

Friends of the Willis Museum

Newsletter, May 2013



Book launch day, April 27th: Peter Parkinson (left), Richard Quinnell (behind), the Mayor and Mayoress, and author, John Hollands holding our new publication at the Triumphal Gateway. Where was Howard Ray who took the magnificent new photographs for the book? He was taking this picture!

The Friends was founded in 1978 to promote, support and improve the Willis Museum. Meetings are held on the third Thursday of the month, except in August, and other events are arranged from time to time. Registered charity no: 280406

Annual subscription £10; visitor for one meeting £2.

Your Committee

Derek Anthony (Chairman), Ian Williams (Deputy Chairman), Leslyanne Hatt (Secretary), Howard Ray (Treasure), Bill Fergie (Outside events), Alistair Craig, John Hollands (Publicity), Cathy Williams (Programme Secretary), Jenny Stevens (Curator, ex officio).

Contact us c/o the Museum, or by email at enquiries@friendsofwillis.hampshire.org.uk

This issue was edited and distributed by Derek Anthony and John Hollands

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Chairman's jottings, by Derek Anthony

On behalf of the committee, welcome to the May issue of the newsletter.

The big news this month is the launch of the Friends' first venture into publishing. On Saturday 27th April "The Basingstoke Triumphal Gateway" was launched in the presence of His Worship the Mayor of Basingstoke and Deane, Councillor Martin Biermann. Amongst the fifty guests were representatives of the Hampshire Museum Service, other local museums, the British Association of Friends of Museums, the Basingstoke Gazette and a number of people who had helped the author, John Hollands with information and images.

We were particularly fortunate to have with us the designer of the Gateway, Peter Parkinson, its constructor, Richard Quinnell, and representatives of the Morris Singer Foundry where the 16 bronze panels that decorate the Gateway were cast.

Peter and Richard told us how delighted they were with the book and the launch event. Apparently it is rare for a public artwork to receive such attention twenty years after it has been erected.

The book is now available in the Willis Museum bookshop at £7.50, or to Friends at Friends' meetings for £6.50.

At the beginning of April the Museum received a very interesting donation, two cardboard boxes crammed full of George Willis memorabilia, including letters, notebooks and photographs. Members of the Museum staff were overjoyed when they realised what they had been given. The task now is to sort and record everything.

Friends who read the January newsletter or attended one of the recent monthly meetings will know that we have been canvassing opinions regarding whether we should replace the January monthly meeting, which can be adversely affected by the weather, with one in August. I can confirm that opinion is decidedly in favour of making the change. Cathy Williams, our Programme Secretary, has now arranged for this change to be made, starting with the 2014 programme.

On Thursday 25th April some 18 Friends enjoyed an evening skittles match against the Friends of the Curtis Museum at the Golden Pot public house between Basingstoke and Alton. Sad to say, we were forced to relinquish the "magnificent" winner's trophy to a superior team in exchange for the runner's up wooden spoon. We must arrange to get some practice in before the next match!

Friends will be interested to know that next year will be the centenary of John Arlott's birth. Your committee is discussing with the Museum Service the possibility of mounting a small exhibition in the Museum to celebrate the fact.

Finally, I do hope you will be able to join us for one or more of our monthly meetings over the summer. Meetings are scheduled for June, July and September.

Fifty Years of Change, by Derek Wren

“Basingstoke today has changed completely...It seemed in my early days a very settled place, where you knew almost everyone you passed in the street. There wasn't the sense of being a stranger in a changed place that has developed recently.”

These were the words spoken by Mr Willis at a meeting of the Natural History Society in 1963. When Margaret and I arrived here in 1962 we were aware that in order to implement the government's plans to reduce the population of London, Basingstoke had agreed in 1961 for the development of the town as an overspill reception area. The town would be expanded so that its population would grow by 1977 from the figure of 30,000 to 75,000. This was after a proposal to build a new town at Hook had been rejected by the Hampshire County Council. To us Basingstoke still seemed very settled. It was a quiet market town where you could easily walk wherever you wanted to go. Many people had always lived here. They lived in the same street. They had been to school together. They shopped at the same shops. Many of the shopkeepers carried on businesses founded by their fathers. People worked for local firms in the town. Men often worked for the same firms all their working lives. Large numbers worked for a small number of firms – Thornycrofts, Wallis & Steevens, Gerrish, Ames & Simpkins. Arthur Wallis, the chairman of Wallis & Steevens, whose house we bought from his widow in 1970, lived within walking distance of the works. The move out to the villages was not yet under way.

Changes were, however, taking place. New firms had moved in such as Lansing Bagnall, in 1949, who made fork lift trucks and the printers Charles Skipper and East. A new housing estate had been built in 1953, just north of Queen Mary's School, for the scientists who worked at Aldermaston.

I was one of the growing number of commuters who caught trains to London each day. One evening, sitting on the train on my way home, the stranger in front of me leaned forward to ask ‘Was I interested in Sociology? Not knowing what to say I agreed to go a meeting that evening at the Town Hall (now the Willis). This was a meeting of the Workers Educational Society, arranged by its Chairman Eric Stokes who was to become a close friend who supported and encouraged me in every project I became involved in. Before I went home I had become a member of the W.E.A. Study Group, set up by Eric to advise on the social problems which the expansion of the town would create. We met each week at the home of John Wigzell, Basingstoke's probation officer. Our tutor was Maurice Broady, lecturer in Sociology at Southampton University. I organised a study tour of earlier new towns such as Crawley and Basildon to find out how they had handled their social problems. The ‘stranger’ was Debbie Reavell's father, John Sweetman. John was not only a constant supporter of the W.E.A. He was a leader in the Council of Churches, working for the Ecumenical Movement. His work was recognised by a Papal Knighthood.

We published the conclusions of our studies in a booklet ‘Basingstoke – A Social Study’. One word stands out. It is ‘integration’. We saw this as happening in three stages. The first was getting the newcomers together, forming new communities, meeting new neighbours, as well as coping with moving into new homes in areas which lacked the local shops and other facilities. Firms moved people into specific areas so they probably knew many of their immediate neighbours. We recommended that every new area should have a meeting room. At first these would be for ‘ginger’ groups, meeting to draw attention to the facilities they were lacking.

Secondly Basingstokers needed to welcome the new arrivals and make them feel at home. There was some apprehension that these people would be coming from slums in the worst parts of London. This was not true and I am told that they came from a wide area. Many came because they moved with the firms they worked for. People who had always lived here not only had to welcome the newcomers but also had to accept that Basingstoke was going to change, would never again be the town they knew and loved, was going to become, as the Gazette described it, ‘the south's first town of the motor car age’.

The last and longest stage was to integrate the newcomers into the town as a whole, to help them forget that they had come from Battersea or Bermondsey and to accept that Basingstoke is now their home.

Basingstoke already had a large number of organisations, Basingstoke Amateur Theatrical Society, for example, who would welcome newcomers to join or support them. We saw the churches and societies such as Rotary and Lions having a special responsibility to involve new people. We noted that a Council of Social Service had been established to co-ordinate the work of existing organisations and to suggest new ventures in the field of social welfare. This was run by Irene Israel, who some may remember was a Friend of the Willis.

That period of social adjustment is history now. In fact the changes that have taken place in recent times have probably been more radical than any in Basingstoke's history. Over the last thirty years we have seen in our town the same changes that have happened all over the country and over much of the world. I describe these as advances towards equality between the sexes and between people of all races.

Equality between the sexes can easily be seen at the surgery where Margaret and I are patients. Five of the eight doctors are ladies. That number will grow while more women than men train to be doctors. A large number, possibly the majority, of priests in our nonconformist and Anglican churches are ladies. Our MP, Maria Miller, is the first lady to be MP for Basingstoke. Mary Edwards is chief executive of the North Hants hospital, in charge of a staff of over 2,000. Katrine Sporle was chief executive of the Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council. Christine Bradwell is chief executive of the Anvil and Haymarket. Margaret Macfarlane was, of course, appointed curator of the Willis Museum as long ago as 1960.

It seems impossible now that it was just 50 years ago that the Reverend Martin Luther King spoke of his dream when all men would be brothers. At our surgery two of the three male doctors are Indian, one born in this country. Our excellent hospital would struggle to survive if the female doctors and people of all races, working at all levels, were removed. While we wait at our surgery we are fascinated to see the mixture of people and read the names, many unpronounceable, that come up on the screen, often people who have come from Eastern Europe.

This mixture of people, coming it seems from every country in the world, is seen everywhere – in the shopping centre, in supermarkets. I can't speak of schools but am sure they are the same as the Alfred Sutton School in Reading where two grandchildren went. Almost every part of the town has an Indian restaurant, which Indian friends tell us are Bangladeshi. One of the most successful firms in Basingstoke, which unfortunately is moving away, is Chinese, controlled from Beijing.

Mixed marriages are not uncommon, but how successful have we been with integrating with this new influx of citizens? How well do we know all these people? How often do we meet in one another's homes? The Basingstoke Multi-Cultural Forum, established in Chute House, exists to help people of all nationalities become part of our community. Having been born in this country, the Chief Executive Radhia Tarafder is English, but anyone meeting her for the first time might think of her as Indian. When she goes to Bangladesh, the country her parents come from, people do think she is English!

Radhia finds that the greatest need is for help for new arrivals to learn English. In some Scandinavian countries this help is given by the government for all immigrants. This is found to help people to become assimilated into the community more quickly. Children learn a new language in less time than older people so it is not unusual when their mother visits a doctor for a child to interpret.

Radhia is also concerned that the culture immigrants bring with them should not be lost - their language, literature, art, music, dress, cuisine. I feel much more opportunities could be made in Basingstoke for us all to enjoy this. It would enrich our lives. Equally, not many people coming from other parts of the world are often seen at our social and cultural occasions.

Is Basingstoke today less friendly than it was fifty years ago? We don't think so. People who have lived here all their life are now a minority but we find it friendly in other ways and find ourselves chatting to strangers wherever we go, in supermarkets or even in lifts.

What would Mr Willis make of Basingstoke today? He would certainly feel he had landed on the moon but he recognised that change is inevitable. He was a strong supporter of Cllr Edith Weston who in 1938 was Basingstoke's first lady Mayor.

My thanks are due to Bob and Barbara Applin, Bill Fergie, John Hollands, Debbie Reavell, Radhia Tarafder and our doctor who have all contributed to this article.

Early Primitive Methodism in villages in the Basingstoke area, by David Young, MA

In the previous article, I wrote concerning the 1960s that:

I had a hobby of going with friends on cycle rides forty to fifty miles in length, and I noticed that the villages were dotted with Methodist chapels. By 1940 the Wesleyans had chapels in Newfound, Cliddesden, North Warnborough, Greywell, Upton Grey, Kempshott and Bramley. This does not really qualify for the words "the villages were dotted with Methodist chapels." The explanation is that the Primitive Methodists, who arrived in the 1830s, soon became considerably more widespread and numerous in the surrounding villages.

So we now turn to look at how, when and whence the Primitive Methodists arrived in the villages, but space does not permit the story of their arrival in Basingstoke itself. A circle of approximately 6-miles radius from the centre of Basingstoke includes the entire Primitive Methodist Silchester Circuit (Silchester, Tadley, Mortimer, Baughurst, Hannington, Haughurst Hill, Charter Alley, Wolverton Common, Little London). The chapels of this Circuit would also need an article of their own.

As early as 1830, Primitive Methodist itinerant minister Elizabeth Smith, working in the Bourne Valley, received pressing invitations to visit places towards Basingstoke; but more preachers would have been needed in order to comply with the invitations, and it was not possible for her or the circuit to respond at that time.

It was from Micheldever that the Primitive Methodist movement both reached and established itself near Basingstoke. Micheldever was the source from which the "great river" (which is the etymology of the village's name) of this movement flowed northwards, and indeed the Mitcheldever [19th century spelling] Circuit was later renamed the Basingstoke Circuit.

In 1832, a new phase of the Primitive Methodist Hampshire mission of the Shefford Circuit began in Micheldever and surrounding villages. The missionary was Elizabeth Smith, who was appointed by the March 1832 quarter day meeting to spend as much time as possible in the Micheldever and Winchester area of the Hampshire mission.

Later in 1832 two preachers were sent in Elizabeth Smith's place; and "amidst hard toiling and much persecution the work gradually went on. The report of being false prophets, whoremongers, and adulterers was raised against the missionaries; and the ignorant mobs, believing the report, thought they did God service in maltreating them; but the Lord sustained them, and crowned their labours with success.

Ministers John Ride and Edward Bishop were imprisoned in 1834 for preaching in the open-meeting in Micheldever.

Very few Circuit Plans have survived, but one for July-October 1835 shows the Mitcheldever Circuit as including the following places: Waltham; Ellisfield; Stratfield Saye; Bramley; Old Basing; Pamber; Dummer; Whitchurch; Sherfield Green; Ramsdell.

(It is assumed that Waltham is North Waltham; the Primitives also missioned Bishop's Waltham, about 9 miles south of Winchester, and eventually built a chapel there, but it was in the Droxford Circuit.) There were also week-night meetings about that time at Tadley, Baughurst, West Sherborne (Now known as Monk Sherborne), Sherborne St John, Mortimer West End, and Silchester.

By 1838 the preaching had spread significantly towards Basingstoke for its Sunday services, and included

in addition: Oakley; Weston (Corbett? Patrick?), Newnham Green; Herriard; Steventon; Ellisfield; Nutley; Bramley; Pamber; Newfound; Overton; Mapledurwell; Cliddesden; Rotherwick; Little London; Upton Grey

We shall consider some of these villages in more detail.

Sherfield Green

There was a Wesleyan family at Sherfield Green (which was sometimes spelled Shirfield Green in those days), through whom the Primitive Methodist mission also found root in that village. Here is the story as related in the *Magazine* in 1837 (pages 51-3) and in 1873:

One William Taphouse, about whom the article on Wesleyan Methodism spoke, was born on 22nd July 1783 at Sherfield Green. His first deep religious convictions came under the preaching of an Independent minister at Basingstoke, but these were “checked by uninformed advisers”, and he lived in perpetual fear of an awful end to his life. Also, he was much addicted to swearing. Later, when he was still young, he went with a friend to hear the Wesleyans, after which he soon came to faith, opened his house for preaching, and himself became both a class leader and a local preacher.

Death was a frequent visitor to his home. Of his fourteen children, six died in infancy, and a son died aged 17. In 1831 his daughter Ann was converted among the Primitive Methodists, but she too died in 1832.

In December 1833 the Shefford Circuit opened a mission in and around Sherfield Green. William joined them, and opened his house for their preaching, but for this he was evicted from his home. Nonetheless he continued to help the work.

He himself preached his last sermon at the camp meeting held at Sherfield Green in August 1835, and he died on 3rd February 1836.

Edward Bishop's Journal records a missionary meeting at Sherfield Green on Sunday 7th May 1837. “We had a large congregation, good attendance, a blessed influence, and a good collection.”

On 4th June 1837 Bishop preached at Old Basing and Sherfield Green. At the latter, “several professed to have their evidence of justification powerfully renewed, and their enjoyments deepened.” The following day he did visiting, and preached on the green at Stratfield Saye. Some left their horses and carts at the beer-shop, came across to us smoking their pipes, and heard peaceably.

But he makes a general comment on 11th June to the effect that:

Some slander; some oppress; some write; some print; and others circulate hand bills, tracts, etc. When it comes to opening houses, forming societies, and getting the people converted, the opposition is still more serious. Employers and landlords are now used by the enemy as the instruments of vengeance, and the result too frequently is, we are obliged to preach out of doors summer and winter for years, without reaping the fruit of our labours. We persevere in preaching the plain truth in streets, lanes, fields, highways, and hedges.

Clearly, if there was no building on the use of which they could rely, they found serious difficulty in gathering a permanent congregation. A building of their own gave the society permanence, as well as establishing it conspicuously in the community.

In January 1838 George Watts visited many families in Sherfield Green and found the members pressing onward. The September 1839 Mitcheldever Circuit quarterly meeting decided “that Bro J. Champion be appointed to labour the next quarter chiefly on the Sherfield Green part.” By 1840 the Sherfield Green society had fourteen members, but the cause was low. The village was missioned again, and scores attended the ministry, prompted partly by the conversion of a “very wicked man”. The converting work broke out wonderfully, and for several weeks together there was a meeting every night, and more than fifty people “found redemption in the blood of the Lamb.”

The March 1842 Mitcheldever quarterly meeting agreed to make Sherfield Green into a branch of the

circuit, in association with the Alton Mission, and that John Butcher and Sister Price should be appointed to serve on it.

In 1842 the Sherfield Green Circuit was formed from the Mitcheldever Circuit. The September 1842 circuit account book records a membership of 55, plus 5 'on trial' and 10 in the new category of 'doubtful'. By March 1844 this had risen to 100, 33 and 2 respectively.

At Sherfield upon Loddon, in a chapel built in 1810, the 1851 census records 33 + 25 children present in the morning, and 50 in the evening. The minister was George Brown of Sherfield. There must be some discrepancy here, unless the society had purchased a chapel built in 1810 for a different congregation.

Basing (Old Basing)

At Old Basing a mob knocked minister George Wallis down three times, trampled on him, and left him for dead. Basing first appears in the circuit account book in September 1840. It was added to the plan by the June 1852 circuit quarterly meeting.

Oakley

Oakley came on to the Mitcheldever Circuit Plan in March 1838, according to the quarterly meeting minutes, along with Newfound. However, in November 1843 the same committee decided that Oakley preaching should be "given up till spring", but it came back on the plan by decision of the quarterly meeting of March 1845, together with "Dean" and "Wooton", no doubt today's Deane and Wootton St Lawrence. Before 1866, "for some considerable time" the Primitive Methodists met in two cottages, later known as Hunters Moon, in Hill Road. A plot of land was purchased for worship in 1866.

Dummer

There is a Minute in the Mitcheldever Circuit committee's minute book that a person with an illegible surname should preach at Dummer on 1st December, 1839.

George Wallis reported in the 1841 *Magazine* that at Dummer a meeting was held "which was crowned with the blessing of God; many were converted and we have an increase of eleven members."



The Dummer Primitive Methodist Chapel

Newnham

The 1844 and 1846 Primitive Methodist Magazine, looking back, relates that more than ten years had passed since Newnham was first visited by the Primitive Methodists - that is, some time in the mid-1830s. They met many discouragements. For years they used the village green as a preaching place in the

summer, but few persons listened, and those who did so from their own doors. An article on the Primitive Methodist work in Newnham will be published by the Basingstoke Archaeological and Historical Society, and no more need be said here.

“East Sherborne”

East Sherborne is an old name for Sherborne St John. At the time of the 1851 religious census, a Primitive Methodist house meeting recorded 61 present in the afternoon and 126 in the evening.

North Waltham



There is no record of a Methodist group in North Waltham before 1837, when a licence was granted for the building of a chapel. This was built in 1837 and opened in April 1838 by John Ride and Miss S. Price of Andover. A document at the Hampshire Record Office (36M94/9) records that the old malthouse was converted so as to be part preaching house, part dwelling, and had in fact been purchased in 1837.

The chapel drew 50 people on the morning of the religious census, and 135 in the evening. Their minister at the time was George Lee of Basingstoke.

There is a Minute in the Circuit's quarterly meeting for March 1839 that “there be preaching out-of-doors every Sunday at North Waltham at 1½ o'clock,” and another in the circuit committee's minute book that a person with an illegible surname should preach at Dummer and Waltham on 1st December, 1839.

In 1851 the chapel held an average of 40 at its morning services, and 130 in the evenings.

Stratfield Saye

Stratfield Saye also saw conversions, as reported in the 1846 Magazine.

Wootton St Lawrence

Prior to opening in 1870 of the chapel, the Primitive Methodist meetings had been held in the old Pit Hall and in a cottage in the main street I have not been able to discover when the meetings began.

Worting

Worting had been on the Micheldever Plan, but came off as early as June, 1835. Efforts there were presumably sporadic. In March 1844 the quarterly meeting decided that preaching at Worting should be held at 1.30 p.m...

I was born and grew up nearby, in Worting (now Old Worting) Road. In the mid 1960s I met elderly men in chapels like Wootton St Lawrence, Oakley, Charter Alley, Burghclere, men probably born in the final decade of the 19th century, who looked back to, and spoke longingly of, the revivalist days which they knew of in their youth. The quality of their aspirations and their conversation attracted me to that religion. When I first encountered in them what were perhaps the final embers of early PMism in northern Hampshire, my desire might have been expressed in the words of Ruth in the Bible: “your people shall be my people, and your God my God.”

The Wasley's Parcel Fund for Men Overseas, by Ian Williams

During the Second World War a butcher's shop in the Market Square called Wasley's started a fund to send parcels to Basingstoke men serving overseas.

It seems to have started with a poster in the shop window in 1942, and there were collecting boxes around the town. Many individuals also donated, and the committee also ran fundraising dances. The fund ran through 1945, through VE day and VJ Day, until March 1946.

Regular reports were published in the Hants & Berks Gazette. For instance, there was a dance in January – including jitterbugging- that raise £43,12s.31/2d. Contributors that week included Mrs Chesterfield, Mrs Bone, Mrs Fuller, Mrs Jeal, Miss Goddard, Mr Stacey, Miss Dowling, Mrs Kelly of Sarum Hill, Mr Edens. Collecting boxes were held by *The Soldier's Return*, Mrs Sweetman – and Upper IVi of Basingstoke High School. Letters of thanks were received regularly – Flt Sgt Martyn, Harry Hibberd, Pte Cottrell. Pte Cleeve received parcels while in seven different countries!

The main organiser was a Mr Bright, and Mrs Dallimore of the George Hotel was a main fund-raiser. The thanks seem to be mainly for cigarettes, and for being remembered. Some books were sent too. There are intriguing references in the letters – a tank called “Basingstoke”? There was a sub-committee handling the correspondence – do those letters still exist?

If any readers have memories of the Parcel Fund, I would be very grateful if they would get in touch with me. My thanks to Barbara Applin and Barbara Large for their help researching the Gazette archives

The Co-op Bakery, by Barbara Applin

I was particularly intrigued to see the film of the PIMCO bakery shown by David Lee of the Wessex Film & Sound Archive at the last meeting because, as anyone who has a copy of the book **THE CO-OP AND BASINGSTOKE A Story of Change** will know, it includes a full description (pages 40-42) of the new bakery building that was put up in Essex Road in 1926 for the Basingstoke Co-operative Society.

At this stage the Basingstoke society was independent (not part of the Portsea Island Mutual Co-operative Society, PIMCO until 1967) but in its first year it did not have its own bakery. *The Hants & Berks Gazette* had carried a report on 14th February 1893 of a social evening when Mr Frankling of Portsmouth had said that “he hoped that the time was not far distant when they [the Basingstoke society] would have an oven of their own. It seems that somebody must have asked how bread was made at the Portsmouth bakery because then he explained that the flour was mixed by the patent kneaders, and the bread was not touched by hand till it was ready to be delivered to the customer. He added that the inside of their bakery was as clean as it was possible to be, because their fire-places were outside the bakehouses.”

Basingstoke followed his advice, but even better, on 1st May 1926 the *Hants & Berks Gazette* carried a lengthy article on the opening of new premises for the Basingstoke Co-operative Society in Essex Road. The Hampshire Record Office has plans (HRO 58M74/BP1035) which are shown on page 41 of the Co-op book, with the *Gazette's* description of the new bakery: “Within there is light and air in every department. The wall surface is faced with white glazed bricks and liberal coatings of white enamel on the woodwork give it an appearance of scrupulous cleanliness. The building is well ventilated and lighted.” We couldn't resist giving a long extract from the *Gazette* report, as it explains in detail every stage of the bakery process, as well as the machinery used. For instance, “There is a chute from the dough room where the dough comes down to feed a divider, which has been installed by Messrs. Baker, Perkins, Ltd., Peterborough. Mechanical plungers and cylinders, together with dividing arrangements, split the dough into equal pieces of weight sufficient to meet the requirements of the law. The pieces of dough travel on a coned belt to an umbrella topped moulder to be shaped round.” The report describes the proving and moulding and cooling processes, as well as “an electric three-speed cake machine which can

beat up any kind of cake”. Further technical detail is given of the drawplate ovens “heated by hundreds of tubes fired by coke at the very back of the building so that no dust can get into the main baking department”.

Members of the Basingstoke Co-operative Society “found the inspection of the new bakery interesting and instructive” and “Not less so was their inspection of the dairy plant.”

So although David’s film had no sound commentary, the account in the Co-op book helps to explain what we saw– and if you want even more detail you can look it up in the *Gazette* back-numbers!

THE CO-OP AND BASINGSTOKE A Story of Change Basingstoke Archaeological & Historical Society, 2013 (obtainable at the Willis Museum and Waterstones, price £9.95)

A knocker pie surprise, by John Hollands

In the early 1880s “some [Basingstoke] gentlemen who had won a certain unpopularity” (Arthur Hailstone’s words) awoke one morning to find that their door knockers had been stolen during the night. This “unpopularity” appears to have been connected in some way with the arrival of the Salvation Army in Basingstoke in 1880, and the rioting that the Salvationists’ campaigning against strong drink provoked in the following year. The person or persons who stole the door knockers were never tracked down, but just before Christmas, a huge pie was delivered to the police station with the “compliments of the season”, and in it were the stolen door knockers. The story is alluded to in one of Peter Parkinson’s bronze panels on the Basingstoke Triumphal Gateway. Along with the other fifteen the panel it was photographed in high resolution by Howard Ray for our new publication about the Gateway, and I wrote the accompanying text.



At present I am reading Thomas Hardy’s well-researched historical novel *The Trumpet Major* first published in 1880 as a magazine serial, and then as a book soon afterwards. The action takes place in 1804 in the part of “Wessex” around “Budmouth” (i.e. the part of Dorset around Weymouth) and is concerned with preparations against an imminently expected invasion by the forces of Napoleon Buonaparte. Detailed preparations were made in the Basingstoke area, too, and you may remember that one of my archives-based talks included an article that George Willis wrote about them for the *Gazette*, drawing upon source material then kept in the Borough Museum (but since transferred to the Record Office). You can of course read Mr Willis’s article in the Local History Room.

So where is this leading, you ask, and what’s the surprise? In Chapter 26 of *The Trumpet Major* I was surprised to read the following; the speaker is one of the book’s main characters, the boorish yeoman, Festus Derriman. He is speaking about the pleasures that he and his fellow warriors would have to forego in the event of a French invasion. (George III regularly holidayed in Weymouth).

No rattling dinners at Stacie’s Hotel, and the King below with his staff. No wrenching off door knockers

and sending 'em to the bakehouse in a pie that nobody calls for. Weeks of cut-and-thrust work rather!

So were knocker pie pranks common among soldiers when in camp with nothing more serious to do? Had the Basingstoke prankster(s) learned this trick whilst serving in the army, and could they have been reminded of it by reading Thomas Hardy's then new novel? These questions may never be answered, unless of course, *you* know differently.

The Basingstoke Triumphal Gateway is available to Friends at the special price of £6.50 (normal price £7.50).

What's on at the Willis?

Community Gallery: Alençon Lace

18 May 29 Jun 2013

Since the 16th century, Basingstoke's French twin town Alençon has been home to fine lace-making. Made with needles, the Point d Alençon requires a high level of skills and craftsmanship as making just one square centimetre of lace takes up to seven hours. This exhibition at the Willis Museum provides the opportunity to discover the technique behind the Point d Alençon and to admire unique original pieces. On Friday 28 and Saturday 29 June 2013, two of the seven lace-makers who are the only ones in the world who possess the production technique for the Point d Alençon will be at the Museum to show how Alençon lace is made.

This unique exhibition is brought to you by the Ville d Alençon, the Alençon-Basingstoke Twinning Association and Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council. Thanks to: Ville d Alençon Service Communication

Sainsbury Gallery: Wildlife Photographer of the Year

18 May 27 Jul 2013

This world-renowned annual exhibition provides a spotlight on the rarely-seen wonders of the natural world. All 100 winning and commended images of the 2012 Veolia Environnement Wildlife Photographer of the Year competition are displayed, selected from thousands of international entries by a panel of expert judges. Veolia Environnement Wildlife Photographer of the Year is co-owned by the Natural History Museum and BBC Worldwide and is sponsored by Veolia Environnement.

Mini beasts and microscopes

28 May Drop in sessions beginning 10.30 am, 12.30 pm and 2 pm

Turn mini-beasts into mega-beasts by exploring specimens from the Hampshire Museum Service collection under the microscope. Free but a £1 donation would be appreciated.

Ellaway Room: Wild about wildlife

18 May to 27 July

Drop in wildlife related craft activities. Free but a £1 donation towards materials would be appreciated.

Archaeology Gallery: Friends' talk: The Portsmouth to London Road, by Jennifer Goldsmith

20 June, 7.30 pm

While stuck in the endless stream of traffic through east Hampshire to and from Portsmouth, most drivers are probably unaware that they are actually following one of the most important routes in British history. Local historian Jennifer Goldsmith has been researching the history of the road, and has unearthed some of the significant events, places and people which made it so important over the years.

Community Gallery: The Art of Making

6 July 2013 to 03 Aug 2013

An exhibition by the Hampshire and Berkshire Guild of Craftsmen, a group of about 20 designer-makers of top quality contemporary work including ceramics, textiles, jewellery, metal, furniture and woodwork, leatherwork, sculpture and printmaking. Many of us exhibit at a national level and the group includes established writers on and teachers of contemporary craft. The exhibition is an opportunity to be inspired, to buy and to commission one-off pieces.

Sainsbury Gallery: Recycling & Fashion

10 August – 14 September

Exhibition by local designer Linda Major – Past Present and Future, showcasing innovation, creation and construction. Challenge what you think and the way you think about fabric, fashion and recycling.

Archaeology Gallery: Friends' 10 minute talks

18 July, 7.30 pm

Once again, members have an opportunity to share pictures and stories, memories, interests and hobbies. We hope that some are surprising; we are sure that all will be interesting! *Please let our Chairman know what you would like to do!* (derekganthony@btinternet.com / 01256 322073)

Community Gallery: Dazzle Exhibition at Basingstoke

10 Aug to 21 Sept

Celebrate the glamour, elegance and exquisite design of the roaring twenties with *Dazzle*. This spectacular display of 1920s beaded dresses and accessories has been specially created from Hampshire County Council's Museums Service collections. Enjoy this rare opportunity to see these stunning and fragile pieces on public display together.

Willis Museum and Sainsbury Gallery

10 Aug – 31 August Summer Holiday Activities

Drop-in for a range of family activities over the summer break. There will be opportunities to explore patterns in *Dazzle*, traditional family games and more! See website for more details.

Archaeology Gallery: Friends' talk: The history of Church Cottage, by Bill Fergie

19 Sept, 7.30 pm

Long-standing Friends' member, Bill is a noted authority on historic buildings. Church Cottage is also long-standing, and Bill will bring us up to date with the latest interpretation of the dendrochronology.

Community Gallery: Basingstoke Art Club bi-annual exhibition

21 Sept – 26 Oct

Bi-annual exhibition by the Basingstoke Art Club. Watch the website for more details.