



The Mildenhall Post

Mildenhall Museum Society Newsletter



December 2021

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News from the Trustees

We have been able to take part in three events this autumn which has enabled us to engage with different audiences.

We were invited to have a stand at an event on RAF Mildenhall. It was a family day with a sci-fi theme so we decided to take things that could be handled, we assembled a selection of fossils, bones [thanks to Norma], toys and reproduction Roman pottery and also some old photos of Mildenhall Market Place and Church. It was a very successful day and fun for Monica and I to see the costumes that were being worn.

The flag was waved at the Autumn fair at Barton Mills Church and sales were quite good making it worthwhile. Finally Organisation Day at the Jubilee centre gave us another opportunity to engage with more of the public. It still surprises us that there are folk who do not know there is a museum in Mildenhall. Someone said we should have a sign outside!

It has been good to get out and about in the community again.

Stephanie Palmer

Museum Society News

Dear Society Members

After having a pretty bleak year in 2020 and several months in 2021 when we were unable to organise Thursday meetings I hope that you have been able to make it to at least one of the lectures during this Autumn. David Palmer has done a terrific job in getting guest speakers who have been willing to come along with most interesting and diverse subjects including the Oregon Trail and Metal Detectorists. 2022 should be one to look forward to if this quality keeps up.

The AGM will be held on the afternoon of Thursday 6th January so no one will have a cold dark night to struggle through to attend. At this meeting we will have the pleasure of Ray King, someone who was brought up in Mildenhall and has had a most interesting life involving steam engines among other things. I'm particularly interested as I found that Ray actually lived in my house during the 1950's. A small world indeed.

If anyone feels they might be able to join the Society Committee, even for a year, please put yourself forward at the AGM as we are getting very short of members, leaving a few individuals to do all of the work. We meet about 4 times a year on average and would welcome any offers of help.

Lastly, but not least I'd like to thank everyone who continued to send in their annual subscription this year. We no longer have a Membership Secretary as Jean could not fit this in with her work, so those few of you who still pay by cash we will collect this at the AGM. If you are unable to attend this meeting and would like to pay by direct debit or standing order the bank details are as follows. The subs will remain at £10 per person.

Wishing you all a very Merry "Covid Free" Christmas and Happy New Year.

Lloyd Hughes

Payment details –Mildenhall Museum Society sort code 30 95 58 Account no. 00213095

Potted History of the Museum

May 2021 was the 70th anniversary of the museum. Unfortunately we were so busy preparing to reopen that it slipped our notice. The Editor thought it would be a good idea if I provided a brief history for this newsletter.

Before the Festival of Britain in 1951 the government suggested that local communities did something to join in the celebrations. Mildenhall had a very active Archaeological and Natural History Society that decided it would be a good idea to mount an exhibition of local finds. The leading light in the Society was Lady Briscoe of Lakenheath Hall, a doctor and noted amateur archaeologist. She had led several important digs and had an extensive collection of finds which provided the basis for the display which was in a room above the porch of the old Town Hall [now Cobblers Court in ST Andrews Street]. It was a great success so much so that it continued to open on Sunday afternoons until 1968. It then moved to two rooms in the first floor above the Trustee Savings Bank [now William Brown]. This gave us more space for better and more varied displays. It was during this time that a cataloguing system was started and more local people were involved. The lease expired in the about 1980 as the TSB needed the space. Everything was put in store for a while as we searched for new premises.

Forest Heath District Council offered us our current site with an interest free loan to convert the properties. The late Dr Colin Dring led an intensive period of fundraising and the foundation stone was laid in 1983. The success of the fund raising impressed the councillors and they converted the remaining loan into a gift. During the next few years we became an Accredited Museum which made us eligible for professional advice and grant aid which meant that we could develop proper documentation procedures. Forest Heath helped out yet again by buying in from Moyses Hall Museum in Bury St Edmunds the services of a curator who provided invaluable help over the years.

As our collection grew space became very tight and in 1996 we decided we needed to extend the premises. Thus began a prolonged period of negotiations, suggestions for alternative sites and other distractions

A major distraction was the Millenium project to get replicas of the Mildenhall Treasure. Each piece was sponsored by local groups and people and the total cost was £50,000 a remarkable testament to Dr Dring's power of persuasion!

Back to the extension we thought it would help if we had a Patron and approached Lord Iveagh of Elveden Hall who after a visit agreed to fill this role for which we are very grateful

Eventually we succeeded in getting plans approved for the current building. It was supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, the District and County Councils, Museum Society and plenty of local goodwill, and encouraged by Lord Iveagh who presided at the official opening in October 2013.

MILDENHALL MUSEUM SOCIETY TALKS 2022

First Thursday of every month.

| Date | Time | Talk | Speaker |
|-------------------------------|------|---------------------------------------|-----------------|
| 6 th January 2021 | 2.30 | AGM | Ray King |
| 3 rd February 2021 | 2.30 | Through the Green Baize Door | Brian Thurlow |
| 3 rd March 2021 | 7.30 | Keeping the Peace in Medieval Suffolk | Dr. Nick Armour |
| 7 th April 2021 | 7.30 | Mildenhall HUB Archaeology | Jo Caruth |
| 5 th May 2021 | 7.30 | Lord Fairhaven and Anglesey Abbey | Helen Ackroyd |

Abbey 1000 millennium celebrations

As you may be aware, in 2020 the Covid-19 pandemic forced the cancellation of the plans to mark the millennium of the foundation of the Abbey of St Edmund. The celebrations, in the form of a programme of events and activities, will now take place next year.

Since the history of the Abbey, the town and the surrounding area are inextricably linked and are our heritage, the involvement of the community is especially important. It is for that reason that, as chairman of the Abbey 1000 Group which is co-ordinating the celebrations, I write to invite and encourage your organisation to take part.

We would welcome proposals for new events as well as expressions of interest to run a stall or activity at the Picnic in the Park in the Abbey Gardens on 16th July 2022. It will be day of entertainment and fun for all the family.

Other activities already planned include:

- an exhibition of seven manuscripts from the Abbey Scriptorium, reunited in their place of origin for the first time since 1539.
- a fascinating Abbey of St Edmund exhibition in Moyse's Hall Museum.
- Abbey 1000 tours with Bury St Edmunds Tour Guides.
- a unique sculpture exhibition in the crypt within the Abbey ruins, where the shrine of St Edmund would have stood.
- a self-guided Abbey 1000 Heritage Town Trail
- community art and theatre projects.
- a 'BioBlitz' seeking 1000 different species of fauna and flora.
- a concert by the Suffolk Philharmonic Orchestra with a specially commissioned work for the millennium.
- a Benedictine Pilgrimage and gathering of Benedictine monks and nuns.
- the grand finale - a fabulous Light Show in November 2022, showing our historic monuments as they have never been seen before.

The Abbey 1000 Group can offer advice and support for your organisation in planning its event but unfortunately not any funding (although we are working on this). Your proposed event should be non-profit-making, celebrate 1000 years of the Abbey of St Edmund in some way and/or perhaps aim to raise £1000 for St Nicholas Hospice or a local charity of your choice. We will then be delighted to promote it as part of the programme that is marketed through Bury St Edmunds and Beyond. Ideas for activities and events are also welcome.

I hope this is of interest to you and would welcome any enquiries. Do get in touch if you would like further information.

Thanks and best wishes

Libby Ranzetta

Chair, Abbey 1000 Group

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