



Christmas at the Castle 2019

FRIENDS OF GUILDFORD MUSEUM NEWSLETTER

January 2020



Issue 40



Christmas at the Castle 2019

FoGM Welcome Stall and the Lord of Misrule being crowned.

From the Editor

Since the last news update in March 2019, work has continued on the Museum Development Project as reported in the article by Nick Bale. However the urgent structural repairs required by parts of the Museum building have taken longer than anticipated, as additional problems have come to light. In early December a previously unknown window opening was found in the Textile Gallery which has caused further delays. It is now anticipated that the work will be completed by 31st March with the Museum reopening on 2nd May with a VE day celebration exhibition.

Work underway to strengthen the floor above the previously unknown window opening in the Textile Gallery.



There have been some changes to the Heritage Team over the last few months and the FoGM Committee warmly welcome Paul Stacey

(Parks and Landscape Manager) who has been appointed as Acting Heritage Manager; and Sarah Fairhurst who has been appointed to replace Catriona as Collections Manager.

Many of you will have enjoyed the Coffee Time Talks organised by the Heritage Team and I understand that many of them have been fully booked with waiting lists. (See page 15 for 2020 dates) Several of our members have helped on the welcome desk at events organised in the Castle Grounds - Alice Day and Christmas at the Castle.

Contributions of articles for this newsletter, which comes out approximately once a year are very welcome. If you have a story to tell about the Museum or Guildford's Heritage but aren't too sure about writing it yourself, let me know and I can write down your story for you. So much of our local history is in our heads and not written down, and in danger of being lost forever. My contact details are below.

Jean Wickens

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Undercroft Volunteer Stewards

In November, we were delighted to hear that the Undercroft lease had been renewed for a 3 year period. We can therefore look forward to continuing to tell visitors about Guildford's history and its museum.

Volunteer stewards are needed on Wednesday afternoons between 2 and 4 pm and Saturdays between 12 and 4 pm, between May and September. Giving information about the Undercroft's History to visitors is a very enjoyable way of spending a couple of hours. Visitors may be from around the world or people who have lived in Guildford all their life but have never visited it before.

If you can help please contact Carol Smythes on; 01483 503667 or email: carolsmythes@hotmail.co.uk

Important progress on Museum Development Project December 2019

The project has advanced in many respects since the last News Update in April 2019. One of the most significant is the **fund raising strategy**. This has now been defined more clearly:

- Total project is still expected to cost approximately £18 million, as before.
- National Heritage Lottery Fund will be asked to contribute £4 million of this.
- Guildford Borough Council have designated just under £7 million to the project from Council funds.
- In addition, the Council have agreed to underwrite the funding gap of £7 million.
- A private sector funding programme will aim to bridge all, or most, of this funding gap. Private donations will be sought from three broad sectors;
 - Foundations supporting Heritage Projects
 - Wealthy individuals and corporate donors
 - Crowd Funding

A trust independent of the Council will be essential for private funding and this is in the process of establishment.

The **architecture and buildings plan** has been slightly reduced in scope, but this retains all the essential elements:

- There will be an entrance in the castle grounds into a new building in what is now the garden at the back of the museum. Here there will be a café, a shop and a new display gallery.
- On the floors below there will be another new gallery, a temporary exhibition gallery and space for activities.
- There will be lift access to all floors of Castle Arch House from the new building.
- The new building will integrate or replace the 20th century extensions to Castle Arch House.

One of the changes is to leave out the enclosure of the King's Chamber from the development. These ruins close to the new museum entrance in the castle grounds are a scheduled monument and there is some doubt whether Historic England would grant approval for this modification.

It is now likely that the **Victorian Schoolroom** will be brought into the main museum as a core part of the services offered to the educational sector.

Celebrating the technology and games industries in the Guildford area will be one of the distinguishing features of the revamped museum. It is therefore significant that a **Digital Strategy** sets out plans for the museum to start a collection of digital items. This strategy also looks at what digital facilities the museum will need, having regard to long term usefulness for the museum and its visitors. It also covers essential but less eye-catching matters such as free customer WiFi and management of customer data.

A vibrant activity and exhibition programme is being developed as set out in the **Activity Plan** for the museum. This has a wide scope including public and community engagement, working with the University and other local organisations, use of volunteers and so on. This is an aspect of the project where we would like to be involved. To establish these new programmes, the Plan envisages employment of a team of three staff for an initial 3 year period. In addition, the new museum expects to provide opportunities for a further 60 volunteers in addition to the current 30 volunteers who support the museum at the moment (This figure excludes our Undercroft volunteers team).

Our Chairman, Jen Powell and other representatives have attended the council meetings at which the museum project has been discussed to show our support. We were pleased to see universal support for the project from councillors on all sides.

It is wonderful to see the significant progress that has been made during 2019. Nevertheless, there are several critical challenges ahead, in particular obtaining funding from the National Heritage Lottery Fund (NHLF). The first stage "Expression of Interest" of the NHLF procedure is under way at the present time. All being well, NHLF will give the green light during 2020 so that a full funding application can be submitted in 2020. This is especially important as foundations and other private donors will only support projects that have been granted NHLF funding. Unfortunately, NHLF has lower funds available for Heritage projects than in the past as sales of lottery tickets have been in decline. Competition for their funds will be fierce. Whilst we have an excellent and exciting project, it is not certain that we will get this critical approval.

Nick Bale

The History of Guildford Museum Part 1

Gavin Morgan, founder of Guildford Heritage Forum, has provided these notes on the story of Guildford Museum and some of its collections. Most of the information comes from copies of the Friends newsletter edited by his father Eric between 1995 and 2017.

As we await changes to the museum it is interesting to reflect on the past. Plans to develop the museum go back almost to its beginnings. The last major extension was in 1911. There were proposals after the First World War to build a new museum and library as a memorial to the fallen. Much later, ambitious plans for a Surrey Museum on the site of Farnham Road bus station were formally adopted in the Borough Plan for 1983 but never implemented. More modest attempts to build on the museum garden and add an entrance into the Castle Grounds also fell foul of planning and financial obstacles. In 1997 Matthew Alexander tried unsuccessfully to persuade the Borough to purchase The Chestnuts as a Lewis Carroll Centre when it came on the market. We now have the best opportunity in over a century to do something spectacular.

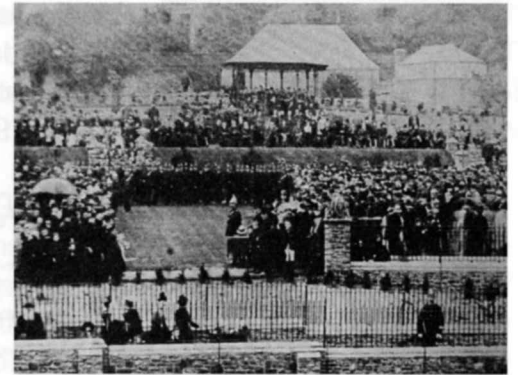
Origins

1885 - Guildford buys Castle Grounds

In 1885 Guildford Borough Council purchased the ruined great tower of Guildford Castle and the surrounding land.

It laid out a municipal park which has been one of the jewels of the town ever since, frequently winning awards for its beautiful flower borders.

Municipal parks were popping up in towns all over the country. It was the age for such things and a uniquely English contribution to urban design to meet the needs for fresh air in the ever-growing polluted towns of England.



Opening of Castle Grounds following purchase in 1885

1855 – The Surrey Archaeological Society

Almost 50% of the collections in Guildford Museum belong to the Surrey Archaeological Society, which founded the museum in 1898. Today we think of archaeology as "Time Team" like excavations but the Victorians took a broader view. The collections of the Surrey Archaeological Society contain not only Prehistoric, Roman and Medieval artefacts, but also prints, maps and needlework. Research by members of the society over the last century includes archaeology and local history and the Society has played a major role in defining our understanding of Guildford's and Surrey's past.

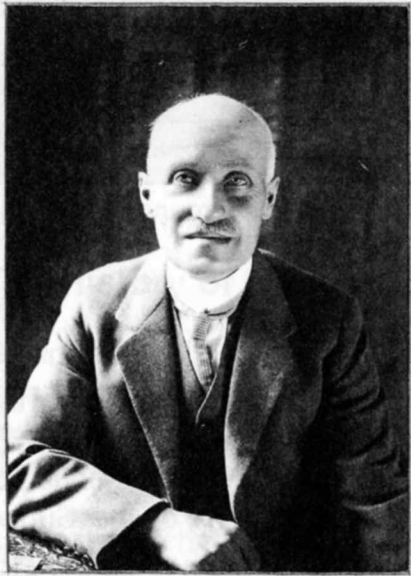
1888 – Town acquires a museum

When in 1885 Guildford Borough Council bought the Castle Grounds, the SyAS offered to move its collection to the town if accommodation could be found. It was an age when social improvement for the masses was as important as tourism or social housing is today. Having created a park to care for the lungs of Guildfordians it seemed

natural to acquire a museum to expand their minds. The move was approved in 1888 but had to wait until 1898 when the lease on the corner house in Castle Arch expired.

1898 – Museum opens in Castle Arch House

The Museum opened in 1898 and in 1903 the first curator and librarian, Frederick H Elsey was appointed who remained connected with the museum until his death in 1944.



Frederick Hammond Elsey

Became a member of Guildford Institute in 1882; Librarian 1896–1944.

His offices and activities included those of:—

Honorary Remembrancer of Guildford.

President and a founder member of Guildford Natural History and Literary Society.

Clerk to the Governors of the Hospital of the Blessed Trinity (Archbishop Abbot's).

Librarian of the Surrey Archeological Society; Curator of Guildford Museum.

Lay Reader and church worker at Blackheath for nearly 60 years.

Guildford and District Hospital Saturday Fund voluntary worker for over 40 years and for some years its hon. treasurer; in recognition thereof being elected a Life Governor of the Royal Surrey County Hospital and of the Surrey Convalescent Home for Men.

Honorary Treasurer of Guildford and District Poppy Day Fund from its beginning.

Photo courtesy of Guildford Institute

The location for the museum was Castle Arch House, one of the oldest houses in the town. It is a typical hall and cross wing built up against the castle wall dating back to 1544 but most of it dates from around 1630.

1911 - Gertrude Jekyll Collection and museum extension

In 1907 the SyAS received an offer of a large collection which would change its relationship with the Borough.

The garden designer, Gertrude Jekyll offered her collection of rural cottage furniture and utensils acquired over 30 years. It was and still is a very important social history collection. The society could not, however, afford the commercial rent on premises to store and display the collection.



The Borough therefore agreed to build an extension to the museum. However, the rate payers were spared the expense of construction when Alderman Smallpeice stepped in and paid for it. His family had connections with the town going back generations and had long been closely associated with the Corporation.

The extension opened in 1911 and the museum became known as "The Guildford Borough and Surrey Archeological Society's Museum".



1933 - The Town takes over the running of the Museum

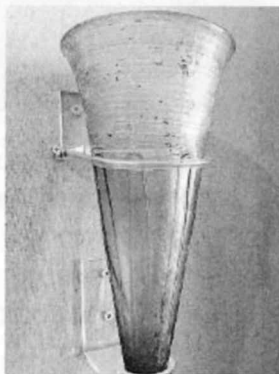
From 1911 the museum was jointly and equally run by the Borough and SyAS. The theory continued that the town provided the building and the society provided the exhibits although the town was starting to acquire its own collections.

As collecting continued, the museum's running costs increased and the borough eventually took over the full running of the museum in 1933 but under the new agreement (renewed in 1953 and 1957) the SyAS had to deposit all its collections from the entire county (except graphics) in the museum. Who got the best deal is hard to say. Certainly, the Council acquired a Surrey Archaeological Museum covering the entire county and had the opportunity to make the most of it.

1929 - Guildown Cemetery

The SyAS was running a museum, adding to collections, publishing research and maintaining a library. It was also excavating. Without the SyAS and the Surrey County Archaeology Unit our knowledge of Guildford would be so much poorer. One of the most important excavations in Guildford took place in 1929. When Mr and Mrs Kempter's gardener found some remains in the back garden of a house on the Mount, the SyAS stepped in.

At the time, the over enthusiastic archaeologists thought they had uncovered the remains of a massacre recorded at Guildford shortly before the Norman conquest. In reality they found a Saxon cemetery with some wonderful artefacts such as rare glass beakers. More importantly they found proof of Guildford's Saxon origins. It is a shame there are no photos (that I know of) of the archaeologists in action because it must have been quite a scene. The back garden of a suburban house being dug up; the gardeners released to help, and the family providing lunch!



1974 - Dominican Friary Excavations

The demolition of the Friary Brewery in the late 1960s provided a chance to find the remains of the original medieval Dominican Friary. Excavations between 1974 and 1978 revealed the entire plan of the Friary. Many people will remember passing the hoardings

with openings to allow the public to view the trenches and ruined foundations. What fascinated the macabre instincts of locals most was the discovery of over 100 skeletons. Here were ordinary Guildfordians and experts had an opportunity to learn more about their diet, health and lives. They were studied before reburial in St Mary's Churchyard in 1987. There was an interesting group in a mass grave, presumed to be plague victims and a lead coffin containing the remains of a wealthy woman who died in childbirth. Her name, Margaret Daubeny, was on the side of the coffin. The excavations were written up by Rob Poulton of the Surrey County Archaeological Unit and published by the Surrey Archaeological Society in 1984.

1985 - Wanborough Roman Temple Excavations

In the mid-1980s a metal detectorist discovered gold coins in a field at Wanborough. Under the law of treasure trove any items of gold discovered are automatically the property of the crown. An inquest was held in 1985 and the judge made the mistake of revealing the location of the site. Shortly afterwards thieves turned up with shovels and even mechanical diggers to unearth literally thousands of Roman and Iron Age coins which were then sold on the market. There were stories of diggers shovelling lorry loads of earth into trucks which were taken away and sifted through. The volume of coins flooding the market was so great that the price of Iron Age coins dropped. The police became involved and there was no option but to excavate the site.

The Surrey Archaeological Society stepped in and discovered a Roman temple along with many finds. Four headdresses were discovered on this site along with other religious items. Only 7 headdresses had been previously discovered in Britain and only one in Surrey. Sceptre handles were also unearthed. In 1999 a further excavation revealed a second temple. The theft of the coins became national news and resulted in a change to the law covering treasure trove.



1990 - Excavations at Guildford Castle

It had long been known that there was more to Guildford Castle than the keep. As a result, the Surrey Archaeological Society, Surrey County Excavation Unit, Guildford Museum and Guildford Borough Council came together to organise five summer excavations. The aim was to discover more about the town's castle whilst also promoting the role of archaeology. In the first year (1990) over 150 volunteers took part in the excavations which was as many as the site could hold. Guided tours were provided and over 600 school children came to see the excavations and learn about the castle. When the Castle was restored in 2003-4 a model was created based on the discoveries.

1991 - Museum Excavation Unit

One very interesting aspect of the museum story concerns the Museum Excavation Unit. The official sounding title hides the fact that it was a couple of volunteers (initially) who funded their own efforts to rescue archaeology that would have been destroyed by builders.

John Boas, a builder and archaeologist, volunteering at the museum used his time and experience to watch building sites around the town and the results were startling. In Spring 1991 a pit full of broken glass and pottery was discovered in Tunsgate. Also discovered at Tunsgate was the John Dwight teapot, the earliest English made teapot ever found in an excavation. Kevin Fryer a cataloguer at the museum joined John to sort through the discovery.

The unit moved on from there, learning much about the town. Their most important discovery was at 81 High Street where a previously unknown 12th century undercroft was discovered. English Heritage were called and there was soon speculation that this might have been a synagogue. At 149 High Street panelled rooms from a timber-framed house were discovered behind Victorian partitions. On the River Wey, a water company unearthed part of the town wharf but since there was no obligation to tell anyone they dumped everything

down stream. Undeterred, the team went through the spoil heap and salvaged pottery and timbers.

There was no proper funding for the unit and Kevin and John had to fund themselves initially but eventually they were taken onto the museum staff.

Gavin Morgan

Pictures found by Jean Wickens

To be continued in the next newsletter.....

Museums and Health and Wellbeing - Museums on Prescription?

There has been a lot in the press recently about wellbeing and the benefits of wellbeing for both mental and physical health. It was therefore interesting to read an article in the Autumn Journal of The British Association of Friends of Museums, which reported some recent research.

The article began with an acknowledgement that 'For many Friends the idea that visiting museums and engaging with art and culture is "good for you" might seem self evident'. They went on to say 'that it will be no surprise to find that researchers have established that what we instinctively feel to be the case is based in reality.' They go on to detail a number of recent studies including research by The Art Fund, the Culture Health and Wellbeing Alliance; and an initiative in Canada giving medical prescriptions for museum visits.

The Art Fund commissioned a research study in 2018 'to investigate how regularly engaging with museums and galleries could contribute to an individual's sense of wellbeing. The results of the qualitative social study and the quantitative survey were published in a report '***Calm and Collected***'. The study suggests 'that museums and galleries are a significant untapped resource at our disposal that can help us achieve a greater sense of wellbeing when we take time out

for ourselves' and that 'visiting more frequently can have a positive effect on our overall sense of balance and fulfilment'.

Established in 2015, to look at the role arts and culture play in supporting health and wellbeing, the Culture Health and Wellbeing Alliance has published 2 main reports. It's 2016 report mapped activity across the country, followed in 2018 by '**Museums as Spaces for Wellbeing**'. This includes a number of case studies from museums working with people with a wide range of health needs including people with dementia, people with sensory impairments, young parents, carers etc. The report states that:

- There is real potential for museums, which have a purpose to help us learn and to share knowledge, to play a long term role in supporting a healthier population.
- The heritage sector is a valuable asset to communities across England and can be a powerful force to enable more of us to live longer in good health.
- Museums and heritage venues bring people together at the heart of their communities, which helps both their physical and mental health at every stage of their life.
- As seen with the projects highlighted in this report, museums also have an important role to play in tackling health inequalities.

In Canada, a Family Medical Group (similar to a GP practice) has established links with the Museum for Fine Arts in Montreal for a pilot project. Museum visit prescriptions are given for a variety of mental health issues, as well as cognitive problems such as Alzheimers and other forms of dementia. Other chronic illnesses are also being considered for prescriptions. However, it should be noted that, currently, there are no validated results on the improvement to patient's health as a result of this initiative.

Many of you will be aware that Guildford Museum has established a number of links to local community organisations including the Alzheimers Society, Sight for Surrey, the Hallow Project and Shawfield

Social Centre. Perhaps in the future, patients will be referred to Guildford Museum to improve their health and wellbeing.

Jean Wickens

Coffee time talks - Spring 2020

The series of free talks continue in 2020 - organised at the Museum, Guildford House or the Guildhall by Melanie Holliker. As space is limited, please contact 01483 444751 if you would like to attend.

The talks for February to April are:-

- 6 February - Temperance movement in Guildford by Valerie Bale at Guildford House
- 5 March - Alexis Soyer Victorian Chef by Margaret Jackson at Guildford House
- 2 April - The Spice Wars by Michael A'Bear at the Guildhall

For these talks, which have been planned to link to the new exhibition, Eating In, meet at 10.30 am for coffee followed at 11 am by the talk.

Eating In - New Exhibition at Guildford House Gallery

Eating In, the new exhibition which opens at Guildford House Gallery on Saturday 18 January, is sure to give plenty of food for thought in telling the fascinating story of home cooking – including a time when children drank more beer than milk!

The exhibition, which is free to visit and was created by Leicestershire County Museums Service, runs to Saturday 28 March, and explores the changing tastes and habits of British dining in the home – what we eat, where our food comes from, the influence of other cultures on our cuisine, the way diet affects our health, and the lives of the people who produce our food.