Institutes help here, in co-operation with other bodies and individuals, by the creation of a County Museum, in which each district would be represented by a different section, and where village would vie with village in the systematic collection and preservation, as they go out of date, of such things as clothes, vehicles, lace, tools, and other objects of local manufacture? (Wake, 1935, p17)

So many village histories were being produced that in July 1934 *Home and Country* published a request from the Bodleian Library for information on village histories issued under the auspices of WIs<sup>136</sup> (Vol. XVII, No 5 p362).

In addition to local history articles, *Home and Country* published other features which would have stimulated WI members to take a fresh look at everyday items of country life. W. R. Lethaby (1857 – 1931), for example, wrote a series of articles which were later published by the WI as a booklet *Home and Country Arts* (Lethaby, 1923). Lethaby was a prominent and influential architect, designer and educationalist, a friend of William Morris, co-founder of the Design and Industries Association in 1915, a member of the Society for the

---

<sup>136</sup> At least 9 published in 1920s and 1930s have been identified in the Bodleian Library online catalogue, downloaded 18/2/2009:  
[http://solo.ouls.ox.ac.uk/primo\\_library/libweb/action/search.do?ct=Next+Page&pag=nxt&mode=Basic&vid=OXVU1&srt=rank&ct=Next%20Page&frbg=&fctV=\[999999999%20TO%201953\]&scp.scps=scope%3A\(%22OX%22\)&indx=11&dum=true&fctN=facet\\_creationdate&vl\(14072161UI1\)=all\\_items&fn=search&vl\(1UI0\)=exact&vl\(freeText0\)=Women%27s%20Institute&vl\(14382746UI0\)=creator&tab=local](http://solo.ouls.ox.ac.uk/primo_library/libweb/action/search.do?ct=Next+Page&pag=nxt&mode=Basic&vid=OXVU1&srt=rank&ct=Next%20Page&frbg=&fctV=[999999999%20TO%201953]&scp.scps=scope%3A(%22OX%22)&indx=11&dum=true&fctN=facet_creationdate&vl(14072161UI1)=all_items&fn=search&vl(1UI0)=exact&vl(freeText0)=Women%27s%20Institute&vl(14382746UI0)=creator&tab=local)

Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) and a significant influence on the founders of the Council for the Preservation of Rural England (CPRE) set up in 1926<sup>137</sup> (Matless, 1998). The booklet, which went through three editions, encouraged WI members to look about them and to see 'beauty in common things'<sup>138</sup> (Lethaby, 1923, p17), "country things" he wrote "have a character and beauty especially their own" (ibid. p24) and highlighted carts and wagons, baskets, butter prints and even loaves of bread as examples. Two of his chapters are on 'Village Arts and Crafts' and the 'Sewing Arts', and there is a further chapter on 'Farms and Cottages' in which he drew attention to the dilapidated state of many of the cottages he saw around him, mainly in Surrey, and their destruction: "This is a very large question indeed from many points of view; from that of the landscape and of the character of the country it is of tremendous importance. More than anything else these cottages, I suppose, form the thought of England in our minds." (ibid. p10)

---

<sup>137</sup> Harry Peach, one of the founders of the CPRE, "followed the 'fitness for purpose' philosophy of W. R. Lethaby, later presented by Lewis Mumford as the original modernist" (Matless, 1998, p51)

<sup>138</sup> There are later echoes of this encouragement of a 'visual culture' in the modernist architectural historian Nikolaus Pevsner's *Visual Pleasures from Everyday Things*, published in 1946 by the Council for Visual Education: "Very few realize that any tree, any leaf, any stone – and also any pot, any rug, any spoon – can be regarded aesthetically" (Pevsner, 1946, quoted in Matless, 1996, p435) "For Pevsner," Matless writes, "visual pleasure was a matter of order and design in the human and natural; ...every element in the environment, however small or mundane, should embody and express such visual principle." (Matless, 1996, p435)

Lethaby is seen as a key figure in the trajectory between the Arts and Crafts Movement and Modernism and his booklet, as indeed was Wake's, was not intended to serve the cause of nostalgia, but to encourage greater participation and activity, a greater engagement with the 'modern'. Recent writers have begun to look more closely at the role of the Women's Institute movement in post-war reconstruction (Andrews, 1997; Stamper, 2001) and at their role in the construction of Englishness (Andrews, 1997; Matless, 1998):

The rhetoric of an improved post-war version of England and of Englishness became second nature to WI speakers. They spoke of a perception of village life and rural womanhood's place in it, along with notions of co-operation, service and class conciliation rather than that of confrontation and exploitation which may have been a more familiar perception to many of their listeners. The WI was seen, by some involved in it, as a significant part of post-war reconstruction and thus they developed a perception of post-war ruralism within which 'villagism' was paramount. The WI was to have a crucial role to play in revitalising the villages, to stem the perceived population flood from the land to the towns. (Andrews, 1997, p32)

## CHAPTER 11: GOING LOCAL

### 11.1 The Turn to the Everyday

The inter-war period saw an increasing focus on rural communities, both as representative of national identity and of the best of the national character and concern that this was being eroded, and, more pragmatically, as communities in visible economic and social decline (Matless, 1994, 1998; Howkins, 1986, 2003; Burchardt, 2002). In the previous chapter we have seen how these strands were interwoven in both the history of the Women's Institute and in the rise of popular local history in the inter-war years.

It should come as no great surprise then that this was also a period when "there was an appreciable expansion in the number of museums devoted to folk life"<sup>139</sup> (Kavanagh, 1990, p22), and of increased collecting activity of 'folk' material and what was then known as by-gones by many provincial museums<sup>140</sup>. In 1928, 'T.S.'<sup>141</sup> reviewed for the *Museums*

---

<sup>139</sup> One of these new museums was Strangers' Hall, given to the City of Norwich in 1922: "The Hall and its collections were the generous gift of the late Mr. Leonard G. Bolingbroke to his native city; he visited the Scandinavian Folk Museums early in the present century and on his return to Norwich purchased a portion of this building and opened it to the public as the first Folk Museum in the country." (*City of Norwich Abridged Guide to the Museums*, 1933, p30). Others were at Gloucester (1935) and in Cambridge (1936).

<sup>140</sup> In fact it was a period of increased expansion of all museums: "of the making of lesser museums there has been no end. Working on the average of the past decade, Mr. Markham tells me that new museums have in recent

*Journal* a book which was to become, like Jekyll's *Old West Surrey*, widely influential in museums<sup>142</sup>, *Iron and Brass Implements of the English House* by J. Seymour Lindsay (Seymour Lindsay, 1964, first published 1927)

A quarter of a century ago the pages of *The Museums Journal* were anything but complimentary to the younger curators of museums who began collecting old farming implements and 'bygones' of various sorts, which at that time were not so scarce as they now are. ... Since then times have changed, and old time utensils and implements are being sought by most of the museums in the country, while a few are devoted entirely to exhibitions of this character. 'Old-fashioned' objects in wood and metal are greatly in demand, especially in the provinces, ... This book is essentially for a museum curator, and it can be heartily recommended to the increasing number who are devoting attention to old domestic appliances. The frontispiece 'A Sixteenth Century Surrey Down Hearth' might quite readily be copied by a number of our folk-lore museums. (T.S., 1928)

Kavanagh suggests that this 'turn to the everyday'<sup>143</sup> is an attempt by society to "put behind it, or at least out of its mind, the war, the depression, social division, industrial strife and the frightening changes taking place in Nazi Germany" (Kavanagh, 1990, p22). Ideas of national identity, Pearson suggests, are

---

years opened in the various parts of the British Isles at the rate of one every three weeks. I can only describe that rate of production as shattering. It is a tribute, I suppose, to the increasing public consciousness of the value of museums; it is at the same time a monument of rash precipitancy if we consider the inadequacy of the funds available for the proper and permanent conduct of all these new institutions." Mortimer Wheeler's Presidential Address to the Museums Association in 1938 (Wheeler, 1938)

<sup>141</sup> This was almost certainly Tom Sheppard, Director of Hull Museums and a leading member of the Museums Association. Sheppard set up a collection of agricultural implements and folk material in a tithe barn at Easington in the East Riding of Yorkshire near Spurn Head in 1928. It closed in 1939 at the outbreak of the Second World War. Unfortunately the collection was later destroyed by enemy action. (Brears and Davies, 1989)

<sup>142</sup> Again, the author recalls that this book was widely available in museum libraries when first joining the museum's profession in the late 1960s. It had been republished in 1964.

<sup>143</sup> Author's phrase.

reflected in museum policy and presented in the museum. Museum collections, for example, took on a more national and regional emphasis as opposed to earlier ideas of the universality of collecting. This created a drive for folk collecting to represent local cultures or national characteristics and was closely linked to refocusing attention on the nation state. (Pearson, 2008)

When Sir Henry Miers presented his *Report on the Public Museums of the British Isles (other than the National Museums)* to the Carnegie United Kingdom Trustees (CUKT) in 1928 he described it as the first comprehensive survey of the country's museums. In the *Report* he drew attention to the 'most haphazard nature' (Miers, 1928, p14) of museum provision in Britain, as well as highlighting areas of neglect<sup>144</sup>, poorly paid staff, and lack of opportunities for research. He also highlighted the lack of purpose behind many museum collections and little discrimination in acquisition; he discouraged the tendency of provincial museums to emulate the national museums, and urged that some museums at least could be devoted to local history or local products. Miers noted that there were conspicuous gaps in the subjects covered by museums possibly even a "serious reproach to the nation that no

---

<sup>144</sup> "The stronger one's belief in the great work they might do, the stronger the conviction that at present, in spite of certain noteworthy exceptions, they fail – and fail lamentably. There is no doubt that the country is not getting what it should from the public museums, and that most of them are not going the right way to supply what is wanted." (Miers, 1928, p38)

adequate folk or agricultural museum exists in the British Isles”<sup>145</sup> (ibid p43):

The nearest approach in this country is to be found in the numerous collections of ‘bygones’. From them, no doubt, a whole series of real folk museums could be constructed in places where old cottages and other suitable buildings have been preserved. The desirability of saving old houses and cottages is beginning to be felt both by corporations and by public-spirited individuals: and the Society of Arts has a fund for assisting this object. Attempts have been made to reproduce ancient kitchens, etc., at various places, but there is no real or comprehensive folk museum. The need has long been felt, and many suggestions have been made, e.g. that the Crystal Palace grounds should be devoted to this purpose. (ibid. p42)

However, before continuing the story of the attempts to set up an English folk museum, it will be useful to exemplify how the ‘turn to the everyday’, as advocated by Miers, materialised in one of the museums that he had visited during his research for the report, the Curtis Museum at Alton in Hampshire.

---

<sup>145</sup> In 1930, Miers spoke in a discussion on A Proposed National Folk Museum in Section H of the British Association at Bristol, September 1930, published in an abridged form in *Nature*, 1930, Vol. 126, No. 180, pp584-5 “...the national conscience is obviously awakening to the value of such things and determined efforts are now being made in many quarters not only to preserve the amenities of the countryside but also to conserve the old houses and cottages which are in danger of destruction.” p585



## 11.2 The 'turn to the everyday' – The Curtis Museum

The Curtis Museum in Alton, Hampshire was, as has been noted above, one of many visited by Miers, together with his assistant S.F. Markham<sup>146</sup>; during the research for his *Report of 1928* (Miers, 1928), and it is worth examining the changes which followed there as a result, as recounted by W. Hugh Curtis in *The Curtis Museum, Alton, Hampshire 1855-1955 – The first hundred years of a small museum* (Curtis, 1955). It is highly probable that they are representative of similar changes occurring in many museums elsewhere from the 1920s onwards and it marks a transformation from the earlier type, as exemplified by the Victoria Jubilee Museum at Cawthorne discussed earlier in Chapter 8.

The Curtis Museum had opened in 1855 as part of the Alton Mechanics and Apprentices Library, founded by William Curtis and others in 1837. In 1880 the museum and institute moved to new buildings on Crown Hill, Alton, in a single grouping that was shared with the Assembly Room and the Inwood Cottage Hospital and all designed by the same architect on land

---

<sup>146</sup> Markham himself was responsible for a further report to the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust in 1938 (Markham, 1938)

donated by a Mr. Hall<sup>147</sup>. The Museum was given to Alton Urban District Council as a war memorial after the 1914-1918 War, and continued as before without paid staff. W. Hugh Curtis became Hon. Curator in about 1924 (ibid.).

---

<sup>147</sup> <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/museum/curtis-museum/alton-history/curtis-museum-story.htm> downloaded 8/6/10

## The Curtis Museum, Alton, Hampshire



*Image 5: The Curtis Museum is shown on the left, with the Inwood Cottage Hospital to the rear. The war memorial is in the centre. This group of buildings were opened in 1880; the museum was given to Alton UDC as a war memorial after the 1914-1918 war. (Unused postcard, possibly dating from the 1930s. Author's collection)*

The original museum collections had been mainly of geology and natural history specimens, as would have been expected, but by 1929:

We were turning our attention to 'bygones' and making efforts to obtain them before it became too late. As early as 1861 there were a few domestic bygones in the Museum, but we had visions of enlarging and widening the scope of the collection to show how our ancestors lived and the sort of things they used in their everyday life. It was too late to do much about the small cottage industries of the 18th and early 19th centuries, though some traces might yet be found. Certainly in an agricultural district which included hops, anything connected with farming must be preserved –so we concentrated on agricultural, domestic and personal things first, and left the search for rural craftsmen's tools etc to follow later. .... It was only by experience that we learnt how scarce some quite familiar items had become. Such things as butchers' wooden meat trays, milk cans, lemonade bottles with glass marble stoppers and their accompanying wooden openers, seemed to disappear in a flash. The tall road signposts we had always been accustomed to suddenly shortened for the benefit of motorists and we were just too late to get one.

Presently, when we were getting into our stride and collecting many of the smaller farm implements, and some that were not so small, I began to wonder if we were merely substituting one form of junk for another. But any doubt I had disappeared when the Curator of a large Museum in the North came to spend a holiday in the district and one day paid us a visit. Shortly afterwards we were told that he had occupied the remainder of his stay in hunting for similar material which he took away with him on his departure. (Curtis, 1955, pp18-19)

Two years later, in 1931, Curtis recorded that when the museum was offered some old English pottery "We decided to accept the offer and to clear some wall cases which still contained foreign birds" (Curtis, 1955, p20). The First Annual Report of the Museum to Alton UDC<sup>148</sup> was published at the

---

<sup>148</sup> Alton UDC had taken over the funding of the museum in 1920, but did not request an Annual Report until 1933. In 1946/7, responsibility for funding passed to Hampshire County Council under the Education Act of 1944

end of May 1933 and appeared in the *Hampshire Herald* on June 2nd. A letter from Sir Harry Wilson, who had recently moved to Hampshire from Hereford where he had been chair of the Museum and Art Gallery Committee<sup>149</sup>, was printed in the same issue:

Their policy, the Curators say, for the last six years has been to make the contents of the Museum primarily of local interest. Foreign stuffed birds and miscellaneous curiosities from abroad have been, or are being, withdrawn as opportunity offers, and additional room is thus afforded for local specimens. This is quite in accordance with the best scientific opinion upon the management of the smaller Country Museums, and much enhances their educational value. (quoted in Curtis, 1955, p22)

A further new venture started in 1935<sup>150</sup> when Mrs E.D.

Walford of Bentworth:

came to the museum and suggested that we might experiment with a village exhibition of a few weeks, ....She offered to canvas her village and in a very short time the Exhibition was staged. It consisted of about 200 items contributed by thirty-six residents, and proved so popular that it remained open for upwards of three months.

There were articles of copper, brass, pottery, pewter, embroidery and samplers; Georgian and Victorian apparel; a police constable's lantern, three constable's pistols, truncheons and musical instruments formerly used in Bentworth Church. (Curtis, 1955, p21)

---

(Curtis, 1955). In 1974 the museum became part of the Hampshire Museum Service; Tony Cross, the Curator, gave advice and support to the Blandford Museum Trust during its early days, as noted in Chapter 16.5 below (le Bas, 2006)

<sup>149</sup> In 1945 a survey by the Folk-Lore Society described Hereford Museum as holding 'a very large collection of domestic and agricultural Bygones and implements still in use, lace, pottery, and many English costumes.' (Banks, 1945)

<sup>150</sup> Although Curtis gives 1935 as the date of this exhibition, museum records show it to have been held in 1932. (Personal communication from Tony Cross, Curator of Alton Museum, June 16<sup>th</sup>, 2010)

The Bentworth village exhibition replaced the display of a Meissen dinner service, which had been loaned to the museum by Lord Northbrook.

The museum remained open during the Second World War, and Curtis wrote that 1943 was one of the best years on record:

The number and quality of the acquisitions has seldom, if ever, been surpassed, and the keen interest taken, especially in the 'Bygones' or Folk-Lore Section has been greater than anything we have previously experienced. (Curtis, 1955, p33)

In the following year, 1944, a new Agricultural Section of the museum was formally opened by Brian Vesey-Fitzgerald, the editor of *The Field*; an *Illustrated and Descriptive List of the Smaller Implements, etc. formerly (or still) in use on Farms* in the display was compiled in 1946 by the joint honorary curators, W. Hugh Curtis and S.A. Warner, in which they state that:

Alton seems to be an ideal spot for a collection of this sort. The exhibits have been brought together within the past twenty years or so – a very short period in which, as Mr Vesey-Fitzgerald pointed out, "Farming has had a bigger revolution than in all the hundreds of years before." (Curtis and Warner, 1946, p3)

Unusually, the *List* also includes a list of the 'Books in our Library – (Agricultural)', probably because the museum still saw itself within its traditional role as part of a Mechanics Institute,

but possibly also to fulfil a wartime educational role, 'The exhibits,' the *List* states, 'are augmented by ... leaflets and posters supplied by the Ministry of Agriculture' and the book list also includes various publications from the Ministry. Among the less technical books in the library are five works by George Bourne, including *Change in the Village*, Gertrude Jekyll's *Old West Surrey*, H.J. Massingham's *Country Relics*, Iorwerth Peate's *Guide to the Collection of Welsh Bygones*<sup>151</sup> and copies of J. Robertson Scott's *The Countryman* magazine from 1932 to 1945.

---

<sup>151</sup> This was one of the reference books used by Massingham himself, along with Jekyll's *Old West Surrey*, when he was gathering his own collection, later described in *Country Relics* (Winchcombe Folk and Police Museum WIXFP.1998.886/1 and WIXFP.1998.886/2), and ultimately one of the founding collections of the Museum of English Rural Life at Reading in 1951.

### 11.3 An English Folk or Open Air Museum? The quest continues

In *Landscape and Englishness*, David Matless points out the 'heterogeneity of the rural' and the 'contested nature of landscape' in the interwar period, and the contrast between the 'preservationist vision of a planned, modern Englishness' and an organicist vision which espoused 'an anti-urban ruralism' (Matless, 1998, p103). The tension between these two approaches to village life and rural England, the modernist and the anti-modernist, becomes manifest in the continual failure of attempts to set up an English Folk Museum both in the interwar period and in the period immediately following the Second World War<sup>152</sup> – and by contrast the often successful attempts to set up small museums in villages and market towns.

Sir Henry Miers's *Report* to the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust, as discussed earlier, did not include the national museums within its remit; they were being investigated more or less concurrently by a Royal Commission, which reported in 1929:

---

<sup>152</sup> See Chapter 14.2 below.



No Folk Museum illustrating the domestic life of our people in the past is at present in existence. Attention has been called to this deficiency by various witnesses, particularly by Dr R E M Wheeler, Keeper of the London Museum.... There should certainly be one each eventually for England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland; of these the most urgent is that relating to England: it would constitute a first attempt at an English Museum. Houses, cottages, work-rooms, etc, and many other illustrations of the life of the people are fast disappearing, and in a very few years it will be impossible to make such an Open Air Museum. It would clearly be of a national character, and should be situated, if possible, in London. Two appropriate sites which seem likely to be available are (1) the Botanic Gardens in Regent's Park, which will be vacated by the Royal Botanic Society in 1932, and (2) the 66 acres of ground surrounding Chiswick House, which has recently been acquired by the Chiswick and Brentford Urban District Council. If confined to an Open Air Institution there would be no need for any large building on the site, for it would consist entirely of cottages and other such small structures illustrating the life of the people, so that even in so central a district as Regent's Park, nothing of any magnitude or of an unsightly nature need be introduced; the principal objections, therefore, to such a site could be avoided. It would, of course, be desirable, if possible, to secure some house in the neighbourhood to serve as a museum of the indoor type. Such an outdoor Museum, far from interfering with the amenities of any park or open space in which it is placed, would do a great deal towards making it more attractive; the old cottages and workrooms, open to any visitor, and furnished with all that gives them the appearance of being inhabited and used would be most interesting and instructive, and would probably attract large numbers of visitors. (*Final Report of the Royal Commission on National Museums and Galleries*, 1929, p60-61)

Following the publication of the Report, a Folk Museum Committee was set up by the Office of Works and the Board of Education to consider the recommendation that a National Folk Museum should be established, if possible in London. As reported in the *Museums Journal*, the committee included Mortimer Wheeler, Sir Henry Miers and Sir John Myres of the Royal Anthropological Institute. (*MJ*, Vol.30, No.8, Feb.1931, p300) The list of members was followed by a statement:

We are particularly requested to state that the Committee has been set up because there seemed to be some prospect of obtaining the necessary funds from private sources. There is no intention of using public funds either for the establishment of the Museum, or for its subsequent upkeep.

A good many optimistic supporters of the plan will, no doubt, be disappointed, but really in the present state of the country's finances nothing more was to be expected. After all, similar museums in other countries are due to individual initiative and private support (ibid.).

The Committee was, according to Wheeler, "on the point of promulgation when the financial crisis of 1932 intervened" (Wheeler, 1934, p191) and although Wheeler himself was optimistic that it might resume its work, it did not do so and, according to S. F. Markham's *Report on the Museums and Galleries of the British Isles*, 1938:

A reasoned, constructive report was prepared by that committee with reference to a specific site, but its promulgation was stopped in 1932, 'the committee being of the opinion that in view of the financial situation then existing no useful purpose would be served by proceeding with their reference, and no report was therefore submitted'! – [*Hansard*, February 28<sup>th</sup>, 1938] (Markham, 1938, p46)

Wheeler, who was then Keeper of The London Museum, used the opportunity of his Presidential Address to the Museums Association in 1934 to outline the committee's discussions and the proposals they had developed for a 'National Folk Museum'<sup>153</sup>. Following an initial survey and analysis of folk museums abroad, they had decided that the museum should consist of two parts, an *Indoor Part* and an *Outdoor Part* "the

---

<sup>153</sup> Its scope was to be England, not Britain.

two to be complementary and to be situated in close proximity to each other" (Wheeler, 1934, p192), as were Skansen and the Nordiska Museet in Stockholm. Wheeler described the *Indoor Part* briefly as including "objects illustrating country crafts, folklore etc., from all parts of England" (ibid.) together with models and dioramas of other crafts and industries and "a limited series of comparative models of village architecture" (ibid). This would be "a sort of Anthropological Museum with a localized and restricted purpose" (ibid.).

The discussions around the *Outdoor Part* were more difficult, but eventually the committee decided that "partly due to variations in the historical tradition and partly to sharp differences in geographical and geological environment" it would be an impossible task for a single museum to represent the whole complexity of the traditional English scene. Their intention instead was "to provide *a single small coherent sample of one type or another of the English village* with only a sufficient range of structure and equipment to demonstrate the main phases in the development of English social life and custom prior to the Industrial Revolution" (original emphasis, Wheeler, 1934, p193)

Despite the modest ambitions of this scheme, which the committee felt would only need ten to fifteen acres of land and have the lowest annual revenue cost of any national museum,

and despite Wheeler's hopes, the report was never published and the second attempt to set up an English folk museum faded away.

J.W. Robertson Scott, a member of the pre-war group urging the use of the Crystal Palace, had not lost heart though, and he took up the baton once again, this time in *The Countryman*, a quarterly magazine which he had founded in 1927<sup>154</sup>, but with a slightly different slant from his efforts before the First World War. This time he thought that what were probably needed were three different kinds of museum:

First, there is the village collection, to deal with the immediate district, and to be housed in an old cottage, tithe barn, disused chapel or school. Then comes the county museum to contain a representative collection in a large house, the grounds of which might become a folk park. Finally, there ought to be a national collection to rank with our general museums. (*The Countryman*, October 1938, p259)

Even after the early demise of the second attempt to set up an English Folk Museum, Wheeler continued to be associated in the public mind with the idea of folk museums, and in October 1935 he was invited to perform the opening ceremony at Bishop Hooper's Lodging in Gloucester<sup>155</sup>, which in a very few years became more widely known as the Gloucester Folk

---

<sup>154</sup> Later described by Scott's biographer as "the most successful venture in periodical publishing between the wars" (Cripps, 2004)

<sup>155</sup> Amongst the guests at the ceremony was Viscount Bledisloe, who was President of the National Council of Social Service between 1935 and 1938. He had recently retired as Governor-General of New Zealand.

Museum<sup>156</sup> (Hannam-Clark, 1942). In his address, reported extensively in *The Citizen*, Wheeler congratulated the Corporation on bringing together a “nucleus of a Gloucestershire Folk Collection”, a scheme which “lay very close to his heart”, as he had been one of a group of people who had been ‘agitating’ for a national folk museum:

In their agitation for the formation of a national folk museum, they were urged by the thought and knowledge that in this small and crowded country the supervention of what might be called a mass-industrialism was ousting and destroying the relics of the old individual craftsmanship, and of old local custom at an increasing and devastating rate. The good old personal craftsmanship of the village cobbler, the village weaver, the village wagon-builder, was approaching extinction. (THE CITIZEN, 11<sup>th</sup> October, 1935)

So far, much is as his audience probably expected, but Wheeler was no anti-modernist as his paper to the Museums Association conference in 1934 discussed earlier makes clear

I am not one of those antiquaries who deplore machinery. We live in a streamline age, and streamlines are generally beautiful. But I do deplore the clumsiness with which we too often use our machinery... To the impatient modern citizen the rather leisurely

---

<sup>156</sup> *Short Guide to the Folk Museum*, 1942, price 3d, Free to Service Men “Compiled specially for the Imperial and Allied Troops in the neighbourhood by Councillor Captain T. Hannam-Clark, Chairman of the City Library and Museum Committee. Curator: Charles Green (On War Service)” The Gloucester City Museum, which contained the traditional subjects of art, natural history and archaeology, closed on the outbreak of war but “no attempt was made to alter the character of the Folk Museum” (Hannam-Clark, p5) There might be a number of reasons why the decision was made to keep this museum open, rather than the City Museum with its more various collections, one of which could possibly be that it would serve as a reminder of the England that was being fought for. In Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger’s 1944 film *A Canterbury Tale*, set in the imaginary Kent village of Chillingbourne, this is the role of the museum in which local history lectures are given to local servicemen. I am most grateful to Nigel Cox, Keeper of Social History, City of Gloucester Museums, for access to the Folk Museum’s archives, and to Nichola Johnson, University of East Anglia, for reference to *A Canterbury Tale*.

craftsmanship of the pre-industrial era is liable to seem an obstructive, pedestrian thing. But the pedestrian ... still has a place, even in this mechanised age (Wheeler, 1934, p196).

Wheeler continued, probably to the surprise of his Gloucester audience:

But in admiring the simple perfection of Bishop Hooper's lodging, he would not thereby imply that a different but equivalent beauty might not attach to a ferro-concrete house.

"I would even go further" he added, "I would not altogether agree with the view that there was something immeasurably finer in the old village craftsman who made himself a complete set of furniture, or a complete pot, or a complete wagon than in his modern successor. There are craftsmen just as fine and proud in a modern shipbuilder's yard, or a modern motor-car factory; and a modern Schneider Cup aeroplane or a modern express engine is just as much the product of loving care as was the stage coach of a century gone" (ibid.).

He concluded by urging them to consider carrying the collections forward into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and to add gramophone records and short films – radical suggestions at that time and for that occasion<sup>157</sup>. Here we have exemplified the tensions between modern and anti-modern attitudes to the everyday and to rural culture and the rural community that were so apparent in the inter-war years.

---

<sup>157</sup> Although Wheeler was still active after the Second World War, and in fact gained the height of his popularity through his television appearances in the early 1950s, notably on the quiz show *Animal, Vegetable and Mineral*, he was not involved in the final attempt to set up an English Folk Museum, and his remarks at Gloucester perhaps indicate an impatience with the anti-modernist nostalgic ruralism evinced by some of the members behind the later scheme (see Chapter 14.1)

## Gloucester Folk Museum



*Image 6: Gloucester Folk Museum, Bishop Hooper's Lodgings, opened by Mortimer Wheeler in 1935. (Taken from a postcard purchased in October 2009)*

Although this second attempt had failed, there was a third and final effort after the Second World War. However, as we shall see in Chapter 14.1, the participants do not appear to have given due consideration to the careful discussions and recommendations of the nature, scope and size of a folk museum put forward by the Office of Works committee and it too was unsuccessful.



## CHAPTER 12: VOLUNTEER - RUN MUSEUMS IN THE 1920s AND 1930s

### 12.1 Introduction

In a previous chapter (Chapter 8) a detailed case study was given of the Victoria Jubilee Museum at Cawthorne, which appears to be the only volunteer-led museum surviving from the period before the watershed of the First World War. A far greater number of similar small museums in rural towns and villages have been identified that survive from the 1920s and 1930s. In fact, twenty-six museums<sup>158</sup> have been identified that were set up in that period of increasing activity in many rural communities, (Brassley, 2006; Burchardt, 2002) as has been discussed in an earlier chapter (Chapter 10).

Not all of these are still in existence (Beer, Dunstable, East Hendred, Petersham, Polperro and Westmill) although in some instances the collections they contained have survived in other museums. Others closed but were later revived (Aldeburgh, Maldon, Wallingford and Wotton-under-Edge). Some are in

---

<sup>158</sup> Abingdon 1931; Aldeburgh 1920s; Ashwell 1930; Beer (closed in 1939); Braintree 1927; Bridport 1932; Clun 1932; Dunstable 1925 (closed in 1938); Dunwich 1935; East Hendred 1933 (closed 1944); Faversham 1925; Filkins 1931; Holsworthy 1935; Ilfracombe 1933; Maldon 1922; Petersham 1925; Polperro (closed in 1939); Portland 1932; Rye 1928; Sandwich 1927; Southwold 1927; Wallingford 1920s; West Hoathly 1935; Westmill 1922 (closed); Winchcombe 1928; Wotton-under-Edge 1930s

towns which have grown considerably and are now staffed through the appropriate district council (Abingdon, Braintree, Bridport and Ilfracombe) and The Priest's House at West Hoathly is part of a county-wide organisation Sussex Past (the Sussex Archaeological Society). Portland Museum, set up by Dr Marie Stopes in 1932, subsequently became managed by Weymouth Borough Council, but in 2008 reverted to being volunteer-led. East Hendred, although open to the public from time to time was primarily a private venture, as was West Hoathly before 1935, although its collections are now in the public domain<sup>159</sup>. At least four of these museums were started through the initiative and drive of women (East Hendred, Portland, Westmill and Winchcombe).

Only a minority have been studied in detail for the present project, but their histories, it is suggested, are of interest not only to the study of the English countryside between the wars as a period of initiative and regeneration rather than decline (Brassley et al. 2006), but to the broader history of the development of museums in England and of the relationship of museums to the rural community.

---

<sup>159</sup> At the Museum of English Rural Life at Reading.

## **12.2 Paternalism or Personal Possession: Westmill, Winchcombe, East Hendred**

We saw in an earlier chapter (Chapter 8) that although the Victoria Jubilee Museum at Cawthorne had been established as a paternalistic gesture and had been tightly controlled in its initial years, its ultimate survival had depended not on the landowner but on a wider body of support and interest through the Cawthorne Museum Society. The following studies of museums at Westmill, Hertfordshire, and Winchcombe, Gloucestershire show that, whilst there is some acknowledgement that paternalism and control cannot necessarily ensure survival, movement towards a more democratic system of governance and involvement is still not seen as a solution. The third museum discussed in this section at East Hendred in Berkshire, could easily be dismissed as a purely personal collection except that from the evidence that survives it is clear that the owner intended it to have a public purpose and to be of and for the village itself.

These three studies also show that, as we saw at Cawthorne earlier, small museums were not isolated from the wider museums community and that there was some knowledge of similar museums and in a few cases even contact between

them as well as contact with larger museums and with professional curators.

The type of collections held by these museums was changing too from the earlier Cawthorne model, as all three concentrate primarily on expressing a local identity through the acquisition of everyday items and other material, often archaeological or geological, from the village itself. The exception is Westmill, which will be considered first, as its foundation is still very much within the paternalistic mode. Here some of the elite donors were still giving ethnographic material, and Mrs Greg who was the founder, gave photographs of the 'grander' items which she had given to other, larger museums, notably in Manchester, which she may have considered inappropriate for a village museum<sup>160</sup>.

Our understanding of both Westmill and Winchcombe museums has been greatly enhanced by the discovery of letters from Mrs Greg of Westmill to Miss Eleanor Adlard of Winchcombe, amongst the Adlard papers in Gloucestershire Archives that relate to the early years of the museum (Gloucestershire Archives D2218/2/1-10). This exchange<sup>161</sup> was initiated after a letter by Adlard written in response to the

---

<sup>160</sup> Mrs Greg was a follower of John Ruskin, and possibly she was aware of his earlier writing on village museums quoted earlier.

<sup>161</sup> Unfortunately Adlard's letters to Mrs Greg do not appear to have survived.

publication of the Final Report of the Royal Commission on the National Museums and Galleries was published in *The Times* of October 14<sup>th</sup>, 1929:

The interesting report on National Museums leads me to urge the possibilities of small parochial ones. Practically every village has a hall or women's institute, or better still a Church parvise, which could be easily adapted without undue expense, and serve as a focus for preserving the fast disappearing country antiques. Lowly homes have no room for "curios," which already are but of little interest and sooner or later end in the scrap heap. The farm labourer's breast plough, his master's wooden cider bottle, the hautboy which cheered up the church choir, local tokens, the housewife's "lazyback" kettle grid, the carter's brass horse bells and ornaments – all these are obsolete, but redolent with tradition and country lore. Such collections are still possible, and if sponsored by the county archaeological society and guided by the nearest town museum curator, the most timid amateur can face fearlessly what lions may arise, and do a real national service.

Eleanor Adlard

Hon. Secretary of the Winchcombe Church Parvise Museum  
(THE TIMES, October 14<sup>th</sup> 1929, p10)

Adlard's letter elicited one or two personal responses, including one from Mrs Greg:

"27 St Mary Abbot's Court, W.14

October 15<sup>th</sup> 29

Dear Madam

I am much interested in your letter in yest. Times on "Parish Museums" It is a subject on which I am specially interested and it occurs to me you may care to know of at least 1 such parish or village museum of which I send you a catalogue. The idea came to me that it might be a good way of utilising a 1600 cottage which was not fit for habitation & yet far too picturesque and interesting to destroy but you will see what is said in the introduction by Mr Guy Ewing who before his death worked continually for the formation of such museums.

I trust your letter may induce many villages – perhaps through their W.I.<sup>162</sup> to start and support so desirable a centre of interest.

Yours truly

M.Greg (Gloucestershire Archives, D2218 2/8)

A few days later, on October 20<sup>th</sup>, Mrs Greg wrote again in response to Eleanor Adlard's reply:

Your letter gives me great pleasure – it is so good to meet with anyone who is so keen on what one is so deeply interested in oneself & I feel the work of treasuring things of the least is most important.  
(Gloucestershire Archives D2218 2/3)

That shared interest in village museums came from two women whose social situations in their respective communities were rather different. The Adlards owned a paper mill at Postlip, on the edge of Winchcombe, and although comparatively well off, were not major landowners in the area, where the greater part of the land belonged to the Dent (later Dent-Brocklehurst) family of Sudeley Castle. The Gregs, on the other hand were the principal landowners in Westmill, and owned a number of properties elsewhere in England. In many ways, Mary Greg had more in common with John Roddam Spencer Stanhope at Cawthorne, for she too was a follower of John Ruskin and had a keen interest in art and in craftsmanship and towards the end of her long life<sup>163</sup> became involved in the Guild of St George, to whom she bequeathed her property in Westmill. Like the

---

<sup>162</sup> The role of the Women's Institute movement in encouraging an interest in local history and in the ordinary, everyday objects with which country women were familiar has been outlined earlier in Chapter 10.5.

<sup>163</sup> Mary Greg died in 1949, just short of her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday,

Spencer Stanhopes, the Gregs had established a range of village amenities at Westmill, which included a village hall, a village library, almshouses and from 1922 a village museum, all of which they invested in the T. & M. Greg Trust, which still exists to manage the surviving amenities. The Gregs were prolific donors to museums, most notably to Manchester City Art Gallery<sup>164</sup> (the Greg fortune originated in their mills at Styal in Cheshire, now owned by the National Trust) but also to the Victoria and Albert Museum and to its branch in Bethnal Green, and to the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge among others (Manchester Art Galleries: Greg correspondence, 2009.122/639).

What was collected and exhibited in the two museums was also rather different, as has been touched on briefly above.

When Eleanor Adlard replied to Mrs Greg's first letter, she must have elaborated on the list of items in the Winchcombe Church

---

<sup>164</sup> A large volume of correspondence between Mary Greg and Manchester City Art Gallery between 1926 and 1949 has recently been transcribed and will be made available via the gallery website. I am most grateful to Alex Woodall of Manchester City Art Gallery for advance access to the collection. One of the interesting points to arise from this correspondence is that it is clear that Mrs Greg was spending considerable sums of money acquiring items such as dolls houses and old toys for the delight and enjoyment of Manchester children and one of the Westmill Museum trustees even made a model for display in Manchester, when no such things were shown in Westmill. Did she see the needs of urban children as greater than those of rural children, or was she happy that her gifts would be seen by thousands of children rather than tens or hundreds? Did she believe that the audience for the Westmill Museum would not necessarily be Westmill people, and therefore the museum was primarily there to tell others about the former life of the village? Or did she simply believe that rural children were not able to appreciate these things or that their lives were rich enough simply by being in the countryside?

Parvise Museum for Mrs Greg's response included a very gentle reproof to Adlard's collecting pretensions:

What treasures you seem to have saved already - & what a grand nucleus you have in the old Tudor Altar Cloth - very few could boast so rich a possession. I should so much like to have a list of the lesser finds - we put a list of what those who worked in the fields might look for with drawing of flint or metal implements in our Village Museum Entrance & my husband talked to those who were likely to be interested & this brought a few things but our village is a purely agricultural one, & no such treasures as tokens are likely to be found - hence you will see we have such things are (sic) iron things - firebacks and kettle tilters from old cottage(s) & flails & such farm implements. I do not think we have breast plough or wooden bottle (harvesters) but I must ask my deputy curator who is most interested in gathering all he can into the museum. He is the carpenter of the village & so has some special opportunities of finding such things as old locks & keys etc etc. You will notice in our catalogue that many things do not seem worth having - but I felt we ought not to refuse anyone who offered their treasures anyway for the present; later on perhaps whoever is in charge will eliminate the least interesting. .... I do not know how large the parvise is - or if more visitors would go to see the contents if the things were separate from the church - personally I should think a separate building was used - our cottage has a modest noticeboard which has brought a few passers by who seem impressed by the "Venture" & so I am hoping the idea of parish museums may be carried further.  
(Gloucestershire Archives D2218 2/3)

The Westmill Museum catalogue<sup>165</sup> gives brief details of three hundred and forty seven items, usually just the name such as 'Candle Box' and 'Old Lantern' but occasionally with small additional details, such as 'Two Iron Quoits used on the Green at Westmill' and 'Old Glass Clothes Presser, used before the

<sup>165</sup> A copy of the Westmill Museum catalogue was given to Ashwell Village Museum by E.O. Fordham (Ashwell Village Museum 1935.7.5). The Catalogue is undated, but is post 1924. I am most grateful to Peter Greener, Hon. Curator, Ashwell Village Museum, for drawing my attention to the catalogue and for providing me with a scanned copy.



invention of Flat Irons', together with the names of their donors, forty men and thirty women. A large proportion of the collections listed in the museum catalogue were domestic items, one hundred and thirty two as against twenty nine from agriculture and only fourteen relating to crafts and trades. Interestingly, twenty five items related to the First World War, both from the home front and abroad, possibly one of the earliest instances of a local museum collecting such relics<sup>166</sup>.

The introduction to the Westmill catalogue was written by Guy Ewing, the son of a former rector of Westmill. In October 1922 Ewing had published 'A Village History Exhibition as an Educational Factor' in the *Journal of the Ministry of Agriculture*, describing an exhibition at Cowden in Kent in which he had been involved<sup>167</sup>, and which was later republished in 1930 by the Historical Association. He also wrote *Westmill: the story of a Hertfordshire parish* (Ewing, 1928) a copy of which Mrs Greg sent to Eleanor Adlard<sup>168</sup>.

---

<sup>166</sup> Mrs Greg's letter also includes a reference to the "Westmill "Archives" which we so presumptuously call a tin box with any papers or pictures or newspaper cuttings relating to the place – including a list of the villagers & the route including I think villages where they were to sleep in case of the Germans landing during the war & the badges of those who were responsible for the flight." It is not clear whether these have survived. (Mary Greg to Eleanor Adlard, October 20<sup>th</sup> 1929, Gloucestershire Archives D2218 2/3)

<sup>167</sup> From 1924 to 1929 Ewing was Chairman of the Kent Rural Community Council (Personal communication from Dr Jeremy Burchardt, University of Reading, May 2009)

<sup>168</sup> E.O. Fordham also donated a copy of this book to Ashwell Village Museum.

I think you are sure also to be interested in parish Histories & possible that of Winchcombe has been written – in case it has not – I am sending you tomorrow a copy of that of our village – Westmill in Herts. Written by the same Mr Guy Ewing who wrote the preface to the Westmill Catalogue – one of the keenest & most valuable workers for Village Museums possible. He would have been most interested in your work had he lived. (Mary Greg to Eleanor Adlard, October 20<sup>th</sup> 1929, Gloucestershire Archives D2218 2/3)

Perhaps this was the spur to Eleanor Adlard to write her own history of Winchcombe, *Winchcombe cavalcade: or sidelights on Winchcombe history*, published in 1939 with an introduction by H. J. Massingham, in which she gives an account of the Winchcombe Church Porch Museum, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Among the seventy donors to the Westmill Museum, Mrs Greg herself gave eighty items, and a further thirty-eight items came from Coles, her estate in Westmill. Charles Hummerstone, the carpenter she mentions in her letter, was the second largest donor with fifty-eight items. In the catalogue, Hummerstone and other male villagers are listed by an initial such as C. Hummerstone or G. Rayment, whereas some male donors have the courtesy title of 'Mr.' before their names. The conventions of the time would suggest that this distinction indicates a class division— in other words fourteen of the male donors to the museum came from the elite class, and one, Mr

Inglis-Davis, takes us straight back to the cabinet of curiosities through his donation of a baby crocodile and miscellaneous ethnographic curios. Altogether, elite donors<sup>169</sup> gave one hundred and sixty items to the museum, or 46%, so whether these could truly be described as treasured 'things of the least' is debatable. Certainly their original owners are not acknowledged. One donor, a Mr Ollerenshaw, a friend of the Greg's from Cheshire, was planning his own village museum in Wilmslow<sup>170</sup>, and Mrs Greg sent a number of items to him via the Manchester Art Gallery<sup>171</sup> (Manchester Art Galleries: Greg correspondence, 2009.122/639).

---

<sup>169</sup> As there is no distinction in the forms of address of women donors, who are all described as Miss or Mrs, the number of elite donors and their gifts may well be greater.

<sup>170</sup> I have not been able to establish whether this plan came to fruition.

<sup>171</sup> A reprint from the Jubilee Edition of the *Alderley and Wilmslow Advertiser* For August 22<sup>nd</sup> 1924, found among the Greg correspondence in Manchester, indicates that Ollerenshaw had helped her at Westmill: "Mr. Ollerenshaw, who last year assisted in arranging a local history museum housed in a quaint old thatched house in a South of England village, said that it was pleasing to see such a collection of so many obsolete articles found in the old homes of that district, and which the villagers were delighted to give to enrich and add interest to their new local history museum."

# Westmill Museum Catalogue

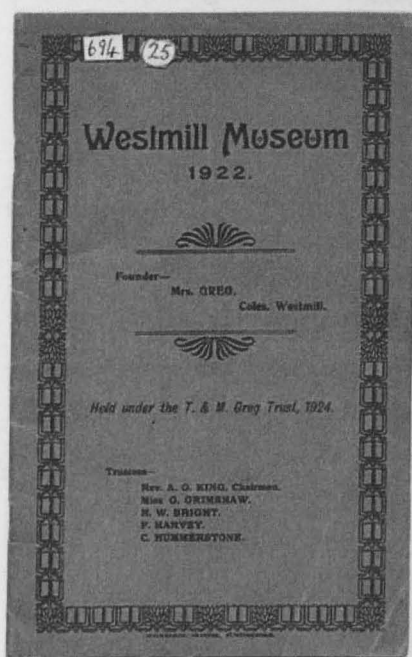


Image 7: The front cover of the Westmill Museum catalogue (Image kindly provided by Peter Greener, Ashwell Village Museum).

No.	Exhib.	Donor.	No.	Exhib.	Donor.
29.	Two Sheep Brands	... C. H.	79.	Copper Brazier Bowl from Constantinople	... Miss Ashforth.
30.			80.	Decorated Gourd	... Miss Yeo.
31.			81.	Small Basket, woven from grass by the natives of the Navigators Islands	... Mr. Inglis-Davis.
32.			82.	Cocunut Shell, carved by Fijians	... Mr. Inglis-Davis.
33.			83.	Apple Corer, made from Mutton Bone	... Mrs. Greg.
34.			84.	Piece of Submarine Cable	... Coles.
35.			85.	Antler of Fallow Deer (out of Coles Park), used for nailing knots in the hall-ropes at Braughing Church	... F. Barley.
36.			86.	Wig Cutters (Monsted)	... Mr. Ollerenshaw.
37.			87.	Small Lens	... Mrs. Greg.
38.			88.	Small Decorated Pot	... do.
39.	Candle Box	... Coles.	89.	Small Brass, "Our Best Batter"	... C. H.
40.	Dessert Spoon, found in garden at Westmill	... B. Hart.	90.	Seal of Dragoon Company	... Mrs. Greg.
41.	Folding Fork	... Coles.	91.	Knitting Needle Shield	... Mrs. Searling.
42.	Jockey's Spur, 19th century	... Coles.	92.	Black Bracelet	... do.
43.	Fork and Skewer	... Mrs. S. Hammer.	93.	Black Jet Bangles	... do.
44.	Framed Plaster Plaque	... Coles. [stone]	94.	Smelling Bottle	... do.
45.	Picture of "Coles" in Wool	... Coles.	95.	Carved Ivory Handle	... E. Hart.
46.	Child's Crutch	... Coles.	96.	Picture Box	... Mrs. Jos. Smith.
47.	Old Candle Stick	... Mrs. G. Coxall.	97.	Salt Box	... Mr. Johnson.
48.	Lump Sugar Cutters	... C. H.	98.	Folding Ivory Tooth Pick	... Braughing.
49.	Two Single Pot-Hooks	... Coles.	99.	Sund Box	... Mr. Johnson.
50.	Kettle Tilter, or Lazy Back	... Coles.	100.	Sund Box	... A. C. Carter.
51.	Pewter Teapot with Chinese figuring	... T. C. Hummerstone	101.	Carved Dog-Oak Pipe	...
52.	Pewter Coffee Pot	... T. C. H.	102.	Tobacco Pipe, found 8 ft. below the surface of the ground while digging foundations at Brent Pelham, 1800	... B. Hart.
53.	Pewter Mustard Pot	... C. H.	103.	Old Shell Pipe, with Wood Stem, South Sea Island	... Mrs. Greg.
54.	Pewter Salt Cellar	... C. H.	104.	Old Pipe Bowl	... Coles.
55.	Pewter Pepper Castor	... Mrs. W. Hammerstone, Theddon Bois.	105.	Clay Tobacco Pipe, found embedded in a wall, evidently placed there by a workmen and forgotten	... Coles.
56.	Splow Box, 1797	... Coles.	106.	Old Pipe Bowl	... T. H.
57.	Grate (Queen Anne period)	... C. H.	107.	Bi-centenary Pipe	... Mrs. Ollerenshaw.
58.	Two Iron Quills (used on the Green at Westmill)	... Coles.	108.	Early Clay "Fairy" Pipe	... Mrs. Greg.
59.	Old Glass Clothes Presser, used before the invention of Flat Irons	... Mrs. Coxall.	109.	Polished Agates	...
60.	Golfing Irons and Stands	... C. H.			
61.	Small Heater Shape Iron	... Coles.			
62.	Old Iron Stool	... C. H.			
63.	Old Lantern	... Gen. Sammons.			
64.	Tinder Box, Flint, and Irons	... Coles.			
65.	Dutch Oven	... C. H.			
66.	Warning Fan	... Coles.			
67.	Decorated Lead Pump	... C. H.			
68.	Patent Kneeler (one of the first articles to be sold under patent)	... Mrs. Greg.			

Image 8: Two pages from the Westmill Museum catalogue. The names of elite male donors, such as Mr Inglis-Davis and Mr Ollerenshaw can be seen on the right hand page (Image kindly provided by Peter Greener, Ashwell Village Museum).

The Introduction to the Westmill Museum Catalogue is worth quoting in full because of the insights that it gives into an emotional and anti-modernist attachment to the countryside, in some ways echoing those of George Bourne's *Change in the Village* from 1912 (Bourne, 1912) mentioned earlier:

Bless and praise we famous men –  
Men of little showing –  
For their work continueth,  
Broad and deep continueth,  
Great beyond their knowing.  
Kipling

The Village Museum is a shrine raised to the memory of Men of Little Showing, housed in the Temple that was their Dwelling-house, as it was that of their fathers from generation to generation. A kindly quiet race, living by Husbandry and the Arts that supplied its needs, father handing down to son the Mysteries of his Craft in which each strove to excel.

Suddenly the world was shaken by a new Power – Steam, with a mighty blast, blew Handicraft away, and the Village, once the capital of a little world, was linked with steel fetters to the conquering City.

Whirled away by Steam, the young men departed, to challenge Fortune in the crowded marts, sending back steam-made tools, cheaper, if less excellent, than those their fathers used. Yet there are still living those who remember, and remembering regret, the thud of the flail (frail we used to call it) through the winter months, the horn by which the Lord of the Harvest called his labourers, and the swish of the sickle in the corn, who knew the name of every field where they went gleaning as children, and thought no shame to wear a clean smock-frock on Sunday. To these the Village has a sacredness, not yet understood (sic) of their children, and surely we are right, we would preserve the savour of those days. "The more pride we can take in our village...the better men we shall be." Thus, in our village, spoke he, to whom the waking once more of the old village spirit was a passionate ideal, to whose help-meet, carrying on his work, we owe this Museum.

"Let us take pride in our village and so give thanks to those who have made it what it is."

Ask the Keeper of the House, himself a Craftsman, to show you the sickle, an implement as old as Husbandry itself, the emblem of patient Industry. Time was, before the chattering self-binder shaved the cornfields close, when stubble, knee-high, gave shelter to the partridges, and to the sportsman scope to train his dog. Their Norman conquerors taught the Reapers who took their "beevor" in the elm-shade, or gathered largesse from the chance intruder, the words they used, but Jutes and Saxons, Romans and Britons too, used the same sickle ere the Normans came. The dibblers he will also show you, modern improvements a thousand years ago. These have given place to the Horse-drill, even the seed basket of the Broad-caster must soon take its place with the bygones. Ask him to show you too the Horse-brasses. These were the waggoner's own; with loving care he decked the harness of his charges, taking payment in proudly-tossed poll-plume and bravely burnished brass. See also their cunning devices, the Kettle-tilter, the apple-corer fashioned from a sheep's shank-bone, and all the other children of necessity. Look at the Chimney-Crane, its comely curves and its head-studs, and see how the care of the craftsman breeds beauty, how "the Smith setteth his mind to finish his work and watcheth to polish it perfectly."

Let us be grateful to those who have gathered and preserved these things for us, for "wisdom that is hid, and treasure that is hoarded up, what profit is in them both?" (Westmill Museum Catalogue, nd. [Ashwell Village Museum 1935.7.5])

It is, perhaps, significant that Ewing begins his Introduction to the Catalogue with a quotation from Rudyard Kipling ('A School Song' from *Stalky & Co.*, 1899), as Kipling was one of the most influential and popular authors to celebrate what he saw as the deep continuity of rural life and tradition in England that stretched back from immemorial time, most notably in *Puck of Pook's Hill*, which was first published in 1906. Mackenzie, in his Introduction to the World's Classics edition of *Puck of Pook's Hill* and *Rewards and Fairies* (Mackenzie, 1993) suggests that these two books present "as finely as anything in English - that distinctive evoking of the past we may call the archaeological imagination." (ibid. pxiv). "The Puck books begin" Mackenzie continues "from the fragments of the buried past. Mary Lascelles catches the significance of this starting point: '*Things*, as the novelist and essayist must know, are evocative, and none have more of this inherent power than artifacts - objects made, handled, used by man.'" (Mackenzie, ibid, pxviii, quoting from Lascelles (1980) *The Story Teller Retrieves the Past*).

Mackenzie suggests that it was the discovery of artefacts, including a Neolithic axe-head,<sup>172</sup> during the digging of a well and the clearance of a pond at Kipling's Sussex property,

---

<sup>172</sup> "Its deepest mud yielded us a perfectly polished Neolithic axe-head with but one chip on its still venomous edge." Kipling, *Something of Myself*, ed.R. Hampson with an Introduction by Richard Holmes, 1987, p142 quoted in Mackenzie, 1993, pxiii.

Bateman's, which became the catalyst for the writing of the *Puck* stories. Perhaps Ewing hoped that the sickle and the dibblers would take the place of the axe-head in triggering the historical imagination of visitors to the Westmill Museum.

Macdonald, in her discussion of the Museum of Island Life on the Island of Skye, Scotland (Macdonald, 2002) suggests that the transfer of everyday objects from their original place of use to a museum changes their nature:

However mundane they (the objects) were before, they are now to some extent sacred. Museums bestow such sanctity. They also anchor or stabilize objects; they remove them from daily use or transaction. A museum, for most objects, is a final resting place - a moment frozen in time for future contemplation - not a stop-over on a journey elsewhere (Macdonald, 2002, p92).

Such objects then become the embodiments of the locality and of the social life that once existed there. They are mnemonics, carrying the past into the present; the museum becomes a "manifestation of the very existence of the locality to which it 'belongs' " (Macdonald, 2002 p100). Ewing's introduction attempts to impart the 'sacredness' of the old village that he feels is expressed through the display and preservation of the slight fragments of past activities, and the rightness of the attempt to 'preserve the savour of those days' in the museum. Like Kipling, Ewing is calling up a Deep England, an England that existed before the period of the last successful invasion of the country.



## Westmill Museum



WESTMILL MUSEUM—EXTERIOR.  
From a photograph.

*Image 9: The exterior of Westmill Museum taken from Guy Ewing's Westmill: the story of a Hertfordshire Parish (Ewing, 1928) (Image kindly provided by Peter Greener, Ashwell Village Museum)*



WESTMILL MUSEUM—INTERIOR.  
From a photograph.

*Image 10: The interior of Westmill Museum taken from Guy Ewing's Westmill: the story of a Hertfordshire Parish (Ewing, 1928) (Image kindly provided by Peter Greener, Ashwell Village Museum)*

Although Mrs Greg had hoped to ensure the museum's survival by the investing it in a trust, her wishes were not realised, possibly because the museum does not appear to have had a wider circle of supporters in the form of a society or association, unlike at Cawthorne, where the Museum Society underpinned the original paternalistic foundation and ensured its survival<sup>173</sup>.

The Winchcombe Church Porch Museum, or *Parvise* Museum, as Adlard referred to it in her letter to *The Times* quoted earlier, had a rather different genesis from that of Westmill. It would seem that at some point during 1925, Adlard became involved to an attempt to tidy up Winchcombe church in response to an increasing number of visitors (Gloucestershire Archives D2218 2/1) and during her work in the room above the porch, she discovered "underneath the disembowelled hassocks, torn hymnbooks and other junk, some treasures "(Gloucestershire Countryside, Vol. 4, No. 4 July – September 1941, p89) These 'treasures' were discarded items from the church and initially that would seem to have been the intended display. In an undated copy letter to the Church Wardens and Church Council Adlard wrote:

---

<sup>173</sup> The later history of the museum is unclear. In 1931, it was described as being administered by Trustees and financed by voluntary subscriptions, with the exhibits consisting of "miscellaneous objects of local interest, including old agricultural implements and by-gones" (Markham, 1931). It appears to have closed on the outbreak of war in 1939 (Markham, 1948), and it is uncertain whether it ever fully reopened. During the 1960s the surviving collections were transferred to Stevenage Museum and the building, the 'Temple' that was the dwelling house of the 'Men of Little Showing', was demolished leaving no trace (Cale, 2002).

Would it be possible to put the steps to the Porch Room in a usable state – with a view to collecting there the antiquities of the church and keeping them in good order? A charge for admission might be made & a good source of revenue opened. (Gloucestershire Archives D2218 2/1)

But the seeds were sown in Adlard's mind for a wider venture, and she began to approach other potential donors, including W. W. Smith Wood, who owned a large collection of posters and other printed material dating from 1727, who wrote to her in November 1925: "I think your suggestion of using the Porch Room at the Church as a Harbour for any suitable local antiquities a very good & sensible one" (ibid.), and it was this collection which, in later accounts that Adlard wrote,<sup>174</sup> became the foundation of the museum. However, it was to be a further three years before Adlard finally got the full approval of the Parochial Church Council (PCC) to use the Porch Room for a museum, although by this time she had already funded the repairs to the room and offered to advance money to provide cases (Letter from A. Ballinger, Hon. Sec of the PCC to Adlard, May 12<sup>th</sup> 1928, ibid). Reading the one-sided correspondence that survives, it is hard to resist the view that Adlard saw this very much as *her* venture, and that she only involved the PCC of necessity "as the Council will become permanently responsible for the care and upkeep of the suggested museum

---

<sup>174</sup> For example in *Gloucestershire Countryside*, January 1933, and July to September 1941 and in *Winchcombe Cavalcade*

this is only right" (ibid. Letter from F.M. Wickham, the Vicar, to Adlard, August 18<sup>th</sup> 1927).<sup>175</sup>

While the plans were under discussion, the PCC had formed a Porch Room Committee, with some members from the PCC and others nominated directly by Adlard. Once a separate Trust was formed, probably in 1930, the Trustees were to be the Archdeacon of Cheltenham, the Vicar of Winchcombe, a representative of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society<sup>176</sup> and a member of the Adlard family<sup>177</sup> – there was no suggestion that there should be any wider representation, and, as Adlard had appointed herself, as had Rev. C. T. Pratt at Cawthorne, the curator of the museum, no opportunities for involvement other than as a donor. This single

---

<sup>175</sup> "We know very little about these mills ... except in the case of Postlip Mill, near Winchcombe, where there are still a few retired employees who remember the old days and some of the processes from their own working days or those of their parents, and they recall the benevolent paternalism of the firm with affection and nostalgia. .... The Adlard family who ran the mill followed in the tradition of the old woolmen, that is some of the profits spilled over into the church and the building of almshouse for retired workers as well as the renovating and building of new cottages for the workers." Brill, 1973, pp157-158

<sup>176</sup> The first BGAS representative was D. W. Herdman, the Curator of Cheltenham Museum and Art Gallery. He gave Adlard practical help as well as advice, hand writing the labels for the museum "in a beautiful script" (Adlard, 1931) and on at least one occasion Adlard took him in her car to a meeting of the South West Group of Museums and Art Galleries (SWGMA records in Somerset Record Office A/BHT G3211 Box 5) The Winchcombe Church Porch Museum was among the earliest members of the Group, and is listed in the first *Handbook* for 1931-4 (SRO A/BHT G/3211 Box 1). Membership would have given her the opportunity to talk to other museum curators and to hear discussions of current museum debates.

<sup>177</sup> "This collecting and saving of essentially country gear is fascinating work and, given the goodwill of the Parish, a labour of love. Such a museum should aim at being the godchild of the nearest large one, passing on to its parent the more important finds as being more suitable for a wider public, and in return receiving help in dating and labelling. Above all, it should be ensured that adequate Trustees are elected so that the Museum has a fair chance of becoming a permanent affair." (*Gloucestershire Countryside*, Jan. 1933, p90)

handedness was acknowledged by H.J. Massingham when he wrote in *Shepherd's Calendar*:

Miss Eleanor Adlard of Postlip has piously collected fragments of old Cotswold into this former priest's room, like torn pieces from the page of an ancient manuscript of husbandry, a sickle used for reaping up to 1850, the labourer's portable cider-keg... (Massingham, 1938).

When items from the museum were loaned to *The Cotswold Tradition* exhibition held in Cirencester as part of the Festival of Britain celebrations in 1951, they were acknowledged to 'Miss Eleanor Adlard' and not to the museum (*The Cotswold Tradition* Catalogue, 1951).

Adlard's rather patronising attitude to some of the potential donors to the museum is very different from Mary Greg's wish of 'treasuring things of the least':

Lowly homes have no room for "curios," which already are but of little interest and sooner or later end in the scrap heap. The farm labourer's breast plough, his master's wooden cider bottle, the hautboy which cheered up the church choir, local tokens, the housewife's "lazyback" kettle grid, the carter's brass horse bells and ornaments – all these are obsolete, but redolent with tradition and country lore (THE TIMES, 14<sup>th</sup> October 1929, p10)

Even as late as 1941, she was repeating her view that "cottage homes are too small to keep anything which is not in everyday use" (*Gloucestershire Countryside*, Vol. 4, No. 4 July – September 1941, p89).

Like Pratt of Cawthorne before her, she too was in search of iconic items as well as the local memorabilia to draw into the museum the increasing number of tourists<sup>178</sup> and ramblers exploring the Cotswolds at this time (Brace, 1997). In her case these were a “particularly interesting collection given to us by Sir James Berry from his Belas Knap excavations” of 1927 (ibid). Belas Knap Long Barrow, and particularly the dry stone walling to the portals, had captured the ‘archaeological imagination’ of the late 1920s and 1930s, particularly after its restoration in 1931, the only barrow to be so treated (Grinsell, 1955; Parsons, 2002). Arthur Mee, writing in 1938 in the Gloucestershire volume of his popular series “*The King’s England*” helpfully signposted explorers to the museum:

In Belas Knapp, the great mound high on the hill a mile or so away, we are linked with the days of the worship of primitive gods. In 1931 the mound was opened, and in its sepulchral chambers a collection of skulls and flints, many now in the museum here, was found. (Mee, 1938, p419)

For many, including H. J. Massingham, (Massingham, 1937) Belas Knap could be taken to represent Deep Cotswold and therefore by implication a Deep England (Brace, 1997). In 1951 a large photograph of the walling at one of the portals was the very first exhibit in the *Cotswold Tradition* exhibition arranged for the Festival of Britain in 1951 in Cirencester. “This is the prototype” the catalogue entry reads “of all the stone walling

---

<sup>178</sup> “The Verger keeps the key ... admitting donors free but charging the tourist a trifle which goes towards the small cost of upkeep and insurance” (Adlard, *Gloucestershire Countryside*, Jan. 1933, p89)

that is fundamental to the Cotswold scene" (*The Cotswold Tradition Catalogue*, 1951, p9)<sup>179</sup>.

The future of the Church Porch Museum was not secured by the appointment of "adequate trustees" (Adlard, 1933, p90) however, and during the late 1950s and 1960s the museum appears to have gone into a decline. Indeed an article in 1958 by W. E. Stanley Merritt on the museum in *Gloucestershire Countryside* paints a sad and different picture:

for the student of social history it is by painstakingly piecing together the fragmentary evidence of quiet and unimportant lives during uneventful centuries that the strong heartbeats of a nation can best be heard. The annals of such are not written on gilded parchment nor enshrined in sculptured stone, but come to us as battered and broken relics of domestic life, discarded tools and what John Moore<sup>180</sup> calls "the attic-rubbish of a departed age".

The visitor approaches by a perilous spiral staircase followed most unexpectedly by two steps down and is almost literally precipitated into the middle of the

---

<sup>179</sup> The 'London Art Critic' reviewed the exhibition for the *Manchester Guardian* on May 29<sup>th</sup> 1951: "The striking and imaginative display of this exhibition begins with this rock, with a photograph of the dry (mortarless) stone-walling of the great burial mound of Belas Knap, which has stood for four thousand years on a hilltop looking west to the Severn, and with a piece of identical wall built specially for the show by Mr Holloway, of Nympsfield. The continuity of the Cotswold tradition could hardly be expressed in a more impressive fashion. Between Belas Knap and Mr Holloway's work come stone slates from the roof of a Roman villa a few miles away, the grave slab of a Saxon (or perhaps a Dane) and photographs of the superb churches and manor houses built from the profits of the wool trade" (MANCHESTER GUARDIAN, May 29<sup>th</sup> 1951, p5).

<sup>180</sup> John Moore (1907-1967) was a popular novelist, country writer and naturalist who lived for most of his life in and around Tewkesbury in Gloucestershire, basing most of his novels there, including his best known '*Brensham Trilogy*' published between 1945 and 1948 (Moore, 1985). His novel *Dance and Skylark* (Moore, 1951) is a comic account of a local history pageant arranged for the Festival of Britain. He organised the first Tewkesbury Abbey Festival in 1935, to which Eleanor Adlard lent items from the Church Porch Museum in Winchcombe (Gloucestershire Archives D2218 2/3), and was one of the founders of the Cheltenham Literary Festival. There is a small, independent museum in Tewkesbury devoted to his life and work, The John Moore Countryside Museum.

collection. His first impression is probably one of clutter and muddle, dust and rust and the untold remnants of generations of jumble sales. True, there is not much in the way of classification or arrangement....and most of the objects are very much the worse for wear (*Gloucestershire Countryside*, August 1958, p75)

A photograph of the then Vicar of Winchcombe in the *Cheltenham Chronicle and Gloucestershire Graphic* (December 10<sup>th</sup>, 1966, p8) hardly shows much improvement, with a jumble of material heaped under cases, and on the floor, comparing badly with the more ordered appearance of the museum shown in an earlier photograph (*Gloucestershire Countryside*, Jan. 1933). However, in 1969, following Adlard's death two years earlier, the museum transferred from the church to the former Town Hall in the centre of Winchcombe<sup>181</sup>, where it is now managed by the Town Trust and staffed by a team of volunteers.

Whatever her other shortcomings, Eleanor Adlard was an effective publicist for the Winchcombe Church Porch Museum through her letters to *The Times* and articles in *Gloucestershire Countryside* and the Royal Anthropological Institute's more popular journal *Man* (October 1931, no. 217-8, p 228) and of course through her contacts with the prolific rural writer H.J. Massingham. The Adlard papers in Gloucestershire Archives

---

<sup>181</sup> Eleanor Adlard was born in 1881 and died in 1967. There is a memorial to her in the south aisle of Winchcombe parish church.



that relate to the museum include correspondence from others interested in similar ventures in Ilfracombe, Lindfield, Long Compton and, as we have seen, Mrs Greg of Westmill. Lavinia Smith<sup>182</sup> of East Hendred in Berkshire had also got to hear of the venture, as is apparent from the following letter which she wrote to M.M. Banks of the Folklore Society<sup>183</sup>:

I always say that the Museum made itself, for the village people used to bring me old things which they thought would interest me. At last I had a few things put away in a drawer where they lived a lost life. Then I thought, and collected them together, and putting them together on a table in an unused little room thus made a refuge for these Old Age tools. This idea came to me partly by the Dedicatory Epigrams in the Greek Anthology commemorating the fishermen, huntsmen, etc., who in their old age hung up their simple instruments in the Greek Temples. *I had also seen the collection of local relics in Winchcombe church* (author's emphasis).

As soon as I put the few things I had on a table I went out and waylaid one of the village people with her small children and declared the Museum open! This was Whit Monday, 1933. The children were delighted and others came and brought things or talked of old things and I began to ask the wheelwright, the blacksmith, the carpenter, the builder and work people of all sorts, and so I soon got to know about and to possess things I had never heard of or read of. I have learned all sorts of interesting things from men who have spent their life in farm work and other trades belonging to earlier times. I think I have between 700 and 800 things. (*Folk-Lore* Vol. LVI, No 1, March 1945 pp218)

A "List of the Contents of East Hendred Museum, July 5<sup>th</sup> 1940"

is held by the Museum of English Rural Life (MERL) at

Reading, in a notebook compiled by Miss Smith:

<sup>182</sup> Little is known about Lavinia Smith, who is believed to have been an American from Kentucky, nor about her association with East Hendred. Personal communication from John Stevenson, Hon. Archivist, Champs Chapel Museum, East Hendred, 2008

<sup>183</sup> In 1944 The Folklore Society initiated a survey of 'Folk-Museums and Collections in England', the results of which were published in a brief article by M.M. Banks, a former President of the Society, in *Folk-Lore* in 1945 (*Folk-Lore* Vol. LVI, No 1, March 1945 pp218-22)

Many of the objects in the Museum have survived years of neglect and indifference and have managed at last to emerge into the security of the Museum which I partly formed in order to make a home for old things who had served mankind faithfully in the past. (MERL 60/28)

Most of the donations to the museum appear to have come from the people of East Hendred, although Smith also acquired items from elsewhere. Unlike Mrs Greg, she often gives the occupations and family details of the donors, for example "Five gingerbread moulds given to me by John Dennis whose family had been the village bakers for 200 years" and "An 18<sup>th</sup> century pair of curling tongs, brought to me by Joseph Besley whose ancestors have been the blacksmith and wheelwrights of the village since the 18<sup>th</sup> century and members of the family still maintain these crafts in spite of the changed condition of village life" (ibid.).

Did these donors believe that they were making a personal gift to Miss Smith, or did they believe that the collection would stay in the village? There is no evidence that she ever attempted either to set up a trust to run the museum or to involve a wider group of people in the venture. The 'museum' was in part of her large house, Downside, but it was opened to the public<sup>184</sup> and

---

<sup>184</sup> Robertson Scott refers to the museum in his regular editorial 'As One Countryman to Another' in *The Countryman*, October 1938, "Village museums like that formed by Sir Stafford Cripps at Filkins are to be found at Ashwell, Herts, and at East Hendred, Berks." (pp259-265) Scott was not

schoolchildren did, apparently, come on organised visits<sup>185</sup>.

She clearly believed that she was preserving something of interest and importance, something that represented the village and memorialised both the people who lived there and preceding generations<sup>186</sup>.

Although so little is known of this museum, from the scanty evidence that does remain, it would appear to have been a less paternalistic venture certainly than Westmill Museum, although there were similarities in the objects collected, and more democratic in outlook than Winchcombe, although clearly still controlled by one person. In her recording of the details of who owned and used the objects and their role in the village, she has much in common with the founders of Ashwell and Filkins Museums, which will be discussed in the next chapter, although unlike them, as an American incomer to the village, she had no direct experience or remembrance of the objects in use.

---

entirely accurate in ascribing the Filkins Museum to Cripps, as we shall see below.

<sup>185</sup> Information from John Stevenson, as before.

<sup>186</sup> At her death in 1944 the collection passed via her executor, Miss Rippon, to the Berkshire Education Committee, who in 1951 were happy to pass what was described as "certain articles which formed part of a Village Museum at East Hendred" (MERL 51/470-892) to the newly formed Museum of English Rural Life at Reading, where it became, with the Massingham Collection, one of the foundation collections of the new museum. Today, although there is museum in East Hendred known as the Champs Chapel Museum, it is a recent venture, managed as part of a wider East Hendred Heritage Trust, and staffed by volunteers (<http://www.hendredmuseum.org.uk/> )

## CHAPTER 13: VOLUNTEER-RUN MUSEUMS IN THE 1920S AND 1930S – *BY THE PEOPLE, FOR THE PEOPLE*

### 13.1 Introduction

In the discussion that follows in this chapter of the Ashwell and Filkins Museums many of the threads that have been outlined in the previous three chapters will be brought together.

In Chapter 10 the rising popularity of history and particularly of local history, and changes in the teaching of history in schools was described, as well as the importance of the Women's Institute in encouraging an enthusiasm for village history. In Chapter 11, it was noted how collecting everyday and local material had now become accepted museum practice. Chapter 12 illustrated through the story of three museums, only one of which survives, the gradual decline of paternalism, as the social and cultural influence of the aristocracy and gentry diminished after the First World War (Howkins, 2003). Westmill shared more in common with Cawthorne in the attitude of its prime mover than it did with Ashwell or Filkins, although the collections harboured many similar items. Mrs Greg was clearly providing something *for* the village, helped by her friends, rather than facilitating village people to provide it for themselves.

Like Westmill, both Winchcombe and East Hendred museums were the product of one person's endeavours and commitment, without a wider circle of support, although at East Hendred we can, it is suggested, discern a different attitude in Smith's wish to link artefacts no longer in common use with occupations that were still practised. Her objects illustrate historical continuity and change, rather than a dislocation to be mourned.

In the museums discussed in this chapter, there is an increasingly clear focus on the local, and particularly on the lives of ordinary people, the rural working-class, and of a further step away from paternalistic foundations. Perhaps for the first time, we have museums that are clearly *of* the people rather than *for* the people. Bennett suggests that an interest in the "lives, habits and customs of either the contemporary working classes or the labouring classes of pre-industrial societies" is recent and that "the extension of the social range of museum concerns in the post-war (1945) period ... is a new departure" (Bennett, 1988, pp63-64) but it is not, as the stories of the museums at Ashwell and Filkins will clearly demonstrate.

## 13.2 Ashwell Village Museum

In many ways the story of Ashwell Village Museum brings together a number of the elements that have been noted in the earlier studies: the resonance of the building itself both in terms of its significance within the local community, and as carrying the freight of 'Englishness', the importance to the sustainability of the museum of developing a wider involvement in its activities, and the decline of the paternalism as exemplified at Westmill. Above all it demonstrates more strongly than the museums considered in the previous chapter, the move towards the expression of a local, even a parochial, identity which will become even stronger, more self-reliant, and more democratic, in the museums that were set up in the years after 1945.

As a county, Hertfordshire had been undergoing profound change since the building of the railways from the 1830s greatly extended the pull of London and the influence of London markets (Pahl, 1964)<sup>187</sup>. The building of the Garden Cities such as Letchworth, drawing people in from the surrounding rural

---

<sup>187</sup> Ashwell with Morden Station is on the Great Northern Railway line from King's Cross built in 1850. It is two miles from the centre of the village. In 1931, nearly as many visitors to Ashwell Village Museum came from Greater London as from Ashwell itself. (Visitors Book, Ashwell Village Museum)

areas, further depopulated the villages (ibid. p22).<sup>188</sup> Unlike Westmill, which had always been a small community, Ashwell had been in serious decline since the agricultural depression of the last quarter of the nineteenth century<sup>189</sup> and, almost within living memory, had lost most of the diversity of occupations which had characterised the village in the mid 1800s (Davey, 1980). Like Winchcombe (Massingham, 1937, 1938; Adlard, 1939; Donaldson, 2001), Ashwell too was conscious of its former importance.

The beginnings of the museum at Ashwell can be traced back to a collection housed in a lean-to greenhouse assembled in 1921 by a group of schoolboys, including Albert Sheldrick, then aged ten, who were “encouraged by Morgan Biles, headmaster of the Ashwell Merchant Taylor’s School,<sup>190</sup> (and) E. F. D. Bloom, HM Inspector of Schools” (Gurney and Sheldrick, 1994, p143). As we have seen in an earlier chapter (Chapter 10.2) the teaching of both history and geography in schools changed considerably in the years immediately before and after the First World War. There was a much greater emphasis on the lives of

---

<sup>188</sup> Letchworth, 12 miles from Ashwell, had a population of 400 in 1903 rising to 14,454 in 1931 (Pahl, 1964, p22)

<sup>189</sup> “During the age when farming began to decline, Ashwell could support neither its crafts, nor its growing children. By 1914 the ‘old community’ had collapsed” (Davey, 1980, pp56)

<sup>190</sup> Ashwell Merchant Taylors School was provided by a trust established by a legacy to the Merchant Taylors Company to provide a school in Ashwell. It was not one of the company’s own schools, but was effectively the boys’ school for the village; the school was made over to Hertfordshire County Council in 1923 and closed in 1947.

([http://www.merchanttaylors.co.uk/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=blogcategory&id=4&Itemid=24](http://www.merchanttaylors.co.uk/index.php?option=com_content&task=blogcategory&id=4&Itemid=24) downloaded 15/6/10)

ordinary people and on the history of familiar items, on direct contact with remains of the past, on livelier teaching methods, and on understanding and knowing the immediate locality through tramping, rambling and looking.<sup>191</sup>

Biles had come to Ashwell in 1918 and stayed as Headmaster until 1933 and “while Mrs Biles and her daughters were settling in, Mr Biles –with neatly trimmed beard, cloth cap and walking stick – took long walks, getting to know his new parish” (ibid.). It may well have been under Biles’s influence that John Bray and Albert Sheldrick “formed a rambling club, and searched the chalk quarries and sand pits for fossils” in 1927 (Gurney and Sheldrick, 1994, p143).

Biles became involved in a wide range of village activities,<sup>192</sup> including as church organist and as a member of the Cricket Club, the Ashwell Choral and Dramatic Society and the Men’s Club and “it was his influence ... which resulted in our starting the Ashwell Village Museum” (ibid. p36) Biles also encouraged other activities at the school:

H.W. Bowman, a member of an old Ashwell family, came in from time to time to talk about history, and

---

<sup>191</sup> Ashwell Village Museum was not the only village museum set up under the influence of school teachers. At Clun, it was flint tools and microliths which attracted the interest of a succession of school teachers in the Clun Valley, and inspired a young Tom Hamar to build up a collection and later to set up the museum in the former Town Hall, owned by Clun Town Trust, in 1932.

<sup>192</sup> Although the population of Ashwell had declined, clearly efforts were being made to promote sociability and activity. It has already been noted that in 1921 the Ashwell Women’s Institute had 125 members.



in 1921 he organised the beating the parish bounds  
(ibid. p35)

Bowman, who later played an important role in setting up the museum, "carried a huge map" (ibid.) and the perambulation of ten miles took eight hours, and the participants seemed to have been collecting on the way as later "the fossils and pieces of pottery" (ibid. p36) were examined at the school.

Another frequent visitor to the school was the curator of the Letchworth Museum and "we paid occasional visits to his museum, walking the two-and-half miles to the station and paying the fare to Letchworth" (ibid.). The Letchworth museum curator was one of those invited to the opening of the museum a few years later (Ashwell Museum Visitors' Book).

Biles also started "Recreative Evening Classes" for boys aged fourteen to eighteen, and a brief notebook record of their activities from December 1918 to April 1919 is included in the museum's archives (Ashwell Museum 1986.76). Activities included games, drama and stories, including on January 15<sup>th</sup>, 1919, Biles's story of 'A British Girl in the year AD54 in Ashwell' and high points out of ten were scored for a repetition of the story by the boys.

By the 1920s Ashwell was largely under the influence of one extended family, the Fordhams, who owned much of the land

and provided most of the employment through their brewery (Kelly, 1929, 1933). Ernest Fordham JP was the older brother of Montague Fordham, the Arts and Crafts enthusiast, follower of John Ruskin, historian, barrister and founder of the Rural Reconstruction Association<sup>193</sup> (Conford, 2001, 2002). He, Ernest Fordham, was the chairman of the committee which opened the Ashwell Village Museum in 1930; there is no evidence that Montague Fordham was involved in any way, and he did not attend the opening, but his *Short History of English Rural Life from Anglo-Saxon to Present Time* (Fordham, 1916) was given to the museum library by his brother Ernest, together with a catalogue of the Westmill Museum; Mrs W.A. Fordham gave a copy of Joan Wake's WI booklet *How to Compile a History and Present Day Record of Village Life* (Wake, 1925) mentioned earlier (Chapter 10.4).

Given the range of activities and facilities in Ashwell during the 1920s and 1930s, including a village hall, a choral and dramatic society, a men's club, WI and cricket club (Kelly, 1929, 1933) it is not unreasonable to suggest that Ernest Fordham shared at least some of his brother's views<sup>194</sup>. Further weight is

---

<sup>193</sup> The Rural Reconstruction Association "was founded in 1926 by Montague Fordham and issued various proposals for regenerating British Agriculture and saving rural life from decay." (Conford, 2001, p251)

<sup>194</sup> Montague Fordham also wrote *The Rebuilding of Rural England*: "There are new elements everywhere; The Women's Institutes, The Village Clubs Association and the Workers Education Association have all done much to promote a new social life. There has been for some twenty years a widespread movement promoted by the Village Drama Society and other

given to this conjecture about his sympathies by the discovery amongst the Greg correspondence in Manchester, discussed earlier, of letters showing that Fordham acted as an executor to Thomas Tylston Greg at Westmill, and also as a trustee of the estate later bequeathed by Mrs Greg to Ruskin's Guild of St George (Harris, 1994<sup>195</sup>). When the Ashwell Village Museum opened, Fordham sent Mrs Greg a postcard of the building with "Just finished EOF" written on the reverse, and a cutting from the *Morning Post* for December 3<sup>rd</sup> 1930 giving an account of the opening<sup>196</sup>.

---

associations for the revival of acting, singing and dancing, things which are natural to country people." (Fordham, 1924, p151)

<sup>195</sup> I am most grateful to Louise Pullen, Curator, Ruskin Collection, Museums Sheffield for providing me with a copy of this paper.

<sup>196</sup> Westmill and Ashwell are less than ten miles distant from each other, between Royston and Baldock in the north east of Hertfordshire. Both T.T. Greg and Fordham were JPs, as was Redcliffe Salaman, a Liberal and later a Labour Party supporter (Painter, 1995) who lived at Barley in the same district. Salaman attended the opening of Ashwell Village Museum and was also involved in the final unsuccessful attempt to set up an English Folk Museum (see below Chapter 14.1).

# Ashwell Village Museum

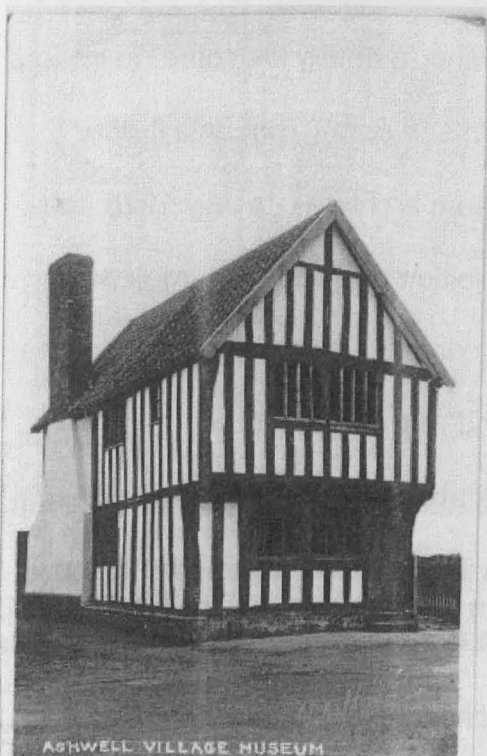


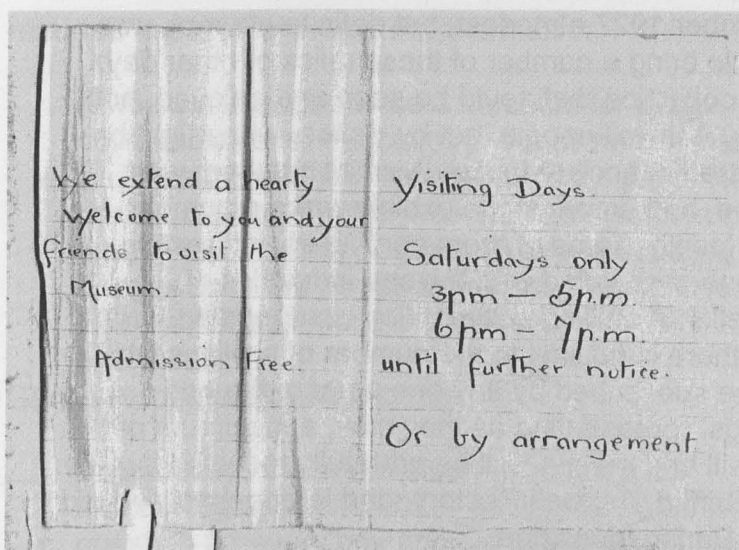
Image11a & b: Postcard sent by E.O. Fordham to Mrs Mary Greg, postmarked 29<sup>th</sup> November 1930. The message reads "Just Finished E.O.F" (from the collection of Manchester Art Galleries 2009.122/639/24)

By 1927 the two former schoolboys, John Bray and Albert Sheldrick, who was then aged sixteen, had begun to open their museum in a shed and to extend "a hearty welcome" to visitors on "Saturdays only 3pm - 5pm and 6pm - 7pm until further notice" (Ashwell Village Museum archives). In July 1928, they were invited to put on an exhibition at a church garden party. As a result of that success a committee was formed under the chairmanship of the rector and with five other members including Fordham, Sheldrick and Bray, the secretary, to find a suitable property to convert. They settled on a building known as the Town House<sup>197</sup>, which had been condemned by the housing authority and was scheduled for demolition (Gurney & Sheldrick, 1994, p143). In reversal of convention, the committee sent the lads ("both teenagers" [ibid.]) off to negotiate a price, £25, with the owner, the local butcher: "We explained that our hobby had outgrown its present home, and that with voluntary labour we hoped to repair the cottage and tidy up the corner of Alms Lane and Swan Street" (ibid.).

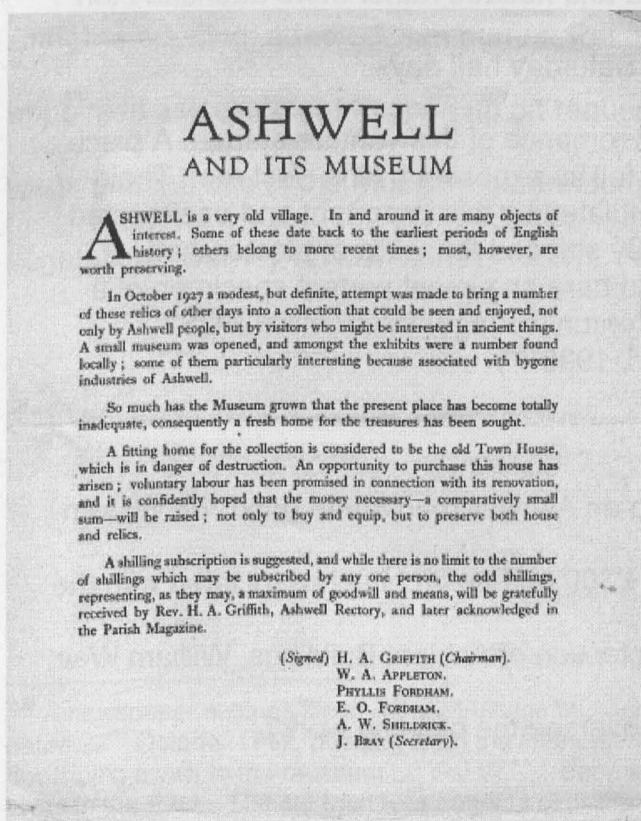
---

<sup>197</sup> This building was believed to have been the 'tithe office' of the principal manor of Ashwell, owned by the Abbot of Westminster, where the "market traders would come to pay their dues" (Gurney and Sheldrick, 1994, p143). It would therefore have been thought to have belonged to the community in a way that a former private dwelling would not. It would also reflect Ashwell's former importance. There are echoes here of Mrs Greg's use of a former almshouse at Westmill "the Temple that was their Dwelling-house" (Westmill Museum Catalogue, nd.)

## Ashwell Village Museum



*Image 12: The invitation extended by John Bray and Albert Sheldrick to visit their Museum in a shed, late 1920s. (Image kindly provided by Peter Greener, Ashwell Village Museum archives)*



*Image 13: The handbill sent round the village appealing for funds towards a new museum. (Image kindly provided by Peter Greener, Ashwell Village Museum archives)*

A leaflet was printed and sent to every house in Ashwell:

In October 1927 a modest, but definite attempt, was made to bring a number of these relics of other days into a collection that could be seen and enjoyed, not only by Ashwell people, but by visitors who might be interested in ancient things. A small museum was opened, and amongst the exhibits were a number found locally; some of them particularly interesting because associated with bygone industries of Ashwell.....A shilling subscription is suggested, and while there is no limit to the number of shillings which may be subscribed by any one person, the odd shillings, representing as they may, a maximum of goodwill and means, will be gratefully received by Rev. H.A. Griffith, Ashwell Rectory, and later acknowledged in the Parish Magazine.<sup>198</sup>

The appeal raised £40 towards the restoration, but it was soon apparent that the building was a more complex structure than had been imagined and needed rather more attention than could be given on Saturday half days.

Then the real romance of this venture started. A piece of the ceiling fell in, exposing a king-post roof. Their curiosity, stimulated by this important and unexpected discovery, they stripped the walls of plaster, and eventually laid bare an almost perfect specimen of a Fourteenth Century cottage. (MORNING POST, December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1930<sup>199</sup>)

Fordham turned to an Ashwell man made good, Sir William Gentle, who gave £300 and an architect associated with the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, William Weir, was appointed to oversee the building work.

---

<sup>198</sup> Leaflet in the possession of Ashwell Village Museum. Unfortunately, no copies of the Parish Magazine appear to have survived.

<sup>199</sup> This cutting, found in the Manchester Art Galleries collection (2009.122/639), is the one sent by Fordham to Mrs Greg. No page number is given on the cutting.

At the museum opening in December 1930, extensively reported in the local press, Fordham said:

It was not intended to be a museum for things collected all over the country, but as far as possible to be limited to things ... illustrative of the past history of the life of people in Ashwell and the district from the time of the Norman occupation to present days.  
(Unprovenanced newspaper cutting dated Dec. 5<sup>th</sup> 1930 in Ashwell Museum Archives)

Gentle responded by saying that:

The success of their Museum whether it be archaeological, historical or geological value was a question for every boy and girl in the village, and he hoped they realised their duty towards their native place. They would come up here and see the things they read about in books and their lessons would thus be more interesting (ibid.)

After the opening, a retired lime burner, Peter Skerman,<sup>200</sup> was appointed as custodian, to open up on request, at nine pence a week and the use of the museum garden for growing vegetables (Gurney and Sheldrick, 1994).

---

<sup>200</sup> A newspaper cuttings file in Ashwell Village Museum contains a cutting dated 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1937, possibly from the *Hertfordshire Express*, describing a visit to the museum by 'A.J.W.' "...Bearded Caretaker who Lives in the Past...The old man was bending over the glass case. He turned towards me, and in that bearded face I saw that life had ploughed a thousand furrows. He smiled and beckoned me to come to him. 'Look' he said, 'My father's – my father's pipe'. I gazed through the glass at one of the largest and finest Meerschaum pipes I had ever seen..... Before long I had been transported to another age. The clock had been put back a hundred years, and there I was picturing the work and play, joys and sorrows of Hertfordshire men and women of the past."



## Ashwell Village Museum



*Image 14: Ashwell Village Museum shortly after opening with, left to right, Peter Skerman, the Caretaker, John Bray and Albert Sheldrick the two young curators. (Image taken from Ashwell Village Museum: Brief history and Guide by Peter Greener, 2002)*



*Image 15: Albert Sheldrick and John Bray examining objects in the lower exhibition room. (Image taken from Ashwell Village Museum: Brief history and Guide by Peter Greener, 2002)*

The story of the Ashwell Museum attracted national attention,<sup>201</sup> including an article in *The Listener* written by the archaeologist Stanley Casson:

any village in England can follow the example of Ashwell. Such museums serve an incalculable educational purpose. They are not mere repositories of forgotten things. They stimulate the children and young men and women by giving them something which will make them think (THE LISTENER, 5<sup>th</sup> October 1932, p490).<sup>202</sup>

The *Museums Journal* too noted the existence of the museum and published photographs of the building before and after restoration under the caption "The Tithe House at Ashwell – a true village museum". The article went on to draw attention to comparisons with the 'Home Museums' (*Heimatsmuseum*) in Germany which featured in an article in the same number<sup>203</sup>. It also noted that a trust had been set up to run the museum "with Mr. E.O. Fordham as chairman and the Rev. H. A. Griffiths as Hon. Secretary. We wish this admirable enterprise every

---

<sup>201</sup> Robertson Scott's *The Countryman* also carried a note of the opening of the museum with photographs of the building before, during and after restoration (*The Countryman*, 1931, Vol.V, No.1, p37)

<sup>202</sup> The cutting is included in an album of news cuttings held by Ashwell Village Museum.

<sup>203</sup> By Dr Otto Lehmann of Altona. In the article Lehmann describes a visit he had received from a clergyman from the "coalmine districts of Westphalia" in which he "begged help for his home-museum. 'People in my Parish have no home; they have come from anywhere and if I would tell them somewhat of humanity, of the beauty and value of their home, they would laugh at me. But I must give them a home and I wish to show them beauties from everywhere, stones, animals, crystals, butterflies, pictures. I shall try to teach them the beauty of all these things, and I hope that they will learn finally to see the beauty of their home, so that they may gain a home.' A little Ruskin, you see." (Lehmann, 1931, p301). This clergyman would have shared much with another clergyman in a coal mining district, Pratt of Cawthorne.

success" (*MJ*, Vol. 30, No.8, Feb. 1931 p329). The two lads, whilst not trustees, had been appointed as joint curators<sup>204</sup>.

Shortly after the museum trust was set up and the museum opened, "a body of annual subscribers, known as the Friends of Ashwell Museum" was set up which "together with the proceeds of the visitors' box, covered the expenses such as rates, insurance, light heat and repairs." (Gurney & Sheldrick, 1994, p146).<sup>205</sup> This was the wider museum society which ensured the museum's sustainability and continued success.

---

<sup>204</sup> Sheldrick remained associated with the museum throughout his life and Bray for very many years. Personal communication from Peter Greener, Hon.Curator, Ashwell Village Museum.

<sup>205</sup> Both bodies are still in existence, and it is from the Friends of Ashwell Museum that the present cohort of volunteers is drawn. John Bray's son is one of the trustees. Personal communication from Peter Greener as above.

### 13.3 Filkins

The next museum to be considered is that in the small village of Filkins in Oxfordshire<sup>206</sup>. It demonstrates an increasingly clear focus on the local and parochial, particularly on the lives of ordinary people, the rural working-class, and of a further step away from paternalistic foundations. Here, as at Ashwell, we have a museum that is clearly *of* the people rather than *for* the people, although like at Ashwell at least some of the elite of the village supported its cause and facilitated its foundation. In neither case though was any attempt made to control or dictate its content or activities.

Bennett's suggestion that "the collection, preservation, and display of artefacts relating to the daily lives, customs, rituals, and traditions on non-elite social strata" (Bennett, 1988, p63) is a recent change of focus for museums may, perhaps, be generally true for larger museums but cannot stand up if we consider volunteer-run museums. Nor can his suggestion that these new displays "represent the cultures of subordinate social classes not in their real complexity but 'as a "picturesque" element"<sup>207</sup>" (ibid. p64) be sustained when the museums are set up and managed by those very social classes, as we have

---

<sup>206</sup> At one time known as the Filkins and Broughton Poggs Museum, it is now known as the Swinford Museum in honour of its founder and first curator, George Swinford.

<sup>207</sup> Here Bennett is quoting from Gramsci's *Selections from Cultural Writings* (Gramsci, 1985, p189)

seen at Ashwell and now at Filkins, and in many of the other volunteer – run museums which are the concern of this project. They have a history that is rather different, and no museum illustrates that more clearly than the museum started by George Swinford, a stonemason of Filkins.

The museum first opened in May 1931 in an old cottage bought for the purpose by Stafford Cripps, the leading Labour politician<sup>208</sup>, and the opening ceremony was performed by his colleague, Herbert Morrison, then Minister of Transport. Cripps had moved to the village in 1921<sup>209</sup>, and shortly afterwards had started a village men's club<sup>210</sup>. Later, he provided a number of other amenities, including a village centre which contained a doctor's surgery, village hall and an outdoor swimming pool, as well as supporting the provision of good quality housing. Cripps was not, in fact, the principal landowner of the village and his support for the village reflected his democratic and socialist beliefs and a concern for the rural community rather than any wish to exert control. He appears to

---

<sup>208</sup> Cripps, (1889-1952) had joined the Labour Party in 1929, after encouragement from Herbert Morrison. He joined Ramsay Macdonald's Labour government as Solicitor General in 1930 and in 1931 won the parliamentary seat of Bristol East. However, he declined to serve in the National Government of 1931, when he, George Lansbury and Clement Attlee were the only former members of the Labour administration left on the backbenches (Clarke and Toye, 2004). S.F. Markham, who had been Miers's assistant during his researches for the *Report to the Carnegie UK Trustees* (Miers, 1928) and later wrote his own *Report* (Markham, 1938) became a Labour MP in 1929, and served as Ramsay Macdonald's Parliamentary Private Secretary (Pearson, 2008). It is inconceivable that the two men did not know each other.

<sup>209</sup> He left his house, Goodfellows, in 1942, and did not live in the village again. (Clarke, 2002)

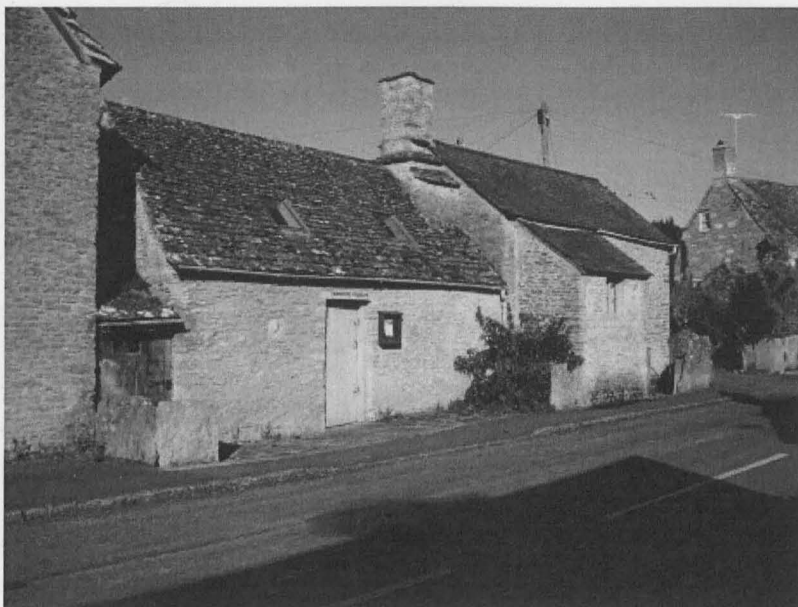
<sup>210</sup> His wife, Isabel, became involved in the Women's Institute.

have made no attempt to interfere in the running of the organisations he helped to establish, including the museum. His biographer, Peter Clarke, discusses whether his generosity was an exercise in paternalism: "Noblesse oblige? To a degree ... The fact is that Cripps was wary of distributing largesse, for reasons that reflected deeply held values." (Clarke, 2002, p31)<sup>211</sup> His estate foreman, George Swinford, also makes the point that Cripps insisted on his workmen being paid the union wages for the job (Fay and Martin, 1987 p104) and a photograph of Cripps with Swinford shows no sign of deference on Swinford's part. Indeed, the two men would have shared many interests and values, including in socialism, in William Morris and in traditional craftsmanship.

---

<sup>211</sup> Clarke also quotes from Cripps's diary for 31<sup>st</sup> December 1921: "It is our aim to make the villagers pay for their own club and not be dependent on Charity" (Clarke, 2002, p33)

## Filkins



*Image16: Filkins Museum (Author's photograph, September 2008)*



*Image 17: George Swinford (left) and Stafford Cripps (right) (taken from a photograph in The Jubilee Boy-The life and recollections of George Swinford of Filkins [Fay and Martin, 1987])*

In *How Societies Remember* Connerton asserts that in

social memory in particular, we may note that images of the past commonly legitimate a present social order. It is an implicit rule that participants in any social order must presuppose a shared memory. To the extent that their memories of a society's past diverge, to that extent its members can share neither experiences nor assumptions. (Connerton, 1989, p3)

Swinford himself was an independent minded man<sup>212</sup> and not inclined to accept without question the version of events promoted by the elite. Shortly after he returned from service in the First World War he returned to work as a stonemason: "One owner of a big house said to me 'You would not have missed it for anything, would you, my boy?' and I said 'My God, I *would!*'" (Fay & Martin, 1987, p96). Cripps did not intend his support of the museum to be a gesture in support of the existing social order. It might almost have been an act of subversion, by foregrounding the lives of the rural poor, and allowing their voice to be heard through that of George Swinford and the collection that he assembled. Morrison was not the only Labour politician to visit the museum; George Lansbury, Ernest Bevin and Clement Attlee were also visitors.<sup>213</sup>

---

<sup>212</sup> "Mr Hardcastle was a real old fashioned customer .....One day he came up his drive with his thumb stick to Broughton bridge over the mill stream where we boys were leaning over the wall, and he said 'Looking at my fish, are you?' I said 'Is that your water?' and he said 'Swinford you're a dangerous person'. " (Fay and Martin, 1987, p76)

<sup>213</sup> Undated newspaper cutting, possibly from the *Oxford Times*, containing an obituary of Cripps, from an album of cuttings formerly belonging to George Swinford in the archives of the Swinford Museum. I am grateful to Mrs Diane Blackett of the Swinford Museum, for access to the archives.



George Swinford was a skilled stonemason and woodworker, born in Filkins in 1887, and an account of his life, based on his written reminiscences and recordings, was published in his 100<sup>th</sup> year (Fay and Martin, 1987). In it he gives an account of the origins of the museum:

When I started work for Sir Stafford Cripps I looked out for anything interesting and anything worth keeping I used to clean and keep on a shelf in my workshop. ....I began to get quite a collection, and one day Sir Stafford was in my workshop and ...said, 'I'm glad you are keeping these things, George. It would be a good idea if we could start a museum'. After that, whenever he came home he would come to the shop to see what else I had found. (ibid. p113)

An old cottage soon became available:

When I told Sir Stafford he said that the cottage would do for a museum and that he would buy it, which he did. He then started to make the cases<sup>214</sup> to put the exhibits in. I told people in the village what we were doing and asked them if they had anything suitable to let me have it. We soon began to get a lot of things together, and on 20th May 1931 it was officially opened by Mr Herbert Morrison...We had a notice on the door which read The object of this Museum is to preserve objects of common use, which are of considerable age (ibid. p114)

In 1968, a reporter from the *Oxford Times* visited the museum and hearing that Swinford had written a book about the village, asked him why: "Not enough is said of the working man in

---

<sup>214</sup> Cripps was a proficient amateur carpenter and the cases that he made are still in use at the museum.

history books, so I wanted to put this right"<sup>215</sup> (OXFORD TIMES, April 26<sup>th</sup> 1968)

Most of the collection comes from Filkins village itself:

Nearly all the people of Filkins have given or lent some curious old relic to the collection. For this is no accumulation of ancient treasures brought from far and wide, but is really a local museum. Everything in it was once the property of men and women who lived and worked in or near the village.  
(BIRMINGHAM POST, Feb. 10<sup>th</sup>, 1933<sup>216</sup>)

Many of the items came from Swinford's own family, such as the apple scoop his grandmother used to eat an apple once she had lost her teeth, and her Leafield pottery kitchen bowls or his father's tools, and, later, he was to give his own tools to the museum. Others represented the various trades, occupations and activities that were disappearing from the village; an undated and unprovenanced cutting in the museum archives describes these as "tools used by local farm labourers, masons, carpenters, tailors, shoemakers, blacksmiths, tinsmiths, wheelwrights, hurdle-makers, slaters and wood-turners in the past". These were not included as picturesque elements –they represented poverty, self-reliance and hard work.

---

<sup>215</sup> The cutting, from the *Oxford Times* of Friday April 26<sup>th</sup> 1968, is pasted into a cuttings file kept by Swinford, now in the museum collection. No page number is given. Swinford's original manuscript is now in the Bodleian Library. It forms the basis, along with recordings, of Fay and Martin's book *The Jubilee Boy- the life and recollections of George Swinford of Filkins*

<sup>216</sup> This cutting was found amongst the Adlard papers in Gloucestershire Archives (D2218/2/3). No page number is given.

They also represented traditional craftsmanship, an interest which, together with socialism, Swinford shared with Cripps<sup>217</sup>. In July 1939 Swinford went over to Kelmscott to the sale of items from William Morris's Kelmscott Manor, and here he bought what he would later proudly show as 'William Morris's coffee pot' and his outdoor easel (Fay and Martin 1987) and at some point the museum had also acquired "the child's push chair, in which the late May Morris was taken for airings when a small child" (WILTSHIRE AND GLOUCESTERSHIRE STANDARD, June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1951, p6).

The museum was open at any time anyone knocked on the door of Swinford's house or applied for the key from the pub across the road.

---

<sup>217</sup> The Village Centre, funded by Stafford and Isobel Cripps and built by local men with Swinford as foreman has a plaque which reads "This building has been erected by craftsmen of the Cotswolds to commemorate the labour of their countless fellow-workers which has enriched the beauty of our countryside in the earnest hope that the people of the Cotswolds will be strong in their determination to persevere to preserve that beauty." (quoted in Delderfield, 1967, p143) Cripps was a friend of Lawrence Weaver, an architectural writer who had collaborated with both Gertrude Jekyll and Edwin Lutyens. Together Cripps and Weaver had set up a pottery for army veterans at Ashstead in Surrey (Weaver, 1989; Bryant, 1997)

## Summary of Section G

In this section we have seen the growing development of an interest in history at a popular level, surely one of the preconditions for arousing sufficient interest in a small town or village for a museum to become established and flourish.

Collecting everyday material and reflecting the locality has become established museum practice, and was widely encouraged both by grant giving bodies, such as the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust, and by leading members of the museums profession, such as Tom Sheppard and Mortimer Wheeler. The failure of the second attempt to establish an English folk museum did not disrupt this process.

We have also seen that whereas at Westmill, paternalism was still the predominant *modus operandi*, with much of the work of the museum undertaken by Mrs Greg and her friends, at Ashwell and at Filkins the role assumed by the elite of the village was rather different. Here Fordham and Cripps facilitated the establishment of the museum, rather than provided it, and neither of them appears to have attempted to manage the museum or interfere with its collecting activities. Ashwell and Filkins are a mid-point between the paternalism exemplified at Cawthorne, and the museums which developed

in the years after the end of the Second World War, which are the focus of the next section.

## SECTION H: A NEW DEMOCRACY

### Introduction to Section H

This section will begin, in Chapter 14.1, with a discussion of the third and final attempt to set up an English folk museum, and continue with a discussion of the ever-increasing expansion of the interest in local history. This is linked to an increasing emphasis on local identity and traditions, particularly in small towns, which was significantly encouraged both by the Festival of Britain in 1951, which was billed as 'The Autobiography of the Nation' (Taylor, 1951; Conekin, 2003) and by the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953.

There were changes in the countryside too, outlined in Chapter 14.5, notably increased migration into rural areas, and the continued decline of traditional rural occupations. In the post-war years, the rural community was no longer seen as the embodiment of the nation; in many ways that role was assumed by the rural landscape (Matless, 1998), and by the towns whose ancient traditions and liberties, were seen as embodying English freedom and democracy, even if the town was less important than it had been in former years, as at Cricklade.

The case histories of local history society museums in Chapter 15 illustrate clearly a move towards a greater democracy, and an equal participation in the museum project by all the members. Here was no facilitation or provision by a traditional elite; it was much more a case of “if we want it, we’ll do it ourselves”, that was recognised at Evesham, as we shall see in Chapter 15.4, as a remainder of a wartime spirit. It is also how volunteer-run museums come into being today, as will be exemplified in the accounts of the Dorset museums in Chapter 18.

## CHAPTER 14: BUILDING A NEW DEMOCRACY – VOLUNTEER-RUN MUSEUMS IN THE 1940S AND 1950S

### 14.1 An English Folk Museum? Finale

Previous chapters (Chapters 9.3 and 11.3) have explored the earlier history of the attempts to set up an English Folk Museum, the first of which disappeared shortly before the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, and the second of which floundered in the depressed economic conditions of the early 1930s. The third attempt fared no better, but its story is still worth examining because of the contrast that it provides with the continued growth in the number of volunteer-run museums.

The third and final attempt to set up a folk museum was prompted by the *Third Report of the Standing Commission on Museums and Galleries into the National Museums and Galleries, the war years and after* (SCMG, 1948), which once again commented on the lack of such a museum in England, and urged that a start be made on forming a collection, although once again public funds were not available for the project. This encouraged the Royal Anthropological Institute (RAI) to set up an Exploratory Committee in June 1948,



chaired by the geographer Professor H.J. Fleure and with Thomas W. Bagshawe as deputy; in December 1948 the Committee changed its title to the British Ethnography Committee, and, following Fleure's resignation, Bagshawe succeeded as Chairman (Riviere, 2010), although Fleure later resumed the chairmanship. This project, which became known as the Museum of English Life and Traditions or the English Museum<sup>218</sup>, and the foundation of the Museum of English Rural Life at the University of Reading in 1951, has recently been the subject of a detailed study by Professor Peter Riviere, *Success and Failure: the Tale of Two Museums* (Riviere, 2010).<sup>219</sup> It is unnecessary to repeat the story in full here; however the activities of Thomas Bagshawe do provide some points of intersection with this project which are worth touching on.

Thomas Bagshawe (1901-1976) was born in Dunstable where his family had an engineering business. He went to Cambridge University and later became a member of both the Royal Anthropological Institute and the Folklore Society. In 1925 he was instrumental in setting up a museum in Dunstable, which at that time was a small market town with a population of below ten thousand people. According to the *Directory of Museums and Art Galleries in the British Isles compiled by the Museums Association*, 1931, the museum was:

---

<sup>218</sup> And of the foundation of the Museum of English Rural Life at the University of Reading in 1951.

<sup>219</sup> I am most grateful to Professor Riviere for an advance copy of his article.

financed from the results of a fete held in 1924, and is housed in a large converted barn of early date, on the site of the King's Houses (*Curia Regis*) erected by Henry I. ....The Museum, which consists of one large room, is composed of objects of the Stone Age, Bronze Age, the Roman period, the Anglo-Saxon, Medieval and later periods, and is almost entirely of a local character. Special attention is paid to the preservation of old farming implements and other by-gones. There is a small natural history collection, including a large Bedfordshire herbarium ..... Hon Curator T. W. Bagshawe. Finance by Curator and other interested persons". (Markham, 1931)

In 1927, Bagshawe also became the first Honorary Curator of Luton Museum, founded to illustrate "everyday life and culture of the people of the district throughout the ages" (Banks, 1945, p219), and later Honorary Director until 1947. He was succeeded as Curator by Charles Freeman in 1936 and according to information available on Luton Borough Council website,<sup>220</sup> the two men "visited many of the Scandinavian museums" and "were profoundly influenced by the Scandinavian example and they sought ways to introduce the ideas and methods they had witnessed into Luton Museum. In 1938 a rural industries gallery was opened at Wardown designed on Scandinavian principles with built in cases and freestanding exhibits." The outstanding regional collection now held at Luton is based on the material that Bagshawe researched and collected in Bedfordshire during the 1920s and

---

220

[http://www.luton.gov.uk/internet/Leisure\\_and\\_culture/Museums\\_and\\_galleries/Stockwood%20Park/Thomas%20Wyatt%20Bagshawe%20rural%20crafts%20and%20trades%20collection](http://www.luton.gov.uk/internet/Leisure_and_culture/Museums_and_galleries/Stockwood%20Park/Thomas%20Wyatt%20Bagshawe%20rural%20crafts%20and%20trades%20collection) downloaded 2008

1930s, but he was also involved in the setting up of the Cambridge and County Folk Museum in 1936 and in 1940 became Honorary Curator there as well as at Luton, a position he held until 1946.<sup>221</sup> The Dunstable Museum closed in 1938 and the collections were transferred to Luton Museum (Markham, 1948). Bagshawe was a prominent figure in Bedfordshire, and had been appointed High Sheriff in 1941.

As Riviere describes it, Bagshawe was among the most energetic of the RAI's Exploratory Committee and was certainly bankrolling the project at some points,<sup>222</sup> for example in the commissioning of a watercolour drawing illustrating the proposed layout of 'The English Museum' which he used to accompany his paper given to Section H of the British Association for the Advancement of Science meeting in Newcastle in September 1949 (Bagshawe, 1950).

Bagshawe also paid for the publication by the British Ethnography Committee of *Suggestions concerning classification, storage and labelling of objects illustrating English Life and Traditions*, in the summer of 1950 (Riviere,

---

<sup>221</sup> <http://www.museums.norfolk.gov.uk/polar/bagshawe.htm> downloaded 03/06/10

<sup>222</sup> It is possible that Bagshawe's very energy in fact served to undermine the project. The SCMG report (1948) had urged a cautious approach, with initial collections built up under the auspices of the Victoria and Albert and Science Museums, advice which appears to have been disregarded.

2010), and it is likely that he was the principal author. The introductory remarks to the *Suggestions* are indicative:

The aim of the English Museum would be to illustrate the evolution of life in our country within the recent period .... It is the material from Tudor times onwards that needs to be saved for future generations, to help them to understand the changes that the agrarian and industrial revolutions have made. It is important that the English Museum should not only attempt to preserve and interpret material objects; it must also find ways of demonstrating facts of social life. The agrarian and industrial revolutions turned a traditionalist peasantry into relatively foot-loose wage-earners, changed a long experiment of half a million years of social life in small groups and attempted to gather workers in the crowds of our industrial agglomerates .... Local ideas, a local tradition, local names for objects, all indicate the old importance of the small group, and the present time is full of the perilous consequences of the great experiment undertaken chiefly from about the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century onward. In chapels and churches, clubs and trade unions, voluntary societies of hundreds of kinds, we see efforts to build once again in the smaller more intimate groups that are the essence of human tradition.

We hope that the English Museum may help to interpret to future generations what this momentous and dangerous change in social life means. (RAI British Ethnography Committee, 1950, p2)

This 'organicist' or anti-modern approach, which has been referred to earlier (Matless, 1998), was out of step with the time when, to quote Matless again:

From the interior landscapes of new homes, schools and hospitals to the urban form of new towns to a modernized agriculture to national parks to a preserved nature, a new country was envisioned. (Matless, 1996, p429)

This modern, forward looking approach to rural life and agriculture was exemplified in the literature of the Festival of Britain in the following year (1951):

In the last few years the farmer and the engineer, between them, have made our land the most highly mechanised of any in the world ... In these days we boast the most highly mechanised and, perhaps, the most efficiently farmed countryside in the world. ... But modern agriculture, wherever it is carried on and whatever the final products it yields, needs modern methods, and in recent years the aid of science has been increasingly sought. Here, Britain's contribution has been outstanding and sustained. ... But in addition to housing our largest single industry, the country provides the endowment for a special way of life – and a rich one. Everything, it is true, turns on the yearly cycle of husbandry; but woven in to it are the village cricket match, the contests of the Young Farmers' Club, the weekly meeting of the Women's Institute. And all the while, creating the fabric for this varied life, the country craftsman is at work. Much of the modern setting is of his devising; his are those many properties of the country scene that we take so easily for granted – the hedges and the hurdles, the thatch of cottage and barn, the walls, the harness of horses and the baskets that go to market. Mechanisation has not killed these country crafts, nor can it. But it has revolutionised the country industries ... No longer is the countryman the old-style yokel, a rough, uncultured being in corduroys, uncouth in accent and in manner. Now, he has become a technician putting to everyday use the results of five hundred years of development and of science. He can drive a tractor, and mend and maintain any of his mechanical aids. (Ian Cox, *The South Bank Exhibition – a guide to the story it tells*, 1951, pp17-19, description of 'The Country' section)

1951 also saw the establishment of the Museum of English Rural Life (MERL) at Reading, a project which had been approved by the University of Reading in October 1950, but of which Bagshawe was, apparently, unaware (Riviere, 2010). The driving force behind this new museum was John Higgs,

lecturer in Farm Mechanisation in the Faculty of Agriculture, and his energetic publicity on behalf of the museum, and the credibility of the Faculty of Agriculture amongst the farming community, secured widespread coverage for the project in the press and a rapid flow of acquisitions.<sup>223</sup> The Museum of English Rural Life saw its role “primarily as a reference collection for students of English rural life”; it was not intended to “build a folk museum on the Scandinavian model” (*THE TIMES*, January 31<sup>st</sup> 1951, p3). Although there were some half-hearted attempts to keep the English Museum project alive, and assurances by Higgs that the two projects would complement each other rather than compete, it was effectively killed off by the establishment of MERL, thus ending nearly half a century of attempts to set up an English folk museum<sup>224</sup>.

---

<sup>223</sup> H.J. Massingham’s collection was amongst the first of these acquisitions. A number of items from the collection were on exhibition at ‘The Cotswold Tradition’ exhibition in Cirencester in 1951 as part of the Festival of Britain celebrations, acknowledged to the University of Reading (*Cotswold Tradition Catalogue*, 1951). The contents of the former village museum at East Hendred, Berkshire, assembled by Lavinia Smith in the 1930s, were also acquired by MERL in 1951 (Chapter 12.2).

<sup>224</sup> One final point of intersection with the present project is the inclusion on the RAI’s Exploratory Committee of Redcliffe N. Salaman. Salaman was a member of a prominent liberal Anglo-Jewish family, who had had to abandon a medical career through ill-health. He had moved to Barley in Hertfordshire where he became “a pillar of his local rural community, served as a magistrate for 43 years and as chairman of the bench for 23. He was chairman of the Parish Council, and served in a number of other prominent voluntary capacities” (Painter, 1995) It was probably through these local activities that he became acquainted with E.O. Fordham, also a JP and a parish and district councillor, who as was shown earlier, was the facilitator behind the establishment of Ashwell Village Museum in 1930 (Chapter 13.2); Salaman’s signature appears among those of other guests at the opening ceremony in December 1930 (Ashwell Village Museum Visitors Book), and his ‘Bantam’ bicycle is in the museum collections, although it is probable that the attribution has confused Raphael Salaman with his father Redcliffe. Redcliffe Salaman is probably best known today as the founder director of the Potato Virus Research Station in Cambridge and the author of *The History and Social Influence of the Potato*, (Cambridge: Cambridge

Accidents of timing go some way to explain the lack of success of the English Folk Museum project, but there were certainly other factors, including the lack of the nationalistic imperative that focused on the rural, the lack of understanding of the nature of ethnological enquiry and research, the backward yearning anti-modern approach of many of the advocates, the growth of regionalism and the inability of the proponents to seriously engage Government, or the national museums, in their aims and ambitions.

It is also hard to resist the conclusion that Bagshawe charged ahead in his eagerness to achieve the project without giving proper consideration to the conclusions of the previous committee, which he was certainly aware of, but which he had dismissed in his paper to the British Association for the Advancement of Science in September 1949: "Perhaps it is just as well that nothing came of it" (Bagshawe, 1950). Nor did he give any weight to the recommendations of the Standing Commission (SCMG, 1948), which had urged collaboration with the national museums. The Museum of English Rural Life would certainly have fulfilled the recommendation of the Office of Works committee, set up in 1930 (Chapter 11.3) for the

---

University Press, 1949). Flinders Petrie was a family friend; Raphael A. Salaman, his fourth son, was the noted collector and lexicographer of tradesmen's tools (Green, 2003), whose extensive and important collection is now held by St Albans Museums.

“indoor part” of an English Folk Museum which, according to Wheeler, would include “objects illustrating country crafts, folklore etc., from all parts of England” (Wheeler, 1934, p192).<sup>225</sup> Bagshawe’s imagined plan for a site, which he commissioned and paid for (Riviere, 2010), and which now hangs in the offices of the Royal Anthropological Institute<sup>226</sup> was for a far more extensive site of some 500 acres than the recommended “outdoor part” of ten acres containing a “*single small coherent sample of one type or another of the English village*” (Wheeler, 1934, p192; original emphasis). This may explain, if for no other reason, why Wheeler was not involved in the project at this time.

Certainly one of the most significant reasons for the failure was the inability of the final protagonists to see that the museum landscape in England had changed, that many more museums had acquired ‘folk’ collections and everyday objects reflecting the particular history of their area, and that there was little appetite for removing items from their locality, or even, as had

---

<sup>225</sup> A leader, written in *The Times* in response to a letter from John Wolfendon, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Reading, appealing for support for the new Museum of English Rural Life, concurred: “Yet it is the wide scope of the museum, limited to no one part of England, which makes it, in effect, a national scheme.” (THE TIMES, 14<sup>th</sup> June 1952, p7)

<sup>226</sup> Personal communication from Sarah Walpole, Archivist, the Royal Anthropological Institute. To this writer, the watercolour plan is reminiscent of the endpaper drawings and frontispiece in J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Hobbit*, first published in 1937. This may not be a completely fanciful suggestion; according to Shippey, Tolkien was an English nationalist, and much of his writing was based upon what he saw as the ‘lost counties’ of the West Midlands, which were being encroached on by the spread of Birmingham (Shippey, 2007). On Bagshawe’s plan, the visitor is drawn up hill and down dale from a South Country Town through a West Country Village, a Midland Village, a North Country Village and an East Anglian Village.



been urged by the British Ethnography Committee, for the collection of duplicates by local museums for some putative museum in the future. The Festival of Britain's focus on 'the Biography of the Nation', and its encouragement of the development of local pride and knowledge, which will be discussed in more detail later, is indicative. It was as if permission had been given for the change from seeing the countryside, its people and activities on a grand scale as embodying the national identity to seeing it as a site for the detailed exploration of local identities and local knowledge. From the 1950s onwards there was a rapid growth in the number of small, local museums; their roots can be traced back to the new ground being opened up by the village and market town museums of the interwar period which were discussed in the previous section.

## 14. 2 The continuing rise of local history

In the previous section (Chapter 10) an account was given of the growing enthusiasm for local history at a popular level in the inter-war period, exemplified by the publications and activities of the Historical Association and the Women's Institute movement, leading up to the establishment of the Local History Sub-Committee of the National Council for Social Service (NCSS) in 1938.<sup>227</sup> There is a consensus among writers on the development of popular local history that this enthusiasm was rekindled into explosive life in the period immediately following the end of the Second World War (Riden, 1983; Munby, 2005; Beckett, 2007). Beckett, for example, writes that "green shoots would burst into flower after 1945" (Beckett, 2007, p100); Munby states that the "the writing of local history is of long standing, but the popular study of it has been transformed since the Second World War." (Munby, 2005, p3); Riden, writing some twenty years earlier (Riden, 1983), suggests that "whereas the county societies, at least in England, are now mostly over a century old, the smaller groups which most local historians join first have rarely been in existence for more than forty years and often much less. Lacking the conservatism and what some would see as the pretensions of the county societies, these new groups were

---

<sup>227</sup> See Chapter 10.3 above.

the spearhead of post-war amateur enthusiasm for local history.” (Riden, 1983, p16) In 1948, the NCSS sub-committee became the Standing Conference for Local History, bringing together the county level federations of local history societies and groups which were emerging rapidly across the country (Beckett, 2007). Many of these were linked directly to their Rural Community Councils (RCCs), including those for Gloucestershire,<sup>228</sup> Herefordshire, Suffolk and Kent, all of which had had an interest in local and village history from their foundation.

In 1952 the Standing Conference for Local History began publication of *The Amateur Historian*, to provide a forum for discussion and a vehicle for the publication of research as well as informative articles on sources, skills and techniques, such as palaeography. It even, very occasionally, published guidance or descriptions of successful projects for societies building their own collections of artefacts or starting a museum. For example, in 1959 Benjamin Cox, who had been the prime mover behind the formation of the Vale of Evesham Historical Society in 1950, and one of the members most closely involved in the opening of its museum in the Almonry at Evesham in

---

<sup>228</sup> The Gloucestershire Community Council revived their “local history work which was suspended during the war” in 1948 “They are anxious to help any group who would like to start a local history society” (*Gloucestershire Countryside*, Vol.6, No.8, July-Sept. 1948, p150)

1957<sup>229</sup>, wrote an article based on their experience *Forming a Local Museum* (Cox, 1959). "These notes" he wrote "are intended to be a help to small local history societies existing in places where the population and the means of the local authority are such that the provision of a public museum at public expense is out of the question" (Cox, 1959, p202)<sup>230</sup>. His guidance is practical and straightforward and makes no attempt to conceal the hard work involved, but it is work that will be shared by the active members of the society, as a group endeavour.<sup>231</sup>

This increasing interest in and demand for local history was having an impact on museums. In 1956 the National Institute of Adult Education (NIAE) published a report on *Museums and Adult Education* (NIAE, 1956), in which they noted that both the Workers Educational Association (WEA)<sup>232</sup> and university extra-mural departments had recently reported a

relative shift of interest from classes in Economics, International Affairs and even Psychology to Art, Archaeology and Local History... (in the WEA) the

---

<sup>229</sup> Cox later became the first Curator of Blandford Town Museum (Le Bas, 2006), see Chapter 18 below.

<sup>230</sup> Immediately following Cox's article in the same number of *The Amateur Historian* was a review by 'F.G.E.' of Hoskins' *Local History in England*: "Its publication follows closely after Mr Celoria's *Teach Yourself Local History*... The local historian is therefore being well-nurtured, and with the aid of these two books ... he should grow in physical as well as mental stature, for both authors urge readers to use their legs and do fieldwork (*The Amateur Historian*, Autumn 1959, p205)

<sup>231</sup> The Almonry Museum will be considered in greater detail in Chapter 15.5

<sup>232</sup> The WEA was founded in 1903. It is the largest voluntary sector provider of adult learning in the United Kingdom, operating in both urban and rural areas, and providing over 10,000 courses each year (<http://www.wea.org.uk/aboutus/index.htm> downloaded 6.7.10).

greatest shift has been towards classes in Archaeology and Local History .... By 1954 History had gained first place among University Extra-Mural classes (684 classes out of 3,994) and 275 or 40% of the History classes were on local history" (NIAE, 1956, p24).

Indeed, in some areas course organisers noted a sharp rise in enrolments in archaeology classes to "an embarrassing degree" and "an immediate and sharp need for practical collaboration between class organisers and museums as the main repositories of exemplary material" (NIAE, 1956, p22).

The Report also noted the influence of the television programme *Animal, Vegetable and Mineral* which ran on BBC television for seven years from 1952 to 1959,<sup>233</sup> for reawakening the interest in museums. In this programme museum objects were offered for identification and discussion by a panel of distinguished archaeologists, art historians and natural historians, including Mortimer Wheeler, who was noted earlier in Chapter 11.3 in connection with the second attempt to set up an English Folk Museum after 1930, and with the opening of the Gloucester Folk Museum. Wheeler became so popular with viewers that he was voted TV Personality of the

---

233

([http://www.ukgameshows.com/page/index.php?title=Animal%2C\\_Vegetable%2C\\_Mineral](http://www.ukgameshows.com/page/index.php?title=Animal%2C_Vegetable%2C_Mineral) accessed 7.7.09)

Year in 1954 (Henson, 2005).<sup>234</sup> The *Museums Calendar*<sup>235</sup> for 1955 opens with the following words:

During the past year public interest in museums has continued to grow in many parts of the world; the influence of the BBC programme 'Animal, Vegetable, and Mineral' has drawn British museums to the centre of public attention, a place they have never before reached' (NIAE, 1956, p22 quoting from the *Museums Calendar*, 1955)

One way to satisfy the need for 'exemplary material' for local history studies was, of course, to use an existing museum collection, but another route, as the *Amateur Historian* recognised, was for a local history society to amass its own collection, as we shall see in the case studies of Cricklade and Evesham, or to assume responsibility for another collection, as at Wotton-under-Edge, where the Historical Society, founded in 1945, took over responsibility for a museum set up by Wotton-under-Edge Town Trust in 1937<sup>236</sup> (Kingan, 2005).

---

<sup>234</sup> In 2007, Mrs Helen Heath assembled an exhibition on behalf of The Vale of Evesham Historical Society (VEHS) to celebrate fifty years of the Almonry Museum. Much of the text was taken from the recollections of Mr R.R. Smith, one of the founder members. "The members met once a week to discuss local history and attend the occasional lecture. We were privileged to be present at Cheltenham Town Hall when the famous archaeologist Sir Mortimer Wheeler talked about his experiences." I am most grateful to Gerald Heath, Chairman of the VEHS for giving me access to the exhibition text.

<sup>235</sup> The *Museums Calendar* was published by the Museums Association. It continues today as the *Museums and Galleries Yearbook*.

<sup>236</sup> According to Kingan the museum was set up "at the instigation of the South Western Group of Museums, in accommodation which was provided in the Town Hall." (Kingan, 2005, p6) The Minutes of the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting 22 April 1939 of the South-Western Group of Museums and Art Galleries recorded that "The more interesting exhibits at the Wotton-under-Edge Museum include a bust of Sir Isaac J Pitman and etchings illustrating houses and buildings relating to his career; the bible which, originally, was intended to be placed under the Tyndall Memorial and the silver trowel with which the Memorial's foundation stone was laid" (Somerset Record Office A/BHT G3211 Box 3: AGM Minutes 1939, p4).

The increasingly popular interest and enthusiasm for local studies outlined above provided a market for the publication of numerous books on local history in which the guidance was aimed specifically at a non-academic and non-elite audience, such as Francis Celoria's *Teach Yourself Local History*, 1958, Joscelyne Finberg's *Exploring Villages*, 1958, and, probably the most influential of all W.G. Hoskins's *Local History in England*, which was first published in 1959<sup>237</sup> (Matless, 1994). Hoskins in particular believed that "local historians should study the lost culture of the countryside" (Beckett, 2007, p109). Hoskins's *The Making of the English Landscape* was first published in 1955, but it was not the first of his books published for the interested general reader as in 1951 he had written two of the titles in the 'About Britain' series published by Collins for the Festival of Britain Office, *Chilterns to the Black Country and East Midlands and the Peak* (Hoskins, 1951 a and b).

Matless suggests that "one can certainly ... regard Hoskins' work in the 1950s and after as the catalyst for a 'discovery' of local history, for a popular upsurge in the local study and local recording of local event" (Matless, 1994, p31). He also notes that Hoskins "warms to the local market embodying local

---

<sup>237</sup> Hoskins published two other books which were aimed specifically at the amateur historian – *The Making of the English Landscape* in 1955 and *Fieldwork in Local History* in 1967. Jerrard records that Hoskins, whom he describes as "the doyen of fieldwork in Local History" (Jerrard, 1998, p24) gave a talk to the Gloucestershire RCC Local History Committee, but gives no date.

transaction.....And the setting of the market, the English market-town, is also regarded as a local place of beauty and intriguing history" (Matless, 1994, p31). It is perhaps, then, no coincidence that many of the volunteer led museums set up from the late 1940s, were in small towns that could look back towards a time of greater significance and prosperity, but their foundation carried less of a freight of nostalgia, more of a concern for historical enquiry than was shown by some of earlier museums in similar communities<sup>238</sup>.

---

<sup>238</sup> During the 1930s, a number of museums had been set up in decayed boroughs, and run under the auspices of Town Trusts or the Town Council as at Clun, Looe, Malmesbury and, originally, as noted above, at Wotton-under-Edge, as a nostalgic referral to past glory and ancientness. At Clun, and Wotton-under-Edge, it was actually exemplified by the display of town regalia. The 'Charitable Object' of the Clun Town Trust is "to preserve in safe custody the two silver maces and the seal of the dissolved corporation and to keep them open to public inspection and available for use on public occasions at the trustees' discretion"<sup>238</sup> (<http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/SHOWCHARITY/RegisterOfCharities/CharityFramework.aspx?RegisteredCharityNumber=208408&SubsidiaryNumber=0> downloaded 7/7/2010). It is from this object that the museum developed from 1932. The Borough maces and the seal are on display in the museum on Bank Holidays (<http://www.discovershropshire.org.uk/html/search/verb/GetRecord/homepage:20060811144911> downloaded 7/7/2010).



### 14.3 The 1951 Festival of Britain: Local History and Popular Art

The 1951 Festival of Britain and the Coronation celebrations of 1953 both provided opportunities for local communities to explore and display, through a wide variety of activities, their local history, civic pride, traditions and customs. The *Official Book of the Festival of Britain* (Taylor, 1951) described the Festival as the "Autobiography of a Nation for the first time...and millions of the British people will be authors of it" (Taylor, 1951, p3). The Festival would take place not only in London but throughout Britain:

cities and towns throughout the country are presenting their own account of themselves, of the industries, trades and crafts in which their citizens are employed, their local traditions and entertainments, their practice and appreciation of the arts, their sports and hobbies. (Taylor, 1951, p65)

However, as Conekin suggests, "the Festival's evocations of the past were chosen for their appropriateness to the post-war New Jerusalem, an imagined world of equality and freedom for all .... The role of history in this project was to illustrate great universal truths about the British people" (Conekin, 2003, p80), truths which revealed them as "independent, freedom-loving, humble, steadfast and fair" (ibid. p81). "The individualism and 'freedom' of towns were evoked as ancient British rights, but this was also used to explain why it was imperative for every

village, town and city across the UK to do something -however 'modest' - to mark 1951 as a special year" (ibid, p159). So this was no backwards looking nostalgia for a former lost golden age, but a recognition of historic foundations on which the new age could be built.

In his general introduction to the Festival of Britain's *About Britain* series of guide books, Geoffrey Grigson described their purpose as showing 'explorers' a new way of looking at their country:

The Festival shows how the British people, with their energy and natural resources, contribute to civilization. So the guide-books as well will celebrate a European country alert, ready for the future, and strengthened by a tradition which you can see in its remarkable monuments and products of history and even pre-history. If the country includes Birmingham, Glasgow or Belfast, it includes Stonehenge. ... On the Downs in Wiltshire we can stand on a minute plot of ground on which the Iron Age farmer reaped his corn with a sickle, and watch a few yards away a combine harvester steadily devouring ripe acres of wheat. What we are as a people, where we have our homes, what we do, what we make ... depends all of it on a thousand national peculiarities, of soil, vegetation, minerals, water, ways of transport, the continuity and accidents of history (Grigson, 1951, pp5-6).

As well shall see later in this section, it was the "continuity and accidents of history" that the small museums inaugurated in this period set out to explore.

Planning for the Festival had begun some years before; in 1949 civic leaders from towns and cities throughout the country were

invited by the Lord Mayor of London to a meeting to discuss the Festival and to encourage them to prepare for events within their own communities<sup>239</sup>. A catalogue of these events for which information was already available by October 1950 was published by the Festival of Britain Office in 1951,<sup>240</sup> and although by no means a complete list of the events that were to take place during the year it did include nearly eighty historical exhibitions as well as publications on local history for which the NCSS had helpfully published *How to Write a Parish Guide* as part of their local history series in the summer of 1951 (Conekin, 2003).<sup>241</sup> Hertfordshire County Council, for example, issued a special edition of Sir William Beach Thomas's *Hertfordshire*, and Copythorne Parish Council planned a history of the village. According to the *Catalogue of Events and Activities etc* (Festival of Britain Office, 1950) two local authorities planned to set up a museum, Bungay Urban District Council in Suffolk and Bishopside Parish Council in Yorkshire, but only Bungay Museum came to fruition some years later.<sup>242</sup>

---

<sup>239</sup> The Mayor of Bridgnorth in Shropshire was one of those who attended (undated and unprovenanced newspaper cutting in the archives of the Northgate Museum, Bridgnorth). See the case study of the Northgate Museum in Chapter 15.3 below.

<sup>240</sup> Festival of Britain 1951 *Catalogue of Events and Activities arranged by local authorities and Festival of Britain Committees throughout the country, up to October 1950* London: Festival of Britain Office

<sup>241</sup> In 1950 the NCSS had published *Notes on the Recording of Local History*.

<sup>242</sup> I am grateful to Chris Reeve, Curator of Bungay Museum, and to Brian Ives of Nidderdale Museum, Pateley Bridge for confirmation of this, by personal communication, July 2010.

A great number of historical pageants and historical plays were also planned in communities of all sizes including at Battle, Sussex, where the whole of Battle would appear in 14<sup>th</sup> century costume for one week in August, 1951. John Moore, a Tewkesbury-born rural writer at his most popular in the 1940s and 1950s wrote a novel, *Dance and Skylark*, based around a Festival pageant devised by Mr Gurney, "the industrious local archaeologist, (who) had routed out the history and devised the episodes" (Moore, 1951, p9) which turned out to be mainly imaginary, from Odo, Dodo, and the Holy Hermit to the flight of Charles II when history appeared to have stopped, to the dismay of some:

"Well, the Committee feels that we can't just stop at Charles II. *Something* must have happened, even in this place, since then." "A great many things have happened," said Mr Gurney. "People have been born, have loved, married, had children, hated, dreamed, cheated, thieved, prospered, and starved; and in due course have died wondering what it was all about. But that, Noakes tells me, is not History." Mr Gurney bore an ancient grudge against Councillor Noakes, of which the origin was lost in obscurity. "History, according to him, consists of Battles, Kings and Queens." (Moore, 1951, p24)

So it would seem that there could still be contestation over the most appropriate portrayal of the history of a community by at least some of its elite members, such as Councillor Noakes.<sup>243</sup>

---

<sup>243</sup> According to a display panel in Tewkesbury Museum: "64 and 64A Barton Street was given to the Borough in 1956 on the understanding that it would be used as a Town Museum. Not all members of the council thought that this was a good idea. The *Tewkesbury Register* quoted some councillors as suggesting the idea was a "dead loss for the town." Sir

According to the *Official Book of the Festival of Britain*

"Buildings of historical importance or architectural beauty have been restored, among them the old Guild Hall at King's Lynn, Hogarth's House at Chiswick, the walls of Lewes Castle and the Moot Hall at John Bunyan's birthplace, Elstow." (Taylor, 1951, p65) Three of these, Hogarth's House, Lewes Castle and Elstow now house museums. In fact it was T.W. Bagshawe, who, as we have seen earlier, was heavily committed to the third and final attempt to set up an English Folk Museum (Chapter 14.1), who was the driving force behind the restoration and opening of the Elstow Moot Hall, a fifteenth century timber framed market hall, as Bedfordshire County Council's contribution to the Festival of Britain celebrations (*MJ*, 1952, 5, 3, p89).

---

George Dowty finally opened the Museum in 1962. The delay was due to many necessary repairs and sitting tenants that did not leave until 1961." (Personal visit, 14<sup>th</sup> April 2010) Many of Moore's characters in his novels were based on people, or composites of people, that he knew in and around Tewkesbury (Cole, 2007).

## The Moot Hall at Elstow, Bedfordshire



*Image 18: the Moot Hall at Elstow, Bedfordshire, restored as Bedfordshire County Council's contribution to the Festival of Britain, 1951. (Author's photograph, 2009)*



*Image 19: The upper floor of the Moot Hall, Elstow, showing part of Thomas Bagshawe's collection of 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century English oak furniture. (From an unused and undated postcard, author's collection)*

The Moot Hall was furnished with Bagshawe's collection of 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century English furniture<sup>244</sup> and the project was entirely consistent with his anti-modernist and anti- progressive perceptions of English rural life as expressed in his *Suggestions* of 1950 (Chapter 14.1; RAI British Ethnography Committee, 1950). It was also consistent with a powerful feeling current during the inter-war years that 'Tudor' architecture expressed Englishness in a way that no other period could do (Howkins, 1986), which was to be contested in the new age. In 1951 Jacquetta Hawkes, who had been adviser for the People of Britain Pavilion at the Festival of Britain, wrote a very personal exploration of Britain's past, *A Land*, in which she sought to evoke as an entity "the land of Britain, in which past and present, nature, man and art appear all in one piece" (Hawkes, 1951, (1959) p9). The era that Hawkes extolled was not the Tudor period, but the Georgian era and its countryside:

---

<sup>244</sup> Apart from a few later donations, mainly of photographs, to the Museum of English Rural Life at Reading, this appears to be Bagshawe's final foray into museums.

Recalling in tranquility the slow possession of Britain by its people, I cannot resist the conclusion that the relationship reached its greatest intimacy, its most sensitive pitch about two hundred years ago. By the middle of the eighteenth century men had triumphed, the land was theirs, but had not yet been subjected and outraged. Wilderness had been pushed back to the mountains, where now for the first time it could safely be admired. Communications were good enough to bind the country in a unity lacking since it was a Roman province, but were not yet so easy as to have destroyed locality and the natural freedom of the individual that remoteness freely gives. Rich men and poor men knew how to use the stuff of their countryside to raise comely buildings and to group them with instinctive grace. Town and country having grown up together to serve one another's needs now enjoyed a moment of balance. (Hawkes, 1951 [1959], p127)

*A Land* was to become Hawkes's best known and most acclaimed and popular work (Finn, 2004).

Activities which were arranged by parish councils would seem to be under-represented in the *Catalogue of Events etc* (Festival of Britain Office, 1950) with only twelve parish councils offering historical pageants and a further twelve historical exhibitions. Many parishes of course chose to celebrate in a more practical way, for example through the provision of bus shelters, seats or playing field equipment. Others may not have had their plans in place in time for inclusion in the catalogue, or the activity may have been organised more informally or through a community endeavour. In his autobiography, *The Strength of the Hills* the writer and



broadcaster George Ewart Evans<sup>245</sup> describes the exhibition in the village of Blaxhall in Suffolk, where his wife was headmistress of the village school:

About this time the Festival of Britain movement started and the Suffolk (rural) community council suggested that the villages should organize exhibitions of old rural and domestic objects that had gone out of use. It was dimly realized that the war had been a watershed and the pace of change would quicken up. Impressed by the potential of Blaxhall as an example of the changes that had already happened, we decided to hold an exhibition in the school during the following spring. For this purpose we formed a committee. But the enthusiasm in rural East Anglia for a Festival was very lukewarm. It had been initiated by a Labour Government and was therefore suspect, and at first none of the farmers in the village was interested. That we were incomers and had not been in the village long enough to start a village function was a natural reaction. But we pressed on after the education people and the school managers had approved of the project. Our committee consisted of a farm worker, Frank Shaw, as the chairman, two other farm workers, the milkman and a villager who worked in Snape maltings. He designed the publicity posters and filled up exhibition stands and so on. I myself volunteered to do the secretarial work. We split the village up between the committee members who volunteered to visit each house and ask the villagers if they had anything that would go into the exhibition. (We had already circulated them with examples of the kind of things we had in mind.) Each object would be insured and would be returned as soon as the days of display were over. We managed to get publicity for the event, notably through a London weekly journal who sent a photographer out to take some shots in the village. The exhibition was a success and was well attended by the schools and villages around. But more important than this was the impetus it gave to a reappraisal of the past by ordinary people, so that they began to dig down to their historical roots and to recognize that their memories of their forebears were valuable - indeed, more valuable than the objects that had been in the exhibition." (Evans, 1983 (1985), p153-4)

---

<sup>245</sup> George Ewart Evans lived in Suffolk until 1968 when he moved to Norfolk. He wrote a number of important books recording the working and home lives of ordinary village people, including *Ask the Fellows Who Cut the Hay* (1956), *The Horse in the Furrow* (1960) and *The Pattern under the Plough* (1966). He was a founder trustee of the Museum of East Anglian Life at Stowmarket, Suffolk. I am very grateful to Dr Nick Mansfield, former Director of the People's History Museum in Manchester for this reference.

This has many similarities with the way that a number of small museums started up, with an exhibition of items drawn directly from the ordinary people of the community, such as had happened at Ashwell, with the boys' exhibition at the church fete in 1928 (Chapter 13.2) or as we will see some years later at Langton Matravers in 1976 (Chapter 18). It is a very different approach from that we saw adopted at Cawthorne, Westmill, or Winchcombe, and one that was much more in tune with a new, democratic age.

One of the largest locally organised exhibitions outside London or the large conurbations was 'The Cotswold Tradition' exhibition held in the Old Museum, Cirencester Park, from May to September 1951. The Exhibition was based largely on the writings of H. J. Massingham, especially on *The Cotswold Country* (1937) and the three main themes were stone, wool and agriculture (*The Cotswold Tradition*, 1951). The exhibits included many items from his collection, recently donated to the new Museum of English Rural Life at the University of Reading, also founded in 1951<sup>246</sup>, as well as items, which although credited to Eleanor Adlard, came from the Winchcombe Church Porch Museum, as we saw earlier. John Betjeman wrote the introductory captions to each section and the exhibition was designed and many of the exhibits sourced

---

<sup>246</sup> See Chapter 14.1.

by the modernist architect and exhibition designer, Oliver Hill

(Hussey, 1951; Powers 1989, 1991):

Into a small exhibition space, he massed tangible reminders of the local traditions of sheep, farming and church building, travelling round the country in his Rolls Royce, ruthlessly getting possession of tombstones, agricultural implements and anything else which caught his eye (Powers, 1989, p56).

A number of Hill's earlier pre-war exhibition designs, notably the "Exhibition of British Industrial Art in relation to the Home" held at the Dorland Hall in London in 1933, had incorporated traditional tools:

Hill's entrance hall to the exhibition was universally praised. ... (he) showed a genius for dramatising industrial objects and seeing their sculptural potential, while his love of country traditions was incorporated in the display of Nettlefold tools, including a scythe and hayrake, seen, perhaps for the first time, as design objects. (ibid. p40)

The photographs of Hill's own properties at Valewood Farm near Haslemere, and at Daneway in Gloucestershire, published in Powers's monograph on Hill *Oliver Hill: Architect and Lover of Life 1887-1968* (Powers, 1989), show a wide range of traditional and everyday objects used as decoration, from stoneware bottles and brass kitchen utensils to oak furniture. The garden at Valewood was "created with help from Gertrude Jekyll" (Powers, 1989, p24).

Reviewing the “Cotswold Tradition” exhibition in *Country Life*, Christopher Hussey<sup>247</sup> wrote:

Cirencester's compact but brilliantly displayed exhibition is the contribution of the Cotswold capital to the Festival of Britain. It may be singled out from the numerous local exhibitions promoted under the Festival scheme because, almost alone outside London, it is designed round a living theme, (as contrasted with historical retrospection or industrial display), and because it is in itself a notable instance of the modern art of display.

As an exhibition it is indeed more moving than any of those on the South Bank. That is partly, of course, because it is tiny by comparison and its theme simple and limited, in contrast to the complexity and scale of those in London. But, allowing for these differences, there is a note here that was equally applicable to the main Festival exhibition but seems to be designedly muted in it, namely continuity and the traditional co-partnership between man and nature. In the capital of this industrial nation, it is probably right to stress imaginative, forward-looking science, although thereby a somewhat distorted reflection of Britain is presented.

In the Cotswolds, however, it is appropriate to focus the spotlight upon tradition, explain what it is, how it evolved, and what is owed to it. Under Lord Bathurst's chairmanship, with Mr Oliver Hill as showman, the committee has succeeded beautifully in the bold design of presenting visually a thousand years of tradition in a single small hall. (Hussey, 1951)

Two years later, Hill was asked to design the street decorations for the Coronation celebrations in Cirencester (Powers, 1989).

Once again it is apparent that traditionalism and modernism were not necessarily in binary opposition in what Conekin has described as ‘the imaginings of Englishness’ (Conekin, 2003,

---

<sup>247</sup> Hussey had shared Valewood Farm with Hill during the 1930s (Powers, 1989)

p80; Schwarz, 1987), as we saw earlier in the discussion on W.

R. Lethaby and the Women's Institute movement.

Festival year also saw the publication of what were to become two important books on popular or traditional art. One of these, *The Unsophisticated Arts* by Barbara Jones (1912-1978), based on a series of articles which she had written for the *Architectural Review*, celebrated such everyday things as toys, shop fronts and the decoration of food (Jones, 1951). Jones was heavily committed to the Festival of Britain and designed murals, notably the Seaside section of the Coastline of Britain and settings for elements of the Battersea Fun Fair, as well as doing paintings to illustrate the Regional Guides series. She also designed and organised an exhibition of British popular and traditional art at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in London called "Black Eyes and Lemonade":

We brought the whole popular art scene right up to date and so far as I know this was the first time it had ever been done: things currently on sale in the shops and posters on the hoardings, plaster and plastic ornaments and a fine 1951 fireplace in the shape of an Airedale dog were all displayed as works of art. People began to realise that indeed they were ... All through the exhibition the new and commonplace were seen near the old and safe, and by the end most people felt able to accept a talking lemon extolling Idris lemon squash (Jones in Banham and Hillier, 1976, p131)

The second book to be published, or rather re-published, was *English Popular and Traditional Art* by Margaret Lambert and Enid Marx. This had first been published in Collins's popular

“Britain in Pictures” series<sup>248</sup> in 1946; an enlarged and expanded edition was published as *English Popular Art* by Batsford in 1951, presumably catching the mood of an increased interest not only in the history and function of everyday things, but also in their design and decoration.<sup>249</sup>

This was not a nostalgic look back, or one that sought to return to a previous age:

As the countryside becomes more urbanised and we buy more from chain stores, the country craftsmen are dying out and with them that individuality in design and decoration that gave life to the old popular art. This is not a thing that can be artificially revived; to try to do so would be to get the antithesis of the genuine tradition. But by preserving examples from the past for study and enjoyment we may, through our designers of the future, possibly regain some of the old individual qualities and delight in simple forms (Lambert and Marx, 1951, ppvii-viii)

Looking back at the Festival of Britain twenty five years later, Jones reflected that:

The Festival had a real and lasting effect on private life in Britain. Clothes, streets, houses and thousands of things in daily use have slowly got brighter and lighter ever since, and this change can be traced directly back (Jones in Banham and Hillier, 1976, p132).

---

<sup>248</sup> The General Editor of the series was W.J. Turner, to whose memory Hawkes had dedicated *A Land*.

<sup>249</sup> The Marx - Lambert Collection is now at Compton Verney Art Gallery, Warwickshire.

#### 14.4 Volunteer- run Museums and the Festival of Britain

In 1948, the Museums Association published a *Directory of Museums and Art Galleries of the British Isles* compiled on their behalf by S. F. Markham (Markham, 1948). This was the first post-war Directory that attempted to assess the damage that had been done to museums during the war and it listed those that had closed in a seven page appendix. Included in the list were a number of small museums:

Aldeburgh *may reopen later*  
Beer (Devon) The Croft Museum. *Used for housing Government evacuees. Museum exhibits are in storage in Exeter*  
Braintree  
Cawthorne. *Closed in 1939*  
Dunstable. *Closed 1938, collections to Luton*  
Frome *Closed 1939*  
Herne Bay *Closed 1940*  
Maldon *Closed. Building used by National Fire Service. Exhibits stored. Unable to find new premises*  
Petersham *Closed 1939*  
Polperro *Closed 1939*  
St Michaels on Wyre *closed 1940*  
Wallingford *temporarily closed. Natural History specimens disposed of and local antiquities stored.*  
Westmill *closed owing to lack of funds (Markham, 1948)*

Of these, Aldeburgh had reopened by 1954 (Rosse, 1963), Braintree and Herne Bay became managed by local authorities, and Cawthorne was reopened by 1951, as will be described

below.<sup>250</sup> Both Maldon and Wallingford eventually reopened some years later.

Wallingford's first museum had been established by a local bank manager, R.R. Hutchinson in the 1920s in a room in the Free Library. It is of interest that Markham notes the disposal of the natural history collections, as this was consistent with the 'turn to the everyday' and to the local that we have seen at the Curtis Museum in Alton (Chapter 11.2) and will see again later.<sup>251</sup>

The other museums listed appear to have disappeared completely, although in some cases their collections survive, as at St Michaels on Wyre, now held by the Lancashire County Museums Service and at Westmill, now in Stevenage Museum.

Of course the war affected all museums, regardless of size, either directly through enemy action or through the loss of staff (Markham, 1948; Pearson 2008); Pearson suggests that the immediate post-war years were particularly difficult for the

---

<sup>250</sup> St Michael's on Wyre Museum, although recorded in Markham's list above as closed in 1940, was noted in Leo Walmsley's guide to Lancashire and Yorkshire, published by the Festival of Britain Office in 1951 (Walmsley, 1951) so it may have re-opened briefly.

<sup>251</sup> It is not clear whether the present museum holds the surviving "local antiquities", but the main exhibition room is known as the Hutchinson Room, so continuity is claimed. Wallingford Museum, like Sherborne Museum which will be discussed later, was initiated by The Wallingford Historical and Archaeological Society, founded in 1974, but established under a separate trust following a public meeting in 1978.

([www.wallingfordmuseum.org.uk/museum\\_history.htm](http://www.wallingfordmuseum.org.uk/museum_history.htm) downloaded 30/11/2010)



“independent voluntary society museum” (Pearson, 2008, p35) and notes that there was a corresponding rise in the number of local authority museums as societies relinquished their museums to local council control. At Buckinghamshire County Museum, for example, The Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society negotiated shared running expenses with Buckinghamshire County Council in 1954, and handed over the museum entirely to the council in 1957.<sup>252</sup> Whilst this may have been true for the larger society museums, who perhaps found funding from the larger charities such as the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust, increasingly difficult to access in the post war years (Robertson, 1965), it was less obviously true for the very small museums which are the subject of this project. They were, in any case, largely ‘below the radar’ of national charities, and more dependent on their own resources and energies and on local sources of funding at a community level. As will be shown later, their numbers continued to increase after 1945.

For those small museums which had closed temporarily or had flagged during the war, the Festival of Britain provided an opportunity to re-open refurbished or rejuvenated.<sup>253</sup> At Filkins

---

<sup>252</sup> [http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/bcc/museum/ceeley\\_house.page?](http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/bcc/museum/ceeley_house.page?)  
Downloaded 30/11/2010.

<sup>253</sup> It was not only small museums that found the Festival a spur to a new beginning. For example, Warwickshire, the first County Council to take responsibility for a museum, re-opened their museum in the Market Hall, Warwick after wartime use by the army, on May 9<sup>th</sup> 1951 (MANCHESTER GUARDIAN, May 10<sup>th</sup> 1951, p3) The museum had been established in the 1830s by the Warwickshire Natural History and Archaeological Society, but in common with other similar societies, had found themselves unable to

the museum, taken over by the Home Guard in 1939 (Fay and Martin, 1987), re-opened on June 2<sup>nd</sup> 1951:

The village museum at Filkins will be re-opened to the public on Saturday, June 2, after extensive repairs to the roof and walls. .... The dark oak beams and clean whitewashed walls, fitted with tiers of shelves, are stacked with precious relics used in olden times. Two rooms – both on the ground floor – have been arranged by the curator, so that visitors can inspect with ease the many exhibits.... The best collection in the district of old red Leafield pottery fills a shelf, side-by-side with old clocks, gophering irons... drinking horns, dutch ovens, old wooden and glass bottles, cider dips, horn lanterns and a set of cooking pots. ... Then the visitor should inspect the old three wheeled ... child's push chair, in which the late Miss May Morris was taken for airings when a small child. .... A nominal fee will be charged for entrance to the museum, where visitors will spend many an interesting and educational hour. (WILTSHIRE AND GLOUCESTERSHIRE STANDARD, June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1951, p6)

At the Victoria Jubilee Museum, Cawthorne, it seems that the building had been used to make camouflage netting during the war, for on October 11<sup>th</sup> 1944, the VJM Minute Book records that the caretaker had patriotically refused to take any payment for the consequent extra cleaning. Although the museum may have been able to continue in some form during the war, and certainly the Museum Society continued to hold *conversatziones* and talks, it was the local history exhibition staged in 1951 that transformed the museum, most fundamentally by raising sufficient funds to enable the Society

---

support the museum and had offered the collections to the County Council in 1932.  
(<http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/Web/Corporate/Pages.nsf/Links/40DAA57F6E21DE43802572FF0035A03E> downloaded 7.7.09)

to purchase the building from the Spencer Stanhope's Cannon Hall estate. It also signalled a change of collecting practice, introducing more local history and everyday material. The decision to hold a local history exhibition had been made late in the year, in early August 1951, with the exhibition scheduled to run from September 22<sup>nd</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> (VJM Minute Book). A leaflet was printed and distributed around the village:

In order to raise funds for the purchase of the Museum it has been decided to stage a Local History Exhibition during the last week of September.

The main idea of the exhibition is to present a history of Cawthorne and its people from earliest times to the present day, by mean of photographs, documents, handbills, articles of antiquity, paintings etc., etc.

We shall be very pleased if you can help us by offering to loan anything suitable for inclusion in the exhibition.

If you are able to help in this way kindly fill in the attached slip which will be collected by a member of the committee in a day or so in order to ascertain exactly what material is available (VJM file of Miscellaneous Leaflets).

The Secretary's Report for 1951-2 describes the exhibition:

A long table was erected down the centre of the Museum, on which were placed a variety of objects made and used in Cawthorne during the past 100 years. The large cases were used to house old china & crockery, including Coronation mugs and cups. Over 200 photographs were displayed on boards the majority being the work of Mr R. Wilkinson. The annex was largely occupied by old Church and Parish Accounts, Coronation details, old sporting records and Flower Show data. The paintings of Abel Hold were displayed, together with the work of his sons and granddaughter. All the exhibits were skilfully labelled, being the work of Mr. Roy Barraclough of Darton to whom great credit was due.

The crockery section was arranged by Mrs N. F. Moxon & Miss M. Fish. Mr.D.Stables the Books, Accounts etc. Miss Alice Moxon and Mr.N.F. Moxon Photographs, Mr. L. Morley, Mr R Swift & Mr P Hutchinson local industries etc. The exhibition was open during the afternoon and evenings and members of the Committee acted as Stewards. (VJM Minute Book)

The acquisition of the building ultimately led to the formation of a Trust, with eight trustees drawn from the village, which still remains as the governing body of the museum. A few years later, the Secretary's report for 1955-6 (VJM Minute Book) noted that the first of a series of papers on local history had been given to the Museum Society. So Festival year marked the moment when Cawthorne's Victoria Jubilee Museum moved away from its earlier, paternalistic origins to be a fully democratic, community led organisation with a focus on local history and local people.

Elsewhere museums were being set up directly as a result of activities during Festival year, three examples being Bridgnorth in Shropshire and Evesham in Worcestershire, which are the subjects of case studies later in this section and Mildenhall in Suffolk, where the Mildenhall Natural History and Archaeology Society, formed during the 1940s, held its first one day public exhibition on 26<sup>th</sup> May 1951:

This proved so successful that it was decided to maintain a permanent exhibition in a small museum. Two small rooms over the Town Hall (the bedrooms of the caretaker's flat) were made available and the Museum was open every Sunday afternoon. Mr Jim Bell was curator for many years until 1975 when Mrs Margaret Seabrook took over.<sup>254</sup>  
(<http://www.mildenhallmuseum.co.uk/about.htm>  
downloaded 6.7.2010)

---

<sup>254</sup> This is another example of the longevity of volunteer involvement in small museums, as at Cawthorne.

However, for many local groups the Festival of Britain and the Coronation celebrations was just a further spur for an activity to which they were already fully committed – the study of the history of their community.

## 14.5 Changes in the Countryside

One further factor should be considered in the discussion of volunteer led museums in the post-war period, and that is the changes that were taking place in the countryside. In the previous section, it was noted that it was a concern for a declining and culturally impoverished rural community that was behind the establishment of museums in villages and market towns. Now, in the 1950s, the population of the countryside began to grow, particularly in those small towns and villages which were within reach of larger conurbations (Howkins, 2003) and it was a reaction to this new rurality that begins to be detected in museum foundations. Commuting began to spread further out into the countryside, although, as has been discussed earlier,

migration to the countryside began to affect the home counties from the late nineteenth century, with the development of an extended suburban railway network which reached out into the Kent, Surrey, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire countryside. This remained on a small scale until the 1930s. Outside the home counties, migration to the countryside became a significant trend only after 1945 (Burchardt, 2002, p163)

One of the consequences of this change was that the "village ceased to be a working, even single occupational community, and became instead a place of leisure where even those who lived there spent only their spare time in the place" (Howkins, 2003, p179). Burchardt points to an increase in the arrival of

middle-class newcomers after the Second World War, which could lead to the establishment or “revival of village leisure activities, with newcomers taking an active role in fostering clubs and societies” (Burchardt, 2002, p191); Cricklade Museum, discussed below, could be considered as an example of a new facility set up in a small town on the initiative of an active, middle-class newcomer, albeit one who both lived and worked in the town. Rowley points out that at least some of the changes in the countryside, both in terms of population and occupational pattern, are linked to structural changes in urban areas: “The de-industrialization in the inner cities (from the 1950s) was accompanied by the expansion of both the manufacturing and service sector forms of employment in rural areas and small towns” (Rowley, 2006, p151). It is interesting to note how many of those involved in the establishment of the four museums discussed below were in service sector occupations, and indeed were people who were clearly enjoying increased leisure opportunities, for example through the talks and outings offered by the societies and through volunteering at the museum itself.

# CHAPTER 15: THE LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY MUSEUM

## 15.1 Introduction

Of the twenty-six museums identified as set up in the interwar period, none were established on the initiative of a local history society, although such societies and groups clearly existed. At least ten such museums are known in the fifteen years following the end of the war in 1945:

Wotton-under-Edge (Glos.) 1945 *Wotton-under-Edge Historical Society*  
Shaftesbury (Dorset) 1946 *Shaftesbury and District Historical Society*  
Cricklade (Wilts), 1950 *Cricklade Historical Society*  
Bridgnorth (Salop), 1951 *Bridgnorth Historical Society*  
Framlingham (Suffolk), 1954 *Framlingham and District Local History and Preservation Society*  
Battle (Sussex) 1956 *Battle Historical Society*  
Evesham (Worcs.), 1957 *Vale of Evesham Historical Society*  
Bakewell (Derbys.), 1958 *Bakewell and District Historical Society*  
Brixham (Devon), 1958 *Brixham Museum and History Society*  
Gillingham (Dorset), 1958 *Gillingham Local History Society*<sup>255</sup>

The Rosse Report (Rosse, 1963) lists only three other museums in small communities set up in the same period:

Ashburton 1955 *Ashburton Museums Committee*  
Dartmouth Borough Museum 1953 *The Friends of the Borough Museum*  
Sidmouth Museum 1955 *The Sid Vale Association*<sup>256</sup>

---

<sup>255</sup> The Rosse Report (Rosse, 1963) records other details of the Market Harborough and District Archaeological and Historical Museum but no foundation date. The museum is now part of Leicestershire Museums Service.



Although the list given in the Rosse Report is unlikely to be complete, the preponderance of local history society museums is very striking. Others, of course, were set up after this period and an extensive listing is given as Appendix 3.

The case histories which follow examine the motivations behind the establishment of four of these local history society museums, Bridgnorth in Shropshire, Cricklade in Wiltshire, Evesham in Worcestershire and Framlingham in Suffolk.

In each of the four, an account will be given of the origins of the museums, and consideration of the factors which motivated their establishment. Although occasional references will be made to the later history of the museum, this is not explored in any detail, fascinating and illuminating though that might be. These case histories are, it is suggested, indicative of volunteer led museums in the 1950s.

---

<sup>256</sup> It is worth commenting briefly on the Sid Vale Association Museum, which is just one of the activities of what is claimed to be the oldest civic society in Britain, founded in 1846. Other activities include landscape, river and footpath conservation and an active engagement in the planning process as well as social and community events ([www.sidvaleassociation.org.uk/page/about\\_sid\\_vale\\_association](http://www.sidvaleassociation.org.uk/page/about_sid_vale_association) downloaded 7/7/2010). In fact, the Association and its museum would seem to encompass many of the activities and philosophy of what elsewhere in Europe would be described as an ecomuseum (Davis, 1999, 2005, 2007b, 2008).

## 15.2 Cricklade Museum, Wiltshire

On Sunday, February 3<sup>rd</sup> 1947 nine men met at the home of the local doctor, Dr. T R F Thomson.<sup>257</sup> The house was an imposing Queen Anne building situated opposite the Town Council offices in the High Street of Cricklade. All those who met were “actively interested in the archaeology and history of Cricklade” (CRDWH: 2900<sup>258</sup>) and formed themselves into a group to be known as the Cricklade Historical Committee under the chairmanship of Dr. Thomson. Their original aims included procuring a grant of arms for the town,<sup>259</sup> to encourage and support archaeological excavations in the town, particularly on the site of the Town Wall, and to undertake a series of publications, which later became known as ‘Materials for a History of Cricklade’.

The Committee embarked directly on a series of projects towards these aims, from which it seems probable that the plan had been in gestation for some months, and almost immediately began to consider setting up a museum. At their meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> February, 1948 “The Chairman proposed that

---

<sup>257</sup> Local doctors were the prime movers of a number of volunteer led museums including Southwold, Ilfracombe, Bungay, Cricklade and Bridgnorth. The most famous doctor/curator is Dr John Kirk, whose collection was the foundation of York Castle Museum.

<sup>258</sup> The reference numbers given in this section are to items in the archives of Cricklade Museum. I am most grateful to Chris Morley, the Curator, for access to the collection.

<sup>259</sup> Cricklade currently has a population of just over 4,000 people. A current leaflet describes Cricklade as “the first town on the Thames” (*A Walkers Guide to Cricklade*, North Wiltshire District Council, acquired 2009)

the Town Hall Committee be approached with a view to the Old Weigh House being rented as a museum” (CRDWH: 2900);<sup>260</sup> the Old Weigh House stands in the forecourt of the Town Council Offices, opposite Thomson’s house. The same meeting proposed forming a Cricklade Historical Society, and shortly afterwards leaflets were printed to encourage membership:

The objects shall be research into local history and topography, more especially as regards the ancient borough of Cricklade; the publication of the results of such research; and the establishment and maintenance of a museum in Cricklade (CRDWH: 5827)

Members of the Society were elected by the Committee, paid a joining fee of half a guinea and an annual subscription of half a guinea thereafter; members elected a Committee to manage the affairs of the Society at an annual meeting in December.

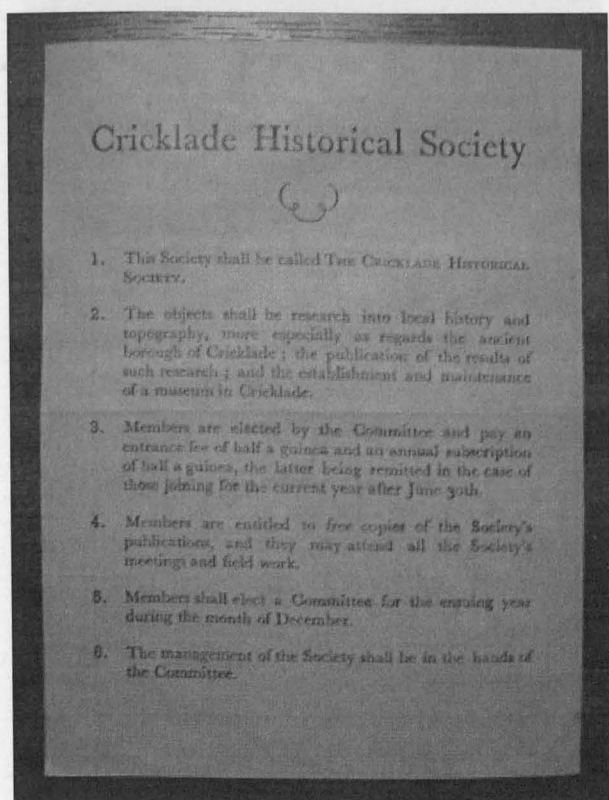
---

<sup>260</sup> Dr Thomson, living opposite the Town Hall, was clearly in a good position to discuss the proposals informally with council members.

## Cricklade Museum



*Image 20: The Old Weigh House, the original site for Cricklade Museum, with the Town Council offices behind. (Author's photograph, taken from outside Dr. Thomson's house)*



*Image 21: The leaflet printed to advertise membership of the Society (Cricklade Museum Archives CRDWH: 5827)*

The Historical Committee formed the core of the new Society's committee. This committee now had fifteen members, five of whom, including Dr Thomson, were also listed as members of the long-established Wiltshire Archaeology and Natural History Society which had had its own highly-regarded museum in Devizes since 1853. The occupations of a number of the Committee are known, and included a farmer and waste dealer, three brothers who were garage owners and motor engineers, the son of a glove manufacturer, a plumber, a draper, a master builder who later became the author of a number of books on local history, a former employee of the Great Western Railway and two clergymen<sup>261</sup> (CRDWH: 5827). This group were clearly brought together through shared enthusiasms rather than class ties or allegiances in a new and more democratic time.

Negotiations between Dr Thomson and the Town Council for the lease were put in hand. Funds began to be raised towards the costs through dances, a raffle, a sweepstake on the Derby and a series of whist drives (CRDWH: 1870).

---

<sup>261</sup> I am grateful to Chris Morley, Curator, for this information.

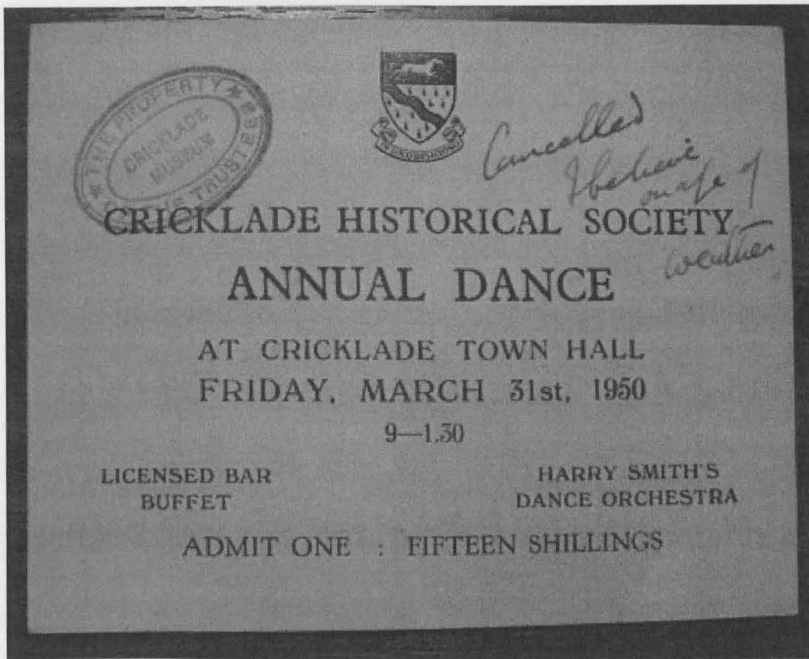


Image 22 and 23 : A ticket for the Annual Dance and a poster for a Grand Annual Rummage Sale, illustrating both the importance of sociability and enjoyment to the Society and how funds were raised to support the museum (Cricklade Museum Archives).

Through these activities the Society was reaching out to the community of the town and providing both leisure and pleasure in a post-war period of austerity. It was as much an attempt by the society to 'win hearts and minds' for the museum project as it was to raise funds, and is similar to the approach that was to be adopted at Beaminster Museum some forty years later (Chapter 18).

At the first Annual General Meeting of the Society in December 1948 it was reported that "A good deal of material has been collected by gift and loan. The Old Weigh House is to be used as a museum." By April 1950, preparations were well in hand for the opening on May 10th and invitations had been sent to all the Wiltshire newspapers and to one hundred other guests for whom tea would be provided; a silver collection would be taken from other visitors (CRWH:1870). Dr Thomson addressed the guests on behalf of the Society:

You will have read from the circulars just given to you of the general activity of this Society whose membership is but forty. You may have seen the Museum building, the old town Weigh House of Cricklade – and noted its smallness. We intend to make it a museum of local history, and you will appreciate the evident truth that we cannot make it a repository for articles from afar (CRDWH: 7445)

An admission charge was set at 3d for adults and children 1d and the museum was open on Wednesdays and Saturdays, when the curator, Miss Dowden, was in attendance, and on

Bank Holiday Monday, when members were on “door duty”.

Miss Dowden was rewarded with an honorarium of 5 guineas.

At the first Annual General Meeting after the official opening, Miss Dowden reported that 323 visitors had seen the museum, including fifty on the Bank Holiday and two school groups, “many of these have been Cricklade people but the majority have come from afar. All have shown great interest in the exhibits” (CRDWH: 1870).

A further leaflet, undated but probably printed shortly after the opening of the museum in 1950 describes the activities of the Cricklade Historical Society:

A man's power of judgement and consequent action is effective in proportion to his knowledge of what has gone before. We ask you to interest yourself in the history of the county and especially in the history of our ancient borough. Our efforts are appreciated in national historical circles and more particularly at the present time by those studying the Roman occupation, the settlement of Wessex, and the evolution of the English Borough.

Time is not far past when the farmer and the hunting man knew the history of his country, of the past ownership of his land, of the reason behind the lines of every one of his hedgerows, paths and ditches.

We believe that the man without roots of land or family and without inquisitiveness about the past of his institutions and surroundings is one of the menaces to our civilisation and to the ethos of our country.

If you agree with us, please help us with your interest by joining this Society and taking part in its work, or by giving us a donation to help us forward in work with which you sympathise. (CRDWH: 5827)



The reference to “inquisitiveness about the past” as a way to identify the true nature of ‘Englishness’ would certainly have resonance with readers, who would have been only too well aware of the perversion of German history perpetrated by the Nazi regime. The reference to the ‘Roman occupation’ would also have struck home so shortly after the end of the war;<sup>262</sup> but it may also be a reflection of a local rivalry between Cricklade, a decayed borough, and nearby Cirencester, a flourishing and larger town with a wealth of Roman remains both in situ and displayed at the Corinium Museum.

The leaflet continued with a long list of the Society’s achievements, which included an account of the museum:

The Museum Building has been loaned to four trustees for a nominal rent for a period of 99 years. The renovation and decorations have been carried out at a cost of about £180 of which £100 has been paid. The equipment, arrangement, and cataloguing has been carried out by the Society. The value of the collection should be judged only after a visit of inspection. There is no room for objects illustrating Natural History, although a place may be found for such if of great local interest. The Society’s thanks are due and hereby given to the many friends who have lent exhibits.  
(CRDWH: 5827)

Rejecting natural history, the contents of the museum appear to have been mainly archaeological artefacts and finds at this early period in its history. An early printed catalogue of the collection from 1955 includes only a small and extremely

---

<sup>262</sup> There are echoes too of E.O. Fordham’s reference to the “Norman occupation” at the opening of Ashwell Museum. In both cases it is an English local identity that is being sought.

miscellaneous collection of what were called 'Bygones', which included coffin furniture, a spoon, a packhorse bell, a quizzing glass, the off foreplate (horseshoe) of the 1883 Grand National winner (trained in Cricklade), a straw splitter, the Borough measures, two clarinets, a toasting fork, and a 'piece from the loom of Queen Victoria's stocking 1874' (CRDWH: 1798). By contrast, the archaeological material was arranged systematically by period and type, no doubt a reflection of the interests of the Committee at that time<sup>263</sup> and, of course, a reinforcement of the ancientness of the borough, as well as the growing popularity of archaeology among the general public in the 1950s, particularly because of the influence of radio and television programmes such as *Animal, Vegetable, Mineral*. As Daniel and Renfrew suggest:

prehistory is interesting to the ordinary man in the street because its sources are so much nearer to the average person and his life than are the sources on which the historian *sensu stricto* relies. ... Its methods are also of great interest; the immediacy and accessibility of the sources are equalled in general interest by the uniqueness and fascination of archaeological method and technique. ... The ordinary member of the public warms to the stories of adventure, of luck and of chance in which the chronicle of archaeology abounds (Daniel and Renfrew, 1988, pp147-149).

A number of points can be drawn out from this brief account of the establishment of the Cricklade Museum by the Cricklade

---

<sup>263</sup> Today (2010) there is very little archaeology displayed in the museum; the displays concern the more recent history and social life of the town, reflecting the changing interests both of the Society and of the wider public.

Historical Society in 1950. First of all it is a museum that is run by a membership organisation, with a set of rules governing its activities, which are now formalised into a constitution. The museum was only one element of the wider activities of the Society, which also included research, publication, lectures, outings and social events<sup>264</sup>. The Society founded and sustained the museum through many of the same types of fund-raising and social activities as other grassroots associations employed – whist drives, raffles, rummage sales, ‘fayres’, and an annual dance as well as through admissions to the museum and membership fees.

The founding members, the Cricklade Historical Committee, were mainly self-employed tradesmen from the town but Dr Thomson, like many of those involved in volunteer-led museums today, was not a native of the place. He had moved to Cricklade from London in 1945, and ran a medical practice from his house in the High Street until 1973.<sup>265</sup> He was a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries and a Fellow of the Royal

---

<sup>264</sup> An undated leaflet in the museum archive advertises a “Quiz and Conversazione” on February 29<sup>th</sup> (either 1952 or 1956) at the Old Bear Inn, Cricklade, at which “Exhibits from the museum will be discussed, and members are invited to bring out-of-the-way and interesting objects. Mr. Hugh de S. Shortt FSA of the Salisbury and Blackmore Museum, who may be known to you on Television, has kindly consented to take the chair” (CRDWH: 5827). Hugh Short was a regular panelist, with Mortimer Wheeler, on *Animal, Vegetable, Mineral* ([http://www.ukgameshows.com/ukgs/Animal\\_Vegetable\\_Mineral](http://www.ukgameshows.com/ukgs/Animal_Vegetable_Mineral) downloaded 19.7.10)

<sup>265</sup> Personal communication from Chris Morley, July 2009

Historical Society and presumably enjoyed a wide network of contacts in the historical and archaeological field. According to information displayed in the museum, he initiated the archaeological survey of Cricklade's Saxon defences, which led to four important excavations in the town between 1948 and 1963 (Radford, 1972). The group were united by a common enthusiasm and interest, and, in addition to Dr Thomson, those other members of the Society who belonged to the Wiltshire Archaeology and Natural History Society were also able to draw on a wider network of contacts and knowledge in support of their interests. Contacts with the wider world also included membership of the South Western Group of Museums and Galleries, which the museum had joined in 1952 (CRDWH: 2900).

However, the most significant feature of the early Cricklade Museum is the focus on a local identity, exemplified both through the research and publication activities of the society and through the acquisition of material which illustrated the long history of the town. Like Clun, Winchcombe and Wotton-under-Edge discussed earlier, and Bridgnorth to be discussed later in this section, Cricklade could look back to a past in which the town was of greater significance both locally and nationally; it had been a Saxon *burgh* and a parliamentary borough until 1885 when it had lost that status. The emphasis

on Cricklade's importance as a borough is aligned to the 1951 Festival of Britain's emphasis on the British values of liberty and citizenship as manifested both through civic traditions<sup>266</sup> and as a means of bringing what was considered to be the best of the past forward to the present and the future: "This country was among the first to recognise the freedom of individual towns, and the form which the Festival of Britain has taken is a further proof that only through remembering this ancient principle have we been able to present in 1951 the Autobiography of our Nation" (Taylor, 1951 p70). It is an emphasis which would have found sympathy with W.G. Hoskins, who signed the visitors' book in the museum on 24<sup>th</sup> May 1956<sup>267</sup>, although perhaps for rather different reasons, given his generally anti-modernist stance (Matless, 1994).

---

<sup>266</sup> Thomson is credited with the "re-introduction of Courts Leet for the Manor of the Borough and Hundred of Cricklade" (information panel in Cricklade Museum, July 2009)

<sup>267</sup> Other signatures in the visitors' book include Frank Stenton, the distinguished Anglo-Saxon historian (30<sup>th</sup> August 1952), and noted archaeologists Stuart Piggott and O.G.S. Crawford (June 13<sup>th</sup> 1953).

### 15.3 The Northgate Museum, Bridgnorth, Shropshire

The Northgate Museum in Bridgnorth is included in this study as, although its origins as a society museum lie in the 1930s<sup>268</sup> it only moved into the public domain as a result of exhibitions held in 1951 as part of the Festival of Britain celebrations in the town.

During the war, a skeleton committee had kept the society alive, and in May 1945 they held their first AGM since 1940 in the Northgate.<sup>269</sup> Shortly after this, in July 1945, the society enjoyed their first outing since 1939 to Tickenhill Manor Museum at Bewdley. This important and extensive collection, assembled by Mr. and Mrs. J.F. Parker<sup>270</sup>, and described in a leaflet "To All Who Are Interested in the History of the People of the Midlands",<sup>271</sup> contained a wide range of domestic items and

---

<sup>268</sup> The Bridgnorth and District Historical Society was founded in 1934 under the presidency of Dr W. Watkins-Pitchford. A series of protracted negotiations with the Borough Council for space for a museum began in 1935 and by June 1937 it seemed as if the council were prepared to let the society have rooms in the Northgate for a nominal rent of 1/- a year, provided that they admitted residents for one hour on one day each week. However, the society could not move forward as they were unable to raise the funds to equip the rooms. Approaches to the council also failed: "The corporation fully realised the value of a well-arranged museum would be to the town, but unfortunately, while it was a very old Corporation, it was also very poor." (BRIDGNORTH JOURNAL, Feb. 2<sup>nd</sup> 1938)

<sup>269</sup> Sometimes also referred to as 'The Burgess Hall'

<sup>270</sup> The collection is now held by Worcestershire County Museum at Hartlebury Castle.

<sup>271</sup> "To All Who Are Interested in the History of the People of the Midlands ....A collection of domestic articles of bygone days may be seen in the west-wing, many of which have been found in the neighbourhood, and much of the furniture of the house dates from the time of the country craftsmen, now unhappily, almost a person of the past. This has now grown into a Folk

objects associated with the crafts and trades of the West Midlands. It is, perhaps, significant that this was the society's choice for their first outing, rather than an ecclesiastical building, stately home or archaeological site.

An appeal fund was launched in November, 1946, with a letter from the President to all members of the Society:

---

Museum, an entirely different thing from a Fine Art Museum as it records the life history of the local people.

Other countries have long had them, but in England they are only just being started. Many are in Scandinavian countries, where on reserved land, old buildings are re-erected, to preserve the life history of the people. Many of the houses, farms and craftsmen's shops are inhabited and used in the old manner, whilst the women spin, weave and embroider and are a living example of the former life, and their work is sold to the numerous visitors.

About 1935, I began to study old industries of this neighbourhood and by degrees, collected many objects of craft work, with the tools used in former days. Gradually interest widened and we were asked to include Midland old trades. These follow naturally from the old country crafts, for example, the making of **pins** and **needles** first made by the country goldsmith, became centred in special areas given up to this work only. **Buttons**, made by the villagers, who called the work "**buttony**" and cut them out of wood, bone, horn and metal, became a Birmingham special industry.

Nails made by the local blacksmith, cut out of sheet iron with a cold chisel, later were made chiefly at Cradley.

**Papier mache**, of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Midland craft, echoed an earlier craft called "mash" of which, it is still remembered, the frames of early pack horse saddles were made, for lightness, in preference to wood. The tools of the blacksmith, wheelwright, woodworker, brickmakers and all the other country craftsmen, have altered in character and it is our object to collect such things and to set up ultimately, craftsmen's shops in the old style, as well as kitchen, dairy, and other places of domestic use.

This is an enormous task and cannot be hurried, our main object is to collect now and arrange later.

By making this a folk centre we wish to preserve also, a place full of history, from the activities of the modern builder, and we ask the sympathy and co-operation of our visitors in our efforts for the preservation of folk history.

Alice Parker, Tickenhill, Bewdley, July 1948" (Folklore Society Special Collections FLS A8:7 TIC)

An Appeal to you as a Member of the Society

You will be glad to know that the long-delayed work of re-conditioning the Burgess' Hall is nearly completed, and that the Hall will shortly be handed over to the Society by the Town Council for use as a Museum and Headquarter.

The Town Council has very generously carried out much of the initial preparation of the premises, and has set a fine example of co-operation for the common good.

Funds are now needed for installing electric light, for heating, and for the purchase of show-cases, picture-frames and picture-rails, shelving and cupboards. I am sure you would like to make a donation to this Museum Fund, and thus assist in establishing a centre of culture and interest for the Town and District.

About three hundred pounds will be required, and with our large and enthusiastic membership we should be able to raise this amount. (Bridgnorth Northgate Museum archives)

The *Bridgnorth Journal* of February 22<sup>nd</sup> 1947 reported on the Annual General Meeting, and noted that the appeal fund for the museum now stood at £179, with fifty-five out of sixty-two donations coming from society members: "Pointing out that the museum would be for the benefit of the town, Mr Cunningham thought the response so far was rather disappointing. Amounts varied from a top figure of £25 to 2s 6d, and the speaker was pleased to recall that two working men, at the recent exhibition, had given him 10s and 2s 6d respectively" (BRIDGNORTH JOURNAL, Feb.22<sup>nd</sup>1947).

With some money available, the society began to assemble and display objects and documents, acquiring cases from



Ludlow Museum and elsewhere to house them; The Hon.

Secretary's Report to the AGM in 1950 noted that

During the past year much progress has been made towards furnishing the museum with suitable exhibits of local interest. A public appeal for such articles met with very little response, but members have, by their own endeavours, assembled a good basis of suitable exhibits (NMMB).

However, because of the restricted public opening, it seems probable that the collection at this time was still seen primarily as an interest for the society members at their meetings and lectures<sup>272</sup>, rather than for the public as a whole, and this situation might well have continued had it not been for the success of the society's contribution to the Festival of Britain in 1951.

The Mayor of Bridgnorth had been one of the civic leaders who had attended the Lord Mayor of London's meeting in 1949, and in August 1950 he in turn convened a public meeting to discuss Bridgnorth's contribution to the festivities. A Historical Committee was set up, consisting mainly of Historical Society committee members (Northgate Museum Bridgnorth archives).

The following month the society's committee:

agreed that during the Summer of 1951 Festival of Britain Celebrations, the Museum should be open on stated days of the week for visitors. It was suggested that a rota be drawn up of those willing to act as

---

<sup>272</sup> The Shropshire County Archivist, Miss M. Hill, gave a talk in December 1947 on 'The Making of Local History' (NMMB)

guides to visitors. The President promised to take these members on a tour of the town beforehand. After a point on the insurance of the contents of the Museum being raised it was agreed that the Treasurer take out such insurance, the contents being irreplaceable, this was assessed at £1,500<sup>273</sup> (Northgate Museum Bridgnorth archives).

The Festival of Britain Historical Committee organised a number of activities during Festival year, including a substantial exhibition of 200 paintings and images of Bridgnorth, held in the Town Hall during June, which had been sourced from museums and private collections from around the country, a major undertaking. The *Bridgnorth Journal* also reports a display of Corporation regalia and “a small exhibition of old costumes, trinkets, toys etc, illustrating the changing life of the people of Bridgnorth 1851-1951” (BRIDGNORTH JOURNAL, June 15<sup>th</sup> 1951, p1).

The Hon Secretaries’ Report to the AGM held in February 1952 summed up the activities during Festival Year:

---

<sup>273</sup> Watkins-Pitchford, the driving force behind the Society and the Museum from its foundation, had also “kindly promised to publish a historical account of the Castle of Bridgnorth and its Chapel which will be commemorative of Festival Year” (Hon. Secretaries Report to AGM February 1951, printed in the notice for the AGM and included in the NMMB)

During the year under review the Society played an important part in the Festival of Britain activities which were organised in the Town. The Museum at Northgate was opened to visitors on several days in the week as from Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> June, 1951, and members of the Society acted as officers in charge during the opening period. ...

The Festival of Britain Historical Exhibition in the Town Hall was a great success...

Numerous further exhibits have been included in the Museum, and the thanks of the Society are due to the donors. If the Museum continues to expand at the present rate, consideration will soon have to be given to the question of holding the ordinary meetings of the Society in some other suitable Hall. (Northgate Museum Bridgnorth archives).

Festival Year seems to have provided a welcome boost to the society. Members' subscriptions had amounted to £21.18.6 in the statement of accounts for 1950, and increased to £40.17.0 in 1952<sup>274</sup> and the Committee proposed increasing the number of meetings to at least one a month during the winter season and also "decided that the Museum should be open as last year, from 1 May to end of September on the same days at the same times. Curator to draw up list of helpers" (Northgate Museum Bridgnorth archives).

It would be reasonable to conclude, then, that the activities of the Festival, whilst they did not actually start the museum, did move it into the public domain for the first time and indeed a

---

<sup>274</sup> Hon. Secretaries Report to AGM February 1951, and February 1952, printed in the notices for the AGM and included in the Northgate Museum Bridgnorth archives.

recent promotional leaflet for the museum, acquired in 2009, describes the museum as “founded in 1951”. The same promotional leaflet is illustrated with a photograph of the display of Borough regalia.

## 15.4 The Lanman Museum, Framlingham, Suffolk

In the two previous studies, both at Cricklade and at Bridgnorth, it has been shown how local history societies were exploring through museums what it meant to be English in the post-war period, through a close concentration on a local identity, and a newly discovered sense of local pride. At Bridgnorth, the catalyst was the Festival of Britain. At Framlingham, it was the Coronation celebrations of 1953.

According to an article by Andrew Lovejoy in *Fram: The Journal of the Framlingham and District Local History and Preservation Society*

Framlingham had to wait until the 1930s before anyone here started taking a positive interest in the possessions left behind them with a view to exhibiting them. Harold Lanman (1893-1979) started collecting items from people in Framlingham of historic and social interest, which preferably were the result of local craftsmanship. (Lovejoy, 1998)

Lanman was the son of a local clock and watchmaker, and had received little formal education as he had been kept from school through deafness. In 1931, he had taken part in a large historical pageant in the town, which may have been the trigger for his interest;<sup>275</sup> this may have brought him together with others in the town who shared his enthusiasm for the

---

<sup>275</sup> There was a second, smaller pageant later in the decade (Personal communication from Tony Moore, former curator, 4/7/08)

past, but it seems that it was not until 1953 that any of his collection was exhibited, other than in his shop where he sold antiques and furniture, when a "Local History Committee" organised an exhibition in the town's Assembly Rooms to mark Coronation Year. The two day exhibition was noted by the *East Anglian Daily Times* (June 25<sup>th</sup>, p5):

#### Framlingham's History on Show

... Many visitors attended the Assembly Rooms yesterday when the Earl of Cranbrook opened an exhibition of local records, antiquities, and objects of historic interest, organised by the Local History Committee. His Lordship said the exhibition might well serve as a stimulant to find out even more about the social life of their historic town in past generations.

Mr Gerald Leedham (Chairman of the Committee) acknowledged the generous response of the public for exhibits, Pembroke College, Cambridge (Lords of the Manor) and the County Archivist.

... Exhibits, which number over 600, include a large portrait of Sir Robert Hitcham, Framlingham's greatest benefactor; another of the local artist Edwin Edwards, which is loaned from Christchurch Mansion.

The Earl of Cranbrook himself loans some outstanding books, including "Agricolae Puer", William Chubbe's translation of Bloomfield's "Farmer's Boy". Mason Martin loans some grand water-colours, and there is an original drawing of Framlingham dated 1736.

The famous barber's sign ("O Abfalom, My Son, My Son") which came from the Market Hill, Framlingham, is on show, also Framlingham's first fire engine. There is also a 1903 De Dion motor-car.

Saxtead is well-represented with exhibits from the famous mill, and stocks from the churchyard.

The exhibition continues until Saturday. (EAST ANGLIAN DAILY TIMES, June 25<sup>th</sup>, p5)

The “many visitors” were invited to sign a visitors’ book<sup>276</sup> and include their comments on the exhibition in addition to their name and address. Altogether four hundred and fifty five visitors signed the book, mainly from Framlingham and its immediate surroundings, but also including some from further afield. The comments included:

A most interesting, instructive and excellent exhibition.  
Exhibition reflects great credit on all concerned in  
arranging and displaying exhibits.  
Very interesting exhibition. ‘Well Done’! Framlingham.  
We should have a museum!  
Very good show. May we have a museum.  
I hope it has come to stay.  
Could it be made permanent? Most interesting.  
I hope this is the beginning of a permanent museum.  
The best thing that Framlingham has ever done.<sup>277</sup>

According to an unpublished paper by C.W. Seely in the Lanman Museum archives, written in 2006, it was “as a direct result of this exhibition our Society (The Framlingham and District Local History and Preservation Society) came into being and drew up its first Constitution in November 1956.” Shortly afterwards the Society moved into premises centrally situated on the Market Hill, offered at a peppercorn rent by a local business and the museum was opened by the Earl of Cranbrook on October 29<sup>th</sup>, 1957.

---

<sup>276</sup> The same book was used for the museum itself from 1957 to 1963.

<sup>277</sup> There were a few negative comments as well: Passable; Too old fashioned; A very good show but too (sic) much writing; A very good show but too many D.N.T. signs (sic) (Do not touch?).

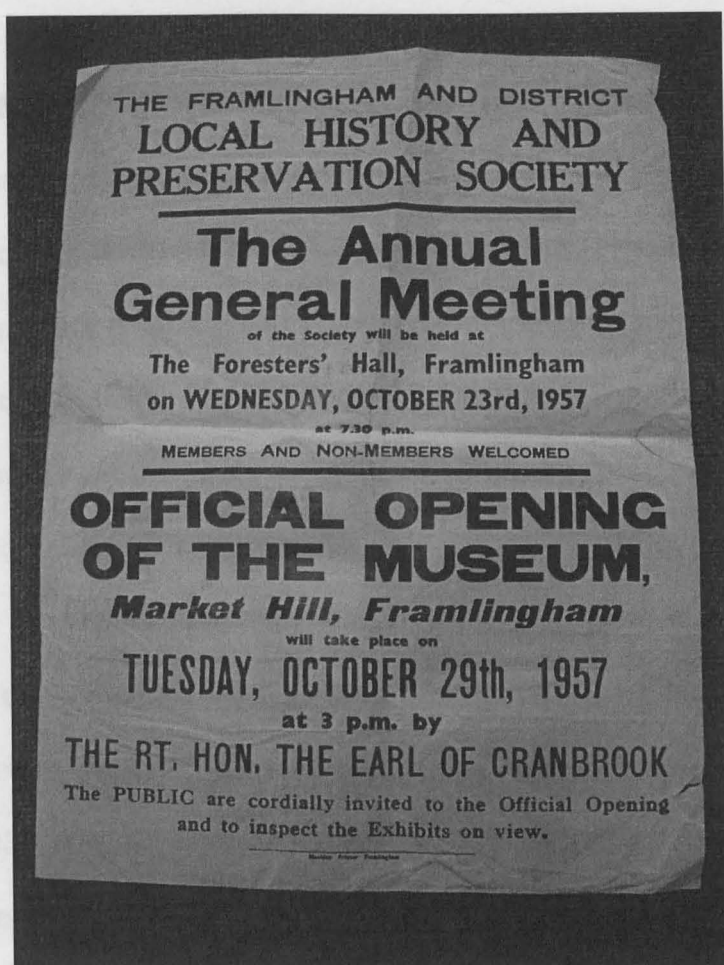


Image 24: Poster advertising the Annual General Meeting of the Framlingham and District Local History and Preservation Society and the opening of their Museum, October 1957. (The Lanman Museum, Framlingham archives)



In his opening speech Cranbrook "said it was not the intention of the committee educationally or culturally to take the place of national or county museums, but to concentrate on articles from Framlingham and district to be saved for posterity....The committee were most fortunate in having Mr Harold Lanman as curator, and Lord Cranbrook hoped he would be utterly ruthless when offered something which was not up to the standard of the museum's requirements" (EAST ANGLIAN DAILY TIMES, October 30<sup>th</sup>, 1957<sup>278</sup>).

Local pride is very much to the fore here with the visitor's comment that the exhibition was "The best thing that Framlingham has ever done", as was the need to assert and celebrate a local identity with Cranbrook's exhortation to "concentrate on articles from Framlingham and district to be saved for posterity"<sup>279</sup>.

---

<sup>278</sup> Newspaper cutting included in the Lanman Museum archives. No page number given.

<sup>279</sup> The subsequent history of the museum illustrates well the persistence of local groups, as well as the difficulties facing those without secure tenure or ownership of premises. In 1964 the museum was asked to move out of Market Hill into premises in Double Street which were available "at a modest rental on a six monthly agreement" (printed letter to the members of the Society from Oswald Sitwell, Chairman, 17<sup>th</sup> July 1964, held in the Lanman Museum archives). While in Double Street, the museum seems to have been open on a fairly regular basis during the summer months, for *Fram*, the Society's newsletter, records that the museum was open on 62 occasions and received 417 visitors, with 15 members acting as 'sitters-in' (*Fram*, December, 1971) and the following year sixty-six openings were recorded with 364 visitors and "Messrs Lanman, James and Sitwell were thanked for their untiring efforts in keeping the museum up to date as regards interior maintenance and the acquisition of 'new pieces of interest'." (*Fram*, October 1972) However, in the mid 1970s, they were asked to move again, and, unable to find permanent premises, moved the collection to a 'prefab' behind Lanman's house (personal communication from Tony Moore, former museum curator, 4/7/2008). In 1979, with the help of advice

## **15.5 The Vale of Evesham Historical Society and the Almonry Museum, Evesham, Worcestershire**

In Evesham, as we have seen at Bridgnorth earlier in this chapter, the 1950s saw the revival of a venture that had started and stumbled in the inter-war years. Now, with the renewed importance of locality and local pride and tradition, nurtured and encouraged by the Festival of Britain in 1951 and the Coronation of 1953, there were increased opportunities and encouragement for success.

In early 1950, Benjamin (Ben) Cox initiated a move to revive the former Evesham Antiquarian Society which had folded in 1934, seemingly through lack of interest. Cox, a solicitor's clerk, took considerable pains to do careful groundwork before calling a public meeting to discuss forming a new historical society. According to extensive files of letters preserved in the archives of the Almonry Museum, he consulted former members of the Evesham Antiquarian Society and local dignitaries in town and church life. Once he was sure there was sufficient interest in a new society, he approached the editors of the two local papers,

---

and funding from the Area Museums Service for South Eastern England, the museum was able to move into the former Courthouse and at the same time a separate trust was set up for the museum. Finally, in 1984, the museum moved to its present premises within Framlingham Castle, where part of the North Wing of the Poor House was made available to them by English Heritage (Lanman museum archives. English Heritage was set up in 1983 under the National Heritage Act 1983. Negotiations had taken place between the society and the Ministry of Works from the early 1960s over accommodation in Framlingham Castle).

the *Evesham Journal* and the *Evesham Standard*, asking for their support in publicising the meeting, which they duly did:

This week I hear that efforts are to be made to re-establish the Vale of Evesham Antiquarian Society, which discontinued its activities sixteen years ago. .... My informant, Mr Benjamin G. Cox, ... tells me that there appear to be many people in Evesham who would like to see the Association re-formed, and with this end in view he has compiled during the past six months a list of those interested. A meeting is to be called in September, when the whole question will be thoroughly discussed, and a decision taken whether or not to revive the society. ...

The objects of the society would be two-fold – to promote the study and preservation of antiquities and to investigate matters of local and general interest; to obtain and maintain museum accommodation in Evesham for the safe custody and exhibition of articles and documents of local and general antiquarian interest. ... "I feel it is high time that something was done to place before the people of the Vale and its many visitors from all parts of the world something of the history of our lovely old town and Vale" adds Mr Cox. ...

The second purpose of the society - to establish a museum in Evesham, is one which will commend itself to many. Every step should be taken by the Borough Council to assist in this laudable object, for the existence of a well-stocked museum would enhance the town's reputation. Evesham and the Vale are rich in history and tradition, for more than one battle was fought for liberty on the hills which surround the town. ... It is to be hoped that there will be sufficient response from the townspeople to enable Mr Cox to continue with his excellent idea, so that a society which flourished sixteen years ago might once again contribute to the cultural and social life of the town. (EVESHAM STANDARD. Newscutting in the archives of the Almonry Museum, undated and no page number given)

This encouragement of an emphasis on English liberty, particularly as associated with the freedoms and rights of ancient towns, was, as we have seen earlier, one of the main aims of the Festival of Britain in 1951 (see Chapter 14.3).

The meeting was held in September 1950 in the Council Chamber of Evesham Town Hall, presided over by the Mayor, and with the Worcestershire County Archivist and the former Hon. Secretary of the Evesham Antiquarian Society as speakers, thus ensuring widespread credibility for the project, and the new society was formed and a committee elected. The first Annual Meeting of the society was held in November 1951, when the Annual Report noted the formation of the society, the election of committee and officers and the formulation of Rules, all actions which legitimated the new society (Cunningham, 1992) and the Winter lecture programme and the Summer outings that members had enjoyed. It also noted that the Society had assisted in the organisation of a Festival of Britain Historical Exhibition “which was highly successful” and that members of the Society had acted as Stewards (VEHS archives, First Annual Report).

The initial idea for the exhibition had come, not from the society, but from the Civic Section of the Townswomen's Guild, and Cox had learnt of their plan when he had written to Susan Greenall, the Chairman of the Section, to invite her to attend the inaugural meeting. Cox immediately suggested co-opting her onto the VEHS committee and offered a number of items from his own collections for the Festival exhibition. A Schedule of the Exhibits, presumably drawn up for insurance purposes as

valuations are given beside many of the items, covers a wide range of items from books, maps and archives, to costumes and needlework, toys and games, domestic items, and farming and trade tools and equipment. It also included items loaned by the Worcestershire Record Office, the Borough Library and the Borough of Evesham<sup>280</sup>. It must have been a very useful exercise, not only in handling loans and displaying a wide variety of objects, in establishing the interest that there was in the town for a museum, and in identifying objects that might be made available to a museum in the future and making contact with their owners. As Cox wrote later in an article on 'Forming a Local Museum' in *The Amateur Historian*:

The first job, of course, must be to compile a register of all exhibits likely to be available for display in a Museum. This is achieved by personal contacts of members, the holding of historical exhibitions in your town and the villages surrounding it. The idea is to get other organisations such as the Women's Institute or Village Hall Committee to promote the exhibition and for your Society to act as advisers without disclosing that, from your point of view, the object of the exhibition is to find out what there is about and who it belongs to. It is really astounding how these historical exhibitions take on. The people are only too delighted to bring along their old maps, photographs, coins, documents and bye-gones generally. Your members then make a list of the exhibits and the names of the exhibitors. The organization running the exhibition make (sic) a nice profit from the takings and you have a valuable record. This necessarily takes some months and has worked very well in the Vale of Evesham. The press should be invited because this helps to work up enthusiasm for local history generally. (Cox, 1959, p202)

---

<sup>280</sup> The schedule of exhibits for the Festival exhibition and correspondence between Cox and Greenall and others are in the archives held at the Almonry Museum, Evesham.

Cox here shows that the first exhibition was crucial to the future success of the project, as it had been to other museums, and would be in future museum projects elsewhere.

The Festival exhibition was not the only event arranged by the VEHS as they worked towards achieving a museum for the town. The 1955 annual report notes that in April they had staged an exhibition to celebrate the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the incorporation of the Borough of Evesham in the Almonry; it “was highly successful in every way and did much to prove to the public the suitability of the Almonry as Museum premises and of the ability of this Society to organise a permanent exhibition” (VEHS Report for the Year 1955).

The Almonry is one of the few surviving structures of the former Evesham Abbey. It had been “acquired by Evesham Borough Council in 1925 and for many years it had been hoped that the building would one day become a Museum” (*The Almonry Museum, Evesham Official Guide*, nd, post 1965, p1). The building was occupied by a number of individual tenants, which the council may have been reluctant to remove until a suitably robust organisation arrived to manage a museum. The VEHS was therefore concerned to prove that they were such a group, and in the years between the establishment of the Society in 1950 and the opening of the

museum in 1957 they were in continual discussion and negotiation with the council. Responsibility for the discussions seems to have remained with the committee and officers. The 'Research Group' seems to have been given responsibility for acquisitions. For example, the Group report for 1954 includes accounts of the activities of their members, with others, in excavations on Bredon Hill, a Saxon inhumation at Fairfield, a Saxon cemetery at Beckford and at a Roman site and also reported that "the group continued its search for material for the Museum and promises of numerous items have been obtained". Both the Research Group and the Society as a whole visited other museums<sup>281</sup>, the British Museum in 1954, the Ashmolean Museum, Birmingham Museum and Tickenhill Manor<sup>282</sup> in 1955 and Gloucester in 1956. Through these visits, they were extending their contacts and network of supporters. The visit by the Research Group to Birmingham was considered to be particularly helpful as "a very useful liaison ... was formed which will be of great help to us in the future" (*Report of the Research Group for 1955*).<sup>283</sup>

---

<sup>281</sup> The annual reports also noted that members of the society and the research group attended day and residential courses in local history and archaeology.

<sup>282</sup> This collection was also visited by members of the Bridgnorth and District Historical Society, as described earlier.

<sup>283</sup> "The Curators of the Almonry Museum gratefully acknowledge the help received from the Natural History departments of the Birmingham, Leicester and Worcester City Museums, in providing many of the bird and mammal exhibits." (*The Almonry Museum, Evesham Official Guide*, nd, post 1965, p4)

By the end of 1955 it was clear that negotiations with the council had been successful, at least for a trial opening in the following summer (VEHS Report for the Year 1955). In April the *Evesham Journal* announced that the museum would be open by August Bank Holiday in the Almonry, and appealed, on behalf of the museum curators, for the help of readers:

The Almonry is going to be *your* museum – a place where the belongings of *your* ancestors, in the Vale of Evesham, will be protected and preserved for *you* and *your* descendants, and occasionally put on exhibition for the public benefit ....the ultimate aim of the honorary curators is that the Almonry shall be a folk museum; that is to say, it will not be one of those dull, dry-as-dust, depressing places emburdened with heaven knows what, festooned with explanatory placards couched in pseudo-learned language nobody can understand; ... the Almonry is really a place of every period from about 1400 down to the present day. So hardly any article of former domestic use could be out of place. Tradesmen and craftsmen, growers and farmers, can all help too. (EVESHAM JOURNAL, April 28<sup>th</sup> 1956, no page number given)



## The Almonry Museum, Evesham



*Image 25: The Almonry Museum, Evesham (taken from a postcard purchased Summer, 2009)*

<sup>80</sup> The initial reports also noted the condition of the ceiling and the repair of some stained glass and a window frame in the library and gallery.

<sup>81</sup> This collection was also visited by members of the Birmingham and District Historical Society, as described earlier.

<sup>82</sup> The Governors of the Almonry Museum, originally known as the Evesham Museum, were established in 1881 by the Evesham Museum Committee. The first report of the committee was published in 1882, and the first annual report was published in 1883. The Almonry Museum, Evesham, 1881-1901, pp. 1-2.

In 2007 the VEHS staged an exhibition to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Almonry Museum, which included the written reminiscences of one of the founder members of the inner core of activists, the Research Group<sup>284</sup>, and a founder member of the Society, R. R. (Bob) Smith<sup>285</sup>.

When I first joined the Vale of Evesham Historical Society, I was a self-employed market gardener. ... While working on the ground I would often find old coins, brooches, bits of pottery and other objects. This rekindled my already keen interest in history and archaeology. I recall one of my most interesting finds was made while cutting asparagus. A Roman coin (Constantine, dated 330) had been pushed up through the soil and was balanced on top of an asparagus bud, almost as if it had wanted to be found. These finds were frequent, and most growers had a story to tell. (Smith, 2007)

Smith's account has some similarities with that given by George Swinford at Filkins, of his early collecting whilst working as a carpenter, builder and stonemason, when he acquired old locks, hinges and other architectural fittings which he came across in the course of his work, later to become part of the Filkins Museum collection discussed earlier (Fay and Martin, 1987). Smith too used his occupation as an opportunity to acquire items for the museum:

Obviously, due to our local heritage, a large part of the collection was from market gardeners and farmers, and many tools and implements were available. I

---

<sup>284</sup> The 2007 Exhibition text refers to the Research Group as "The Magnificent Seven".

<sup>285</sup> I am most grateful to Mrs Helen Heath for making the text of the exhibition panels, which included Smith's reminiscences, available to me, July 2009.

loaned various tools, items of clothing, and other artefacts. (Smith, 2007)

Smith had joined the VEHS with a fellow grower, Michael Edwards (ibid.). The Vale of Evesham is at the heart of the main fruit and vegetable growing area in the Midlands. It was one of the few areas of rural England that actually saw population growth in the interwar years, rather than decline, and “just after the Second World War there were some 395 horticulturalists in the Vale, occupying holdings which averaged seven acres” (Rowley, 2006, p229). These were independent men, possessed of a ‘can do’ attitude:

The second world war struggle had recently ended, and the world was working hard to recover. The attitude of most people at that time was to tackle any task head on, which is what we did. (Smith, 2007)

Smith’s account also highlights another important aspect of volunteer led museums, the sociability associated with working together towards a common purpose, especially among those within the inner core, over and above the enjoyment of shared activities such as outings:

Our small group comprised of a collection of different ages and backgrounds, united in a common cause – the formation of a museum in Evesham ... In the 1950s I always made a few barrels of cider and a gallon or two kept on tap at the Almonry helped to fuel the efforts and inspire the imagination. After a few glasses nothing was impossible ... It was great fun trying to identify some of the more unusual objects and their purpose. A glass or two of cider would lead to the most

imaginative descriptions, followed by roars of laughter.  
(Smith, 2007)

In addition to Smith, who was later to become a police officer, and Edwards, later to become a teacher, the group consisted of Tom Keen, antique restorer and cabinet maker, Tom Bayliss school teacher and local history author, Ben Cox, solicitor's clerk (mentioned above), Ivor Slocombe, painter and amateur artist and Joe Robinson, a draughtsman (Mrs Helen Heath, 2007 Exhibition text). As Cox wrote two years after the official opening of the museum in April, 1957:

We in Evesham do everything ourselves. You are bound to find a good deal of talent in your Society. You will have those who are clever with tools who can make your showcases – you will have the coin expert, the art expert and the dab hand at signwriting and labelling. You will have the lady with the typewriter, the man who likes cleaning up old guns, agricultural implements etc., and various others, all able to contribute something which would help to keep the show going. We have done it and we are very proud of it, and I can quite honestly say it has not placed too much of a burden upon any one individual, but obviously, in the early days, the Secretary (Cox) has his hands full. Working together in this way a really good local museum can be formed and maintained. (Cox, 1959, p203)

This ability to utilise all the many life skills and working experiences of their volunteers is characteristic of volunteer-led museums.

The members of the VEHS Research Group were the inner, activist group of the society (Rochester, 2007; Rochester et al.

2010) who were spending “hours, sorting out, classifying, indexing, cleaning, protecting, the objects that have so far been lent or given for the collections of antiquities” (*Evesham Journal*, April 28<sup>th</sup> 1956). An article by E. Woodward Jephcott, unfortunately undated and unattributed<sup>286</sup>, in a local newspaper during the open season describes the museum’s exhibits in “neat show cases”, including a wealth of archaeological material, displays about Evesham Abbey and of pictures, and of more recent material:

Probably to many visitors, the most fascinating exhibits will be those illustrative of old-time work in the Evesham Vale. Much profitable lingering should be occasioned by breast plough, flail, hay knife, vermin trap, eel spears and putchin, small cider barrels for field workers, branding irons, saddlers’ tools and “donkey”, an old bottling outfit, and the magnificent series of corn measures belonging to the Borough of Evesham. ... There are domestic bygoners too ... a fine lady’s dress, a labourer’s smock, and a lovely white cotton bonnet such as many a Vale countrywoman favoured not so long ago. (E. Woodward Jephcott, unprovenanced newspaper article, nd 1956)

The writer noted that “this attractive little local museum ... is on trial until September 30<sup>th</sup>; but it is greatly hoped that the museum may become one of Evesham’s permanent and most cherished amenities” (*ibid.*). The VEHS’s efforts were successful, for in 1956 the annual report noted that:

Your Committee are pleased to report that this trial period proved successful in every way, almost 1000 people visiting the Museum during the period. Your delegates have met the Council again in recent weeks

---

<sup>286</sup> Newscutting held in the archives of the Almonry Museum.

and arrangements are now in hand for a Civil opening early in April 1957.

The *Evesham Journal* too considered that this initial success was “a complete justification for the formation and opening of the museum” and congratulated the council on making the Almonry available for “by this act it must enhance, not only its own reputation, but that of the Borough of Evesham. Every thoughtful person owes Evesham Town Council a deep debt of gratitude for inaugurating a museum, which Evesham has lacked for so long, especially in these hard and difficult times” (EVESHAM JOURNAL, October 12, 1956<sup>287</sup>).<sup>288</sup>

---

<sup>287</sup> Cutting held in the archives of the Almonry Museum. No page number given)

<sup>288</sup> The arrangement that had been made between the council and the VEHS still pertains: the VEHS acts as Curator of the museum, and the council owns the building and manages the day to day arrangements for opening, now run in conjunction with a busy Tourist Information Office. Overall management is by a joint committee. The careful preparations that were made by Cox and his colleagues in the early years, and the nurturing of the relationship between the VEHS and the council and other local societies, and with the local press has clearly born fruit.

## Summary of Section H

In this section we have seen the final, doomed attempt to set up an English folk museum, and some reasons for this failure were suggested. Perhaps the most significant reason, though, was that *it was no longer needed*. Local and everyday material had found its way in to every museum; there was no call for the grand narrative of national identity, in England at least, and there was a clearer focus on locality that had been strengthened by the Festival of Britain and the Coronation celebrations<sup>289</sup>.

The demographics of the rural community had changed too, and have far greater similarities with those revealed by the Dorset Survey (Chapter 6) than they do with earlier periods exemplified by Cawthorne and the inter-war museums.

Equally, the volunteer-run museums of the 1940s and 1950s have greater similarities with the museums set up in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s than with those founded in the inter-war years. Their self-reliance in seeking funding and support, their sociability, and their effort to sustain and develop a relationship with their own community, as well as the contacts

---

<sup>289</sup> Later, it would be *regional* identities that would be explored in museums such as the North of England Open Air Museum at Beamish (1970), or the Black Country Museum at Dudley in the West Midlands (1975).

they establish further afield, are comparable to today's  
volunteer-run museums, as we shall see in the final section,  
Section I.



## SECTION I: VOLUNTEER RUN MUSEUMS SINCE THE 1960S

### Introduction to Section I

In this, the final section, we shall examine some of the considerable changes that occurred in museums, especially where these influenced the growth in numbers of volunteer-run museums and guided their development (Chapter 16). The decades of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s also brought considerable change to the rural community, with an influx of new people into remoter rural regions, such as the South West and East Anglia, and some implications will be highlighted in relation to the responses to the Dorset Survey of Volunteers (Chapter 17).

Chapter 18 discusses the case histories of a selection of the volunteer-run museums in Dorset who participated in the Survey, picking up on some of the common threads that have run throughout this project, and bringing the account of the historical development of these small but dynamic museums closer to the present-day.

## CHAPTER 16: THE MUSEUM CONTEXT

In November 1986, the Arts Minister, Richard Luce, in his comments at the opening of a new display at the Yorkshire Museum, noted that

One of the most impressive facts in the art world today is the astonishing vitality of museums. Over the last fifteen years the number has doubled in the United Kingdom. There are about 2,000 of them - a great majority privately funded. Once every fortnight somewhere in the United Kingdom a new museum unfolds its treasures to the public gaze (quoted in Hewison, 1987, p84)

Although this was something of an exaggeration there was certainly an extraordinary growth in the number of all museums in this period,<sup>290</sup> including national museums, but the expansion was most marked in the independent sector. It was not just increasing numbers that drew attention to this phenomenon; Prince and Higgins-McLoughlin observed that:

before 1950 the majority of the foundations were based on the so-called traditional collecting areas of fine art and archaeology, together with the pure and natural sciences (particularly in the public sector) their relative dominance has been eroded rapidly in recent years (particularly since 1961), and replaced by foundations within the fields of industrial archaeology, social history (particularly rural social history) and technology and transport. (Prince and Higgins-McLoughlin, 1987, p26)

---

<sup>290</sup> Particularly during the 1970s and 1980s. According to a survey of members of the Association of Independent Museums conducted by the Policy Studies Institute (PSI) in 1989, thirty-one independent museums had opened between 1960 and 1969, eighty-six between 1970 and 1979, and one hundred and three between 1980 and 1989 (PSI, 1989, p18).

This rapid growth in the number of museums and heritage centres and of heritage based attractions did not go unchallenged nor uncommented upon by contemporaries, for example Lowenthal (1985; 1989), Horne (1984), Wright (1985), and Hewison (1987), particularly where their growth was seen as a pastiche replacement of past economic activity, often in the former industrial areas of the north of England, and a gloss over difference and conflict: "Critics castigate heritage for displacing real industry, with museums breeding like maggots on the graves of enterprise" (Lowenthal, 1998, p96).

Others, notably Raphael Samuel, saw it as a welcome extension and democratisation of historical consciousness and enthusiasm which brought opportunities for people other than the elite to participate in research, collection and presentation (Samuel, 1994). Davies, in a review of Hewison's *The Heritage Industry: Britain in a climate of decline* (1987), suggests that Hewison is, both metaphorically and actually, travelling north from a southern elite perspective that is more concerned with the individual artist-creator than with the community and the lives of ordinary people: "Wigan Pier does attempt to help reinvigorate the local economy but it is also concerned with a revival of community awareness and local pride" (Davies, 1988, p138). Like Samuel, Davies welcomes this development "there is now a curiosity about the past - especially about local, family

or regional history - that cannot be dismissed as fantasy or nostalgia" (Ibid. p135).

In 1989, the Policy Studies Institute conducted a survey of members of the Association of Independent Museums, in which they found that 68 per cent of the museums in the sample opened after 1970, including two-thirds of the responding local history museums (PSI, 1989). Shorland-Ball, in a later survey, found that 74 per cent of museums with rural life collections originated between 1960 and 1980 (Shorland-Ball, 2000). Babbidge has identified a number of "substantive trends" within this growth, including that the greatest increase tended to be in southern England<sup>291</sup> (Babbidge, 2005b, p9).

All of this would suggest that the majority of the volunteer-run museums in market towns and villages with which this project is concerned also opened in this period. The case histories of museums from Dorset which follows in Chapter 18 would certainly seem to bear this out, although, as has been shown in earlier chapters, such museums certainly have a longer pedigree and their numbers were already growing steadily before the 1960s. Without entering in to a full discussion of the many factors that precipitated the 'heritage boom', touched on briefly above, it is worth noting a few of those which might

---

<sup>291</sup> This geographical in-balance has a long history, as has been noted earlier in this project, for example in Chapter 5.1

have contributed to an environment where these volunteer-run museums could become established perhaps with greater readiness than in previous decades. Some factors can probably be put aside such as the suggestion that these museums can significantly affect the economic prosperity of their town or village; their visitor numbers are too small and their scope too modest, although of course they contribute to the tourism 'offer' of their immediate area<sup>292</sup>. The various unemployment measures initiated in the 1970s, such as the Community Programme, were helpful to the larger independent museums, but more rarely accessed by museums without staff<sup>293</sup> (Middleton, 1990). Babbidge suggests that few museums were actually started through an employment measure, although many already in existence were transformed by the availability of manpower (Babbidge, 2005b).

Middleton suggests a range of other factors which influenced the growth of all independent museums including a growth in community activism and disillusion with local government's ability to provide services,<sup>294</sup> optimism in leisure and tourism

---

<sup>292</sup> "Museums have responded to the need and desire to serve tourists, but this has rarely been the primary reason for the creation of museums in the South West, which remain firmly related to the authentic local heritage" (Locke, 1989, p3)

<sup>293</sup> One volunteer-run museum which did take advantage of a Manpower Services Commission scheme was Okehampton and District Museum of Dartmoor Life (Locke, 1989)

<sup>294</sup> In Norfolk eleven small independent museums were established between 1980 and 1995, joining two other market town museums set up in the

schemes, concern for the environment and an attractive organisational model following the Charities Act of 1960 which enabled museums to apply for charitable status (see Chapter 5.1) (Middleton, 1990, pp20-22). To these could be added the impact of the Public Libraries and Museums Act of 1964 and the Local Government Act of 1972, which was implemented in the reorganisation of local government in 1974.

The Public Libraries and Museums Act of 1964 enabled local authorities to contribute towards museums and museum services other than or in addition to their own, so that they could, for example, provide a grant to a volunteer-run or independent museum, or provide revenue funding towards an Area Museums Council to support local museum activity, to be described below. The Local Government Act of 1972 empowered both the new county councils and the new district councils to fund and manage museum services; prior to this date Rural District Councils were not empowered to fund museums so for the first time local authorities serving a rural area could fund or provide museums. Although more research is needed to establish how many museums were set up or newly funded as a consequence of the Act, it is interesting to note that both at Blandford and at Wareham in Dorset efforts were made to persuade the new shadow authorities to support

---

1960s, despite the establishment in 1974 of a county-wide Norfolk Museums Service by the County Council and all of the District Councils (personal knowledge).

museum projects immediately before the Act came into force in 1974 (Chapter 18).

Area Museums Councils (AMCs) were set up following the recommendations of the Rosse Report (Rosse, 1963), with some funding provided by the Treasury, the first occasion when national government had supported the non-national museums. Other funding was provided by the membership either through the newly empowered local authorities or from individual organisations. AMCs were self-governing, independent charities and lasted until 2000, when they were superseded by regional Museums, Libraries and Archives Councils, which were effectively MLA branches, and no longer membership organisations. These were in turn wound up in 2009.

AMCs after 1964 were modelled largely on the South West Area Museum Council, first set up in 1959: “its formation and subsequent pioneering success reflect a unity, quiet enthusiasm and concern for quality of life, which is characteristic of South West England” (Locke, 1989, p3). For much of their existence, AMCs were pragmatic organisations which provided advice, grant funding and practical services such as conservation and design. After the launch of the Museums and Galleries Commission Registration Scheme (now the Accreditation Scheme, see Chapter 5.2) AMCs were

greatly concerned with providing guidance and support to museums striving to meet the standard, particularly volunteer-run museums, as well as giving small grants to purchase items required to comply with the scheme, such as accession registers. Many AMCs also assumed a 'pastoral care' and training role towards the curatorial advisers who worked with the volunteer-run museums in the Registration scheme.

In regions such as the South West and the South East<sup>295</sup> much of their work was concerned with the smaller museums:

Nothing is more characteristic of the museum world in the South West than the local museum – created and maintained by local enthusiasm. This is perhaps the most sensitive area within which the AMCSW operates, but one of the most successful when co-operation with local museums is effective. A special concern for local museums has been a central policy of AMCSW since its inception (ibid. p22)

Locke, in his account of the first thirty years of AMCSW gives a brief case history of Okehampton and District Museum of Dartmoor life:

Okehampton Museum is another characteristic example of a local museum created through the energies of local people in a completely natural and unselfconscious way. A museum society, a shrewd, committed and hard-working amateur curator, a vacant historic mill, the availability of a Manpower Services Scheme; these factors have occurred again and again in the irrepressible development of local museums. Some succeed and some don't and it is a fundamental role of the AMCSW to try and spot the potential winners and provide support early enough to help (Ibid. p23).

---

<sup>295</sup> The former Area Museum Council for South East England originally covered a vast area from Norfolk to the Isle of Wight, including London.



Beaminster Museum was also supported by AMCSW as we shall see in Chapter 18.<sup>296</sup>

Two other recommendations of the Rosse report are worth mentioning in the context of volunteer-run museums, and that was that “they should give priority to schemes for museum development.. (and) the financial costs of operating museum services should be shared between all tiers of local government” (Rosse, 1963, quoted in Babbidge, 2005b, p40).

Two county-wide museums services were set up in the 1960s in Oxfordshire and in Worcestershire, which reflected these recommendations, and Norfolk and Hampshire followed in 1974<sup>297</sup> (Babbidge, 2005b). We shall see in Chapter 18 how the Hampshire Museum Service were providing guidance and support at Blandford; in Oxfordshire the museum service were providing similar support to a museum venture in Wantage, which in 1975 became the Vale and Downland Museum Trust:

At this time we also had very close contact with Richard Foster (*Director of Oxfordshire Museum Services*) who held our hand and guided us over the minefield of museum politics. I would often telephone Richard several times a week asking advice on what do we do next? Or how do you think we should approach this one? We were also having discussions with the Area

---

<sup>296</sup> The Area Museums Service for South East England provided both practical help and funding for Framlingham Museum when they moved from their premises in Double Street to the Courthouse in 1979, with professional design and display and help in developing the stories and text panels (Lanman Museum archives)

<sup>297</sup> The recommendations were not widely followed though, and some joint services, such as that set up in Leicestershire, have since been disaggregated.

Museum Service ... (who) said they were unable to provide hard cash, but they would be able to increase help to Woodstock County Museum<sup>298</sup> so we would in turn benefit from professional part-time staffing and some practical help from their workshops for mounting displays etc (Squires, 1993, p3<sup>299</sup>)

This account, as did that of Okehampton, clearly shows how contacts with the wider museums community had now moved from the earlier mode of advice and guidance from fellow curators, with occasional gifts of equipment, such as we saw at Evesham in the 1950s (Chapter 15.5) to a point where actual practical help and significant funding can be achieved.

---

<sup>298</sup> The headquarters of the Oxfordshire Museums Service was based in Woodstock.

<sup>299</sup> In his account of the early days of the Vale and Downland Museum, Squires also recounted how he had been to a lecture given by Foster about starting museums "that it could be likened to childbirth – conception is easy, confinement can be long and drawn out with miscarriage threatened at all times, birth is painful, but when the museum is finally up and running you can easily forget all the agony that produced it." (Squires 1993, p1)

## CHAPTER 17: CHANGE IN THE RURAL COMMUNITY

The purpose of this chapter is to indicate a few of the changes that have occurred in the English rural community since the 1960s that will both serve to illuminate some of the findings of the Dorset Survey of Museum Volunteers (Chapter 6) and provide a background for the study of the four museums in Dorset that follows in Chapter 18, and that will conclude this study of volunteer-run museums in market towns and villages.

We have seen in earlier chapters (Section G) how in the inter-war years, a declining rural population and the drift of people away to larger conurbations had been a focus of concern, as had the changes in agricultural practice that brought with them the decline of traditional rural crafts and industries. Now, in the period after 1960, agricultural change accelerates,<sup>300</sup> and the number of people employed in agriculture continues to decline both in real terms and as a percentage of the rural population. Burchardt considers that this is “the most striking feature of the typical English village in the twentieth century” (Burchardt, 2002, p187). We have already seen, in Chapter 6, how few of the volunteers who responded to the survey were associated

---

<sup>300</sup> In the previous chapter we noted how this accelerated pace of change had influenced the establishment of a number of agricultural and rural social history museums, the first of which was the Museum of Lincolnshire Life, started in 1969.

with traditional rural occupations, such as farming and horticulture, or with the industries that serve and supply farming, such as agricultural engineering. This can be contrasted with the Almonry Museum in Evesham where, only a few years earlier in the 1950s, a number of market gardeners were involved both in the Vale of Evesham Historical Society and in setting up the museum in 1957(Chapter 15.5).

At the same time as the number of people involved in agriculture has shrunk, the rural population as a whole has risen, and is continuing to rise, so that “by 2001 over 14 million people were living in the English countryside, representing 28 per cent of the national total” (Burchardt, 2002, p163). This rise has occurred through inward migration, initially to those areas that were within commuting distance of larger conurbations (Pahl, 1964) and later to more remote rural areas as increased car ownership made travelling easier (Cherry and Rogers, 1996). These incomers were identified by a number of scholars as being predominantly from the middle-classes (Boyle, 1995; Hoggart, 1997; Phillips, 1993, 1998a, 1998b), and more specifically the ‘service class’ of professional and managerial groups who were understood to bring with them a particular perception of rural life and living (Thrift, 1989). Again, we have noted earlier in the discussions of the responses to the Dorset Survey, the number of volunteers whose former occupations,

for example as teaching, the law, accountancy and health occupations, would indicate that they were from this group.

Similarly, a survey of the forty museums in membership of the Association for Suffolk Museums<sup>301</sup> conducted in 1999 (Shorland-Ball and Yates, 2000) revealed nearly fifty different occupations from which the skills and expertise derived from those trades and professions were now put at the service of the museums. Of these, the more obvious 'museum' skills were in a minority (archaeologist, archivist, art historian, and curator (retired) for example) compared to the wealth of other skills ranging from accountant and banker through builder, carpenter, electrician, engineer, steam fitter and welder to florist, journalist, publisher/editor and shop manager; a horseman and a horticulturalist were the only two identifiably 'rural' occupations.

Initially, the influx of new people with new expectations and new ideas into rural communities was understood to have caused tension and disruption of the existing pattern of rural relationships (Newby, 1977, Newby et al. 1978; Halfacree, 1995) and at least one Rural Community Council attempted to bring the two perspectives together (Suffolk ACRE, 1991). In part this was brought about by:

---

<sup>301</sup> This included both volunteer-run and staffed museums.

the close relationship between rural environmentalism and the great internal migration of middle-class commuters and retirees into the countryside since the Second World War ('counter-urbanization'). Counter-urbanization occurred at least in part because those who moved to the countryside had a vision of the countryside as embodying distinctive rural characteristics which were absent in urban Britain. Once settled in the countryside, these ex-urban migrants have, quite naturally, been determined to keep the countryside as close to their vision as possible (Burchardt, 2002, pp176-7)

Contestation arose not only because the cock crowed at dawn, but because of how the cock and its hens were housed, fed and killed.

One of the expectations of the new rural dwellers was that in the countryside there was a greater sense of community and social cohesion, which many had felt to be in decline in urban areas (CRC05). When the provision of rural services went into decline in the 1970s and 1980s, despite a rising rural population, the expectation seemed to be that traditional self-help would step in, and, as Cherry and Rogers point out, "the commitment to self-help and voluntary action ... appears very much in line with the image of the rural community held in the minds of many newcomers to rural areas" (Cherry and Rogers, 1996, p175). In 2002, a report by the NCVO noted that "a general decline in the delivery of some basic services ... in rural areas has led to the voluntary sector taking on a range of

roles more traditionally associated with the public and private sectors" (Yates, H., 2002 piii).

We have already noted that the provision of a museum service is not a statutory obligation placed on local authorities in England (Chapters 3.1 and 5.1) so it is unlikely that many incomers to rural communities would expect to find a museum, as they would expect to have access to health services or to have their bins emptied. However, many of them might hope for cultural activities of one sort or another, and where these were not in place, would be prepared to join with others to achieve them for their communities. The survey results would seem to indicate this, not only in the motivations of people to volunteer, but also in the other activities with which they were actively involved in their towns and villages (Chapter 6). We shall see this again in the accounts which follow of the origins of a small group of Dorset volunteer-run museums in Sherborne, Beaminster, Langton Matravers and Wareham (Chapter 18).

## CHAPTER 18: VOLUNTEER-RUN MUSEUMS FROM THE 1960S – SOME EXAMPLES FROM DORSET

### 18.1 Introduction to the Case Histories

The ten volunteer led museums which fall within the scope of this element of the project were all founded in the second half of the twentieth century, consistent with Middleton's findings that 79% of the museums open to the public in 1997 had been opened since 1950 (Middleton, 1998). The Gold Hill Museum in Shaftesbury, formerly Shaftesbury Town Museum, which is governed by the Shaftesbury and District Historical Society, is the earliest and was set up in 1948 two years after the society itself began. The most recent museum foundation is that of Beaminster. Some of the museums, for example Langton Matravers, Wareham, and Swanage, have moved premises at least once. At Gillingham, the parish council encouraged the formation of a local history society to help them to care for a collection of documents and objects which had been bequeathed to the town in 1953. At first the collection was housed in Gillingham Modern School, but in 1958 the Society were given a pair of small cottages near the church. In time these proved too small and the conditions inappropriate for the



care of the collections. Finally an extension was built on to the town library and the museum opened there in 1996.<sup>302</sup>

Gillingham, Langton Matravers and Gold Hill museums are all governed by local history societies; Sherborne Museum is governed by the Sherborne Museum Association, although it was started by members of the Sherborne Historical Society, Wareham Museum by the Town Council, and the remainder by museum trusts (Beaminster, Blandford, Sturminster Newton and Swanage). Since moving premises in 2006, Swanage has renamed itself Swanage Museum and Heritage Centre, and now operates a separate local studies centre in the town in addition to the Heritage Centre. It is worth noting that the four earliest of these museums are all either run by or were started by local history societies<sup>303</sup>.

These are all small communities although only Langton Matravers is a village; the other communities are described as towns.<sup>304</sup> However, only Swanage had a population of over 10,000 people at the 2001 census:<sup>305</sup>

---

<sup>302</sup> <http://www.gillinghammuseum.co.uk/about.aspx> downloaded 21/10/2010

<sup>303</sup> Gold Hill, Shaftesbury 1948; Gillingham, 1953; Sherborne 1966; Langton Matravers, 1976

<sup>304</sup> [www.dorsetforyou.com](http://www.dorsetforyou.com)

<sup>305</sup> Information for Langton Matravers from

<http://www.no2tierpurbeck.org/parishcouncils.htm> ; information for the other settlements from [www.dorsetforyou.com](http://www.dorsetforyou.com) downloaded 21/10/2010

Place	Population
Langton Matravers	1,010
Beaminster	2,920
Sturminster Newton	3,110
Wareham	5,680
Shaftesbury	6,670
Blandford	8,760
Sherborne	9,310
Gillingham	9,340
Swanage	10,140

*Table 8: Population of towns and villages with volunteer-run museums in Dorset at the 2001 census*

The case histories which follow are based on research and interviews undertaken at the museums concerned in the first half of September 2010. Langton Matravers was selected as the only village museum and as a museum governed by a local history society (The Langton Matravers Local History and Preservation Society); Beaminster as representative of a museum trust; Sherborne as representative of a museum governed by an association and Wareham as a Town Council museum. In each case it was hoped that the research would provide the context to develop a greater understanding of the results from the Dorset Volunteers Survey, which in turn would illuminate the case studies of other museums elsewhere in the country. Blandford Town Museum published a record of their history *Blandford Forum Town Museum – the first 21 years* in 2006 (Le Bas, 2006), and this too has been drawn upon for this section.

## 18.2 The first steps

For two of the museums discussed here, the initial step towards setting up a museum was a public meeting in a prominent venue in the locality, although, perhaps inevitably, not without preliminary discussions between those likely to be interested in such a project. At Langton Matravers, for example, an inaugural meeting was called for January 3<sup>rd</sup> 1972 by the warden of the field studies centre in the village,<sup>306</sup> advertised through the parish magazine, and attended by three people who had, apparently unknown to each other, been collecting memorabilia from the village, and by the chairman of the parish council, the headmaster of the village school and the chairman of the Langton Women's Institute<sup>307</sup> amongst others (Saville, 2010).

A brief constitution was formulated for the 'Langton Matravers Local History and Preservation Society' in which the declared aims were to "discover evidences of the past within the parish, to collect them together as necessary, possible and desirable, and to preserve the historical and visual amenities of the parish" (ibid. No page nos. given). Following this inaugural meeting, a further open meeting was held in the village hall,

---

<sup>306</sup> Leeson House was at that time managed by Bournemouth Education Committee; it is now run by Dorset County Council  
[www.leesonhouse.com/page3.htm](http://www.leesonhouse.com/page3.htm) downloaded 12/10/2010

<sup>307</sup> Typewritten notes on *The Origins of the Langton Matravers Museum*, prepared by Mr R.J. Saville and given to the researcher in September 2010.

attended by approximately eighty people.<sup>308</sup> The collection of items, for which there was an appeal through the parish magazine, began immediately, and by August 1972 enough material had been gathered for an all-day exhibition to be held at Leeson House after which “a flood of objects was then handed in by those who had visited the Exhibition” (ibid.).

At Beaminster, the inaugural meeting was held in the Public Hall on 5<sup>th</sup> November 1987, but it is clear that initial discussions had already taken place as a surviving agenda for the meeting begins with “Opening remarks by the Chairman of Steering Committee” (Beaminster Museum Trust Correspondence 1987-2001[BMTC]). The Chairman was Mrs Marie Eedle who had moved to the town from Surrey in 1977. A keen local historian, Eedle had already published on local history in Surrey,<sup>309</sup> and in 1984 had published *A History of Beaminster* (Eedle, 1984). According to an obituary tribute published in 2002, she had also been instrumental in setting up the West Dorset Local History Society, and, in 1986, the Beaminster Society<sup>310</sup> and it is possible that the latter organisation had been nursemaid to the museum scheme. Various suggestions for future activities were made at the meeting, including “the need to hold an exhibition first of all and the need to acquire premises in the

---

<sup>308</sup> Oral communication from Mr R.J. Saville, September 2010.

<sup>309</sup> Eedle, Marie de G. *A History of Bagshot and Windlesham*, 1977, Chichester: Phillimore

<sup>310</sup> Undated and unprovenanced newspaper cutting in the BMT archives. Mrs Eedle died in 2002.

early stages” (BMTC Notes of Proceedings at the Inaugural Meeting). The first exhibitions were held the following year and further exhibitions followed each year initially in community venues in the town (BMTC AGM minutes 1988-1997).

In Blandford, as at Beaminster, it would seem that much of the initial impetus for a museum came from people who had moved into the town. Mr and Mrs Tupper had moved to Blandford, where they owned a shop in 1964, and “soon became familiar with the town’s fascinating history and heritage and felt there was an urgent need for a museum to house, care for and show the many artefacts known to exist in both public and private local ownership” (Le Bas, 2006, p4). Before the reorganisation of local government in 1974, Blandford Borough Council had promised £1,000 towards a museum; this promise was initially honoured by the new North Dorset District Council although shortly afterwards the “whole idea was deemed unrealistic” (ibid.)<sup>311</sup> Mrs Tupper was not to be daunted by this setback and

After mulling over the problem for a while, she suddenly realised the answer was to form a private, charitable Trust which the people would run for themselves. As she said, “After all, some villages had museums, so a town of 6000 inhabitants could surely muster a dozen or

---

<sup>311</sup> At Wareham also the museum project was taken on in the dying months of the old authority, Wareham Borough Council. It would be interesting to know how many other museum projects were advanced in this way, and to what extent that influenced the number of museum start-ups in the years of the so-called ‘heritage boom’ (Wright, 1985; Hewison, 1987). It is worth remembering too that the former Rural District Councils had not been empowered to fund museums, but the new post-1974 District Councils, with their more extensive boundaries now often including several market towns, were so empowered.

so who would be willing to work for such a worthwhile cause (ibid.)

An appeal for supporters in a local newspaper led to an encouraging response and two years later a Trust was registered with the Charity Commission. Like Langton Matravers a year or two earlier and as Beaminster would do in the next decade, those behind the project were anxious to show something of the wealth of material which they felt could illustrate the history of the community:

in March 1976, our very first display of any kind was exhibited by courtesy of National Westminster Bank. Mr Kenneth Brown kindly lent a magnificent glass display case to stand inside the bank, and we also mounted photographs and an explanation of the Trust, in the window. (Mrs Tupper's account of the development of the museum, quoted in Le Bas, 2006, p5)

At Sherborne, the first steps in setting up a museum were rather different as here the museum grew from the activities of the Sherborne Historical Society (SHS), which had been founded in May 1957. The Society held their first exhibition in the Church Hall in September 1957, and an unprovenanced and undated press photograph in the museum collections illustrates a well-attended display of mainly domestic items (1994/18/8). This first exhibition was followed in 1960 with a very successful exhibition on the railway in Sherborne, complete with model rail layout. According to a label text in the museum archives

The decision to explore the feasibility for a museum was taken by the Sherborne Historical Society after their successful exhibition ... in 1960. After much discussion the Historical Society called an open public meeting of townspeople to sound out opinion, where much enthusiasm was expressed. Whereupon, the Society appointed a group to launch an appeal for funds and find a suitable premises (1994/18/9).

The group first met on 14<sup>th</sup> January 1966 and “adopted the title of Council of the Sherborne Museum Association”. They also decided that the Association should become a trust separate from the SHS, and under the leadership of one of the most dynamic businessmen in the town, Frederick Marsden,<sup>312</sup> who was also a keen local historian, moved with extraordinary speed agreeing to rent the Abbey Gate House three days later and by 17<sup>th</sup> February “the appeal had reached £607, the ground floor of the Abbey Gate House had been knocked into a single front room and electrical strip lighting and gas installed for £130 (Ibid.). Later in 1966, the Abbey Gate House was purchased from the Almshouse of St John the Baptist and St John the Evangelist, with the aid of a loan from Marsden, and the museum held its official opening in May 1968.

---

<sup>312</sup> “...the really rather exciting period when Mr. Frederick Marsden took over the silk mills in 1937, and set a failing business once more on the road to prosperity, turning it into a phenomenally successful modern enterprise, largely by his own personal ability. Mr. Marsden became one of Sherborne’s very special people. It was shortly after his death in 1981 that I was asked to give the 1984 Fowler Lecture, and at the time I thought, this must be a memorial tribute to a very great, friendly and much loved man.” (Cockburn, 1991, p2 ) Marsden himself wrote *A Short History Of Sherborne Silk Mill From 1753 Onwards*, (Marsden,1971) published by the Sherborne Historical Society and *Sherborne Mill From Silks To Glass* which he published himself in 1980 (Marsden, 1980)

The Accession Books of the museum collections start in 1967, when only nineteen items were listed. The following year, 1968, 475 items are listed including a number of donations from the SHS itself and other gifts from named donors via the SHS, including woodworking, thatching and other tools, domestic items and items from the famous Sherborne Pageant of 1905. These donations would suggest that the Society had been accumulating collections towards the museum, possibly since the initial exhibition in 1957, and the acquisition of premises was the catalyst. Under the constitution of the Sherborne Museum Association, the SHS is entitled to nominate a member to the Council of the Museum Association, so the relationship has remained close and inevitably there are a number of people who are members of both groups.<sup>313</sup>

At Wareham, the story of the foundation of the museum, and its subsequent adoption by the Wareham Town Council, is rather different. Here, the origins of the museum lie, not in community effort, but in a private collection known as the "Pictorial Museum" which had been started in about 1960 (DORSET EVENING ECHO, September 29<sup>th</sup>, 1973, p18) by two prominent individuals in the town, Alderman Harry Broughton and his wife.<sup>314</sup> The museum occupied the front room of the

---

<sup>313</sup> Oral information from Mrs Sue Taylor, Chairman SMA, September 2010

<sup>314</sup> The origins of the museum may lie further back. Mike O'Hara, curator of Wareham Museum, believes that Broughton was friendly with the



Broughton's house in North Street, Wareham, and the present curator remembers it as being "very dark and smelling of gravy dinners"<sup>315</sup>. One of the principal features of the Pictorial Museum was its collection of photographs and memorabilia associated with T.E. Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia), and this still forms a significant and popular section of the present museum.<sup>316</sup>

The first indication that the then Wareham Borough Council (WBC) might assume responsibility for the museum comes in the minutes of the WBC report of the General Purposes Committee of 25<sup>th</sup> November 1971:

PROVISION OF MUSEUM Mr Alderman Broughton informed the Committee he would be unable to continue operating his pictorial museum indefinitely and enquiring whether the Council would undertake to administer the facility. RECOMMENDED Mr Alderman Broughton be thanked for his efforts in so ably conducting his pictorial museum and the matter be considered at the next meeting. (Item 3439)

---

headmaster of the local boys' school, Mr. Skues, who was a keen local historian and held a small collection of archaeological material. Both, O'Hara believes, were involved in the campaign to save and restore St Martin's Church, Wareham, which was rededicated in 1936.

(<http://www.dorsethistoricchurchestrust.co.uk/warehamstmartin.htm> downloaded 3/11/2010)

<sup>315</sup> Oral information from Mr. Mike O'Hara, September 2010. According to the list of mayors which hangs on the wall of the Council Chamber in Wareham Town Hall, Harry Broughton was Mayor of Wareham in 1954, 1955 and 1966; His wife, Councillor Mrs W. Broughton was Mayor in 1976, 1982 and 1983, after local government reorganization in 1974.

<sup>316</sup> The film *Lawrence of Arabia*, directed by David Lean and starring Peter O'Toole in the title role, was released in 1962. Lawrence was killed in 1935 in a motorcycle accident near Wareham. The cottage where he had lived intermittently from 1923, Clouds Hill near Wareham, was given to the National Trust in 1937 by Lawrence's brother.

A sub-committee was tasked with investigating possible premises for the museum, and after an unsuccessful approach to the County Council for storage facilities,<sup>317</sup> it was agreed by the WBC that they should acquire the contents of the museum<sup>318</sup> and re-site it in a former confectionery factory that they owned on St John's Hill, Wareham. Broughton agreed to "assist in setting up the museum and it was probable that other assistance in a part-time capacity could be obtained" (WBC Minutes Report of the General Purposes Committee, 27<sup>th</sup> September, 1973, Item 4486). The museum would be administered by the future Parish Council, Wareham Town Council, which would come into being on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1974, following the reorganisation of local government.

There is no evidence in the WBC minutes that the council ever sought advice either from other local museums such as the Dorset County Museum in Dorchester or from other outside sources or that they had attempted to assess public support for a museum at a public meeting of some kind; the decision to acquire the museum was taken in the last few weeks of the Council, thereby binding the successor parish council to a project which they had not initiated, and the successor district council to the provision and maintenance of premises. It is not

---

<sup>317</sup> WBC Minutes Report of General Purposes Committee 24<sup>th</sup> May 1973, Item 4312

<sup>318</sup> Broughton was paid £1,000 for the contents of the museum and a further £500 was allocated for alterations to the St John's Hill premises (WBC Minutes Report of the Finance Committee 27<sup>th</sup> September 1973, Item 4500)

surprising, then, that for the first few years the museum had a slightly chequered history, with several curators and three different premises until 1988, the year that Dorset County Council appointed its first Museums Adviser, when the relationship between the museum, its volunteers and the Town Council was clarified in an updated 'Terms of Reference'.<sup>319</sup>

---

<sup>319</sup> Wareham Town Museum Terms of Reference updated 1/10/88 by P.D. R(andall), Town Clerk

### 18.3 "Go forward with faith"<sup>320</sup>

The museums which are profiled in these case histories are all small organisations operating within the context of small communities. It was suggested earlier that for these museums the horizontal relationships that they develop within their own community are of at least equal importance to their sustainability as the vertical relationships that they may establish with other museum networks or with public bodies. Indeed, as the latter can change or disappear it could be argued that they will become increasingly significant.<sup>321</sup> In his study of *New Visions for Independent Museums* Middleton noted that "the hundreds of museums run solely by volunteers (up to half of all independents) will mostly survive for as long as the existing volunteers can sustain themselves and involve successors, and as long as their premises are secure" (1990, p49), which is unlikely to be achievable unless the museum is rooted in the community which it is intended to reflect. The range of activities which these newly created organisations

---

<sup>320</sup> This exhortation was made by the Chairman of the Beaminster Museum Trust at the 1991 AGM, and repeated in the Newsletter of 7<sup>th</sup> January, 1992 to "go forward with faith that there would be funds to carry out our project".

<sup>321</sup> The South West regional offices of the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA-SW) were closed at the end of March 2009. The Curator of Sherborne Museum in acknowledging the help, guidance and support that the staff had given over the years, noted that "two roving officers in the region... will not be quite the same." She also listed the museum's acquisition of "two tables for our new Research and Study Centre in the New Store, two wooden bookcases for the relocation of the museum book collection to make them more accessible to readers, a clock, waste paper bins and a much needed Christmas Tree and decorations to replace our elderly one that had to be propped up in our window display this year!" (Sherborne Museum Newsletter, March 2009, p4-5)

used to raise money to realise their museum ambitions and acquire premises<sup>322</sup>, provides a good illustration of the importance the volunteers attached to community involvement. As the Treasurer to the Beaminster Museum Trust articulated in her report to the Fourth Annual General Meeting “all events served more than money-making functions; they ensured that people knew that the Trust was alive and well and was working for an amenity which would benefit the whole town” (Beaminster Museum Trust Minutes of the Fourth Annual General Meeting, 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1991). At Blandford, in addition to fundraising activities, the Museum Trust provided a float for the town’s carnival parade “proclaiming the message THE MUSEUM IS COMING” (Le Bas, 2006, p5) two or three years before premises were acquired to house the museum and its collections.<sup>323</sup>

---

<sup>322</sup> The acquisition of premises, and security of tenure or ownership, opens up the possibility of funding from grant making bodies including public bodies and charitable foundations. Beaminster Museum were able to buy their premises, the former Congregational Chapel for £5,000, in 1990, half the sum loaned by a member, and half raised through fund-raising activity. The building needed substantial restoration, especially the roof, for which the museum trust later secured grants from English Heritage and others.

<sup>323</sup> After the initial open meeting in the Corn Exchange, Blandford in May 1976, which had not been a complete success as the Director of the Hampshire Museums Service had suggested they would need to employ a professional curator, the Museum Council “set about raising money in a variety of ways: a flag day; a display of photographs in the Methodist Hall; a ‘Jubilee Junket’ ... at which one of the vast paintings by Rolf Harris was raffled and won by Blandford’s Rector, Andrew Babington –much to his dismay ... talks to local organisations, a display of dolls ... several talks by visiting speakers ...” (Le Bas, 2006, p5) Blandford Museum opened in 1985.

## Beaminster



*Image 26: A fundraising event for Beaminster Museum Trust (from a photograph by Les R. Jones in the archives of Beaminster Museum Trust)*



*Image 27: A cream tea fundraising event held in aid of the Beaminster Museum Trust (from a photograph by Les R. Jones in the archives of Beaminster Museum Trust)*

The nature and scale of the activities that the new museum trusts<sup>324</sup> engaged in were characteristic of many small rural organisations seeking to provide or improve services and amenities; modest in ambition, they made the maximum use of members skills and contacts, and, more often than not, were intended to provide enjoyment<sup>325</sup> and a benefit to the visitor, audience or participant as well as to raise income and profile for the museum project. Beaminster Museum provides the most comprehensive information on these activities through the Minutes of the Annual General Meetings (AGM) from 1989 to 1997 and through the Newsletters and Invitations sent by the Committee to the wider membership for the same period.<sup>326</sup> The former Congregational Chapel was acquired by the Beaminster Museum Trust in 1990, but the museum was not fully open to the public until 1998. In the decade between the first meeting and the opening, a great variety of local events had taken place, inevitably some more successful than others, including exhibitions, talks and slide shows; cream teas, lunches and wine and cheese and garden parties; book fairs, an auction of gifts and promises, and raffles; collecting boxes; concerts, a Victorian Fair and a 'Donate a Slate' campaign. A quiz evening

---

<sup>324</sup> Both Beaminster and Blandford registered as charitable trusts before they acquired a building for the museum, rightly believing that they would be more successful in applying for grants to public bodies and charitable foundations. Beaminster achieved Provisional Registration status before the museum was fully open, thus opening further opportunities for grants.

<sup>325</sup> In 1994 the Chairman closed the AGM "and in a mood of optimism those present proceeded to refresh themselves with wine, snacks and conviviality" (Beaminster Museum Trust Minutes of the Sixth AGM, 10<sup>th</sup> January 1994)

<sup>326</sup> Held in the archives at Beaminster Museum

held in 1994 had been “great fun and an excellent way of meeting members of other organisations in a competitive but friendly atmosphere” (Beaminster Museum Trust Minutes of the Seventh AGM, 9<sup>th</sup> January, 1995). Maintaining contact with other local organisations was important to the Trust. Sometimes they needed to borrow equipment such as the cups and saucers borrowed from the Beaminster Gardens and Allotments Society<sup>327</sup> or invited speakers from other societies; sometimes they received donations from other community groups, such as the local branch of the Trefoil Guild, which raised £20 at a coffee morning held in aid of the museum in 1991.<sup>328</sup>

Another fruitful source of funds locally came through the establishment of a ‘museum shop’ set up in 1990 with a donation of £500 to buy stock. During its first year it “had sold 571 tea towels, more than 40 aprons, 260 mugs and several bags and dusters” (Beaminster Museum Trust Newsletter, 7<sup>th</sup> January, 1992) not only at Trust events but also through other shops and businesses in the town. Donations, loans and legacies from members were also important sources of income.

This account of the activities of the Beaminster Museum Trust illustrates both the importance members attached to working

---

<sup>327</sup> The Beaminster Gardens and Allotments Society loaned their cups and saucers for the Dorset Cream Tea held in July 1989 (Letter of thanks in Museum archives 17<sup>th</sup> July 1989)

<sup>328</sup> Letter from the Treasurer of the Trefoil Guild held in Museum archives 5<sup>th</sup> September 1991



within and through their own community and what Ellis et al. describe as “the importance of the social dimension to community development in a rural context” (Ellis et al., 2004). Indeed, at the Fifth AGM in December 1992, the Chairman noted that “one notable success had been the Commendation awarded by the Community Enterprise Award Scheme, the Certificate received was displayed proudly on the wall near the door.” (BMT Fifth AGM, 3<sup>rd</sup> December, 1992) However, the majority of the funding for the project, which ultimately exceeded £350,000, came not from local events but through grants from public bodies and charitable foundations,<sup>329</sup> but with much of the actual building work undertaken by voluntary labour from members and other supporters.

---

<sup>329</sup> These included English Heritage, the Foundation for Sport and the Arts, Rural Development Commission, Heritage Lottery Fund, the Esmee Fairbairn Charitable Trust, the Alice Cooper Dean Charitable Foundation, the Ward Blenkinsop Charitable Trust, the Area Museum Council for the South West and the Town, District and County Councils. Few, if any, of these bodies would have donated without evidence of local support for the project.

## 18.4 Contacts with other museums and museum networks

Of the four museums examined in these brief case studies from Dorset, it is only Wareham which seems to have come into being without some consultation with or visits to other museums, or advice from an external body, perhaps because the Town Council felt that as they were taking over an existing venture, and the previous owner offered his help, such advice would be superfluous. At Sherborne, Museum Council “members were visiting Dorchester and other local museums to get advice” shortly after they had set up the Sherborne Museum Association in 1966 (Sherborne Museum 1994/18/9). The founding curator of the Langton Matravers Museum was a personal friend of the curator of the Dorchester Museum, and the initial constitution of the museum provided for the donation of the collections to Dorchester should the village museum venture fail for any reason.<sup>330</sup>

At Blandford too contact had been made with other museums and at the open meeting at the Corn Exchange in May 1976 “the curator of the Dorset County Museum, Roger Peers, added his influential support by speaking in favour of a museum in Blandford” (Le Bas, 2006, p5). Unfortunately, the principal speaker at this meeting, the Director of the Hampshire Museum

---

<sup>330</sup> Personal communication from R.J. Saville, October 2010

Service, who had been specifically asked not to mention costs, found himself edged into a corner and suggested that between £10,000 and £18,000 a year would be needed plus a professional curator, a remark which “lost at least 99% of support which we might otherwise have gained from that well-attended evening!”<sup>331</sup> However, despite or perhaps because of this, the Hampshire Museum Service continued to give support to the Blandford Museum Trust through the curator of the Curtis Museum at Alton (Le Bas, 2006).<sup>332</sup>

The curator of the Dorset County Museum at Dorchester, Roger Peers, was also supportive of the Beaminster venture, and although it is not clear whether he attended the initial meeting in November 1987, he had certainly advised the Trust to contact the Area Museum Council for the South West, who sent them a copy of “Guidelines for setting up a Museum”.<sup>333</sup> This was almost certainly the AIM Guidelines *Setting up and Running a New Museum* (Greene, 1980). Peers spoke at the BMT’s second AGM in November 1989 on “Setting up and Running a Small Museum” in which he gave information on sources of advice and information as well as stressing “the need for strict

---

<sup>331</sup> Taken from an account by Mrs Tupper quoted in *Blandford Forum Town Museum – the First 21 Years* (Le Bas, 2006, p5)

<sup>332</sup> In 1979 the Blandford Museum Trust co-opted their first curator. This was Ben Cox who had moved recently to the town from Evesham, where he had been the driving force behind the establishment of the Almonry Museum in 1957 (see below) and was an experienced and enthusiastic local historian (Le Bas, 2006)

<sup>333</sup> Correspondence between BMT Hon. Secretary and the AMC SW held in the Museum archives (BMTC)

discipline with regard to collecting, and a large storage area”.

He concluded his talk “by saying that what we were embarking on was terrifyingly exciting and that we would be walking a tight rope, but keeping our balance would be well worthwhile! ... the meeting closed in thoughtful mood” (BMT Minutes of Second AGM, 24<sup>th</sup> November, 1989). Earlier in the year, Peers had given the BMT the opportunity to show their exhibition on the Hine family, makers of fine cognac who were originally from Beaminster, in the Dorset County Museum, which must have provided them with some welcome publicity for the project and a wider audience.<sup>334</sup>

In addition to the Area Museums Service and the Dorset County Museum, other support networks were being put in place in response to the rising numbers of volunteer-run and other museums. In 1988 the Dorset Museums Association was formed, which Beaminster promptly joined, and were then able to call on the advice of the newly appointed County Museums Adviser (Beaminster Museum Archives).

---

<sup>334</sup> Marie Eedle wrote in her Curator’s Report for 1988-9 to the BMT AGM “The idea was a bit daunting at first as it meant redesigning it for different premises, but it was good experience and we are most grateful to Mr. Roger Peers, the curator, for giving us the opportunity and incidentally providing screens and two proper showcases. (The ones used in the Strode Room were actually devised from the chest of drawers belonging in our spare bedroom.)” (Curator’s Report 1988-9 held in Beaminster Museum Archives)

Marie Eedle, who had been appointed Honorary Curator of the Beaminster Museum Trust at the Inaugural Meeting in 1987, also spoke at the same AGM in November 1989:

Over the past two-and-a-half years since the steering committee of this Trust was set up, I have been to at least two dozen museums, some here in the South West, but most in Lincolnshire, the Welsh Borders and Wales, and in the Scottish Borders – and the Scots produce some very fine museums! By the way, two or three of the museums I came across were obvious examples of what not to do – one room only with all the objects piled up and no possibility of storing a reserve collection, preparing and changing displays. I was of course particularly interested in small town museums of local history ...

Eedle was clearly well-informed about museums. In her previous report for 1987-8, delivered to the first AGM, she had noted that the 'Museums Commission' (sic) report:

which spotlights independent museums, is quite flattering about the best of these and it concludes "Perhaps their outstanding quality is their optimism. For whereas too many others faced with something new, have hesitated or looked the other way, their response has invariably been 'Here is an opportunity – how can we make it work?' Fellow members, we have started something. Let's press on and make it work. (Curator's Report for 1987-88, Beaminster Museum archives)

That same indomitable spirit of "let's press on and make it work" has been a common thread throughout the cases histories in this study, from Cawthorne, via Ashwell and Evesham and now in Beaminster and in the other volunteer run museums in Dorset. In part it explains the enjoyment and stimulation of working with them, and justifies why, in the opinion of this

researcher, they and their histories are worthy of both academic attention and of the attention of practitioners.

## SECTION J: CONCLUSION

At the beginning of this thesis, I rather boldly asserted that although the project had changed direction and ultimately contained two parts, the richness of the material which the research had exposed would justify the course which my journey had taken, and that the completed study would add significantly to the understanding of volunteer run museums, and thus of the broader museums community, both in the academy and amongst practitioners. The thesis in its final form, therefore, promotes a framework for understanding the development of volunteer run museums in English villages and market towns both over time and at the present moment. This has been attempted through an exploration of the organisational context of these small independent museums and by embedding them firmly within the broader context of rural social change and development. These changes run as a motif throughout the thesis, from the landlord paternalism of late Victorian Cawthorne through the shifting demography of the interwar and immediate post-war years to the more recent period of inward migration that is apparent in rural areas today, and which is revealed through the findings of the Dorset survey.

In my literature review (Section B.), I showed how volunteer run museums in England had been almost completely overlooked

both in studies of the history of museums, which have been more concerned with larger, urban or national institutions, and in studies of the 'New Museology' and of museums and communities. These had either looked abroad for examples or had looked exclusively at work *with* communities rather than *by* the communities themselves (Chapter 3). In the rather confusing literature on museum volunteering, outlined in Chapter 4, I found that volunteer run museums were at best not distinguished from volunteer involving organisations, which were often much larger in size, and at worst were once again overlooked. It is one of the contentions of this thesis that neither scholars nor museum practitioners should continue to conflate the large with the small, nor continue to project what is seen as the urban norm, in terms of the historical development of museums, onto small museums in rural settings without considering the distinctive context of these organisations. The key research questions and themes, which were posited at the start of the project, have each contributed to this argument.

The theme which has stayed as a constant throughout the project has been the wish to understand more about those who are involved in those museums which seek to express the history of their own communities, not only their demographic characteristics but also their motivations for involvement and continuing engagement. Here I found the work of Colin



Rochester, rather than the work of scholars looking specifically at museum or heritage volunteering, to be particularly helpful in identifying a paradigm which resonated with my understanding of volunteer run museums, the member-activist model (Rochester, 2007). In this model all roles are played by volunteers, and there is an inner core of highly active people, plus an outer core of less active supporters who nonetheless associate themselves with the aims and purposes of the organisation and may take on a more active role as and when they wish. In member-activist organisations Rochester found that less emphasis was placed on the formal definition of roles and greater consideration given to the individual contribution and interests of the volunteer than was apparent within the other identified models of involvement, the service delivery model, the support role model and the co-worker model (ibid; Chapter 4.5). In the first two of these three models the lead roles in organising the work are taken by paid staff; in the third, there is a less clear-cut distinction although without the relaxed informality of the member-activist model. All three models are to be found in larger independent museums rather than in those I have chosen to be the nucleus of this project, where I deliberately set out the parameters to exclude museums with paid staff; some museums, as they grow in size and ambition, make the transition from one model to another. However, as I have learnt from my own experience as a practitioner, this

transition is as likely to be a painful experience as it is to have a successful outcome. More research in this area would be helpful both in ensuring the sustainability of the museum and in providing specific guidance to organisations taking this route and to prospective employees.

In the meantime it would be useful for museum practitioners to be aware of these differences in organisational context so that some of the advice that is given, for example in support of the workplace paradigm of role organisation, can be finessed to give greater consideration to volunteer run organisations. Here, as we saw in the Dorset evidence (Chapters 6 and 18), many roles and tasks, other than those that are already clearly defined in the constitution, for example as chairman or treasurer, are moulded around the individual volunteer's own attributes and interests.

In my discussion of the results of the Dorset Survey (Chapter 6) I drew attention to a number of findings that emphasised the rural context in which these volunteers were working. The first of these related to the age of the survey respondents, with 88% of the Dorset volunteers aged over 55, compared to the findings for the South West region of the two MLA surveys of 79% (Chambers, 2002) and 74% (Howlett et al., 2006). However, both the latter surveys included urban areas, which

have a higher percentage of younger people (CRC46, 2007), as well as rural areas; it was also noted that the *State of the Countryside Report for 2007* had remarked that “the concentration of older people in the South West is particularly striking” (CRC46, 2007, p15). A further question asked respondents how far they travelled to the museum where they worked: 82.2% lived in the same town or village and no volunteer travelled more than ten miles to work. This would suggest that these museums are very dependent on their own community and its immediate hinterland, again emphasising their rurality; profiling by region without distinguishing between urban and rural areas, may not be helpful to the latter and there is a danger that the demographic profile of rural areas will be unseen and disregarded by policy makers and that therefore unrealistic expectations will be loaded onto volunteer run museums.

Three of the questions in the Dorset Survey were designed to identify ‘bridging social capital’, which Jochum has described as involving “overlapping networks where one member of one group accesses the resources of another group” (Jochum, 2003, p9). Although, as I describe in Chapter 6.4, a number of respondents were also volunteers with other conservation or preservation societies, and others were involved with county-wide societies, often in a social care or health setting, a far

greater number were actively involved in a wide range of other organisations within their own (rural) community. The ability of the volunteer run museum to place itself firmly within a community context, both by creating links at an organisational level and by an interchange of active members, is a very real contribution to community vibrancy and to supporting a sense of identity and pride in place. Sadly, as I have shown in my literature review (Chapter 3), it is also one of the positive social benefits of museums which is widely overlooked, even in recent studies of museums and community.

This appreciation of the rural context further underlines my assertion that the horizontal relationships that can be established across their communities are likely to be more critical to the sustainability of volunteer run museums than the vertical relationships they may establish with the wider museums community or with other external bodies. It also illustrates the way in which the Survey findings can themselves shed light on the historical development of volunteer run museums; I noted, for example, how Ben Cox was carefully recruiting people from other organisations to his cause in the build-up to the opening of the Almonry Museum at Evesham in the 1950s, and how those involved in the project at Beaminster thirty years later were also careful to make contact with existing

organisations in the town and to establish reciprocal relationships.

In his study of the social benefits of community sector organisations (CSOs), which, I argue, includes volunteer run museums, Colin Rochester suggests that these organisations provide public benefits on three levels “to the community of those who shared the characteristics or aspirations of members; to the wider community who were directly affected by their activities; and to the public at large” (Rochester, 1998, p3; Summary of Section D). These ‘largely invisible’ organisations make a significant contribution to the quality of collective life, and, if we accept this argument, those who take responsibility for developing policy and practice within the world of museums should be mindful that nothing that they propose undermines the ability of volunteer run museums to operate *as community organisations* as well as supporting their endeavours to achieve high standards *as museums*<sup>335</sup>.

Rochester also suggested that CSOs provide “considerable benefits” for their members (Rochester, 1998, p3) and this we

---

<sup>335</sup> Since this thesis was researched and written a revised standard for Museum Accreditation has been developed by the MLA. This standard will be launched in the Autumn of 2011, following the transfer of responsibility for the management of the scheme to the Arts Council on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2011. Curatorial Advisers, whose role was described in Chapter 5.2, will be renamed Museum Mentors. 31% of Accredited museums currently use the services of a curatorial adviser ([http://www.mla.gov.uk/news\\_and\\_views/press\\_releases/2011/Accreditation\\_revised\\_standard](http://www.mla.gov.uk/news_and_views/press_releases/2011/Accreditation_revised_standard) downloaded 1/7/2011).

have seen strikingly illustrated in the responses to the Dorset Survey (Section D). Although involvement in the museum has clearly created opportunities for personal education and interest, what is most striking are the opportunities for developing personal well-being, particularly through enjoyment and fun. Well-being is receiving greater attention from policy makers with the realisation that economic measures alone cannot create happiness or thriving, sustainable communities, largely due to the pioneering work of the New Economics Foundation<sup>336</sup>; it is also the focus of the recently launched Happy Museums Project<sup>337</sup>. The findings from the Dorset Survey that relate to well-being and happiness indicate that further research would be fruitful; they were revealed only because I sought to understand whether the reasons that people chose to become volunteers at a museum were the same as the reasons that they stayed. Some significant differences were revealed (Chapter 6.3), with the highest number of respondents focussing on 'enjoyment'. If we take these findings in conjunction with the responses to the question *What is the most important thing the museum does for you?* we can see that personal well-being is a crucial factor in sustaining and enriching the volunteer workforce, whether that is through enhanced self-esteem and motivation, or providing a structure to life and a feeling of being useful or through simple enjoyment

---

<sup>336</sup> <http://www.neweconomics.org/programmes/well-being> downloaded 1/7/2011

<sup>337</sup> <http://www.happymuseumproject.org/> downloaded 1/7/2011

and contact with others. As I noted earlier, understanding motivation is one of the keys to successful recruitment of volunteers, but it may not be the primary key to understanding retention. I would suggest that the focus of future research in this area should move away from investigating motivation and towards enquiring into why volunteers remain committed and engaged, how their experience can be enhanced and sustained and what should be avoided or limited.

Bonding social capital, which Jochum describes as something that serves "to unite groups ... with group members sharing one or several factors in common (aspirations, values, experiences, interests, locality etc.)" (Jochum, 2003, p9; Chapter 6.4), is also strongly apparent in the responses to the Dorset Survey. It is particularly present in the responses to the question (Question 17) asking *What is the best thing about being a museum volunteer?*, where many of the respondents referred to friendship and companionship as key. This also serves as a reminder that throughout their history, sociability and the winning of hearts and minds have been important factors both in the creation and longevity of the museums I have described. The talks and *conversazione* at Cawthorne find their echoes in Ashwell, Evesham and Langton Matravers; the Ashwell church fete, which started the museum project, would have been familiar ground for the Beaminster enthusiasts, refreshed by

their cream teas; and the Cricklade annual dance and 'fayre' to raise funds and provide fun and enjoyment for the wider community, would not provoke surprise anywhere.

Volunteer run museums have never been isolated from the wider museums community, as we have seen throughout this project. Larger museums and their staff have been commendably generous both with time and expertise, and this tradition continues through the provision of Curatorial Advisers. But there is a question over whether this has always been on their terms only, by encouragement to become 'just like us', a 'one way traffic' of ideas for good practice from large to small museums. My hope is that now that there is a growing emphasis on the broader social benefit of museums, there will be a greater willingness to learn from volunteer run museums, particularly related to the personal benefits for the volunteers actively participating in the enterprise and for the wider social benefits that are spread more broadly in the community.

A second theme that has run throughout the project has been the aspiration to discover the unacknowledged history of volunteer run museums in English market towns and villages and to reveal where this history is distinctive from that of larger, urban museums or where it can enrich our understanding of the development of museums nationally. We saw that at



Cawthorne (Chapter 8) although the content of the museum emulated the 'classical disciplines' of more established organisations, and had been founded as a paternalistic gesture by the local landowning elite, it was organised rather differently through a Museum Society. Unlike the literary and philosophical society museums in the larger urban centres such as York, Leeds or Manchester, the Cawthorne Museum Society consisted largely of working class members, a number of whom were active participants in the museum, arranging displays and outings and contributing to the collections, even though the museum did not reflect their lives. Again at Ashwell and at Filkins in the interwar years we see the direct involvement of the non-elite both in the foundation of the museums and in decisions about collecting, although in both instances local landowners acted as facilitators for the projects.

There would seem to be another history for small rural museums that has little to do with Bennett's theory of museums as instruments of governmentality (Bennett, 1995) and has greater resonance with Clifford's discussion of museums as contact zones (Clifford, 1997). This is perhaps a particularly pertinent theory for the museums established in the interwar years, when the museums provide an interface between the visitors, who as we have seen at Ashwell, (Chapter 13.2) were frequently urban or suburban based, and the rural community whose history was now described and displayed.

Bennett's other assertions, quoted earlier in the introduction to Chapter 13, that interest in the "lives, habits and customs of either the contemporary working classes or the labouring classes of pre-industrial societies" is recent and that "the extension of the social range of museum concerns in the post-war (1945) period ... is a new departure" (Bennett, 1988, pp63-64) also needs to be modified in the light of evidence from the volunteer run museums discovered during the course of this project. Swinford, for example, was very specific in his concern that the collections at Filkins should represent the lives and activities of the rural working class, the 'working man' whose stories he could not find in the history books (OXFORD TIMES, April 26<sup>th</sup>, 1968; Chapter 13.3). We have seen too how the Almonry Museum in Evesham in the 1950s would be "*your* museum – a place where the belongings of *your* ancestors, in the Vale of Evesham, will be protected and preserved for *you* and *your* descendants ... Tradesmen and craftsmen, growers and farmers, can all help too. (EVESHAM JOURNAL, April 28<sup>th</sup> 1956, no page number given)".

This quotation about the Almonry Museum also serves to remind us that some volunteer run museums pioneered the collection of items from a specific and clearly defined geographical area, whether this was the village, as at Ashwell,

or from a wider district which focussed on a particular town, such as the Vale of Evesham. There seems to have been less concern among other (urban) museums to be specific to their area, particularly in the early period of the collection of everyday items (Chapters 9 and 11), as can be seen in the suggestion by 'T.S.' that the frontispiece of a Surrey hearth in J. Seymour Lindsay's *Iron and Brass Implements of the English House* (1927) "might quite readily be copied by a number of our folk-museums" (T.S., 1928; Chapter 11.1) without any regard for local distinctiveness or materials. In his account of the 'turn to the everyday' at the Curtis Museum at Alton, Hugh Curtis notes that in 1929 the "Curator of a large Museum in the North" visited the museum and then spent "the remainder of his stay in hunting for similar material which he took away with him on his departure" (Curtis, 1955, p19; Chapter 11.2). Today all museums are required to define their collections and collecting areas through Acquisition and Disposal Policies in the MLA Accreditation Scheme, but this is a recent development, dating from the introduction of Registration in 1988 (Chapter 5.2).

The continuous growth in the number of small volunteer run museums in the years after 1945 (Chapters 14 and 15) also seems to have escaped the attention of scholars interested in the history of museums; Pearson, for example, suggests that the immediate post-war years were particularly difficult for what

she calls the “independent voluntary society museum” (Pearson, 2008, p35) and that there was a corresponding rise in local authority museums as local councils assumed responsibility. But here it is the larger, often county-wide societies that are referred to – the number of volunteer run museums drawing their enthusiasts and their resources from within their own communities continued to grow, not decline. At Wotton-under Edge, for example, the local history society themselves assumed responsibility for the museum set up in 1937 by the Town Trust (Chapter 14.2). Indeed, we might gain a different perspective on the years of the so-called ‘heritage boom’ if more was known of this gradual but perhaps steadier increase in the number of museums and heritage centres devoted to the history of their own small communities. Commentators on the ‘heritage industry’ of the 1970s and 1980s, such as Hewison (1987) were concerned with the larger institutions, historic sites and single subject museums, as I have outlined in Section B. The ‘can do’ spirit, which many of these later ventures exemplified, and which is such a strong characteristic of the independent sector today, was already there in volunteer run museums. It was particularly well-expressed at Evesham where Bob Smith described how they tackled any task head on (Smith, 2007) and Ben Cox wrote that “We in Evesham do everything ourselves” (Cox, 1959, p203; Chapter 15.5).

Throughout this concluding chapter I have stressed the importance of the rural context of the museums that I have studied both today and in the past. By using this prism I have, I believe, given a different perspective on many aspects of the history of museums, some of which have been overlooked. To give but one example, the development of museums in villages and small towns in the interwar years as well as their collections and the buildings in which they are housed, should be seen as one manifestation of a trope of Englishness that saw the rural community as the embodiment of the nation; so to conflate nationalism solely with the imperial venture in the history of museums, is to miss an important part of the story. Whilst it is unlikely that any volunteer run museum today, or ever, would see itself as holding the national identity in its hands, they would certainly see their role, and have always done so, as celebrating a local identity and a sense of place.

Nor should rural museums either today or in the past be identified solely with a backward-looking pastoral nostalgia; Mortimer Wheeler, as his address at the opening of the Gloucester Folk Museum clearly showed, saw rural culture as contributing to the modern way of life and to modern values (Chapter 11.3). Today's village and market town museums surely have much to say about community, localism and

sustainability, as I have demonstrated throughout this thesis. Ignoring the rural deprives the wider museums community of opportunities to extend its understanding of the social benefits of museums and of their contribution, and that of their volunteers, to community vibrancy. I hope that this project will not only make its own contribution to developing this understanding, but will also indicate the wealth of rewarding research that remains to be undertaken into an important area of museum endeavour.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Primary and Manuscript Sources:

#### Museum Archives

1. Ashwell Village Museum archives

*Westmill Museum Catalogue*, (nd)

2. Beaminster Museum Trust correspondence 1987-2001

3. Bridgnorth Northgate Museum archives

4. Cawthorne Victoria Jubilee Museum archives

Cawthorne Parish Magazine 1884-1915

Charlesworth, Douglas *Manuscript Diary of 1915 to 1918*  
(photocopy in the possession of the Victoria Jubilee  
Museum, Cawthorne. Original believed to be in the  
possession of the Charlesworth family).

5. Cricklade Museum archives

6. Lanman Museum archives, Framlingham

Seely, C.W. (2006) History of the Lanman Museum,  
Framlingham [unpublished manuscript]

7. Gloucester Folk Museum archives

8. Museum of English Rural Life, University of Reading,  
archives

9. Portland Museum archives

10. Sherborne Museum archives

11. Vale of Evesham Historical Society Archives (Almonry  
Museum)

12. Winchcombe Folk and Police Museum archives

Correspondence between Harold Greening and H.J.  
Massingham and others in the possession of Winchcombe  
Folk and Police Museum (WIXFP.1998.886/1 and  
WIXFP.1998.886/2)

## Other primary sources

Buxton, L .H. Dudley (1929) *The Pitt-Rivers Museum, Farnham: General Handbook*. Farnham, Dorset: Farnham Museum

Curtis, W. Hugh and Warner, S.A. (1946) *Agricultural Section: An Illustrated and Descriptive List of the Smaller Implements, etc. formerly (or still) in use on Farms*, Alton: The Curtis Museum

Hannam Clark, Councillor Captain T. (1942) *Short Guide to the Folk Museum*, Gloucester: City Library and Museum Committee

*Museum Catalogue* (nd) St Michaels on Wyre, St Michael's Museum

Norwich Castle Museum Committee (1933) *City of Norwich Abridged Guide to the Museums*. Norwich: Norwich Castle Museum Committee

Reynolds, Julie (2009) *Valuing Volunteers: a report of the surveys conducted in volunteering in museums in Gloucestershire and South Gloucestershire, May-September 2009* (unpublished paper: personal communication)

Saville, R.J. (2010) *The Origins of the Langton Matravers Museum* (unpublished manuscript)

Shorland-Ball, Rob and Yates, Bridget (2000) *Strategic Review of Suffolk Museums*, Final Report prepared for the Association for Suffolk Museums, Suffolk County Council and the East of England Museums Service (unpublished report)

*The Almonry Museum, Evesham, Official Guide* (nd) Evesham: The Almonry Museum

*The Cotswold Tradition*, (1951) Exhibition at Cirencester, May to September 1951 [Exhibition Catalogue]

Wareham Borough Council Minutes 1971 to 1974, Dorchester, Dorset History Centre DC/WAB



## Secondary Sources

Adlard, Eleanor (1931) Winchcombe Church Porch Museum, *Man*, No. 217-8, October 1931, p228

Adlard, Eleanor (1939) *Winchcombe cavalcade: or sidelights on Winchcombe history*. London and Cheltenham: Ed. J. Burrow

Alvey, Norman (1995) *From Chantry to Oxfam: a short history of charity and charity legislation*. Chichester: Phillimore for the British Association for Local History

Anderson, Benedict (1983) *Imagined Communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London: Verso

Anderson, J. and Lawrence, L. eds. (2001) *Gender Issues in Work and Leisure*. Eastbourne: Leisure Studies Association

Andrews, Maggie (1997) *The Acceptable Face of Feminism: The Women's Institute as a Social Movement*. London: Lawrence and Wishart

Angel, Heather (1995) Gertrude Jekyll as a Photographer, in Tooley, Michael and Arnander, Primrose, eds. *Gertrude Jekyll: essays on the life of a working amateur*. Witton-le-Weir, Co. Durham: Michaelmas Books, pp153-162

Association of Independent Museums (1981) *Charitable Status for Museums* Association of Independent Museums: AIM Guidelines No.3

Babbidge, Adrian (2005a) *Museum Trusteeship: A Training Package* [CD-ROM] Egeria

Babbidge, Adrian (2005b) Forty Years On, *Cultural Trends* Vol.14 (1), No 53, pp 3-66

Babbidge, Adrian (2007) *Local Authorities and Museums: a research study for the Association of Independent Museums*. Association of Independent Museums

Bagshawe, Thomas W. (1950) A Plea for a Museum of English Life and Traditions, *The Advancement of Science*, Vol.VII, No.25, 1950-51, May 1950, pp21-24

Bailey, Peter (1978) *Leisure and Class in Victorian England: rational recreation and the contest for control 1830-1885*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul

- Balfour, Henry (1909) Presidential Address, *Museums Journal*, 1909-10, July 1909, pp5-18
- Banham, Mary and Hillier, Bevis (1976) *A Tonic to the Nation: The Festival of Britain 1951*. London: Thames and Hudson
- Banks, M. M. (1945) Folk Museums and Collections in England, *Folk-Lore*, Vol. LVI, pp218-222
- Batey, Mavis (1995) Gertrude Jekyll and the Arts and Crafts Movement, in: Tooley, Michael and Arnander, Primrose, eds. *Gertrude Jekyll: essays on the life of a working amateur*. Witton-le-Weir, Co.Durham: Michaelmas Books, pp63-70
- Bather, F.A. (1903a) President's Address, *Museums Journal*, 1903-4, September 1903, pp92-3
- Bather, F.A. (1903b) President's Address, Appendix iii, Open-air Museums and Peasant Art, *Museums Journal*, 1903-4, October 1903, pp127-132
- Bather, F.A. (1911) Open-Air Museums: Progress and Prospects, *Museums Journal*, 1910-1911, March 1911, p250
- Batho, G. R. (1972) Sources for the history of history teaching in elementary schools 1933-1914, in: Cook, T. G. ed. *Local Studies and the History of Education*. London: Methuen & Co Ltd, for the History of Education Society, pp137-152
- Batson, C., Ahmad, N. And Tsang, J. (2002) Four Motives for Community Involvement, *Journal of Social Issues* 58 (3) pp429-445
- Beckett, J. (2007) *Writing Local History*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Belk, Russell W. (1995) *Collecting in a Consumer Society*. London: Routledge
- Belk, Russell W. (2005) Collectors and Collecting, in: Tilley, Chris, Kuechler-Fogden, Susanne, Keane, Webb, Rowlands, Mike and Spyer, Patricia eds. *Handbook of Material Culture*. London, Sage, pp534-545
- Bell, J.J. (1924 edition) *Piers Plowman Histories Junior Book 4*. London: George Philip and Son Ltd
- Bennett, Tony (1988a) The Exhibitionary Complex, *New Formations*, 4: 73-102

Bennett, Tony (1988b) Museums and "the people", in: Lumley, Robert, ed. *The MuseumTime Machine*. London: Routledge for Comedia, pp63-85

Bennett, Tony (1995) *The Birth of the Museum: history, theory, politics*. London: Routledge

Bentley, M. (2005) The Evolution and Dissemination of Historical Knowledge in: Daunton, M. ed. *The Organisation of Knowledge in Victorian Britain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp173-197

Billis, David (1993) *Organising public and voluntary agencies*. London: Routledge

Birch, Dinah (1999) *Ruskin and the Dawn of the Modern*. Oxford: Clarendon Press

Bourdillon, A.F.C., (1945) *Voluntary Social Services*. London: Methuen & Co. Ltd.

Bourne, George (1912) *Change in the Village*. London: Duckworth & Co.

Boyes, Georgina (1993) *The Imagined Village: Culture, Ideology and the English Folk Revival*. Manchester: Manchester University Press

Boyle, Paul (1995) Rural in-migration in England and Wales 1980-1981, *Journal of Rural Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 1, pp65-78

Brassley, Paul, Burchardt, Jeremy and Thompson, Lynne (2006) *The English Countryside between the Wars: Regeneration or Decline?* Woodbridge: The Boydell Press,

Brears, Peter and Davies, Stuart (1989) *Treasures for the People: the story of museums and galleries in Yorkshire and Humberside*. Yorkshire and Humberside Museums Council (no place of publication given)

Brewer, Rev. Dr. (nd) *Allison's Guide to English History and Biography*. Norwich: Jarrold & Sons

Brill, Edith (1973) *Life and Tradition on the Cotswolds*. London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd

Bröchner, Georg (1901) An Open-Air Museum for London: A Suggestion, *The Studio*, 1901, pp158-171

- Bryant, Chris (1997) *Stafford Cripps: The First Modern Chancellor*. London: Hodder and Stoughton
- Bryson, J.R. McGuinness, M. and Ford, R.G. (2002) Chasing a 'Loose and Baggy Monster': almshouses and the geography of charity, *Area*, 34 (1) pp48-58
- Burchardt, Jeremy (1999) Reconstructing the Rural Community: Village Halls and the National Council of Social Service, 1919 to 1939, *Rural History* 10, 2, pp193-216
- Burchardt, Jeremy (2002) *Paradise Lost*. London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd
- Burrow, J.W. (1981) *A Liberal Descent: Victorian Historians and the English Past*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Cale, Al (2002) *Westmill Then and Now*. Privately published (purchased in Westmill, 2009)
- Cameron, H. (2007) Are Members Volunteers? An exploration of the concept of membership drawing upon studies of the local church, *Voluntary Action* 1(2) pp53-66, reprinted in Davis Smith, J. and Locke, M. eds. (2007) *Volunteering and the Test of Time: essays for policy, organisation and research*. London, Institute for Volunteering Research, pp79-90
- Casiday, Rachel; Kinsman, Eileen; Fisher, Clare and Bambra, Clare (2008) *Volunteering and Health: What Impact Does It Really Have?* University of Wales, Lampeter, for Volunteering England
- Cavaliero, Glen (1977) *The Rural Tradition in the English Novel 1900-1939*. London: Macmillan Press Ltd
- Caygill, Marjorie (2002) *The Story of the British Museum*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. London: British Museum Press
- Celoria, Francis (1958) *Teach Yourself Local History*. London: English Universities Press
- Chancellor, Valerie (1970) *History for their Masters: opinion in the English history textbook 1800-1914*. Bath: Adams and Dart
- Cheetham, Graham and Chivers, Geoff (2005) *Professions, Competence and Informal Learning*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar
- Cherry, Gordon and Rogers, Alan (1996) *Rural Change and Planning: England and Wales in the Twentieth Century*. London: E & F.N. Spon

Christian, John ed. (1989) *The Last Romantics: the romantic tradition in British Art Burne-Jones to Stanley Spencer*. Exhibition held at the Barbican Art Gallery, London, 1989. London: Lund Humphries [Exhibition Catalogue]

Clarke, P. (2002). *The Cripps Version: The Life of Sir Stafford Cripps 1889-1952*. London: Allen Lane / The Penguin Press

Clarke, Peter and Toye, Richard (2004) Sir Stafford Cripps in: Matthew, H.C.G. and Harrison, Brian eds. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004, Vol. 14. Oxford: Oxford University Press pp200-206

Clary, E., Snyder, M. and Stukas, A. (1996) Volunteers' Motivations: Findings from a national survey, *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 25, pp485-505

Clayden, Paul (2007) *The Parish Councillors Guide*. 19<sup>th</sup> edn. Crayford: Shaw & Sons Ltd

Clifford, James (1997) *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press

Cloke, Paul, Doel, Marcus, Matless, David, Phillips, Martin and Thrift, Nigel (1994) *Writing the Rural: five cultural geographies*. London: Paul Chapman Publishing Ltd

Cockburn, Elizabeth O. (1991) *Sherborne Silk Mills and Marglass*, Sherborne Historical Society Fowler Lecture, 29<sup>th</sup> March 1984, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., reprinted at the request of the Sherborne Museum Association Sherborne: Sherborne Museum Association

Coates, Bryan E. (1976) The Geography of the Industrialization and Urbanization of South Yorkshire, 18th Century to 20th Century, in: Pollard, Sydney and Holmes, Colin eds. *Essays in the Economic and Social History of South Yorkshire*. Sheffield: South Yorkshire Council pp14-27

Cohen, Deborah (2006) *Household Gods: The British and Their Possessions*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press

Cole, David (2007) *John Moore-True Countryman*. Pershore: Blacksmith Publishing.

Collins, Mike (1996) *Leisure in Industrial and Post-Industrial Societies*. Eastbourne: Leisure Studies Association

- Conekin, Becky E. (2003) *'The autobiography of a nation': The 1951 Festival of Britain*. Manchester: Manchester University Press
- Conford, Philip (2001) *The Origins of the Organic Movement*. Edinburgh: Floris Books
- Conford, Philip (2002) Finance versus Farming: Rural Reconstruction and Economic Reform 1894-1955, *Rural History* 13, 2, pp225-241
- Connerton, Paul (1989) *How Societies Remember*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Cook, E.T and Wedderburn, John eds. (1907) *The Works of John Ruskin* Vol. XXXIV. London: George Allen
- Cook, T. G. ed. (1972) *Local Studies and the History of Education*. London, Methuen & Co Ltd, for the History of Education Society
- Coombes, A. E. (1994). *Reinventing Africa: Museums, Material Culture and Popular Imagination in Late Victorian and Edwardian England*. Newhaven and London: Yale University Press
- Corsane, Gerard ed. (2005) *Heritage, Museums and Galleries: An Introductory Reader*. London: Routledge
- Corsane, G, Davis, P., Elliott, S., Maggi, M., Murtas, D. and Rogers, S. (2007a) Ecomuseum Evaluation: Experiences in Piemonte and Liguria, Italy, *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 13:2, 101-116
- Corsane, G, Davis, P., Elliott, S., Maggi, M., Murtas, D. and Rogers, S. (2007b) Ecomuseum Performance in Piemonte and Liguria, Italy: The Significance of Capital, *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 13:3, 224-239
- Cossons, Neil (1984) Independent Museums, in: Thompson, John M. A; Bassett, Douglas A; Davies, D. Gareth; Duggan, Anthony J; Lewis, Geoffrey D; and Prince, David R. eds. *The Manual of Curatorship: A Guide to Museum Practice*. London: Butterworth, pp84-90
- Cox, Benjamin G. (1959) Forming a Local Museum, *The Amateur Historian*, Vol.4, No.5, Autumn 1959, pp202-205
- Cox, Ian (1951) *The South Bank Exhibition – A guide to the story it tells*. London: HMSO

Cripps, John (2004) J.W Robertson Scott, *in*: Matthew, H.C.G. and Harrison, Brian eds. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol. 49. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp431-2

Crooke, Elizabeth (2006) Museums and Community, *in*: Macdonald, Sharon ed. *A Companion to Museum Studies*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, pp170-185

Crooke, Elizabeth (2007) *Museums and Community: ideas, issues, challenges*. London: Routledge

Crooke, Elizabeth (2008) An Exploration of the Connections among Museums, Community and Heritage, *in*: Graham, Brian and Howard, Peter eds. *The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity*. Aldershot: Ashgate, pp415-424

Cunningham, H. (1990). Leisure and Culture, *in*: Thompson F. M. L. ed. *The Cambridge Social History of England Vol.2, People and their Environment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp279 -339.

Curtis, W. H. (1955) *The Curtis Museum, Alton, Hampshire 1855-1955 – The first hundred years of a small museum*. Alton: The Curtis Museum

Curtis, W.H. and Warner, S.A. (1946) *An Illustrated and Descriptive List of the Smaller Implements, etc. Formerly (or still) in use on Farms*. Alton: The Curtis Museum

Daniel, Glyn and Renfrew, Colin (1988) *The Idea of Prehistory*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press

Davey, B.J. (1980) *Ashwell 1830-1914: the decline of a village community*. Leicester: Leicester University Press

Davies, Gill (1988) The End of the Pier Show?, *New Formations*, Vol. 5, pp133-140

Davies, Hunter (2010) *Behind the Scenes at the Museum of Baked Beans: My search for Britain's maddest museums*. London: Virgin

Davis, Peter (1999) *Ecomuseums: A Sense of Place*. London: Leicester University Press

Davis, Peter (2005) Places, Cultural Touchstones and the Ecomuseum, *in*: Corsane, Gerard ed. *Heritage, Museums and Galleries: An Introductory Reader*. London: Routledge, pp365-376

Davis, Peter (2007a) Ecomuseums and Sustainability in Italy, Japan and China: concept adaptation through implementation, *in*: Knell, Simon J., MacLeod, Suzanne and Watson, Sheila *Museum Revolutions: how museums change and are changed*. London: Routledge, pp198-214

Davis, Peter (2007b) Place Exploration: museums, identity, community *in*: Watson, Sheila ed. *Museums and their Communities* London: Routledge, pp53-75

Davis, Peter (2008) New Museologies and the Ecomuseum *in*: Graham, Brian and Howard, Peter eds. *The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity* Aldershot: Ashgate, pp397-414

Davis Smith, J. (1998) *The 1997 National Survey of Volunteering*. London: Institute for Volunteering Research

Davis Smith, J. and Locke, M. eds. (2007) *Volunteering and the Test of Time: essays for policy, organisation and research*. London: Institute for Volunteering Research

Delderfield, Eric R. (1967) *The Cotswold Countryside and its Characters*. Newton Abbot: The Raleigh Press

Dicks, Bella (2003) *Culture on Display: the production of contemporary visitability*. Maidenhead: Open University Press

Donaldson, D.N. (2001). *Winchcombe: a history of the Cotswold borough*. Charlbury: The Wychwood Press.

Dorset County Council (2008) *The Dorset Data Book 2008*. Dorchester: Dorset County Council

Dorson, Richard M. (1968) *The British Folklorists: A History*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul

Durbin, Gail (1984) *The Past Displayed: a picture history of the Norwich Museums*. Norwich: Norfolk Museums Service

Eedle, Marie de G. (1977) *A History of Bagshot and Windlesham*. Chichester: Phillimore

Eedle, Marie de G. (1984) *A History of Beaminster*. Chichester: Phillimore

Ellis, Angela, Hindley, Ann, Macmillan, Rob, Scott, Duncan, Servante, Denise (2004) *No Overall Control: experiencing*



*community development in rural Britain*. Manchester: University of Manchester: Centre for Applied Social Research

Evans, George Ewart (1983, paperback edition 1985) *The Strength of the Hills: An Autobiography*. London: Faber and Faber

Ewing, Guy (1928) *Westmill: the story of a Hertfordshire Parish*. Tunbridge Wells: Courier

Ewing, Guy (1930) A Village History Exhibition as an Educational Factor, (reprinted from the *Journal of the Ministry of Agriculture*, October 1922) Historical Association leaflet No.81

Fay, Judith and Martin, Richard eds. (1987) *The Jubilee Boy- The life and recollections of George Swinford of Filkins*. Filkins: The Filkins Press

Festival of Britain Office (1950) *Catalogue of Events and Activities arranged by local authorities and Festival of Britain Committees throughout the country, up to October 31st 1950*. London: Festival of Britain Office (Land Travelling Exhibition)

Finberg, Joscelyne (1958) *Exploring Villages*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul

Finn, Christine (2004) Jacquetta Hawkes, in: Matthew, H.C.G. and Harrison, Brian eds. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol. 25, Oxford: Oxford University Press pp901-903

Fleming, D., Paine, Crispin, and Rhodes, John G. eds. (1993) *Social History in Museums: A Handbook for Professionals*. London: HMSO

Fordham, Montague (1916) *A Short History of English Rural Life from the Anglo-Saxon Invasion to the Present Time*. London: George Allen and Unwin

Fordham, Montague (1924) *The Rebuilding of Rural England*. London: Hutchinson & Co.

Foucault, Michel (1970) *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. London: Tavistock Publications

Foucault, Michel (1974) *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. London: Tavistock Publications

Fyfe, Nicholas R. and Milligan, Christine (2003) Out of the Shadows: exploring contemporary geographies of voluntarism, *Progress in Human Geography*, 27: 4 pp397-413

Goodlad, S. and McIvor, S. (1998) *Museum Volunteers: good practice in the management of volunteers*. London: Routledge

Goldman, Lawrence (1999) Ruskin, Oxford and the British Labour Movement 1880-1914, in Birch, Dinah *Ruskin and the Dawn of the Modern Oxford*: Clarendon Press pp57-86

Graham, Brian and Howard, Peter (2008) eds. *The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity*. Aldershot: Ashgate

Graham, Margaret (2000) The Professionalisation of Museum Volunteers: an Ethical Dilemma, in: Brackenridge, C., Howe, D., and Jordan, F. eds. *Just Leisure: politics, ethics and professionalism*. Eastbourne: Leisure Studies Association, pp185-209

Graham, Margaret and Foley, Malcolm (1998) Volunteering in an Urban Museums Service, in: Ravenscroft, N., Philips, D., and Bennett, M. eds. *Tourism and Visitor Attractions*. Eastbourne: Leisure Studies Association, pp21-38

Graham, Margaret and Foley, Malcolm (2001) *Leisure volunteering: marginal or inclusive?* Eastbourne: Leisure Studies Association

Gramsci, A. (1985) *Selections from Cultural Writings*. London: Lawrence & Wishart

Green, Chris (2004) Raphael Arthur Salaman, in Matthew, H.C.G and Harrison, Brian eds. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* Vol.48. Oxford: Oxford University Press pp683-4

Green, J.R (1874) *A Short History of the English People*. London: Macmillan and Co.

Greene, J. Patrick (1980) *Setting up and Running a New Museum*. Association of Independent Museums: AIM Guidelines No.2

Greenwood, Thomas (1888) *Museums and Art Galleries*. London: Simpkin, Marshall & Co.

Grigson, Geoffrey (1951) *About Britain No.1: West Country*. London: Collins for the Festival of Britain Office

Grinsell, L.V (1955) *The Ancient Burial Mounds of England*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. revised and reset; original publication 1936. London: Methuen and Co.

Gurney, Norman and Sheldrick, Albert (1994) *Ashwell : village life in war and peace, 1939-1975*. Baldock: Cortney

Haddon, A.C. (1897) Professor Flinders Petrie's Scheme of an Ethnological Store-house, *Science*, New Series Vol. vi, No. 146, pp555-7

Halfacree, Keith H. (1995) Talking about Rurality: Social Representations of the Rural as Expressed by Residents of Six English Parishes, *Journal of Rural Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 1, pp 1-20

Hall, Chris (2004) John Cripps, *in*: Matthew, H.C.G. and Harrison, Brian eds. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* Vol.14. Oxford: Oxford University Press pp199-200

Hall, Lesley A. (2004) Marie Stopes, *in*: Matthew, H.C.G. and Harrison, Brian eds. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* Vol.52. Oxford: Oxford University Press p931

Hamnett, Chris; McDowell, Linda and Sarre, Philip eds. *The Changing Social Structure*. London: Sage

Harris, Anthony (1994) Mary Hope Greg – Companion Extraordinary, "Fors" – *The Letters of the Companions of the Guild of St George*, Summer 1994, pp2-5

Hawkes, Jacquetta (1959) *A Land* (Original edition 1951, London: Cresset Press) Harmondsworth: Pelican

Henson, Don, (2005) *Television Archaeology: Education or Entertainment?* Available at:  
<http://www.history.ac.uk/resources/history-in-british-education/first-conference/henson-paper> (accessed 7 July 2009)

Hewison, Robert (1987) *The Heritage Industry: Britain in a Climate of Decline*. London: Methuen

Higgs, J.W.Y. (1963) Folk Life Collection and Classification, *in*: *Handbook for Museum Curators Part C: Permanent Collections, Archaeology & Ethnology* Section 6. London: The Museums Association

Hill, Julia (2009) *Recruiting and Retaining Volunteers – a practical guide*. Association of Independent Museums: Focus

Hill, Kate (2005) *Culture and Class in English Public Museums 1850-1914*. Aldershot: Ashgate

Historical Association, The (1955) *The Historical Association 1906 -1956*. London: G. Philip for the Historical Association

Hobhouse, Christopher (1937) *1851 and the Crystal Palace*. London: John Murray

Hoggart, Keith (1997) The Middle Classes in Rural England 1971-1991, *Journal of Rural Studies* Vol. 13, No. 3, pp 253-273

Holmes, Kirsten (1999) Changing Times: volunteering in the heritage sector 1984 –1998, *Voluntary Action* 1 (2) Spring 1999, pp21-35

Holmes, Kirsten (2001) The Motivation and Retention of Front-of- House Volunteers at Museums and Heritage Attractions, in: Graham, Margaret and Foley, Malcolm eds. *Leisure volunteering: marginal or inclusive?* Eastbourne: Leisure Studies Association, pp95-109

Holmes, Kirsten (2003) Volunteers in the Heritage Sector: A Neglected Audience? *International Journal of Heritage Studies* Vol. 9, No.4, 2003, pp. 341-355

Hooper-Greenhill, Eilean (1992) *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge*. London: Routledge

Hoskins, W.G. (1951a) *Chilterns to the Black Country*. London: Collins, for the Festival of Britain Office

Hoskins, W.G. (1951b) *East Midlands and the Peak*. London: Collins, for the Festival of Britain Office

Hoskins, W.G. (1955) *The Making of the English Landscape*. London: Hodder and Stoughton

Hoskins, W.G. (1959) *Local History in England*. London: Longmans

Hoskins, W.G. (1967) *Fieldwork in Local History*. London: Faber

Howkins, A. (1986) The Discovery of Rural England, in: Colls, R. and Dodd, P. eds. *Englishness: Politics and Culture 1880-1920*. London: Croom Helm, pp62-88

- Howkins, A. (2003) *The Death of Rural England- A Social History of the Countryside since 1900*. London: Routledge
- Hussey, Christopher (1951) A Thousand Years of Cotswold Tradition, *Country Life*, 6<sup>th</sup> July 1951, pp 36-37.
- Inkster, Ian ed. (1985) *The Steam Intellect Societies - Essays on Culture, Education & Industry circa 1820-1914*. Nottingham: University of Nottingham, Department of Adult Education
- Jackson, Barry (1991) *Cawthorne 1790-1990 – a South Yorkshire village remembers its past*. Cawthorne: Cawthorne Victoria Jubilee Museum
- Jekyll, Gertrude (1971) *Old West Surrey*. (Facsimile reprint of 1904 original edition, London: Longmans, Green and Co.) Wakefield: S.R. Publishers,
- Jekyll, Gertrude (1925) *Old English Household Life*: London: B.T. Batsford Ltd.
- Jenkins, Inez. (1953). *The History of the Women's Institute Movement of England and Wales*. Oxford: National Federation of Women's Institutes (printed at the University Press by Charles Batey)
- Jenkins, J. Geraint (1969) Folk Museums: Some Aims and Purposes, *Museums Journal*, 69, No1, pp17-20
- Jerrard, Bryan (1998) *The Gloucestershire Rural Community Council 1923 to 1998: A Record*. Gloucester: Gloucestershire Rural Community Council
- Jochum, Veronique (2003) *Social Capital: beyond the theory*. London: NCVO
- Kavanagh, Gaynor (1990) *History Curatorship*. London: Leicester University Press
- Kavanagh, G. (1993) History in Museums in Britain: A Brief Survey of Trends and Ideas, in: Fleming, D., Paine, Crispin, and Rhodes, John G. eds. *Social History in Museums: A Handbook for Professionals*. London: HMSO, pp13-24
- Kavanagh, Gaynor (1994) *Museums and the First World War: A Social History*. London: Leicester University Press
- Keary, Margaret and Wragge, Phyllis (1913) *Piers Plowman Histories Junior Book 3*. London: George Philip and Son Ltd

Kelly (1889) *Kelly's Directory of the West Riding*. London: Kelly Publishing

Kelly (1929) *Kelly's Directory of Hertfordshire*. London: Kelly Publishing

Kelly (1933) *Kelly's Directory of Hertfordshire*. London: Kelly Publishing

Kelly (1933) *Kelly's Directory of Cambridgeshire*. London: Kelly Publishing

Kingan, Beryl (2005) *Celebrating Wotton-under-Edge Historical Society's Diamond Jubilee 1945-2005*. Wotton-under-Edge: Wotton-under-Edge Historical Society

Kipling, Rudyard (1899) *Stalky and Co*. London: Macmillan & Co

Kipling, Rudyard (1993) *Puck of Pook's Hill and Rewards and Fairies*, edited and with an introduction by Mackenzie, Donald. (1st edition 1906, London: Macmillan & Co) Oxford: Oxford University Press

Klemm, M., Scott, M., and Wilson, N. (1993) *Museum Sector Workforce Survey: An analysis of the workforce in the museum, gallery and heritage sector in the United Kingdom*. [A report prepared by the Management Centre, Bradford University for the Museum Training Institute] Bradford: Museum Training Institute

Knell, Simon J., MacLeod, Suzanne and Watson, Sheila (2007) *Museum Revolutions: how museums change and are changed*. London: Routledge

Lambert, Margaret and Marx, Enid (1946) *English Popular and Traditional Art*. London: Collins

Lambert, Margaret and Marx, Enid (1951) *English Popular Art*. London: B.T. Batsford

Lang, W.D. (1934) F.A. Bather, *Nature*, 133, 31March, pp 485-486

Larson, Frances (2005) *Henry Balfour* available at [http://history.prm.ox.ac.uk/collector\\_balfour.html](http://history.prm.ox.ac.uk/collector_balfour.html) (accessed 1 April 2010)

La Rue, Hélène (2004) Henry Balfour, *in*: Matthew, H.C.G. and Harrison, Brian eds. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol.3. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp529-31

Lascelles, Mary (1980) *The Story Teller Retrieves the Past: historical fiction and fictitious history in the art of Scott, Stevenson, Kipling, and some others*. Oxford: Clarendon

Le Bas, Pam (2006) *Blandford Forum Town Museum – the first 21 years*. Blandford: Blandford Forum Town Museum

Lehmann, Otto (1931) The Home Museums of Germany, *Museums Journal*, Vol.30, No.8, February, pp300-305

Lewis, Geoffrey D, (1984a) Collections, Collectors and Museums in Britain to 1920, *in*: Thompson, John M. A; Bassett, Douglas A; Davies, D. Gareth; Duggan, Anthony J; Lewis, Geoffrey D; and Prince, David R. eds. *The Manual of Curatorship: A Guide to Museum Practice*. London: Butterworth, pp23-37

Lewis, Geoffrey D, (1984b) Museums in Britain: 1920 to the Present Day, *in*: Thompson, John M. A; Bassett, Douglas A; Davies, D. Gareth; Duggan, Anthony J; Lewis, Geoffrey D; and Prince, David R. eds. *The Manual of Curatorship: A Guide to Museum Practice*. London: Butterworth, pp38-53

Lewis, Geoffrey D, (1984c) Enabling Legislation for Museums, *in*: Thompson, John M. A; Bassett, Douglas A; Davies, D. Gareth; Duggan, Anthony J; Lewis, Geoffrey D; and Prince, David R. eds. *The Manual of Curatorship: A Guide to Museum Practice*. London: Butterworth, pp70-79

Lewis, Geoffrey D. (1989) *For Instruction and Recreation: a centenary history of the Museums Association*. London: Quiller

Little, J. and Austin, Patricia (1996), Women and the Rural Idyll, *Journal of Rural Studies* 12, (2), pp101-111

Little, J. (1997), Constructions of Rural Women's Voluntary Work, *Gender, Place and Culture* 4, (2), pp197-209

Lindsay, J. Seymour (1964) *Iron and Brass Implements of the English House*. First published in 1927 by the Medici Society. London: Alec Tiranti

Locke, Stephen, (1989) *Museums in South West England: Thirty Years of Achievement*. Taunton: Area Museum Council for the South West

Lovejoy, Andrew A. (1998) *The Lanman Museum, Fram: The Journal of the Framlingham and District Local History and Preservation Society*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, No. 3, April

Lowenthal, David (1985) *The Past is a Foreign Country*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Lowenthal, David (1989) Nostalgia tells it like it wasn't, in: Shaw, Christopher and Chase Malcolm, eds. *The Imagined Past: History and Nostalgia*. Manchester: Manchester University Press

Lowenthal, David (1998) *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Lumley, Robert ed. (1988) *The Museum Time Machine*. London: Routledge for Comedia

Lynch, Patricia (2003) *The Liberal Party in Rural England 1885-1910: Radicalism and Community* Oxford: Oxford University Press

Lynn, Kitty and Dereham Antiquarian Society (2005) *The History of the Museum in Bishop Bonner's Cottages*. Dereham: Dereham Antiquarian Society

Macdonald, Sharon (2002) On 'Old Things': The Fetishization of Past Everyday Life, in: Rapport, Nigel ed. *British Subjects: an anthropology of Britain*. Oxford: Berg, pp89-106

Macdonald, Sharon ed. (2006) *A Companion to Museum Studies*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing

MacGregor, Arthur (2001) *The Ashmolean Museum: a brief history of the museum and its collections*. Oxford: Ashmolean Museum in association with Jonathan Horn

Mackenzie, Donald ed. (1993) Introduction, in: *Puck of Pook's Hill and Rewards and Fairies / Kipling, Rudyard*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Marchant, Ronald (1987) *The Story of Laxfield Museum* Laxfield: Laxfield and District Museum

Markham, R.A.D. (1990) *A Rhino in the High Street: Ipswich Museum – The Early Years* Ipswich: Ipswich Borough Council

Markham, S. F. ed. (1931) *Directory of Museums and Art Galleries in the British Isles compiled by the Museums Association*. London: Museums Association



Markham, S.F. (1938) *A Report on the Museums and Art Galleries of the British Isles (Other than the National Museums)*. Edinburgh: Carnegie United Kingdom Trust

Markham, S. F. ed. (1948) *Directory of Museums and Art Galleries in the British Isles compiled by the Museums Association*. London: Museums Association

Marsden, Frederick (1971) *A Short History of Sherborne Silk Mill From 1753 Onwards*. Sherborne: Sherborne Historical Society

Marsden, Frederick (1980) *Sherborne Mill from Silks to Glass*. Sherborne: Frederick Marsden

Mason, Rhiannon (2006) Cultural Theory and Museum Studies, in: Macdonald, Sharon ed. *A Companion to Museum Studies* Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, pp17-32

Massingham, H.J. (1937) *The Cotswold Country*. London: B. T. Batsford Ltd.

Massingham, H. J. (1938) *Shepherd's Country*. London: Chapman & Hall Ltd.

Massingham, H. J. (1974) *Country Relics*. (Facsimile of 1939 edition, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) Wakefield: EP Publishing Ltd

Massingham, H.J. (1942) *Remembrance*. London: Batsford,

Matless, David (1992) Regional Surveys and local knowledges: the geographical imagination in Britain, 1918-39, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, N.S.17, pp464-480

Matless, David (1994) Doing the English Village, 1945-90: An Essay in Imaginative Geography, in: Cloke, Paul, Doel, Marcus, Matless, David, and Phillips, Martin *Writing the Rural: five cultural geographies*. London: Paul Chapman Publishing Ltd

Matless, David (1996) Visual Culture and Geographical Citizenship: England in the 1940s, *Journal of Historical Geography*, 22, 4, pp424-439

Matless, David (1998) *Landscape and Englishness*. London: Reaktion Books Ltd

Matthew, H.C.G. and Harrison, Brian eds. (2004) *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Mattingly, Jenny (1984) *Volunteers in Museums and Galleries: a Report of a Survey into the Work of Volunteers in Museums and Galleries in the United Kingdom*. Berkhamsted: The Volunteer Centre UK

Mee, Arthur (1938) *The King's England – Gloucestershire*. London: Hodder and Stoughton

Meynell, Viola ed. (1940) *Friends of a Lifetime: letters to Sydney Carlyle Cockerell*. London: Jonathan Cape

Middleton, Victor T. C. (1990). *New visions for independent museums in the UK*. Chichester: Association of Independent Museums.

Middleton, Victor T.C. (1998) *New Visions for Museums in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Chichester: Association of Independent Museums

Miers, S. H. (1928). *A Report on the Public Museums of the British Isles (other than the National Museums) to the Carnegie United Kingdom Trustees*. Edinburgh: Carnegie United Kingdom Trustees

Millar, S. (1991) *Volunteers in Museums and Heritage Organisation: policy, planning and management*. London: HMSO

Millerson, Geoffrey (1964) *The Qualifying Associations*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul

Milligan, Christine (2001) *Geographies of Care: space, place and the voluntary sector*. Aldershot: Ashgate

Moore, John (1951) *Dance and Skylark*. London: Collins

Moore, John (1985) *The Brensham Trilogy* with an introduction by Asa Briggs. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Moore, Kevin (1999) ed. *Management in Museums*. London: Athlone Press

Moore-Colyer, R.J. (2002) A Voice Clamouring in the Wilderness: H.J. Massingham (1888-1952) and Rural England, *Rural History* 13, 2, pp199-224

Morris, R.J. (1990) Clubs, societies and associations, in: Thompson, F.M.L ed. *Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750 – 1950, Vol. 3* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp395-443

Morris, R.J. (2006) Urban Associations in England and Scotland, 1750-1914, in: Morton, Graeme, de Vries, Boudien and Morris, R.J. eds. *Civil Society, Associations, and Urban Places: class, nation and culture in nineteenth-century Europe*. Aldershot: Ashgate

Morton, Graeme, de Vries, Boudien and Morris, R.J. eds. (2006) *Civil Society, Associations, and Urban Places: class, nation and culture in nineteenth-century Europe*. Aldershot: Ashgate

Munby, L. (2005). Local History Studies in England, in: Munby, L., Owen, D. Huw, and Scannell, James *Local History since 1945: England, Wales & Ireland* Socialist History Society: SHS Occasional Paper No.21 pp3-21.

Munby, L., Owen, D. Huw, and Scannell, James (2005) *Local History since 1945: England, Wales & Ireland* Socialist History Society: SHS Occasional Paper No.21 pp3-21.

Museums Association (1903) Museum Directory, *Museums Journal*, Supplement to Vol.2 (unpaginated)

Museums Association (2002) *Code of Ethics for Museums*. London: The Museums Association

Museums Association (2008) *Museums Yearbook*. London: The Museums Association

Myrone, Martin (2009) Instituting English Folk Art , *Visual Culture in Britain* 10, 1, pp27-52

National Institute of Adult Education (1956) *Museums and Adult Education: Report of Working Party appointed by the National Institute of Adult Education*. London: National Institute of Adult Education.

Newby, Howard (1977) *The Deferential Worker: a Study of Farm Workers in East Anglia*. London: Allen Lane

Newby, Howard, Bell, Colin, Rose, David and Saunders, Peter (1978) *Property, Paternalism and Power - Class and Control in Rural England*. London: Hutchinson

Orr, Noreen (2006) Museum volunteering: heritage as serious leisure, *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 12 (2) pp194-210

Osborne, Kate (1999) 'When they are good, they are very, very good, but ...' The challenge of Managing Retired Volunteers in Small Museums, in: Moore, Kevin ed. *Management in Museums* London: Athlone Press pp149-183

Pahl, R.E. (1964) *Urbs in Rure: The Metropolitan Fringe in Hertfordshire*. London: London School of Economics and Political Science Geographical Papers No.2

Painter, Desmond (1995) Redcliffe and Raphael Salaman: a Memoir, *History Workshop Journal*, 40, pp276-282

Parker, Stan (1996) Serious Leisure – A Middle-Class Phenomenon, in: Collins, Mike ed. *Leisure in Industrial and Post-Industrial Societies*. Eastbourne: Leisure Studies Association

Parsons, Julien (2002) Belas Knap *British Archaeology*, Issue 63, February 2002 available at: <http://www.britarch.ac.uk/ba/ba63/feat3.shtml> (Accessed 22 June 2010)

Pearce, Susan M. (1995) *On Collecting: An Investigation into Collecting in the European Tradition*. London: Routledge

Peate, Iorwerth C. (1949) The Folk Museum, *The Museums Journal*, Vol.49, June, pp67-70

Perry, Reg (1990) *Portland Museum 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary – 60 Years of Portland Museum 1930-1990*, booklet produced by the Friends of Portland Museum. Portland: Portland Museum collections

Petch, Alison (2005) *Augustus Henry Lane Fox Pitt Rivers*. Available at: [http://history.prm.ox.ac.uk/collector\\_pittrivers.html](http://history.prm.ox.ac.uk/collector_pittrivers.html) (Accesses 1 April 2010)

Petrie, W. Flinders (1900) A National Repository for Science and Art, *Journal of the Society of Arts*, Vol. XLVIII, pp525-536

Pevsner, Nikolaus (1946) *Visual Pleasures from Everyday Things*. London: Council for Visual Education

Phillimore, Jenny (2001) Voluntary Work, Status and Inclusion in Rural Tourist Attractions, in: Anderson, J. and Lawrence, L.

*Gender Issues in Work and Leisure*. Eastbourne: Leisure Studies Association, pp 125-141

Phillips, Martin (1993) Rural Gentrification and the Processes of Class Colonisation, *Journal of Rural Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 2, pp 123-140

Phillips, Martin (1998a) Investigations of the British Rural Middle Classes – Part 1: From Legislation to Interpretation, *Journal of Rural Studies*, Vol.14, No.4, pp 411-425

Phillips, Martin (1998b) Investigations of the British Rural Middle Classes – Part 2: Fragmentation, Identity, Morality and Contestation, *Journal of Rural Studies*, Vol.14, No.4, pp 427-443

Policy Studies Institute (1989) Museums, *Cultural Trends* 1989, Issue 4, pp1-17

Portes, Alejandro (1998) Social Capital: Its Origins and Applications in Modern Sociology, *Annual Review of Sociology* 24, pp1-24

Powers, Alan (1989), *Oliver Hill: Architect & Lover of Life 1887-1968*. London: Mouton Publications

Powers, Alan (1991) Oliver Hill as Exhibition Designer, *Thirties Society Journal*, VII, pp28-39

Pratt, Mary Louise (1992) *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. London: Routledge

Prince, David and Higgins-McLoughlin, Bernadette (1987) *MuseumsUK: The findings of the museums data-base project*. London: The Museums Association

Putnam, Robert D. (2000) *Bowling Alone: the collapse and revival of American community*. New York: Simon and Schuster

Putnam, Robert D. (1993) The Prosperous Community: Social Capital and Public Life, *The American Prospect*, March 21<sup>st</sup> 1993, pp1-11

Quennell, Marjorie & C. H. B. (1918) *History of Everyday Things in England 1066-1499*. London: B. T. Batsford Ltd.

Radford, C.A.R. (1972) Excavations at Cricklade 1948-1963, *Transactions of the Wiltshire Archaeology and Natural History Society*, Vol.67, pp61-111

Rapport, Nigel ed. (2002) *British Subjects: An Anthropology of Britain*. Oxford: Berg

Rentzhog, Sten (2007) *Open Air Museums: the history and future of a visionary idea* translated by Skans Victoria Airey, Jamtli, Sweden: Carlssons

Riden, P. (1998). *Local History: a handbook for beginners*. (1<sup>st</sup> edn. 1983, London: Batsford) Cardiff: Merton Priory Press Ltd

Riviere, Peter (2010) Success and Failure: the Tale of Two Museums, in: *Journal of the History of Collections*, Vol.22, no. 1, pp 141-151

Robertson, W. (1964) *Welfare in Trust- A History of the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust 1913-1963*. Dunfermline: The Carnegie United Kingdom Trust

Robertson Scott, J.W. (1910a) Why Not an Open-Air Theatre and an Open-Air Museum? *World's Work*, August, pp315-321

Robertson Scott, J.W. (1910b) Our Plea for Open-Air Museums, *World's Work*, October, pp477-486

Robertson Scott, J.W. (1910c) The Scandinavian Open-Air Museum – Why should we not have similar museums in Great Britain? *World's Work*, November, pp625-631

Rochester, Colin (1998) *Social Benefits: exploring the value of community sector organisations*. West Malling: Charities Aid Foundation

Rochester, Colin, 2007 [1999], One size does not fit all: four models of involving volunteers in small voluntary organisations, in: Davis Smith, Justin and Locke, Michael eds, *Volunteering and the Test of Time: Essays for policy, organisation and research* (first published in *Voluntary Action* 1(2): pp7-20, Spring 1999). London: Institute for Volunteering Research

Rochester, Colin; Ellis Paine, Angela; Howlett, Steven with Zimmeck, Meta (2010) *Volunteering and Society in the 21st Century*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan

Roderick, G. W. and Stephens, M.D. (1985) Steam Intellect Created - The Educational Role of the Mechanics' Institutes, in: Inkster, Ian ed. *The Steam Intellect Societies - Essays on Culture, Education & Industry circa 1820-1914*. Nottingham: University of Nottingham Department of Adult Education, pp20 - 32

Rowley, Trevor (2006) *The English Landscape in the Twentieth Century*. London: Hambledon Continuum

Samuel, Raphael (1994) *Theatres of Memory*. London: Verso

Schwarz, B. (1987) Englishness & the paradox of modernity, *New Formations* 1 (Spring 1987) 147-53

Seebohm F.E. (1883), *The English Village Community*. London, Longmans, Green

Seebohm, F. E. (1918) *The Teaching of History and the Use of Local Illustrations - a Paper read at Hitchin to the members of the Herts. Branch of the Historical Association in October 1910, at the Girls Grammar School*. London: The Historical Association

Sherman, Daniel J. and Rogoff, Irit eds. (1994) *Museum Culture: histories, discourses, spectacles*. London: Routledge

Shippey, Tom (2007) *Roots and Branches: Selected papers on Tolkien*. Zollikofen, Switzerland: Walking Tree Publishers

Smith, David Horton (2000) *Grassroots Associations*: Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications Inc.

Smith, Karen A. (2002) Modelling the volunteer experience: findings from the heritage sector, *Voluntary Action*, 4 (2) pp9-30

Squires, Dick (1993) *The Birth of a Museum – a Personal Account*. Available at [http://www.wantage.com/museum/local\\_history/the%20birth%20of%20a%20museum.pdf](http://www.wantage.com/museum/local_history/the%20birth%20of%20a%20museum.pdf) (Accessed 8 June 2010)

Stamper, Anne (2001) *Countrywomen in Action: Voluntary Action in the National Federation of Women's Institutes 1917-1965*. Paper given at the Four Hundred Years of Charity conference, Liverpool, 2001, Available at <http://www.vahs.org.uk/vahs/papers/wi.pdf> (Accessed 1 December 2008)

Starn, Randolph (2005) A Historian's Brief Guide to New Museum Studies, *American Historical Review* Vol.110 Issue 1[online]. Available at <http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/ahr/starn.html> (Accessed 22 January 2010)

Stebbins, R. A. (1992) *Amateurs, Professionals and Serious Leisure*. Montreal: McGill -Queen's University Press.

- Stebbins, R. A. (1996) Volunteering: A Serious Leisure Perspective, *Non-profit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 25 (2): pp211-224.
- Stevenson, John (2003) *The Countryside, Planning and Civil Society in Britain 1926-1947*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Suffolk ACRE (1991) *The Integration of Newcomers*. Ipswich: Suffolk ACRE
- T.S. (1928) Iron and Brass Implements of the English House by J. Seymour Lindsay, book review, *Museums Journal*, Vol.28, 8, pp201-2
- Taylor, Basil (1951) *The Official Book of the Festival of Britain*. London: HMSO
- Teather, J. Lynne, (1990) The Museum Keepers: The Museums Association and the Growth of Museum Professionalism, *Museum Management and Curatorship*, Volume 9, pp25-41.
- Thompson, F.M.L. (1963) *English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul
- Thompson, F.M.L. ed. (1990) *The Cambridge Social History of England Vol.2 People and their Environment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Thompson, John M. A; Bassett, Douglas A; Davies, D. Gareth; Duggan, Anthony J; Lewis, Geoffrey D; and Prince, David R.eds. (1984) *The Manual of Curatorship: a Guide to Museum Practice*. London: Butterworth
- Thrift, Nigel (1989) Images of Social Change, in: Hamnett, Chris; McDowell, Linda and Sarre, Philip eds. *The Changing Social Structure* London: Sage pp12-42
- Tilley, Chris; Kuechler-Fogden, Susanne; Keane, Webb; Rowlands, Mike and Spyer, Patricia eds. (2005) *Handbook of Material Culture* London: Sage
- Tooley, Michael and Arnander, Primrose, ed. (1995) *Gertrude Jekyll: essays on the life of a working amateur*. Witton-le-Weir, Co.Durham: Michaelmas Books
- Treuherz, Julian (2007a) *Pre-Raphaelitism: the second generation* Grove Art Online, Oxford University Press. Available at



<http://www.groveart.com/shared/views/article.html?section=art.069496.2> (Accessed 22 November 2007)

Treuherz, Julian (2007b) *Stanhope, (John) Roddam Spencer* Grove Art Online, Oxford University Press. Available at <http://www.groveart.com/shared/views/article.html?section=art.080974> (Accessed 22 November 2007)

Wake, Joan (1925) *How to Compile a History and Present Day Record of Village Life*. Northampton: Northamptonshire and Soke of Peterborough Federation of Women's Institutes

Walmsley, Leo (1951) *Lancashire and Yorkshire*. London: Collins, for the Festival of Britain Office

Walsh, Kevin (1992) *The Representation of the Past: Museums and heritage in the post-modern world*. London: Routledge

Watson, Sheila ed. (2007) *Museums and their Communities*. London: Routledge

Weaver, Lawrence Trevelyan (1989) *Lawrence Weaver 1876-1930 – an annotated bibliography*. York: Inch's Books

Wheeler, Michael (1994) *Ruskin's Museums and Galleries: the treasury, the storehouse, the school*, a lecture delivered at the National Gallery, London, 21<sup>st</sup> November 1994. London: Pilkington Press

Wheeler, R.E. Mortimer (1934) Folk Museums, *Museums Journal*, Vol.34, No.5, August 1934, pp191-196

Wheeler, R.E. Mortimer (1938) Presidential Address, *Museums Journal*, Vol. 38, No.5, pp216-221

Williams, Colin C. (2003) Developing Community Involvement: Contrasting Local and Regional Participatory Cultures in Britain and their Implications for Policy, *Regional Studies*, Vol. 37, Issue 5, pp531-541

Withers, Jean (2003) Celebrating Clun Museum: 1932-2003, *Clun Courier*, Issue Number 156, July [Online]. Available at <http://www.discovershropshire.org.uk/html/search/verb/GetRecord/theme:200703171> (Accessed 18 June 2008)

Woolcock, M. (2001) The Place of Social Capital in understanding social and economic outcomes, *Isuma*, Vol.2, No.1, pp11-17

Wright, Patrick (1985) *On Living in an Old Country*. London: Verso

Yates, Bridget (2005) *Working with Volunteers – an introduction to good practice*. Association of Independent Museums: Focus Paper 18

Yates, Bridget (2008) *The Early History of Volunteer-run Museums: a case study from Cawthorne*, a paper delivered at the Voluntary Action History Society Conference, University of Liverpool, July 17, 2008.

Yates, Holly (2002) *Supporting Rural Voluntary Action* London: National Council for Voluntary Organisations

## Newspapers and Periodicals

***(Articles quoted in the text. NB: where no page numbers are given, the article concerned was consulted in museum archives)***

BARNSLEY CHRONICLE Saturday November 2<sup>nd</sup> 1889 (article on the opening of the Victoria Jubilee Museum, Cawthorne)

BIRMINGHAM POST 10<sup>th</sup> February 1933 (article on Filkins Museum)

BRIDGNORTH JOURNAL, 27<sup>th</sup> January 1934, p6 (article on the Bridgnorth and District Local History Society)

BRIDGNORTH JOURNAL, Feb.22<sup>nd</sup>1947 (article on the Bridgnorth and District Local History Society)

BRIDGNORTH JOURNAL, June 15<sup>th</sup> 1951, p1 (article on the Festival of Britain exhibition)

CHELTENHAM CHRONICLE AND GLOUCESTERSHIRE GRAPHIC, December 10 1966, p8 (article on Winchcombe Church Porch Museum)

DORSET EVENING ECHO September 29<sup>th</sup>, 1973, p18 (article about the Wareham Pictorial Museum)

EAST ANGLIAN DAILY TIMES June 25<sup>th</sup>, 1953, p5 (article *Framlingham's History on Show*)

EAST ANGLIAN DAILY TIMES October 30<sup>th</sup>, 1957 (article on opening of Framlingham Museum)

EVESHAM JOURNAL, April 28<sup>th</sup> 1956 (article on forthcoming Almonry Museum)

EVESHAM JOURNAL, October 12, 1956 (article on opening of the Almonry Museum)

EVESHAM STANDARD (undated article)

HAMPSHIRE HERALD June 2<sup>nd</sup> 1933 (article on the Curtis Museum, Alton)

MANCHESTER GUARDIAN, May 10<sup>th</sup> 1951, p3 (article on reopening of Warwickshire County Museum, Warwick)

MANCHESTER GUARDIAN, May 29<sup>th</sup> 1951, p5 (article on the Cotswold Tradition exhibition)

MORNING POST December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1930 (article on the opening of Ashwell Village Museum)

OXFORD TIMES, April 26<sup>th</sup> 1968 (article on the Filkins Museum)

THE CITIZEN Friday, October 11<sup>th</sup>, 1935 (article on the opening of Gloucester Folk Museum)

THE LISTENER 5<sup>th</sup> October 1932, p490 (article by Stanley Casson on Ashwell Village Museum)

THE TIMES January 3<sup>rd</sup> 1912 (Letter proposing use of Crystal Palace for an English Folk Museum, quoted in Myrone (2009), p30)

THE TIMES 14<sup>th</sup> October 1929, p10 (letter from Eleanor Adlard)

THE TIMES January 31<sup>st</sup> 1951, p3 (article on the Museum of English Rural Life, Reading)

THE TIMES 14<sup>th</sup> June 1952, p7 (*Times* leader on the Museum of English Rural Life, Reading)

WILTSHIRE AND GLOUCESTERSHIRE STANDARD, June 2<sup>nd</sup> 1951, p6 (article on the re-opening of the Filkins Museum)

## **Government Publications and Reports**

***(Including reports produced on behalf of public bodies)***

Board of Education (1908) Circular 599 *Teaching of History in Secondary Schools* London: HMSO

Board of Education (1923) Educational Pamphlets no 37, *Report on the Teaching of History* London: HMSO

Board of Education (1927) *Handbook of Suggestions for the Consideration of Teachers and others concerned in the work of public elementary schools*, London: HMSO

Cabinet Office, Office of the Third Sector *The Charities Act 2006: What Trustees Need to Know* downloaded from [http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/cabinetoffice/third\\_sector/assets/charities\\_act\\_interactive.pdf](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/cabinetoffice/third_sector/assets/charities_act_interactive.pdf) 08/02/10

Chambers, David (2002) *Volunteers in the Cultural Sector*, London, Institute for Volunteering Research, London: Re:source

Charity Commission (RR10, 2002) *Museums and Art Galleries*

Commission for Rural Communities (CRC05, 2005) *The State of the Countryside Report 2005*

Commission for Rural Communities (CRC46, 2007) *The State of the Countryside Report 2007*

Commission for Rural Communities (CRC49, 2007) *Defining Rural England*

Coulthard, M.; Walker, A. and Morgan, A. (2002) *People's Perceptions of their Neighbourhood and Community Involvement: Results from the Social Capital Module of the General Household Survey 2000* London: Home Office

Countryside Agency (CA26, 2000) *England's Market Towns: meeting the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century*

Department for Communities and Local Government (2009) *Citizenship Survey 2007-8*

Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (2000) *Our Countryside the Future: A Fair Deal for Rural England* CM4909

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (nd probably 2009) *Defra Classification of Local Authority Districts and Unitary Authorities in England: an introductory guide* downloaded from <http://www.defra.gov.uk/evidence/statistics/rural/documents/rural-defra/LAClassifications-introguide.pdf> 18/01/10

Department for Culture, Media and Sport (2005) *Understanding the Future: priorities for England's Museums*

Department for Culture, Media and Sport (2006) *Understanding the Future: museums and the 21<sup>st</sup> century*

Farnell, Richard; Hopkinson, Jill; Jarvis, David; Martineau, Jeremy and Ricketts Hein, Jane (2006) *Faith in Rural Communities: Contributions of Social Capital to Community Vibrancy* a study by the Applied Research Centre for Sustainable Regeneration, Coventry University, The Arthur Rank Centre and the Church of England, funded by DEFRA, Warwickshire: Acora Publishing

Home Office (2004) *ChangeUp: capacity building and infrastructure framework for the voluntary and community sector*

Howlett, Steven; Machin, Joanna and Malmersjo, Gertrud (2006) *Volunteering in Museums, Libraries and Archives* London, Institute for Volunteering Research for the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council

Kitchen, S.; Michaelson J.; Wood N.; and John P. (2005) *Citizenship Survey: Active Communities Topic Report* Dept for Communities & LG, <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/452564.pdf> downloaded 17.3.10

Moseley, Malcolm J. and Pahl, R.E (2007) *Social Capital in Rural Places – a Report to DEFRA*

Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (2004) *The Accreditation Scheme for Museums in the United Kingdom: Accreditation Standard*

Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (2009) *The Impact of the Accreditation Scheme: a report to the MLA by Jura Consultants* downloaded from [http://www.mla.gov.uk/what/raising\\_standards/accreditation/~media/Files/pdf/2010/accreditation/Impact\\_of\\_Accreditation\\_Jura\\_Report\\_T187\\_Oct\\_09\\_15/2/2010](http://www.mla.gov.uk/what/raising_standards/accreditation/~/media/Files/pdf/2010/accreditation/Impact_of_Accreditation_Jura_Report_T187_Oct_09_15/2/2010)

Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (2008) *List of Museums with Full Registration or Accreditation last updated July 2008* accreditation\_list\_july08.pdf  
Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (2009) *Participants from England: The Museums Accreditation Scheme for Museums in the UK November 2009* downloaded from [http://www.mla.gov.uk/what/raising\\_standards/~media/Files/pdf/2009/Accreditation\\_Participants\\_England\\_11\\_09.ashx](http://www.mla.gov.uk/what/raising_standards/~media/Files/pdf/2009/Accreditation_Participants_England_11_09.ashx) 8/2/2010

Museums, Libraries and Archives Council / Julia Holberry Associates (2009) *Renaissance Now: Review of the Impact of Renaissance on the Wider Museums Community – a report for the Renaissance Review included as Appendix 7 in Renaissance Review Appendices* downloaded from [http://www.mla.gov.uk/what/programmes/renaissance/~media/Files/pdf/2009/Renaissance\\_Review\\_Appendices\\_1-14](http://www.mla.gov.uk/what/programmes/renaissance/~media/Files/pdf/2009/Renaissance_Review_Appendices_1-14) 12/02/2010

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister *Non-Domestic Rates: Guidance on Rate Reliefs for Charities and Other Non –Profit Making Organisations* downloaded from <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/localgovernment/pdf/1178787.pdf> 12.2.2010

Rosse, Earl of (1963) *Survey of Provincial Museums and Galleries*, (The Rosse Report) Standing Commission on Museums and Galleries, London: HMSO

Royal Commission on National Museums and Galleries, Final Report 1929, Cmd 3401, London: HMSO

Royal Commission on National Museums and Galleries: Oral Evidence, Memoranda and Appendices to the Final Report, 1929, London, HMSO

Shorland-Ball, Rob (2000) *Farming, Countryside and Museums – Museums of farming and rural life at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century*. London: Re:source

Standing Commission on Museums and Galleries (1963) *Survey of Provincial Museums and Galleries*, (The Rosse Report) Standing Commission on Museums and Galleries, London: HMSO

HM Treasury (2002) *Cross Cutting Review of the Role of the Voluntary and Community Sector in Service Delivery*

## Theses

Brace, Catherine (1997) *Finding England Everywhere: Representations of the Cotswolds 1880-1950*, Thesis (PhD) submitted through Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education to the University of Bristol.

Geoghegan, Hilary (2008) *The Culture of Enthusiasm: technology, collecting and museums*, Thesis (PhD), University of London

Pearson, Catherine (2008) *Curators, Culture and Conflict: The effects of the Second World War on Museums in Britain, 1925-1965*, Thesis (PhD), University of London

Smith, K.A. (1999) *The management of volunteers at heritage attractions: literary heritage properties in the UK* Thesis (PhD), Nottingham Trent University



**Websites (*mentioned in the text*)**

Ancestry [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk)

Association of Independent Museums [www.aim-museums.co.uk](http://www.aim-museums.co.uk)

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council (Cotton Town digitisation project) [www.cottontown.org](http://www.cottontown.org)

Buckinghamshire County Museum, Aylesbury  
[http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/bcc/museum/ceeley\\_house.page?](http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/bcc/museum/ceeley_house.page?)

Charity Commission [www.charitycommission.gov.uk](http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk)  
East Hendred Museum <http://www.hendredmuseum.org.uk/>

Gillingham Museum  
<http://www.gillinghammuseum.co.uk/about.aspx>

Heritage Lottery Fund [www.hlf.org.uk](http://www.hlf.org.uk)

Mildenhall Museum  
<http://www.mildenhallmuseum.co.uk/about.htm>

North West Federation of Museums and Art Galleries  
[www.nwfed.org.uk](http://www.nwfed.org.uk)

Sidmouth Museum  
[www.sidvaleassociation.org.uk/page/about sid vale associatio  
n](http://www.sidvaleassociation.org.uk/page/about_sid_vale_association)

South West Federation of Museums and Art Galleries  
[www.swfed.org.uk](http://www.swfed.org.uk)

The Curtis Museum [http://www3.hants.gov.uk/museum/curtis-  
museum/alton-history/curtis-museum-story.htm](http://www3.hants.gov.uk/museum/curtis-museum/alton-history/curtis-museum-story.htm)

University of Gloucestershire (*Code of Ethics*)  
[http://resources.glos.ac.uk/shareddata/dms/42B83EECB4D42  
A03968908DF8AD4A0EB.pdf](http://resources.glos.ac.uk/shareddata/dms/42B83EECB4D42A03968908DF8AD4A0EB.pdf)

Wallingford Museum  
[www.wallingfordmuseum.org.uk/museum\\_history.htm](http://www.wallingfordmuseum.org.uk/museum_history.htm)

## APPENDIX 1:

Conference paper forthcoming in *Understanding the Roots of Voluntary Action: Historical Perspectives on Current Social Policy* edited by Colin Rochester, George Campbell Gosling, Alison Penn and Meta Zimmeck (Sussex Academic Press, March 2011)

### **BY THE PEOPLE THEMSELVES? SOCIAL CLASS AND A VOLUNTEER-LED MUSEUM 1884 – 1915**

#### **Introduction**

The museum landscape in England today is a complex mix of institutions run by national and local government, universities, private and commercial bodies, and by the charitable companies and trusts which now form the largest grouping in the sector. Over half of all the museums in Britain have been established since 1970 and this growth has been exceptionally marked in the institutions that originated in voluntary action<sup>338</sup>. Although many of these museums now employ paid staff, there are approximately 200 museums, mainly in rural areas, which are entirely volunteer-led. Despite an increasing academic interest in the history of museums, and particularly in the

---

<sup>338</sup> Adrian Babbidge, "Forty Years On", *Cultural Trends* Vol.14 (1), No 53, (March, 2005): pp 3-66. Victor T.C. Middleton, *New Visions for Museums in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (London: Association of Independent Museums, 1998)

history of collections, there have been few, if any, studies of volunteer-led museums and wider studies of museum and heritage volunteers have rarely distinguished between volunteer involving organisations and the small museums which have no paid staff at all.

The purpose of this chapter is to show, through a case study of the oldest volunteer-led museum, that such museums have a much longer and richer history than is commonly believed, and that those museums which began before the 'heritage boom' of the 1970s have much to tell about what makes village people become involved and stay involved in a museum, about an organisational framework that can be sustainable, and how village museums have adapted and changed over time and yet stayed true to their primary intentions of providing a resource and an amenity for their own community.

### **Museum Expansion in the Nineteenth Century**

In the mid to late nineteenth century there was a marked increase in the number of museums open to the public following a series of enabling Acts of Parliament that began with the Museums Act of 1845. This growth was primarily an urban phenomenon as funding from municipal rates was restricted to towns with a population of over 10,000. It was a palliative response to the appalling conditions of many urban

areas, providing 'rational recreation' for the working man alongside public parks and gardens, libraries and swimming baths<sup>339</sup>. Such museums frequently attempted to be smaller, provincial echoes of the national museums and their subjects were geology, natural history, art and archaeology<sup>340</sup>; history, as a body of knowledge exemplified through material culture, had no place in museums at this time<sup>341</sup>. As Bennett has said, "nineteenth century museums were thus intended *for* the people, they were certainly not *of* the people in the sense of displaying any interest in the lives, habits and customs of either the contemporary working classes or the labouring classes of pre-industrial societies."<sup>342</sup> What these museums and the people behind their establishment were interested in was the education of the working classes and in their moral

---

<sup>339</sup> Peter Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England: rational recreation and the contest for control 1830-1885* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978); Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: history, theory, politics* (London: Routledge, 1995); H. Cunningham, "Leisure and Culture", in Thompson, F.M.L. ed. *The Cambridge Social History of England Vol.2 People and their Environment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). The Museums Act, 1845; the Public Libraries and Museums Act, 1850; Public Libraries (Amendment) Act of 1866; The Public Libraries Act of 1892, all gave impetus to the movement and enabled municipal authorities to provide support to museums from the rates; none of the legislation required them to do so and the provision of museums is not a 'statutory' service in England. County Councils, established in 1888, were not empowered to support museums until 1919. As Cunningham (1990 p324) has said: "The public parks, museums and libraries were supported precisely because they were public, open to scrutiny and controlled by bye-laws. They quite deliberately aimed to enforce a certain standard of behaviour."

<sup>340</sup> Geoffrey D. Lewis, "Collections, Collectors and Museums in Britain to 1920", in John M. A Thompson, Douglas A Bassett, D.Gareth Davies, Anthony J Duggan, Geoffery D Lewis, and David R Prince, eds, *The Manual of Curatorship* (London: Butterworth, 1984)

<sup>341</sup> Gaynor Kavanagh, "History in Museums in Britain", in David Fleming, Crispin Paine and John G. Rhodes, eds, *Social History in Museums: A Handbook for Professionals* (London: HMSO, 1993)

<sup>342</sup> Tony Bennett, "Museums and 'the people' ", in Robert Lumley, ed. *The Museum Time Machine: putting cultures on display* (London: Routledge, 1988) p63

improvement, nicely encapsulated by Thomas Greenwood, a follower of John Ruskin, writing in 1888<sup>343</sup>:

The working man or agricultural labourer who spends his holiday in a walk through any well-arranged museum cannot fail to come away with a deeply-rooted and reverential sense of the extent of knowledge possessed by his fellow-men. It is not the objects themselves that he sees there, and wonders at, that cause this impression, so much as the order and evident science which he cannot but recognise in the manner in which they are grouped and arranged. He learns that there is a meaning and value in every object, however insignificant, and that there is a way of looking at things common and rare, distinct from the regarding them as useless, useful or merely curious....He has gained a new sense, a craving for natural knowledge, and such a craving may, possibly, in course of time quench another and lower craving which may at one time have held him in bondage - that

---

<sup>343</sup> <sup>343</sup>Thomas Greenwood, *Museums and Art Galleries* (London: Simpkin, Marshall & Co. 1888). Greenwood supported Sunday opening, and the evening opening of museums for "cheerful and constructive conversatziones" and for lectures in which "the use of the lantern in most advisable", all of which were to take place at Cawthorne. A section of his book was devoted to a description of the St George's Guild Museum at Walkley, Sheffield, set up by Ruskin in 1875. This collection is now exhibited in the Millennium Galleries, Sheffield.

for intoxicants or vicious excitement of one description or another. (Greenwood, p26)

## **The Origins of the Victoria Jubilee Museum, Cawthorne**

At the end of the nineteenth century, the Spencer Stanhope family of Cannon Hall were the largest of two principal landowners and the largest single employer in Cawthorne, a semi-industrial village<sup>344</sup> near Barnsley in South Yorkshire. They were paternalistic landowners, exercising their benevolence and control through the church, where they held the living, and through the provision of and support for amenities that by the end of the nineteenth-century included schools for both boys and girls, a village library, a penny savings bank, a cottage institute with a nurse and, from 1884, a museum. John Roddom Spencer Stanhope was the younger son, a second generation Pre-Raphaelite artist and another follower of John Ruskin<sup>345</sup>. The Reverend Charles Tiplady Pratt

---

<sup>344</sup> Post Office Directory of the West Riding of Yorkshire, (London: Kelly & Co, 1889); Barry Jackson, *Cawthorne 1790-1990 – a South Yorkshire village remembers its past* (Cawthorne: Cawthorne Victoria Jubilee Museum, 1991); Bryan E Coates, "The Geography of the Industrialization and Urbanization of South Yorkshire, 18th Century to 20th Century" in Sydney Pollard and Colin Holmes *Essays in the Economic and Social History of South Yorkshire* (Sheffield: South Yorkshire Council, 1976)

<sup>345</sup> Julian Treuherz, *Pre-Raphaelitism: the second generation* Grove Art Online, Oxford University Press (accessed 22 November 2007)  
<<http://www.groveart.com/shared/views/article.html?section=art.069496.2>>

served first as curate and then as vicar of the parish from 1866 until 1915; from 1870 until he left he wrote, single-handedly, a monthly Parish Magazine, frequently using the authorial first person 'we' and it is this which provides much of the information about the early history of the museum<sup>346</sup>.

### A Village Museum

A letter came to us from Mr Roddom Stanhope, now in Florence, very strongly advocating the establishment of a Village Museum "to be managed, of course, by the people themselves." It is not the first time that he has made a suggestion of this kind, and we strongly hope that the idea will be heartily taken up. "A Natural History Collection" he says "seems such an easy and inexpensive thing to start, and one in which so many might help. \*\* I hope the time is not

---

Julian Treuherz, *Stanhope, (John) Roddam Spencer* Grove Art Online, Oxford University Press (accessed 22 November 2007)  
<<http://www.groveart.com/shared/views/article.html?section=art.080974>>  
John Christian, ed. *The Last Romantics: the romantic tradition in British Art Burne-Jones to Stanley Spencer* (London: Lund Humphries, Catalogue of an exhibition held at the Barbican Art Gallery, 1989). Roddom Spencer Stanhope would have known John Ruskin, if only through their mutual friendship with Edward Burne-Jones. He would certainly have been aware of Ruskin's views on museums, and may even have known of his articles in the Art Journal of June and August 1880, on *A Museum or Picture Gallery*: "A Museum, primarily, is to be for *simple* persons. Children, that is to say, and peasants. For your student, your antiquary or your scientific gentleman, there must be separate accommodation, or they must be sent elsewhere. The Town Museum is to be for the Town's People, the Village Museum for the Villagers. ... The Museum is to manifest to these simple persons the beauty and life of all things and creatures in their perfectness." (E.T Cook and John Wedderburn, eds, *The Works of John Ruskin*, Vol. XXXIV, (London: George Allen, 1907) p.251-2

<sup>346</sup> Bound copies of the Cawthorne Parish Magazine are held in the archives at the Victoria Jubilee Museum. The title of the magazine was changed to Cawthorne Monthly Magazine in January 1891, but for clarity, the abbreviation CPM will be used throughout this chapter.

far off when such a simple way of breaking the monotony of village life may be adopted, and, if it is started at Cawthorne, I shall be delighted to help both by subscribing and by sending anything that may appear to me to be of interest." Some of our readers will have frequently heard us remark, that we believe that God would as surely have us study His works as His word; and that it is only through contemplation of God's marvellous creation<sup>347</sup>, that we can have any intelligent idea of His Almighty power, and His majesty, and His glory.

All who are in the least interested in this Village Museum scheme will attend a public meeting, we hope, in the Boys' School on Monday 14<sup>th</sup>, at seven o'clock. The Meeting will be for a general discussion on the proposed Museum.

It is not intended, we believe, that it should become an exhibition of mere "curiosities", but of everything that is illustrative of Nature. (Cawthorne Parish

---

<sup>347</sup> Pratt was a keen amateur geologist. In 1909, the Yorkshire Naturalists' Union held one of their periodic field outings to Cawthorne, later written up in their journal, *The Naturalist*. "Cawthorne, on the outskirts of Barnsley, with its pit shafts and waste heaps, was the rendez-vous of the members of the Yorkshire Naturalists Union on Saturday August 28<sup>th</sup>. Notwithstanding the artificial excrescences on the landscape, the district contains much that appeals to the naturalist. Under the guidance of the Rev. C.T. Pratt and Mr W. Hemingway, the geologists secured from the shale heaps, beautiful club mosses and ferns, so well-preserved, that even their most minute structures could be examined. Some new and undescribed forms were obtained." (*The Naturalist*, 1909, p393)



Magazine (CPM), January, 1884. No page numbers are given)

A preliminary committee was formed and after the first few meetings, appealed for contributions:

It is only by a combination of many tastes and interests that our Museum can ever have a collection worthy of its name: and we allow that the attempt that is being made is a somewhat severe test of the education and intelligence of a Parish of this size. Still, there is no reason why it should not succeed, if even a very small proportion of our people show themselves in earnest. (CPM, March, 1884)

A start was made in April when "the first fruits" (CPM, April, 1884) of the museum would be on exhibition in the Boys' School.

Later that month, a circular went round the village appealing for members to join the Cawthorne Museum Society and in May the Society elected their first committee of eleven people, the majority of whom had some connection with the Cannon Hall estate, including Pratt himself, the land agent and his son, Spencer Stanhope's private secretary, the Boys' School

teacher, the head gardener and a colleague, the estate builder, and a wood agent. Roddom Spencer Stanhope was elected President, Pratt became Chairman, a position he was to hold until he left the village in 1915, the land agent became Secretary and the estate builder was elected as Treasurer.

Cawthorne was not the only community where a museum was set up by a paternalistic and philanthropic landowner. At St Michael's-on-Wyre in Lancashire a similar venture was started by a local landowner, but here it was not supported by a museum society, and after several years of diminishing interest, finally closed after the death of its founder despite the management having passed to a small number of trustees<sup>348</sup>. The Victoria Jubilee Museum at Cawthorne has survived not because of its collections, its location or its endowments, but because it has been run by a Museum Society, "the people themselves", despite the apparent control and longevity of its founding Chairman, Pratt. Throughout its history membership has been drawn from the village community, an organisational framework that is familiar and remains appropriate for many volunteer-led museums today.

---

<sup>348</sup> S. H. Miers, *A Report on the Public Museums of the British Isles (other than the National Museums) to the Carnegie United Kingdom Trustees*, (Edinburgh, Carnegie United Kingdom Trustees, 1928). Personal communication from Hugh Hornby.

## The Cawthorne Museum Society

The Cawthorne Museum Society took the institutional form of what Morris, in discussing the Leeds and Manchester Literary and Philosophical Societies of the early nineteenth century, has characterised as a "subscriber democracy"<sup>349</sup>. A set of General Rules were written and published in the Parish Magazine in June 1884<sup>350</sup>, when Pratt stated that

It is the intention of the Committee that any Rules which may be made from time to time should be with the object of making the Museum as accessible and useful as possible to those who may be interested in it. (CPM, June, 1884)

The date of the General Meeting was advertised each year, and, for a few years, a summary of the Museum Society

---

<sup>349</sup> R. J. Morris, "Clubs, societies and associations" in F. M. L. Thompson, ed. *Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750 – 1950, Vol. 3* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) p. 412

<sup>350</sup> "1. That the Society be called 'The Cawthorne Museum Society'. 2. That the subscription of members, payable on admission, be one shilling each year ending with December. 3. That members be entitled to free admission to the museum at such times as the Committee may determine it shall be open, and also, on showing their tickets of membership, to any Lectures which may be given in connection with the Society. 4. That until further notice the Museum be open on Monday evenings between 6.30 and 8 and on Saturdays from 4.30 to 6. 5. That admission to the Museum may be obtained by non-members on any week-day between 10 a.m. and 7 p.m. on application to the care-taker, or in company with any member of the Committee at any hour. A box is to be placed in the Room, into which non-members are required to pay not less than a penny". (CPM, June, 1884)

accounts was published, all practices which, to quote Morris again, “set out a claim for legitimacy”<sup>351</sup>.

The annual subscription paid by members of the Museum Society was set at a shilling a year, for which they received free admission to the museum, while non-members were expected to put “not less than a penny”<sup>352</sup> in the box provided.

Members were also entitled to free admission to the lectures organised by Pratt and the museum committee during the winter months, many of them by curators from larger museums such as those at York, and Leeds. Later, members were able to borrow books from the museum library and to use various items of equipment, such as the meteorological instruments acquired in 1889 and a telescope provided by Colonel Spencer Stanhope. The hours of opening were agreed for times that would enable working men and women to visit, Monday evenings from 6.30 to 8.0 and on Saturdays from 4.30 to 6.0. It is quite clear who was the desired audience for the museum and that it was always intended to be open for a wider public than the Museum Society members alone, unlike the museum of the nearby Barnsley Naturalists and Scientific Society, which

---

<sup>351</sup> R. J. Morris, “Urban Associations in England and Scotland, 1750-1914” in Graeme Morton, Boudien de Vries, and R. J. Morris, eds, *Civil Society, Associations, and Urban Places: class, nation and culture in nineteenth-century Europe* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006) p. 156

<sup>352</sup> CPM, June, 1884

at this time was primarily for members' use only<sup>353</sup>. In addition, the museum was open on public holidays such as Easter and Whitsun and on the Cawthorne 'Feast Days', and, perhaps surprisingly, Sunday afternoons (initially for members only), again clearly times when working people would be able to visit and days when the village itself had considerable numbers of trippers.

Many of the Museum Society committee members were to have a very long association with the museum, and they were not drawn predominantly from the Cawthorne elite. John Fretwell, for example was a coal miner, and although illiterate, had an extensive knowledge of natural history and was responsible for bringing together the collection of local butterflies and moths and, later, for leading natural history rambles from the museum<sup>354</sup>. Between 1884 and 1894 the results of the annual elections to the committee were reported in the Parish Magazine; after that date the committee seems to

---

<sup>353</sup> Peter Brears, and Stuart Davies, *Treasures for the People: the story of museums and galleries in Yorkshire and Humberside* (Yorkshire and Humberside Museums Council 1989)

<sup>354</sup> Fretwell would seem to be more representative of the 'artisan naturalists' of the early nineteenth century than of the 1880s (see David Elliston Allen, *The Naturalist in Britain- A Social History* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978) Jackson quotes a letter written by Miss Winifred Pratt to a local newspaper following Fretwell's death in 1933: "Tales used to be told of his enthusiasm when he found a specimen he had not known before – how he flung his hat in the air in Sherwood Forest, shouting 'Isn't this worth more than three weeks at Blackpool.' His fellow miners told how every bird, insect or flower was noticed by him on the way to and from the pit where he had worked since early years, and in any natural history discussion, John Fretwell's intimate knowledge of birds and beasts was to be relied on to settle the disputed point. He was also full of the old knowledge of the uses of herbs", Jackson, *Cawthorne 1790-1990*, p.54.

have been regularly re-elected *en bloc*. During this decade, twenty nine individuals served on the committee, including two women, of whom five were employed in mining, four as gardeners, a mason and a mason's labourer, a teamster, the postmaster and grocer, and a blacksmith, in addition to those working for the estate<sup>355</sup>.

The working class base of the committee appears to have been representative of the Museum Society as a whole; it has been possible to identify the occupations of 118 society members listed in the Museum Minute Book between 1888 and 1900, using the census records for 1891. The majority were from the working and lower middle classes, including, as the largest block, twenty-seven people involved in coal mining of whom nineteen were coal miners, three colliery labourers, two weighmen, an engine man, an engine stoker and a colliery cashier, as well as a number of tradesmen (a blacksmith, boot and shoe makers, butchers, carpenters and a joiner, masons, two grocers, two linen weavers and an ironmonger), indoor and outdoor staff from the estate, and the police constable. Ten farmers were listed, but the majority of these held small acreages. Only two Society members apart from the Spencer Stanhopes, were described in the census as 'living on own

---

<sup>355</sup> Information on the occupations of Museum Society members and Committee members as well as information on the occupations of the visitors to the museum has been obtained from census records accessed via [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk)

means' and there was one 'retired manufacturer'. The Cawthorne Museum Society began with eighty four members in 1884 and peaked at 152 in 1893. After that, in the period under discussion, there seems to have been a steady decline in numbers to a mere thirty in 1904, including members of Pratt's family, despite the various strategies attempted, such as family and household membership and tickets for guests.

Although caution is imperative in using contemporary models to describe earlier organisational forms, the Cawthorne Museum Society would seem to conform to Rochester's<sup>356</sup> analysis of one distinctive type of volunteer involvement in small voluntary organisations, the member/activist model that he identified in associations and organisations without paid staff:

The members have come together to pursue a common interest or meet a shared need. Their goals are pursued and all of their operational and support activities are carried out by the members themselves and not delegated to a separate group of staff - paid or unpaid. The work is not shared equally, and clear distinctions can be made between passive and active members and between the majority of active members and a smaller inner group who undertake most of the work. (Colin Rochester, Angela Ellis Paine, Steven Howlett, with Meta Zimmeck, *Volunteering and Society in the 21st Century*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, p35)

---

<sup>356</sup> Colin Rochester, "One size does not fit all: four models of involving volunteers in small voluntary organisations" in Justin Davis Smith and Michael Locke, eds, *Volunteering and the Test of Time: Essays for policy, organisation and research* (London: Institute for Volunteering Research, 2007)



In the case of Cawthorne, the Spencer Stanhope family and their friends who supported the museum through their subscriptions and other donations might be described as the passive members as they took no other part in the activities of the museum; the members of the Museum Society who visited the museum and attended its numerous activities, particularly its talks and lectures, demonstrations and lantern slide shows, to which members had free entry and non-members paid, could be described as 'active members', and the committee as the 'inner group'. Certainly some of the committee showed remarkable longevity of involvement in the museum. John Fretwell, who has been mentioned earlier, was involved from 1884 until his death in 1933, Pratt himself was Chairman and acted as curator from 1884 until 1915; Douglas Charlesworth, a smallholder, had joined the Museum Society as a young man in 1894, and later become its Secretary and curator from 1918 until his death in 1940. In addition to contributing to and arranging the collections, committee members were also responsible for organising and in some cases for leading the events put on for the society members and others, for example at a *conversazione* held in November 1892 "Miss Beatrice Pratt will play some violin solos. Mr Jas. Balme's party will sing some Songs and Glees, and some short Recitations from Tennyson will be given by the Rev C.T Pratt."<sup>357</sup> (CPM,

---

<sup>357</sup> Both Beatrice Pratt and James Balme were members of the Committee

November, 1892) In March 1894 it was announced that “Mr George Hindle and Mr John Fretwell will take charge of Field Classes of Members in Natural History as soon as the season is sufficiently advanced.” (CPM, March, 1894)

A recent analysis of the governing bodies of voluntary and community museums concerned with the history of their own communities in small towns and villages in England has shown that the ‘museum society’ model is still widely used. In addition to Cawthorne, there are thirty-one museums active today that are managed by museum societies, ranging geographically from Honiton, Bruton, and Salcombe in the South West to Hedon and Pateley Bridge in Yorkshire and Millom in Cumbria.<sup>358</sup>

## **The Museum Collections**

The collections in the museum reveal more about its original aims and how those aims reflected wider cultural concerns in late Victorian and Edwardian England. During the period of Pratt’s curatorship, the collections made by the museum were primarily of natural history and geological material, particularly coal fossils found on the slag heaps in the neighbourhood. It was made clear from the beginning that “it is not intended for

---

at this date. CPM, November, 1892.

<sup>358</sup> Bridget Yates, forthcoming

mere natural curiosities only, but for everything illustrative of nature, science and art" (CPM, June, 1895) and it was to be educational and instructive:

Knowing what we do of Museums in other places and large Towns, we still feel it is a severe test to put the intelligence of Cawthorne to: for it is not intended only for a place of amusement: but for the encouragement of a taste for Natural Science, and that is a matter which requires a more active use of our brains than most people are prepared to make. The discipline and culture of our intellectual faculties does not come to us more naturally than the culture of our moral and spiritual powers. We are as responsible, however, for the use we make of our brains as of any other part of our nature. (CPM, May, 1896)

This emphasis was, as has been discussed earlier, entirely consistent with other museums at this period and it is worth noting that enthusiasm for natural history was widespread across all social classes.<sup>359</sup> So although many of the collections came from Cawthorne and its surroundings they were certainly not expressive of the history of Cawthorne or of the lives of its people. An entry in the Museums Directory,

---

<sup>359</sup> See, for example, David Elliston Allen, *The Naturalist in Britain- A Social History* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978) and Lynn Barber, *The Heyday of Natural History* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1980)

published by the Museums Association as a supplement to the Museums Journal in June 1903, described the exhibition space of the museum as:

Minerals, 34½ ft; coal fossils 7ft; birds nests 7½ft; ancient pottery 6ft; coins 2½ft; arts and manufactures 8ft; cases of birds are arranged against one wall for a space of 16ft by 8ft high; weapons and drawings shewing sections of neighbouring coal mines are hung from other portions of the walls, the moths and butterflies are in 20 small drawers, birds eggs in 5, shells in 14. (*Museums Journal*, Supplement to Vol.2, 1903, no page number given)

However, not all of the collections came from the area. Pratt was active in soliciting gifts mainly from his clerical colleagues and other acquaintances, and he also contacted John Ruskin<sup>360</sup>.

---

<sup>360</sup> Ruskin made a number of donations of minerals to museums, including to the British Museum (Natural History) and also to schools and colleges (Michael Wheeler, *Ruskin's Museums and Galleries: the treasury, the storehouse, the school* A paper given at the National Gallery, London, 21<sup>st</sup> November 1994. London: Pilkington Press). In 1884, he had given a collection of 200 familiar minerals to a new museum in Kirkcudbright with a catalogue (Cook and Wedderburn, 1906, Vol.XXVI, p259). Unfortunately, Ruskin does not appear to have sent a catalogue or a list with his collection to Cawthorne, and it is now impossible to positively identify his gift of minerals. Ruskin's connection with the museum at Cawthorne appears to be previously unknown.

It is a peculiar pleasure to us to make known that Mr John Ruskin has most kindly sent us some contributions for our Museum and promised us some more. "I shall have great pleasure" he writes, "in looking out some things for your Village Museum, and I have begun with a few minerals. \*\* I will look out later on some Prints and such things as are likely to answer your purpose." Those who know anything of Mr Ruskin will very greatly appreciate his kindly interest in our Museum. (CPM, March, 1886)

Since we wrote in last month's MAGAZINE, a Box containing a most beautiful and interesting collection of Minerals has been received from Mr Ruskin, who has also sent a second Box within the last few days. It is intended that these should be exhibited by Easter in a case specially reserved for them, to contain all Mr Ruskin's most generous contributions. (CPM, April, 1886)

Pratt, of course, must have been well aware of the iconic nature of such gifts; G. W. Hudson Shaw's Oxford University Extension lectures on 'English Social Reformers', which included Ruskin, drew an average attendance of 420 students at Huddersfield in 1887 and 400 students at Barnsley in

1888.<sup>361</sup> He would certainly have seen them as a significant additional attraction for visitors (note the Easter opening), as well, as raising the status of the museum:

The death of Mr Ruskin reminds us of the generous kindness with which he responded to our request that he would send some contribution to our little museum at Cawthorne, when it first begun, in order that it might have at least some slight connexion with his name. (CPM February 1900)

The Museum also exhibited material given or loaned by members of the elite, particularly the Spencer Stanhope family, such as the “Arab shields, spears and knives, brought from the Field of Battle by W. Spencer-Stanhope, Lieut. 19<sup>th</sup> Hussars” (CPM, June, 1884), or Mr and Mrs Montague Stanhope’s wedding presents exhibited over three days in May 1890, attracting over a thousand visitors<sup>362</sup> and in 1895:

Miss Cicely Stanhope has sent the Museum a large packet of pieces from morning and evening Dresses that have been worn by Her Majesty the Queen.

Besides their natural “curiosity,” from their connection

---

<sup>361</sup> Lawrence Goldman, “Ruskin, Oxford and the British Labour Movement 1880-1914” in Dinah Birch, ed. *Ruskin and the Dawn of the Modern* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999)

<sup>362</sup> CPM, June, 1890

with our Sovereign, they illustrate very well the designs and fashions of royal dress some years ago. An arrangement will be made for temporarily exhibiting them, so that each pattern may be clearly seen, but probably not before the Summer season, when there are many visitors to our Museum who have a special interest in dress materials and designs. (CPM, February, 1895)

So it would seem that elite material, and especially material that reinforced the social hierarchy and the imperial venture, had a place in the museum, although the 'curiosities' of the people, the ordinary and everyday items that reflected the recent history of the village and the lives of its people, including Museum Society members, did not.

### **The Visitors to the Museum**

It is unlikely that many of the visitors to the museum came to Cawthorne for that purpose alone. Increasing leisure time attracted many people from the nearby industrial towns and villages to walk in the Park at Cannon Hall and in the surrounding woodland, and around Tivy Dale. They patronised the two pubs and the temperance inn, and the small tea shops that catered for their needs at busy times. For many villagers,

the opportunity for extra income was welcomed. Mrs Morley, widowed with six sons in 1903 at "Easter and Whitsuntide ... catered for wagonette loads of visitors to the village or for cycling club outings, providing plain teas at 1s 6d or ham and egg teas at 3s." (Jackson, *Cawthorne 1790-1990*, p77)

Remarkably, almost the entire run of visitors' books from 1889, the date when the museum moved into its present building, has survived at Cawthorne. Looking at the entries in the Visitors Book for 1891, in which people gave both their names and the place where they lived, it is clear from the order of the signatures that many visitors came together in informal groups, and through this it has been possible to identify some of their occupations from the 1891 census. This analysis shows an overwhelmingly working-class audience, for example the group of neighbours from Blackmoorfoot Road, near Huddersfield who came on July 17<sup>th</sup> consisted of six women (two woollen weavers and the wife of an ironmonger's assistant) and two men, both stone quarrymen, and their wives, or the church outing led by Rev. William Surtees of Hoyland Common on September 9<sup>th</sup> from which three coal miners, a colliery labourer and a deputy, a butcher and a blacksmith and their families have been identified in a group of 21 people. Among further examples are the group of young women from Clayton West, (a dressmaker, a worsted spinner, a worsted weaver, a



cashmere weaver and a manufacturer, boots and shoes) and the group of eighteen young men, members of the Skelmanthorpe Naturalists Society, who visited in May and were given permission to use the museum to arrange their specimens (six coal miners, a banksman and a colliery trammer, five fancy weavers, a joiner's apprentice and a general labourer).

During 1891, 2,609 people signed the book, of which 285 came from Huddersfield, fourteen miles away, and 193 from Barnsley, which is four miles away. Although there is a sprinkling of middle class signatures in the book, including those of visitors brought by the Spencer Stanhopes, it is clear that the majority of the visitors, as were the Museum Society members, were from what would now be described as social groups C2, D, and E, exactly the audience that Pratt and Roddom Spencer Stanhope (and Ruskin) would have hoped would visit and benefit from the museum. Unfortunately it is not known how the visitors actually responded to what they saw, as their comments were not invited, but throughout this period visitor numbers appear to have remained steady at between two and three thousand people a year.

## After Pratt: Collecting the Everyday

A recent museum leaflet<sup>363</sup> describes the Victoria Jubilee Museum as a “typical Victorian hotch potch”, but the nature of the collections has changed considerably over time. Today, although many of the original collections are still to be seen in the museum, the greater part of the exhibition space is devoted to items of local and social interest, such as agricultural and trade tools, local photographs, domestic items and memorabilia. Pratt was emulating the museums with which he was familiar when he turned away from ‘mere curiosities’ and endeavoured to acquire mainly natural history specimens, geology and antiquities, and to order these collections systematically and clearly, sometimes with the help of professional curators. No museums before 1914, Kavanagh claims<sup>364</sup>, “considered popular or cultural history in ways which were already well-established in the folk museums of Sweden, Norway and Denmark.” (Kavanagh, *Museums*, p.19) After 1918, and particularly in the 1930s, a growing number of volunteer-led village museums began to be established which were concerned primarily with collecting everyday material that reflected the history of their own communities. Ashwell Village Museum in Hertfordshire, for example, which opened in

---

<sup>363</sup> Anon, *Cawthorne Victoria Jubilee Museum – A Brief History of the Museum and the Society*, not dated, acquired 2007

<sup>364</sup> Gaynor Kavanagh, *Museums and the First World War*, (London: Leicester University Press, 1994)

December 1930, mainly through the initiative of two schoolboys, was "as far as possible to be limited to things found in Ashwell and the immediate countryside, things illustrative of the past history of the life of people in Ashwell and the district from the time of the Norman occupation to present days."<sup>365</sup>

At Cawthorne, the long tradition of collecting primarily natural history and geology specimens seems to have been so important to the museum society and to its committee, that change was slow in coming. Douglas Charlesworth, Secretary from 1918 and later Curator, was like Pratt, an amateur naturalist with an enthusiasm for antiquities, especially coins<sup>366</sup>. However, Noel Moxon, who succeeded him from 1943 until 1979, is known to have been a keen local historian<sup>367</sup>. In August 1951, the museum committee, in common with many other towns and villages celebrating the Festival of Britain, decided to hold a local history exhibition in September. An appeal to the village for loans brought in a wealth of material, as described in the Secretary's Report for 1951-2<sup>368</sup>:

---

<sup>365</sup> Unattributed newspaper cutting dated December 5<sup>th</sup> 1930 held in Ashwell Village Museum archives (Bridget Yates, unpublished research).

<sup>366</sup> Douglas Charlesworth, *Manuscript Diary of 1915 to 1918* (photocopy in the possession of the Victoria Jubilee Museum, Cawthorne)

<sup>367</sup> Jackson, *Cawthorne 1790-1990*

<sup>368</sup> Victoria Jubilee Museum Minute Book 1924-1990

A long table was erected down the centre of the Museum, on which were placed a variety of objects made and used in Cawthorne during the past 100 years. The large cases were used to house old china & crockery, including Coronation mugs and cups. Over 200 photographs were displayed on boards the majority being the work of Mr R. Wilkinson. The annex was largely occupied by old Church and Parish Accounts, Coronation details, old sporting records and Flower Show data.

The exhibition ran for nearly a month and was a great success, raising enough money to enable the committee to commence the purchase of the museum building from the Cannon Hall estate. The following year, the Secretary's Report stated that "A display case containing local history exhibits has been placed in the bay window"<sup>369</sup>, suggesting perhaps that this was the first time that such material, which now forms the majority of the exhibits, became a regular feature of the museum.

### **Continuity and Change**

There is continuity as well as change in the story of Cawthorne's museum and of the Museum Society. The series

---

<sup>369</sup> *Ibid.*

of winter lectures instigated by Pratt is still organised each year, the museum continues to attract between two and three thousand visitors in its season and the trustees, committee and volunteers, some of whom are related to original members, are drawn from the village community. A current leaflet from the museum states “we receive tremendous support in our efforts, especially from the villagers.”<sup>370</sup> That support stems partly from the changed nature of the collection; it is hard to see a collection focussed on natural history and fragments from imperial and elite cultures sustaining such interest in a village community today.

“Cawthorne” the leaflet states “is very proud of its Museum”. That pride is justified in terms of the longevity of this volunteer museum. But more than the continuous service of 126 years what should be celebrated is the organisational framework, the Cawthorne Museum Society – “the people themselves”. The Society survived the departure of its original driving force, the decline of the Spencer Stanhope family after the First World War<sup>371</sup> and the societal changes of the twentieth century. It was able to do this because the volunteer museum society was sufficiently flexible to enable it to adapt to the changing nature

---

<sup>370</sup> Anon, *Cawthorne Victoria Jubilee Museum – A Brief History of the Museum and the Society*, not dated, acquired 2007

<sup>371</sup> See Alun Howkins *The Death of Rural England: a social history of the countryside since 1900* (London: Routledge, 2003). Cannon Hall was severely affected by mining subsidence; it is now a museum managed by Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council.

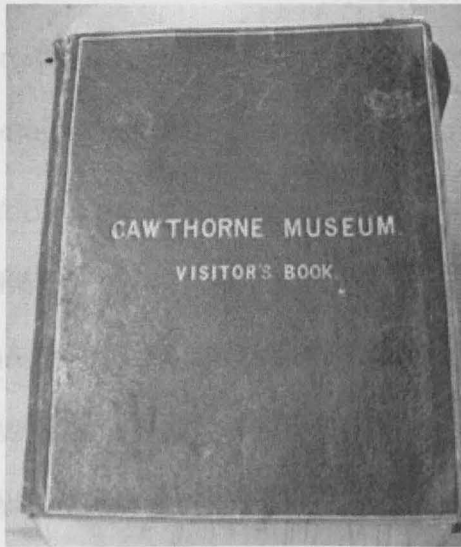
of village life and to the changing aspirations of village museums. Perhaps this is the most important lesson that this seemingly unique history of a village museum offers to other volunteer-led museums today.

### **Acknowledgements**

I am extremely grateful to the Cawthorne Museum Society for their generosity in allowing me free rein of their archives, in particular Barry Jackson, Hon. President, Mary Herbert, Hon. Secretary, Leslie Herbert, Trustee, and Alan Broadhead, volunteer, for sharing their knowledge and enthusiasm without stint, and for making my visits to Cawthorne so enjoyable. I would also like to thank John Coldwell, Local Studies Librarian, Archives and Local Studies Department, Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council, for drawing my attention to the Yorkshire Naturalists Union visit to Cawthorne, and my supervisors at the University of Gloucestershire, Andrew Charlesworth and James Derounian.

## Appendix 2: The Victoria Jubilee Museum, Cawthorne

### Visitor's Book



*Image 28: The Cawthorne Museum Visitor's Book given to the museum in 1889 (Victoria Jubilee Museum archives, author's photograph)*

The Visitor's Book was given anonymously to the museum shortly after it opened in its new premises in 1889. Visitors were clearly encouraged to put their signatures and place of residence in the book, and Pratt frequently notes the numbers of visitors who had been to the museum at a particular time, such as Easter or Whitsun, in the Cawthorne Parish Magazine. The Visitor's Book contains no space for comments, so we cannot use it to explore what the visitors thought of what they saw. What we can do, however, is to catch fleeting glimpses of who the visitors were, as has been outlined in Chapter 8.6.

In trying to identify the occupations of the visitors, and therefore their social class, the following method was used:

- ❖ The year 1891 was selected to research as census records for that year were readily available online via the subscription service [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk)
- ❖ The signatures and place of residence and date of visit were transcribed onto an Excel spreadsheet, enabling sorts to be made by family name and place. It also clearly indicated when people had come together as a family group or as a group of friends or neighbours
- ❖ Groups of visitors who came on the same day and from the same place were selected to research. Clearly, John Smith of Huddersfield is unidentifiable with any certainty, John Smith in the company of others of the same family name has a greater chance of traceability and an even greater chance if he came with a number of others, perhaps with a more unusual family or given name.
- ❖ It should be noted that not all visitors gave their place of residence or gave more than their initials.

Undoubtedly there is much more research that can be done on the series of visitors books at the museum, which must form a rare, if not unique record of museum visiting at the end of the nineteenth century. This may be the first occasion that census



records have been used for visitor analysis and clearly there is great potential here. No work has been done yet on the visitors in 1901, for which census records are also available, as they will be shortly for 1911. This would enable comparisons to be made in the occupation of visitors, their age spread and the distance they had travelled to reach the museum.

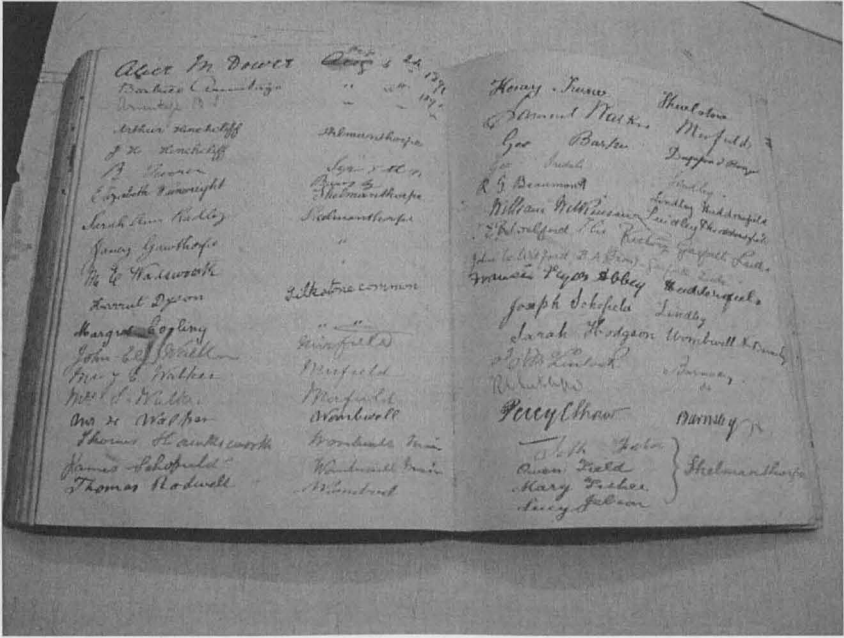


Image 29: Cawthorne Museum Visitor's Book open at the page for visitors coming on 5<sup>th</sup> September 1891(Victoria Jubilee Museum archives, author's photograph)

## Appendix 3:

### Independent Museums in Towns and Villages with a Population of less than 30,000 that are Accredited with the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council

<b>Name of Museum</b>	<b>Governing Body</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>Region</b>
Aldeburgh Museum	Aldeburgh Museum Trust	Aldeburgh	Suffolk	EE
Alford Manor House	Alford Civic Trust	Alford	Lincs	EM
Allhallows Museum	Allhallows Museum Society of Honiton	Honiton	Devon	SW
Almonry Heritage Centre	Evesham Town Council	Evesham	Worcs	WM
Amersham Museum	Amersham Museum Ltd	Amersham	Bucks	SE
Anker's House Museum	St Mary and St Cuthbert Parish Church	Chester-le-Street	Durham	NE
Armitt Collection	The Armitt Trust	Ambleside	Cumbria	NW
Arundel Museum & Heritage Centre	Arundel Museum Society	Arundel	Sussex	SE
Ash Museum	Ash and District Local History Museum Society	Ash	Surrey	SE
Ashburton Museum	Ashburton Museum Trustees	Ashburton	Devon	SW
Ashby de la Zouch Museum	Ashby de la Zouch Museum Committee	Ashby de la Zouch	Leics	EM
Ashford Museum	Ashford Borough Museum Society	Ashford	Kent	SE
Ashwell Village Museum	Ashwell Museum Trustees	Ashwell	Herts	EE
Athelstan Museum	Friends of Athelstan Museum	Malmesbury	Wilts	SW
Axminster Museum	Axminster Museum Trustees	Axminster	Devon	SW
Battle Museum of Local History	Museum of Local History Trust	Battle	Sussex	SE
Bayle Museum	The Lords Foeffees and Assistants of the Manor of Bridlington	Bridlington	Yorkshire	Yks
Baysgarth House Museum	Community Heritage Arts and Media Project Ltd	Barton on Humber	Nth Lincs	Yks

Beaminster Museum  
 Beccles & District Museum  
 Beck Isle Museum of Rural Life  
 Bedale Museum  
 Bellingham Heritage Centre  
 Bishop Bonner's Cottage Museum  
 Blandford Forum Museum  
 Bloxham Village Museum  
 Bodmin Town Museum  
 Bradford on Avon Museum  
 Braunton & District Museum  
 Brentwood Museum  
 Bridgnorth Northgate Museum  
 Bridport Museum  
 Brightlingsea Museum  
 Brixham Heritage Museum  
 Bruton Museum  
 Bungay Museum  
 Burnham on Crouch and District  
 Museum  
 Burwell Museum of Fen Edge Village  
 Life  
 Bushey Museum & Art Gall.  
 Callington Heritage Centre  
 Castle Bude Heritage Centre & Gall.  
 Castle Combe Museum

Beaminster Museum Trust  
 Beccles and District Museum  
 Beck Isle Museum Trust  
 The Bedale Hall Trust  
 The Heritage Group Bellingham  
 Dereham Antiquarian Society  
 Blandford Forum Museum Trust  
 Bloxham Village Museum Trust  
 Bodmin Town Council  
 Bradford on Avon Museum Society  
 Braunton & District Museum Trustees  
 Brentwood Museum Society  
 Bridgnorth Historical Society  
 Bridport Museum Trust  
 Brightlingsea Museum Trust  
 Brixham Museum and History Society  
 Bruton Museum Society  
 Bungay Museum Trust with Waveney DC  
 Burnham on Crouch & District Local History & Amenity  
 Society  
 Burwell Museum Trust Ltd  
 Bushey Museum Trust  
 Callington Museum Trust  
 Bude-Stratton Town Council  
 Castle Combe & District Historical Society

Beaminster	Dorset	SW
Beccles	Suffolk	EE
Pickering	Yorkshire	Yks
Bedale	Nth Yorks	Yks
Bellingham	Northumberland	NE
Dereham	Norfolk	EE
Blandford Forum	Dorset	SW
Bloxham	Oxfordshire	SE
Bodmin	Cornwall	SW
Bradford on Avon	Wilts	SW
Braunton	Devon	SW
Brentwood	Essex	EE
Bridgnorth	Shropshire	WM
Bridport	Dorset	SW
Brightlingsea	Essex	EE
Brixham	Devon	SW
Bruton	Somerset	SW
Bungay	Suffolk	EE
Burnham on Crouch	Essex	EE
Burwell	Cambs	EE
Bushey	Herts	EE
Callington	Cornwall	SW
Bude	Cornwall	SW
Castle Combe	Wilts	SW

Castle Donington Museum	Castle Donington Museum Trust	Castle Donington	Leics	EM
Castleton Village Museum	Castleton Historical Society	Castleton	Derbyshire	EM
Cawthorne Victoria Jubilee Museum	Cawthorne Museum Society	Cawthorne	Yorkshire	Yks
Champs Chapel Museum	East Hendred Heritage Trust	East Hendred	Oxfordshire	SE
Chard and District Museum	Chard and District Museum Society	Chard	Somerset	SW
Chatteris Museum	Chatteris Museum Trust	Chatteris	Cambs	EE
Chippenham Museum & Heritage Centre	Chippenham Town Council	Chippenham	Wilts	SW
Chobham Museum	The Chobham Museum	Chobham	Surrey	SE
Clare Ancient House Museum	Clare Ancient House Museum Trust	Clare	Suffolk	EE
Colne Valley Museum	Colne Valley Museum Trust	Golcar	Yorkshire	Yks
Combe Martin Museum	Combe Martin Museum Charitable Trust	Combe Martin	Devon	SW
Congleton Museum	Congleton Museum Trust	Congleton	Cheshire	NW
Cookworthy Museum	William Cookworthy Museum Society	Kingsbridge	Devon	SW
Corfe Castle Museum	Corfe Castle Town Trust	Corfe Castle	Dorset	SW
Court Hall Museum	Winchelsea Corporation	Winchelsea	Kent	SE
Cowper & Newton Museum	Cowper Memorial Mus	Olney	Bucks	SE
Cranbrook Museum	Cranbrook & District Local History Soc.	Cranbrook	Kent	SE
Crawley Museum Centre	Crawley Museum Society	Crawley	Sussex	SE
Crewkerne Museum and Heritage Centre	Crewkerne Museum / Crewkerne Heritage Cente Ltd	Crewkerne	Somerset	SW
Cricklade Museum	Cricklade Historical Society	Cricklade	Wilts	SW
Cuckfield Museum	Cuckfield Museum Trust	Cuckfield	Sussex	SE
Dawlish Museum	Dawlish Museum Society	Dawlish	Devon	SW
Deal Maritime and Local History Museum	Deal Maritime and Local History Museum	Deal	Kent	SE
Dean Heritage Centre	Dean Heritage Museum Trust	Soudley	Glos.	SW

Dewey Museum	Warminster History Society	Warminster	Wilts	SW
Diss Museum	Diss Museum Trust	Diss	Norfolk	EE
Ditchling Museum	Ditchling Museum Trust	Ditchling	Sussex	SE
Dorking and District Museum	Dorking and District Preservation Society	Dorking	Surrey	SE
Dunwich	Dunwich Reading Room & Museum Charity	Dunwich	Suffolk	EE
East Grinstead Museum	East Grinstead Town Museum Trust	East Grinstead	Sussex	SE
East Surrey Museum	East Surrey Museum Trust	Caterham	Surrey	SE
Eden Valley Museum	Eden Valley Museum Trust	Edenbridge	Kent	SE
Egham Museum	Egham Museum Trust	Egham	Surrey	SE
Ely Museum	Ely Museum Trust	Ely	Cambs	EE
Emsworth Museum	Emsworth Maritime & Historical Trust	Emsworth	Hants	SE
Exmouth Museum	The Museum Society of Exmouth	Exmouth	Devon	SW
Eyam Museum	Eyam Museum Ltd	Eyam	Derbyshire	EM
Fairlynch Museum & Arts Centre	Budleigh Salterton Arts Centre and Museum	Budleigh Salterton	Devon	SW
Fakenham Museum of Gas & Local History	Fakenham Town Gasworks Museum Trust	Fakenham	Norfolk	EE
Felixstowe Museum	Felixstowe History and Museum Society	Felixstowe	Suffolk	EE
Filey Museum	Filey Museum Trust	Filey	Yorkshire	Yks
Fleur de Lis Heritage Centre	The Faversham Society	Faversham	Kent	SE
Flintham Museum	The Flintham Society	Flintham	Notts.	EM
Fordingbridge Museum	Fordingbridge Museum Trust	Fordingbridge	Hants	SE
Forge Museum	Hertfordshire Building Preservation Trust	Much Hadham	Herts	EE
Frenchay Village Museum	Frenchay Tuckett Society	Frenchay	Glos.	SW
Frome Museum	Frome Museum Trust	Frome	Somerset	SW
Gillingham Museum	Gillingham Local History Society	Gillingham	Dorset	SW
Gold Hill Museum	Shaftesbury & District Historical Society	Shaftesbury	Dorset	SW

Halesworth & District Museum	Halesworth and District Museum	Halesworth	Suffolk	EE
Haverhill & District Local History Centre	Haverhill & District Local History Group	Haverhill	Suffolk	EE
Hedon Museum	Hedon Museum Society	Hedon	Yorkshire	Yks
Helena Thompson Museum	Helena Thompson Museum	Workington	Cumbria	NW
Henfield Museum	Henfield Parish Council	Henfield	Sussex	SE
Holsworthy Museum	Holsworthy Museum Society Trust	Holsworthy	Devon	SW
Hornsea Museum	Hornsea Museum Trust	Hornsea	Yorkshire	Yks
Horsforth Village Museum	Horsforth Village Historical Society	Horsforth	Yorkshire	Yks
House on Crutches Museum	House on Crutches Museum Collection Trust	Bishop's Castle	Shropshire	WM
Hythe Local History Room	Hythe Town Council	Hythe	Kent	SE
Ilfracombe	The Ilfracombe Museum	Ilfracombe	Devon	SW
Immingham Museum	The Old Chapel Charitable Trust (Immingham Gallery)	Immingham	Yorkshire	Yks
Isles of Scilly Museum	Isles of Scilly Museum Assoc	St Mary's, Isles of Scilly	Cornwall	SW
Kegworth Museum	Kegworth Village Association and Museum	Scilly	Leics	EM
King John's Hunting Lodge	Axbridge & District Museum Trust	Kegworth	Somerset	SW
Kington Museum	Kington and District Museum	Axbridge	Herefordshire	WM
Langton Matravers Museum	Langton Matravers History & Preservation Society	Kington	Dorset	SW
Lanman Museum	Lanman Museum Trust	Langton Matravers	Suffolk	EE
Lawrence House Museum	Trustees of the Lawrence House Muse-Launceston Town	Framlingham		
Laxfield & District Museum	CI	Launceston	Cornwall	SW
Leatherhead Museum of Local History	Laxfield and District Museum	Laxfield	Suffolk	EE
Leominster Folk Museum	Leatherhead & District Local History Society	Leatherhead	Surrey	SE
Lichfield Heritage Centre	Leominster Folk Museum Trust	Leominster	Herefordshire	WM
Littlehampton Museum	The Guild of St Mary's Centre Lichfield Ltd	Lichfield	Staffs	WM
	Littlehampton Town Council	Littlehampton	Sussex	SE

Lostwithiel Museum	Lostwithiel Museum Association Ltd	Lostwithiel	Cornwall	SW
Louth Museum	Louth Naturalists' Antiquarian & Literary Society	Louth	Lincs	EM
Lyme Regis Philpot Museum	Lyme Regis Philpot Museum Trust Ltd	Lyme Regis	Dorset	SW
Lyn & Exmoor Museum	Lyn & Exmoor Museum Trust	Lynton	Devon	SW
Lytham Heritage Centre	Lytham Heritage Group	Lytham	Lancs	NW
Maldon District Museum	Maldon District Museum Association	Maldon	Essex	EE
Malton Museum	Malton Museum Foundation	Malton	Yorkshire	Yks
Malvern Museum of Local History	Malvern Museum Society Ltd	Malvern	Worcs	WM
March & District Museum	March & District Museum Society	March	Cambs	EE
Margate Museum of Local History	East Kent Maritime Trust	Margate	Kent	SE
Market Lavington Village Museum	Market Lavington Museum	Market Lavington	Wilts	SW
Maurice Dobson Museum and Heritage Centre	<i>Not found</i>	Darfield	Yorkshire	Yks
Measham Museum	Measham Museum Society	Measham	Leics	EM
Mere Museum	Mere Museum	Mere	Wilts	SW
Mersea Island Museum	Mersea Island Museum Trust	West Mersea	Essex	EE
Mildenhall & District Museum	Mildenhall & District Museum	Mildenhall	Suffolk	EE
Millom Folk Museum	Millom Folk Museum Society	Millom	Cumbria	NW
Mundesley Maritime Museum	Mundesley Parish Council	Mundesley	Norfolk	EE
Museum of Dartmoor Life	Dartmoor Museum Association	Okehampton	Devon	SW
Museum of North Craven Life	North Craven Building Preservation Trust	Settle	Yorkshire	Yks
Museum of the Broads	The Museum of the Broads	Stalham	Norfolk	EE
Nantwich Museum	Nantwich Museum Trust	Nantwich	Cheshire	NW
New Mills Heritage & Information Centre	New Mills Town Council	New Mills	Derbyshire	EM
Newton Abbot Town & GWR Museum	Newton Abbot Town Council	Newton Abbot	Devon	SW

Nidderdale Museum	Nidderdale Museum Society	Pateley Bridge	Yorkshire	Yks
Norris Museum	St Ives Town Council as Trustees	St Ives	Cambs	EE
North Devon Maritime Museum	North Devon Museum Trust	Appledore	Devon	SW
Old Goal Museum	Buckingham Heritage Trust	Buckingham	Bucks	SE
Old Guildhall Museum	East Looe Town Trust	East Looe	Cornwall	SW
Old House Museum	Bakewell & District Historical Society	Bakewell	Derbyshire	EM
Old Kiln Museum	Old Kiln Museum Trust	Farnham	Surrey	SE
Orford Museum	Orford Museum Trust	Orford	Suffolk	EE
Otley Museum	Otley Museum Trust	Otley	Yorkshire	Yks
Oundle Museum	Oundle Museum Trust	Oundle	Northants	EM
Padstow Museum	Padstow Museum	Padstow	Cornwall	SW
Pendle Heritage Centre	Heritage Trust for the North West	Barrowford	Lancs.	NW
Perranzabuloe Folk Museum	Perranzabuloe Museum Trust	Perranporth	Cornwall	SW
Petersfield Museum	Petersfield Museum Ltd	Petersfield	Hants	SE
Pitstone Green Museum	Pitstone & Ivinghoe Museum Society	Pitstone	Bucks	SE
Portland Museum	Portland Museum Trust	Portland	Dorset	SW
Potters Bar Museum	Potters Bar & District Historical Society	Potters Bar	Herts	EE
Priest's House Museum	Priest's House Museum Trust	Wimborne Minster	Dorset	SW
Purton Museum	Purton & District Historical Society	Purton	Wilts	SW
Radstock, Midsomer Norton & District Museum	Radstock, Midsomer Norton & District Museum Society	Radstock	Somerset	SW
Ramsey Rural Museum	Ramsey Rural Museum Community Trust	Ramsey	Cambs	EE
Redbourn Village Museum	Redbourn Village Historical and Museum Group Ltd	Redbourn	Herts	EE
Reigate Priory Museum	Reigate Priory Museum Society	Reigate	Surrey	SE
Richmondshire Museum	Richmondshire Museum Society	Richmond	Yorkshire	Yks
Ripon Museum Trust (3 sites)	Ripon Museum Trust	Ripon	Yorkshire	Yks



Robin Hood's Bay and Fylingdales Museum	Fylingdales Museum and Library Trust	Robin Hood's Bay	Yorkshire	Yks
Royston & District Museum	Royston Town Council	Royston	Herts	EE
Ruddington Framework Knitters' Museum	Ruddington Framework Knitters Museum Ltd	Ruddington	Notts.	EM
Ruddington Village Museum	Ruddington Local History & Amenity Society	Ruddington	Notts.	EM
Rustington Museum	Rustington Heritage Association	Rustington	Sussex	SE
Rye Castle Museum	Rye Museum Association	Rye	Sussex	SE
Ryedale Folk Museum		Hutton-le-Hole	Yorkshire	Yks
Pewsey Heritage Centre	Pewsey Heritage Centre Trust	Pewsey	Wilts	SW
Saddleworth Museum & Art Gallery	Saddleworth Museum Trust	Uppermill	Lancs	NW
Salcombe Maritime Museum	Salcombe Museum Society	Salcombe	Devon	SW
Saltash Heritage	Saltash Heritage	Saltash	Cornwall	SW
Sandwich Guildhall Museum	Sandwich Town Council acting as Trustees	Sandwich	Kent	SE
Seaford Museum of Local History	Seaford Museum & Heritage Society	Seaford	Sussex	SE
Shaftesbury Abbey Museum	Shaftesbury Abbey and Museum Preservation Trust Co Ltd	Shaftesbury	Dorset	SW
Sherborne Museum	Sherborne Museum Association	Sherborne	Dorset	SW
Sheringham Museum	Sheringham Museum Trust	Sheringham	Norfolk	EE
Sid Vale Heritage Centre	Sid Vale Association	Sidmouth	Devon	SW
Smithy Heritage Centre	Eccleston Parish Council	Eccleston	Lancs	NW
South Molton & District Museum	South Molton Town Co.acting as agent for North Devon DC	South Molton	Devon	SW
Southwold Museum	Southwold Museum & Historical Society	Southwold	Suffolk	EE
St Agnes Parish Museum	St Agnes Museum Trust	St Agnes	Cornwall	SW
St Neots Museum	St Neots Museum Ltd	St Neots	Cambs	EE
Steyning Museum	Steyning Museum Trust	Steyning	Sussex	SE
Strumminster Newton Museum	Strumminster Newton Museum and Mill Society	Strumminster Newton	Dorset	SW

Swaffham Museum	Swaffham Museum Ltd	Swaffham	Norfolk	EE
Swanage Museum & Heritage Centre	Swanage Museum	Swanage	Dorset	SW
Swinford Museum	Swinford Museum Trust	Filkins	Oxfordshire	SE
Tavistock Museum	Tavistock Museum Charitable Trust	Tavistock	Devon	SW
Teignmouth & Shaldon Museum & Historical Soc	Teign Heritage	Teignmouth	Devon	SW
Tenbury & District Museum	Tenbury & District Museum Society	Tenbury Wells	Worcs	WM
Tenterden & District Museum	Tenterden & District Museum Association	Tenterden	Kent	SE
Tewkesbury Museum	Tewkesbury Museum	Tewkesbury	Glos.	SW
Thame Museum	Thame Museum Trust	Thame	Oxfordshire	SE
The Cater Museum	The Cater Museum	Billericay	Essex	EE
Thirsk Museum	Thirsk Museum Society	Thirsk	Yorkshire	Yks
Thornbury & District Museum	Thornbury & District Heritage Trust	Thornbury	Somerset	SW
Thorney Heritage Museum	Thorney Society	Thorney	Northants	EE
Tiverton Museum of Mid Devon Life	Tiverton & Mid Devon Museum Trust	Tiverton	Devon	SW
Tolsey Museum	Tolsey Museum	Burford	Oxfordshire	SE
Topsham Museum	Topsham Museum Society	Topsham	Devon	SW
Totnes Elizabethan House Museum	Totnes Museum Trust	Totnes	Devon	SW
Trowbridge Museum	Trowbridge Town Council	Trowbridge	Wilts	SW
Upper Wharfedale Folk Museum	Upper Wharfedale Museum Society	Grassington	Yorkshire	Yks
Vale & Downland Museum	Vale & Downland Museum Trust	Wantage	Oxon	SE
Wallingford Museum	Wallingford Museum Trust	Wallingford	Oxfordshire	SE
Walton Maritime Museum	Frinton & Walton Heritage Trust	Walton-on-the-Naze	Essex	EE
Ware Museum	Ware Museum Trust	Ware	Herts	EE
Wareham Town Museum	Wareham Town Council	Wareham	Dorset	SW
Watchet Market House Museum	Watchet Market House Museum Society with Watchet TC	Watchet	Somerset	SW

Weardale Museum	Weardale Museum Trust	Ireshopeburn	Durham	NE
Wellingborough Museum	Winifred Wharton Trust	Wellingborough	Northants	EM
Wells & Mendip Museum	Wells Museum	Wells	Somerset	SW
Weobley Local History Centre and Museum	Weobley & District Local History Society	Weobley	Herefordshire	WM
West Somerset Rural Life Museum	West Somerset Rural Life Museum Association	Allerford	Somerset	SW
Whitby Museum	Whitby Literary & Philosophical Society	Whitby	Yorkshire	Yks
White Mill Rural Heritage Centre	White Mill Folk Museum Trust Ltd	Sandwich	Kent	SE
Whittlesey Museum	Whittlesey Museum Trust	Whittlesey	Cambs	EE
Wigston Framework Knitters Museum	<i>Not found</i>	Wigston Magna	Leics.	EM
Winchcombe Folk & Police Museum	Winchcombe Town Trust	Winchcombe	Glos.	SW
Wirksworth Heritage Centre	Wirksworth Heritage Centre Trust	Wirksworth	Derbyshire	EM
Witney & District Museum & Art Gallery	West Oxfordshire Museum Centre	Witney	Oxfordshire	SE
Woburn Heritage Centre	Woburn Heritage Centre	Woburn	Beds.	EE
Woodbridge Museum	Woodbridge Museum Trustees	Woodbridge	Suffolk	EE
Woodchurch Village Life Museum	Woodchurch Museum Trust	Woodchurch	Kent	SE
Woodhall Spa Cottage Museum	Woodhall Spa Cottage Museum	Woodhall Spa	Lincs	EM
Wotton Heritage Centre	Wotton-under-Edge Historical Society	Wotton-under-Edge	Glos.	SW
Wymondham Heritage Museum	Wymondham Heritage Society	Wymondham	Norfolk	EE

**Independent Museums in Towns and Villages with a population of less than 30,000 that are not Accredited with the Museums Libraries and Archives Council**

<b>Name of Museum</b>	<b>Governing Body</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>Region</b>
Bacup Natural History Museum	Bacup Natural History Society	Bacup	Lancs	NW
Berkswell Village Museum	Charitable Trust <i>not found</i>	Berkswell	Warwicks	WM
Bishops Waltham Museum	Bishops Waltham Museum Trust	Bishops Waltham	Hants	SE
Bovey Tracey Heritage Centre	Bovey Tracey Heritage Trust	Bovey Tracey	Devon	SW
Calverton Folk Museum	Calverton Preservation & History Soc.	Calverton	Notts.	EM
Castle Cary Museum	Castle Cary and District Museum and Preservation Society	Castle Cary	Somerset	SW
Charlbury Museum	Charlbury Society	Charlbury	Oxfordshire	SE
Chipping Norton Museum	Chipping Norton Museum Trust	Chipping Norton	Oxfordshire	SE
Clun Local History Museum	Clun Town Trust	Clun	Shropshire	WM
Coggeshall Museum	Coggeshall Heritage Centre Assoc.	Coggeshall	Essex	EE
Earls Barton Museum	Earl's Barton Museum Trust	Earls Barton	Northants	EM
Feering and Kelvedon Local History Museum	Trustees (funding from Parish Councils)	Kelvedon	Essex	EE
Glossop Heritage Centre	Glossop & District Heritage Trust	Glossop	Derbyshire	EM
Great Bardfield Cottage Museum	Great Bardfield Historical Society	Great Bardfield	Essex	EE
Guisborough Museum	Guisborough Museum Ltd	Guisborough	Yorkshire	Yks
Halstead Heritage Museum	Halstead & District Local History Society	Halstead	Essex	EE
Harwich Maritime Museum	The Harwich Society	Harwich	Essex	EE
Ilchester	Ilchester Town Trust	Ilchester	Somerset	SW
Knutsford Heritage Centre	Knutsford Heritage Centre	Knutsford	Cheshire	NW

Langwith Whaley Thorns Heritage Centre	Langwith Whaley Thorns Heritage Association	Langwith	Derbyshire	EM
Leigh Heritage Centre & Plumbs Cottage	Leigh Heritage Centre Ltd	Leigh on Sea	Essex	EE
Lydd Town Museum	Friends of Lydd	Lydd	Kent	SE
Manor Cottage Heritage Centre	Southwick (Sussex) Society	Southwick	Sussex	SE
Marazion Museum	Marazion Museum Trust	Marazion	Cornwall	SW
Mevagissey Folk Museum	Mevagissey & District Museum Society	Mevagissey	Cornwall	SW
Minster Abbey Gatehouse Museum	Sheppey Local History Society	Minster in Sheppey	Kent	SE
Mortehoe Heritage Centre	Mortehoe Heritage Trust	Mortehoe	Devon	SW
Newport Pagnell Historical Society Museum	Newport Pagnell Historical Society	Newport Pagnell	Bucks	SE
Petworth Cottage Museum	The Petworth Cottage Trust	Petworth	Sussex	SE
Seaton Museum	Axe Valley Heritage Association	Seaton	Devon	SW
Sittingbourne Heritage Museum	Sittingbourne Heritage Museum Trust	Sittingbourne	Kent	SE
St Margaret's Museum	St Margarets Bay Trust	St Margarets Bay	Kent	SE
Stanmer Rural Museum	Stanmer Preservation Society	Brighton	Sussex	SE
Sudbury Museum & Heritage centre	Sudbury Museum Trust	Sudbury	Suffolk	EE
The Valiant Soldier	Buckfastleigh Trust	Buckfastleigh	Devon	SW
Three Rivers Museum of Local History	Three Rivers Museum Trust	Rickmansworth	Herts	EE
Torrington Museum	Torrington & District Society	Torrington	Devon	SW
Uttoxeter Heritage Centre	Uttoxeter Town Council	Uttoxeter	Staffs	SW
Ventnor Heritage Museum	Ventnor & District Local Historical Society	Ventnor	Isle of Wight	SE
Whimble Heritage Centre	Whimble History Society	Whimble	Devon	SW
Wincanton Museum	Wincanton and District Museum and History Society	Wincanton	Somerset	SW
Wollaston Museum	Wollaston Heritage Society	Wollaston	Northants	EM
Woolpit & District Museum	Woolpit & District Museum Trust	Woolpit	Suffolk	EE

**Appendix 4:**

**The Dorset Museums Volunteers Survey Questionnaire**



UNIVERSITY OF  
GLOUCESTERSHIRE

at Cheltenham and Gloucester

# Dorset Museums

## *Volunteers Survey*

Autumn 2006

*Bridget Yates  
Department of Natural & Social Sciences  
Quad East QU115  
University of Gloucestershire  
Francis Close Hall  
Swindon Road  
Cheltenham  
Glos. GL50 4AZ*

*The majority of the questions that follow can be answered by putting a tick or cross in the appropriate box. Please answer the remaining questions as fully as possible.*

1. Where do you volunteer?

If you volunteer in more than one museum, please underline the one where you spend most time.

*Please answer the following questions with the museum where you spend most of your time in mind.*

2. Are you a museum trustee or company director? ☐ A museum worker (in any role)? ☐ Or both? ☐

3. How long have you been a volunteer in your museum?

☐ 2 yrs or less ☐ 3-5 yrs ☐ 6-10yrs  
☐ 11-15yrs ☐ 16-20 yrs ☐ over 20 yrs

4. Were you one of the founders of the museum? ☐ Yes ☐ No

5. Have you been a volunteer since the museum started?  
☐ Yes ☐ No

6. Were you a volunteer in another museum before this?  
☐ Yes ☐ No

7. Do you volunteer at the museum throughout the year?  
☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, do you work more at any particular time of year, for example during the summer?

If no, please tick the months when you are at the museum, even if only for a short time.

☐ Jan ☐ Feb ☐ March ☐ April ☐ May ☐ June  
☐ July ☐ Aug ☐ Sept ☐ Oct ☐ Nov ☐ Dec

Are these the months that the museum is open? ☐ Yes ☐ No



8. In an average month, how many hours do you think you work for the museum in each week?

Minimum.....

Maximum.....

Roughly what proportion of these is spent in the museum itself?  
Elsewhere, for example from home?

9. Why did you become a volunteer in the museum? Please tick all those that apply.

☐ I knew other volunteers

☐ To meet new people

☐ To add structure to the working week

☐ Because someone asked me to help

☐ To do something for the community

☐ To 'put something back'

☐ General interest in the subject of the museum (for example: history / art / transport / military history)

☐ Member of the society or the organisation that runs the museum

☐ Member of a like-minded society in the locality, for example a family history group

☐ Member of a group which volunteered, ie a branch of NADFAS

☐ To be involved in a respected organisation

☐ Particular interest in local history

☐ To learn something about the subject

☐ To learn something about the locality

☐ The Volunteer Bureau (or similar) suggested it

☐ To hand on skills or knowledge

☐ To use my work skills in a new way

☐ To try something new

☐ It seemed fun

☐ I was asked and had time

☐ Because it helps me to remember my lifetime

☐ To learn a new skill

☐ To try a new career

☐ It seemed interesting

☐ To keep busy and active

☐ Companionship / friendship

☐ To do something completely different

☐ It's a stepping-stone back to employment

☐ To take up a new challenge

☐ To develop things for the museum that weren't in place before

☐ I enjoy role play / acting

☐ Other. Please describe

10. Which was the most important reason?

11. What tasks do you do in the museum? Please tick all that apply.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Curatorial   | <input type="checkbox"/> Education/learning with adults including reminiscence work |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Collections management (documentation, storage etc)                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Shop manager/purchaser                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation / restoration / maintenance of exhibits                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Front of house (sales, tickets, greeting)                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Maintenance / enhancement work to the building or site such as gardening or decorating | <input type="checkbox"/> Event/activity organisation                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Putting on displays / exhibitions  | <input type="checkbox"/> Answering general enquiries                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Research on the collections  | <input type="checkbox"/> Answering family history enquiries                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Research on the subject of the museum or on the locality                               | <input type="checkbox"/> Publicity / marketing                                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Archiving  | <input type="checkbox"/> Giving talks   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Writing booklets or other publications   | <input type="checkbox"/> Guiding or interpretation in the museum                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Photography  | <input type="checkbox"/> Leading walks or trails outside the museum                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Design   | <input type="checkbox"/> Café/refreshments for visitors                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Computer work, including image scanning  | <input type="checkbox"/> Management committee member                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education/learning with children, (schools, holiday activities, family events)         | <input type="checkbox"/> Sub-Committee member                                       |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> General Administration                                     |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> Fundraising  |

12. If you do more than one task, which task do you consider to be the most important for you personally?

13. Which tasks do you consider to be the most important for the museum?

14. Do you have a role title? ☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, please give:

15. Are you a member of a specific team in your museum, for example the gardening team or the front of house team?

☐ Yes ☐ No

16. What motivates you to continue to be a volunteer?
17. What is the best thing about being a museum volunteer?
18. What is the most important thing that the museum does for you?
19. If you had a choice of volunteering in a volunteer run museum or in a museum with paid staff, which one would you choose? ☐ Volunteer run ☐ Paid staff

*Please answer **either** Question 20 **or** Question 21:*

20. If you have chosen to be a volunteer in a volunteer run museum, can you explain why? Please tick all those that apply.
- ☐ Other museums are too far away
  - ☐ Access difficulties
  - ☐ I can't get to other museums by public transport
  - ☐ Other museums don't cover my subject
  - ☐ I like to be involved in making decisions
  - ☐ I like to develop my own projects
  - ☐ I wanted to work in my own community
  - ☐ My friends are all here
  - ☐ I wanted to be in a small organisation
  - ☐ I have more freedom
  - ☐ I can study what I like
  - ☐ I feel I can make more of a difference
  - ☐ It's more flexible for my needs
  - ☐ It enables me to 'sell' my community to visitors
  - ☐ I'm able to make more of a contribution
  - ☐ Other (Please describe)

21. If you have chosen to be a volunteer in a museum with paid curatorial staff, can you explain why? Please tick all that apply:

- ☐ Other museums are too far away
- ☐ Access difficulties
- ☐ Other museums don't cover my subject
- ☐ I can't get to other museums by public transport
- ☐ I will learn more from 'trained' staff
- ☐ My special interest isn't covered
- ☐ I prefer to be in a 'professional' organisation
- ☐ My friends are all here
- ☐ It's more flexible for my needs
- ☐ I don't want to be involved in management or decision-making
- ☐ There's not enough to do in small museums
- ☐ I want to be in a large organisation
- ☐ I'm happy being a small cog
- ☐ I'm happy that someone else does the administration
- ☐ I'm able to make more of a contribution
- ☐ Other (Please describe)

22. What do you think is the most important thing that your museum does?

23. How long have you lived in Dorset?

- ☐ 2 years or less ☐ 3-5 years ☐ 6-10years
- ☐ 11-15years ☐ 16-20 years ☐ over 20 years
- ☐ All your life

24. If you have lived in Dorset for less than five years, where did you live before?

25. Were you born in Dorset? ☐ Yes ☐ No

26. Do you live in the same town/village as the museum? ☐  
☐ Yes ☐ No

27. If not, how far do you travel from home to the museum?  
☐ 5 miles or less ☐ 6-10 miles ☐ 11-15 miles  
☐ 16-20 miles ☐ over 20 miles
28. Are you a member of any conservation or preservation societies for example The National Trust, English Heritage, a railway preservation society, a civic society, a local history society, a wildlife group. ☐ Yes ☐ No
29. Do you volunteer for any of these? Please list:
30. Do you volunteer for any other county-wide organisation in Dorset, for example Age Concern, WRVS, Rotary Club?  
☐ Yes ☐ No Please list:
31. Are you actively involved in any other organisations in your own community, or in the locality where the museum is situated, for example the Town or Parish Council, the Parochial Church Council, Neighbourhood Watch, an arts or sports group, the village or community hall committee, the annual show? ☐ Yes ☐ No  
If you answered yes, please list as many as you can:
32. Are you: ☐ retired ☐ retired and seeking work  
☐ not seeking work ☐ employed  
☐ unemployed & seeking work ☐ student or gap year
33. If you are employed, not seeking work or retired, what is or was your occupation?

34. Since leaving school, have you achieved any further qualifications such as certificates, a degree, HND, postgraduate qualification, trade, industrial or professional qualifications? ☐ Yes ☐ No Please list the one(s) you consider most important:
35. Have you been a student on any organised learning activities in the past three years?
- ☐ WEA courses
  - ☐ Dorset adult education service courses
  - ☐ Open University
  - ☐ Open College
  - ☐ University course or unit of study
  - ☐ University of the Third Age
  - ☐ Lecture series
  - ☐ Other
36. Have you been a teacher or instructor on any courses?
- ☐ Yes ☐ No
37. What is your age?
- ☐ Under 18; ☐ 18-24; ☐ 25-34; ☐ 35-44;  
☐ 45-54; ☐ 55-64; ☐ 65-74; ☐ 75+;
38. Are you Male? ☐ or Female? ☐
39. Would you describe yourself as:
- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asian or British Asian      | <input type="checkbox"/> White (British)                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Black or Black British      | <input type="checkbox"/> White (other eg American or Australian) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chinese or Chinese British  | <input type="checkbox"/> White (European)                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gypsy / Roma                | <input type="checkbox"/> Other                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mixed race                  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Traveller of Irish heritage |  |

*With very many thanks for your help. Please return the Survey as soon as possible to Bridget Yates using the FREEPOST envelope provided*