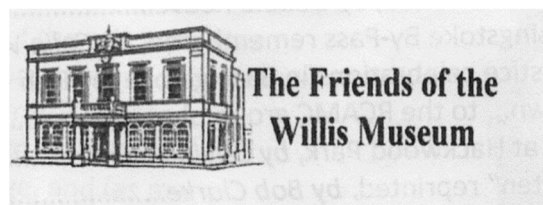


Friends of the Willis Museum Newsletter January 2023



The Local History Gallery in the re-displayed Gosport Museum. (Photo, Jenny Stevens).
See From the Venue Manager, and Opening Day at the re-displayed Gosport Museum and Art Gallery.

'The Friends' was founded in 1978 to "promote, support and improve the Willis Museum." Meetings are held on the third Thursday of the month for ten months of the year, and other events are arranged from time to time. *Registered Charity no 280406.*

Annual subscription £12. Visitor for one meeting £3

Your committee: Derek Anthony (Chairman), David Wickens (Deputy Chairman and Programme Secretary); Ian Scott (Treasurer); Isobel Archer (minutes secretary); Steve Crudge; (Publicity); John Hollands (Publicity and Newsletter); Barbara Johnson (Membership Secretary); Jenny Stevens (Venue Manager, ex officio).

Contact us c/o the museum, or by email at enquiries@friendsofthewillis.org.uk

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From the Chair, by Derek Anthony

Welcome to the first Newsletter of the New Year. I do hope that you had a very enjoyable Christmas and that 2023 will prove to be a better year for all of us.

As a result of the elections held at the October 2022 Annual General Meeting your committee now consists of Derek Anthony (Chair), David Wickens (Vice-Chair), Isobel Archer (Secretary), Ian Scott (Treasurer) plus committee members Barbara Johnson, John Hollands and Steve Crudge. Barbara is our Membership Secretary and John and Steve form our publicity team.

I would like to thank everyone on our current committee plus Howard Ray and Alistair Craig, both of whom retired from the committee in October, for their hard work and dedication and all our members for their loyalty and participation in 2022, a year which brought its share of challenges. Due to your support the Friends of the Willis Museum has been able to transfer £25,000 to the Hampshire Cultural Trust, a contribution towards the planned refurbishment of the "Story of Basingstoke" galleries.

At the same time, thanks to the efforts of their managements and staffs the Hampshire Cultural Trust and the Willis Museum both enter 2023 in strong positions.

Now a few words about the future. Thanks to our Programme Secretary, David Wickens, we have a full programme of monthly talks taking us up to the end of our financial year in June. As you will be aware, sometimes illness or other unpredictable circumstances cause the cancellation or postponement of a talk but, so far, David has always been able to "fill the gap", sometimes at very short notice.

I would also like to mention the Willis Museum's programme of Sunday afternoon talks, which take place at 2.00pm on the last Sunday of the month in the Archaeology Gallery. Bookings can be made through the Willis Museum website or by telephoning the Museum on 01256 465902. The cost is just £5 per person and this month's talk will be given by Dr Tony Hersh on Sunday 29th January, his subject – "A Day in the life of a Magistrate".

Finally, I do hope that I will have the pleasure of welcoming you to one of our monthly meetings in the not-too-distant future.

From the Venue Manager, *Jenny Stevens*

Happy New year to all!

As well as being the Venue Manager for The Willis Museum & Sainsbury Gallery, some of you may have noticed that my job title also includes the phrase Arts & Culture Curatorial Lead. This means I have responsibility for looking after and interpreting the collections that relate to both Basingstoke and Gosport, that are held within the wider Hampshire collections.

As many of you are aware, a third of my time in the last three years (as well as coping with Covid related issues) has been working on the redevelopment of the Gosport Museum. The venue, the town's former Grammar School, has been through various incarnations over the years, including being the Borough Museum for some years and the home of SEARCH, a specialist hands-on museum for schools run first by Hampshire County Council and then the Trust. In c.2005 the museum part of the building was closed, and it was amalgamated into the Gosport Discovery Centre, with the Local Studies part of the library moving into the museum building.

Around 5 years ago, HCC decided to bring all the library services back under one roof and offered the trust the chance to take over the rooms previously used by the library. With SEARCH still in the building and the trust having been managing the exhibition gallery on the site, it was agreed that the trust would take on the building, restore a museum display and create a new facility incorporating a café, retail and room hire facilities in the building.

Gosport – my hometown, is recognised as being an area of deprivation. Its growth and prosperity were once very much linked to the Royal Navy (Portsmouth being the other side of the harbour). Gosport was home to a number of shore establishments and support services, all but two of which have now closed. It has therefore attracted money both directly from the Government, in the form of the Historic High Street funding, but indirectly through organisations such as Historic England and The Arts Council.

This, along with funding from HCC, the trust and some other grant giving bodies, has allowed us to refurbish the building to create a lovely new facility for the people of Gosport and visitors.

My role has been focussed around creating the new displays for the museum. A large part of this work was working with our external consultants to engage local community groups and individuals through workshops and discussions, to decide on the stories they wanted to tell and the objects they wanted to display to illustrate those stories.

It was a very rewarding experience and has given us many ideas and pointers for future projects!

If you do get the chance to visit Gosport, please do go and visit the museum and take a look at the website: www.gosportmuseumandgallery.org.uk

A new King, by Isobel Archer

I was born in the summer of 1952, the year that our late Queen, Elizabeth II came to the throne. As with many people, she was the only monarch I had known, and the end of her reign was indeed the end of an era.

On 11th September 2022 I joined with others who had gathered in front of the Willis Museum, to witness the Official Proclamation of our new monarch – King Charles III. The Willis Museum was chosen as the most appropriate venue as it was originally Basingstoke Town Hall, where the Proclamation for the Queen had taken place 70 years earlier.

This new Proclamation was read by the Mayor of Basingstoke and Deane, Cllr Paul Miller. He was joined on the platform by the Deputy Lieutenant of Hampshire, Lady Portal MBE DL, while other dignitaries looked on. The robes and regalia added to the feeling of occasion.'

'Whereas it has pleased Almighty God to call to his mercy our late Sovereign Lady Queen Elizabeth II of Blessed and Glorious memory, by whose decease the Crown of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is solely and rightly come to the Prince Charles Philip Arthur George, we therefore, the Lords

Spiritual and Temporal of this realm, and members of the House of Commons, together with other members of her Majesty's Privy Council, and Representatives of the realms and territories, Aldermen and citizens of London and others, do now hereby, with one voice and consent of tongue and heart, publish and proclaim that the Prince Charles Philip Arthur George is now, by the death of our late Sovereign of happy memory, become our only lawful and rightful Liege Lord Charles III by the grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and of his other realms and territories, King, Head of the Commonwealth, Defender of the Faith, to whom we do acknowledge all faith and obedience with humble affection, beseeching God by whom Kings and Queens reign, to bless his Majesty with long and happy years to reign over us.'



Left: September 11, 2022: King Charles III is proclaimed to the people of Basingstoke.

This exact Proclamation was of course being repeated all over the country at the same time. It was a moving event, and you were aware that it was history in the making. In this modern age, when many old traditions have been swept away, some rightly so, it felt fitting

that this one has survived. Perhaps when many were feeling a little overwhelmed by the death of the Queen who had been such a large part of our lives, it provided some continuity, a feeling that all would be well.

On 8th February 1952, the Mayor of Basingstoke Colonel Sidney Charles Rigby Dale, stood in front of the Town Hall in the marketplace and read the Proclamation for her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. I wonder how many of our members were there as children.

With my love of history, I also looked back to an event that took place 419 years ago. In 1603, when Queen Elizabeth I died, her minister Sir Robert Cecil emerged from Whitehall, accompanied by his Councillors, to read a Proclamation informing the crowd 'Forasmuch as it has pleased Almighty God to call to his mercy, out of this transitory life, our Sovereign Lady, the High and Mighty Prince, Elizabeth late Queen of England, etc.' The Proclamation declares King James VI of Scotland is the legal and lawful recipient of the realms. The wording of that Proclamation is almost identical to the one we still use.

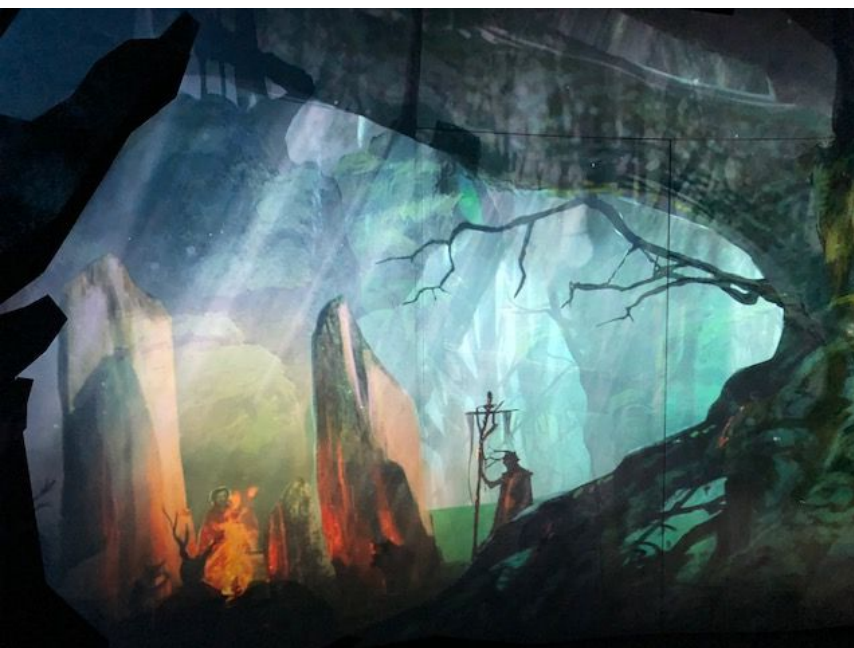
It's like following the threads of history back into the past, weaving their story with ours, reinforcing the continuity of everything. I'm sure that the same Proclamation has been read out over the centuries, on the accession of every new Monarch. In the crowds outside the Willis Museum on that September day in 2022,

were some small children, who will one day look back, perhaps telling their own children, ‘I was there when Charles III was proclaimed King.’

And so, along with the Mayor and Councillors and all who were present that day, we say ‘God Save The King.’

878 AD: “Step into Anglo-Saxon Winchester”, by Steve Crudge

Hampshire Cultural Trust staff and volunteers were invited to preview the Trust’s 878 AD experience in Winchester, an offer taken up by a small group from the Willis Museum. The venue is to be found on the upper floor of the Brooks Shopping Centre in the city, having taken over premises formerly occupied by Argos!



Left: The exhibition prologue; right: Friends’ Publicity Officer, Steve Crudge, and Willis Museum Visitor Experience Assistants, Mandy Brennan and John Cooper, (better known to us simply as “Mandy” and “John”) test some of the merchandise on sale.

As indicated by its title the aim of this venue is to recreate the experience of life in Winchester in the year 878, a time of particular significance to both the city and the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Wessex. The Vikings continued advance across England from north-east to south-west put all of Wessex at risk and

Alfred the Great staked his own and his kingdom’s survival on a battle at Edington in Wiltshire.

The experience starts with a prologue, setting the scene of the increasing threat of Viking conquest and the preparations for both battle and domestic defence. Visitors are then admitted to the main gallery which contains video recreations of Anglo-Saxon Winchester, explanations of many aspects of life in the city plus details of some of the finds relating to the period. Interaction comes in the form of role-playing; two characters appeared during my visit, the itinerant trader putting on a most engaging performance and emphasising, if it were needed, that merchants prefer times of peace and prosperity to the insecurities of war. We also learnt that a pound consisted of 240 pence in those days, as remained the case until 1971!

The new venue was created in collaboration with Ubisoft, the makers of the hit game ‘Assassin’s Creed’. The twelfth instalment titled ‘Assassin’s Creed: Valhalla’ features historic Winchester as a place in which the player can explore. Some of the artefacts which feature in the game, alongside information on how the game was developed, also appear within the new exhibition.

An epilogue brings news of Alfred's victory at Edington and the consequent safety and prosperity of Winchester and Wessex. Peace and stability laid the initial foundations for the kingdom of England, more fully realised by Alfred's grandson Athelstan. Alfred himself improved administrative, legal, and educational standards with particular emphasis on the wider use of the English language.

The experience does not need to end when you leave the venue; an "augmented reality app" entitled 878AD Winchester Revealed, downloadable on arrival or departure, allows Anglo-Saxon buildings to be encountered as you walk around the city centre.

In summary, an enjoyable and varied experience which aims to cater for a wide range of tastes while also giving an insight into the current thinking and approach of Hampshire Cultural Trust. My only reservation is that the venue is, in fact, quite small and may struggle when demand is high. In particular, the prologue and epilogue compartments can only handle limited numbers at a time. Full admission price of £15 is, therefore, on the high side but not out of line with today's going rate and includes any number of revisits within a year.

878 AD opened on Saturday November 12th.

With thanks to Mandy Brennan, John Cooper, and Chelsey Lewington.

Opening Day at the re-displayed Gosport Museum and Art Gallery, by David Wickens, with photos by the author and by Howard Ray

Responding to the invitation to the 'Friends' from Rebekah Jeffery of HCT to the official re-opening of the Gosport Museum and Art Gallery following a major **£1.4 million refurbishment project** I travelled down to Gosport for this event on Saturday 26th November. Two other Friends, Howard and Wendy Ray also attended.

Located on the High Street in the heart of the town, Gosport Museum and Art Gallery's home is in the former grade II Old Grammar School, which has been a centre for education and culture for more than 100 years.



Outside view.

It now features a new layout for the museum, a community gallery, new café and enlarged play gallery for under-fives and enhanced learning rooms to cater for the venue's schools and learning programme. Within the next few weeks there will also be a covered walkway linking the Museum and the historically separate Art Gallery resulting in everything being combined into one facility.

The refurbishment project was made possible by funding from several sources, including the Gosport High Street Heritage Action Zone programme led by Historic England, Arts Council England, the Foyle Foundation, Gosport Borough Council, plus donations from individuals and groups, including the Friends of Gosport Museum as well as investment by Hampshire Cultural Trust. Hampshire County Council was a key supporter and major funder of the project.

After coffee, pastries, and cup-cakes on arrival the official opening began with speeches from Peter Chegwyn, the Leader of Gosport Borough Council, Alan Lovell, Chairman of Hampshire Cultural Trust, Rob

Harvey, Leader of Hampshire County Council, and Paul Sapwell, Chief Executive of Hampshire Cultural Trust.



Left: a dream fulfilled: Wendy Redman cuts the ribbon to officially open the museum. Paul Sapwell, Alan Lovell and Peter Chegwyn (left to right) stand behind.

As many of you know our Venue Manager, Jenny

Stevens, whose family roots are in Gosport has spent much of this year commuting between the two locations to assist with all the refurbishment work in Gosport. It was good to hear Paul Sapwell acknowledging her significant contribution.

Work on this location has been in hand for several years and we heard that it had been the dream of the Venue Manager, Wendy Redman, for twenty-four years. The wait was worth it: the facilities, although not absolutely finalised, are superb.

After the formalities everyone had the opportunity to explore the building. Whilst the local history gallery, just to the right of the main entrance, is relatively small, the presentation of the exhibits in a multitude of small cases, the concise "static" information panels and the numerous electronic panels showing local historical scenes on a rolling basis provided much of interest. **(See the front cover illustration.)**

Behind this Galley you access a multitude of rooms spread over two floors offering workshop space, variable and permanent exhibitions, meeting rooms and even a lovely children's playroom. It was pleasing to note that a lift has been installed. The refurbished and generous toilet facilities were also checked out!



Left: The Café; right: a learning room with displays and desks



Back at the main entrance we were able to appreciate the work in hand on the link to the Art Gallery and what will be a lovely, secluded tile paved open garden area. A further source of funding, 'Tag-A-Tile', raised over £12,000 by asking individuals to buy one.

We were able to access the relatively small Art Gallery by a temporary circuitous route and spend time watching the specially commissioned film presentation featuring the plant life of the locality.

It was then back to the main entrance to test out the extremely inviting, spacious and well stocked café facilities offering a wide range of hot and cold refreshments. This facility will be operated entirely by the Museum staff and volunteers resulting in all the profits finding their way into the HCT coffers.

The accompanying photos will give you an idea on what has been achieved at Gosport in terms of presentation and lighting; I have every reason to believe that comparable achievements will be seen after the re-display of Willis's 'Story of Basingstoke Gallery', and I look forward to the opportunity we shall have to work with HCT on bringing these achievements about.

Memories of Potters Lane, by Fred Kinge, (a sequel to the Robert Brown photo feature in our September issue)

My memories of Potters Lane are of a rather narrow, but busy thoroughfare linking Church Street and Wote Street. On the south side were mostly houses and on the north side shops with a public house at both ends. At the Church Street end was the charming and very old Rose and Crown, while at the Wote Street end was the nearly 100-year-old Angel.

My first memory or rather my first tenuous connection with Potters Lane was when my mother purchased my pram from E Litchfield at no.16, Father was away doing his bit for King and country so Mother was in charge of the purse strings. Interestingly the pram, a Silver Cross, cost £10.16s with a pillow for an extra 3s 11p. In later years as a small boy, I would stand transfixed looking at the large selection of toys in the shop. Litchfield's also sold gramophones and records as well as all kinds of musical instruments, baby carriages and fancy goods – not bad for a small shop.



Next door stood Hampshire Dairies, run by Mr and Mrs Bailey. As well as selling milk a wide variety of dairy products were on display. Their daughter Thelma was one of the first ladies to join St Michael's Choir when a lady's section was introduced in 1959. Between Litchfield's and the next shop, Farmers who sold groceries and provisions was a narrow entrance that led to Carpenters Yard. Situated here was a small cottage that locals knew intriguingly as Smugglers Cottage. Next to Farmers was a store many Basingstoke people visited, this was Munford's paint and wallpaper store, (telephone no.98), selling everything a DIY enthusiast would require.

At the Church Street end on the south side no 27 was a cycle shop with the grand title of Southern Counties Cycle Company, otherwise known as Charlie Everett's, a well-known local character. This was an Aladdin's Cave of cycles, on entering you would be surrounded by cycles of every type and make. Cycles would also be hanging from the ceiling in various states of repair; the walls were covered by shelves containing a myriad of spare parts. It was here in 1959 that I purchased my very first bicycle for the princely sum of £15.15s and was charged an extra 2s 6p for a bell. On the opposite side of the road was Charles Philpott, baker and confectioner in whose shop window was that famous wedding cake.

On the south side at the Wote Street end was the British Workman Restaurant which later was transformed into the Silver Star, the first Chinese Restaurant in Basingstoke. At last, we could sample the delights of Chinese Cuisine – no more pie and a pint.

At the end of 1965 the lane was filled with the sounds of removal vans as families moved out of their homes and businesses for the building of the new town centre. Many families had lived there for years, those being the days when people lived above their shops and businesses; these were either re-located or closed for good.

In 1966 as a GPO telephone engineer. I was involved re-routing cables away from Potters Lane and recovering the redundant cables. This also included going into the buildings prior to demolition to recover internal cables. Inside these lead cables were copper wires, and at the time the price of copper was high so it was profitable to recover them. My last memory of the area was installing cables in the New Town Centre including Potters Walk!

Please keep sending your memories of Potters Lane. Ref: September Newsletter pp 9-11

www.friendsofthewillis.org.uk

Holidays, by Isobel Archer

Now that Christmas is over and done with for another year, we look for ways to pass the time during those long cold months before the first signs of Spring start to peek through. For many it's when thoughts turn to holiday plans. Of course, in these modern times, the world is our oyster – quite literally, but looking back in time we see quite different holiday plans and experiences.

It all really took off in 1938, when the government enacted the 'Holidays with Pay Act' giving all workers the right to have paid holiday. This didn't happen overnight but was the results of 25 years of hard campaigning by trade unionists and some supportive politicians and members of the public, in the face of stiff opposition

by the government and the employers. The fight for paid holiday was due to a strong sense of injustice felt by the campaigners, as senior local government workers had up to 48 days paid holiday a year and manual workers had none. The result of the Act was the chance at last for thousands of workers to take their families away, often to the seaside, safe in the knowledge that they were not losing a week's wages.

Holidays had existed before then of course but were mostly enjoyed by white collar workers and those with funds to spare. Bank holidays had been introduced in 1871, and decreed that: -

No person was compelled to make any payment or to do any act upon a bank holiday which he would not be compelled to do or make on Christmas Day or Good Friday, and the making of a payment or the doing of an act on the following day was equivalent to doing it on the holiday.

The bank holidays named were Easter Monday, Whitsunday, the first Monday in August and Boxing Day. These were added to Christmas Day and Good Friday, which were already non-working days. Whilst this was nice, and gave workers a few extra days off, they were not paid for these holidays.

For those who could afford it, this extra day gave them a nice long weekend when they often hopped aboard a steam train and headed for the coast. The Victorians took to the seaside like a duck to water, enjoying donkey rides, open air concerts and walks along the promenade. The seaside piers, originally built to provide landing stages for boats, developed into a source of fun and entertainment. As well as walking along the pier, or rather 'promenading' as the Victorians would say, there were also theatres, bars and shops, penny arcades and Punch and Judy shows to be found along its length.



Left: Clacton-on-Sea pier 1895.

The larger seaside resorts developed rapidly to meet this new demand. Pleasure gardens were laid out, music hall and variety entertainments were provided, lidos and outdoor swimming pools sprang up, and ice-cream, candy floss and fish and chips were readily available. And let's not forget the rise of the seaside landlady, that uniquely British character.

Not everyone headed for the coast, and early adventurers could enjoy options such as cycling, hiking, youth hosteling and camping. Then came

the rise of the holiday camp, with the biggest player in the early days of the business being Billy Butlin.

In 1936 he bought a plot of land in Skegness and built the first camp. It was officially opened by Amy Johnson, who had achieved fame as the first woman to fly solo from England to Australia. Clacton-on-sea was the second and Filey was in the process of being built when war broke out. These were given to the government to be used by the military for the duration although he bought them back afterwards.

Soon there was no stopping him, with the original holiday camps being enjoyed by thousands until the 1970s. Then the package holiday abroad became popular, and the holiday camps declined, so Billy Butlin sold his empire to the Rank Organisation, who changed and modernized it into its present incarnation.

I wonder how many of us have enjoyed a week at a Butlins holiday camp in our younger days? I hold my hand up to that, enjoying a week's holiday at Filey in 1967.

But times move on, and the continent beckoned. Flights became cheaper, and holidays abroad offered more

certainly about the weather than a stay-at-home vacation. Gradually we went further afield until we embraced all the options and destinations we can now choose from. So, whether your holiday of choice is a cruise, a faraway destination or a quiet get-away overlooking one of our English lakes, I hope you enjoy the thrill of planning your next trip away. And while you make your plans, spare a thought for those ancestors who didn't have the opportunities we have.

Credits: Clacton-on-Sea pier image - fiveminutehistory.com/18-victorian-seaside-pleasure-piers; Filey - Butlins image - www.butlins-memories.com/filey



BUTLIN'S FILEY—The Oasis Bar

Photo : E. Nägele, John Hinde Studios.

Your attention is drawn...to a school cap, badge and tie, *by the editor*

These items of QMSB (Queen Mary School for Boys) school uniform exhibited in the Basingstoke Gallery may well have been worn up to when they became redundant at the end of the summer term of 1970, after which this boys' county grammar school merged with the adjoining Charles Chute Secondary Modern School to become a comprehensive school now known as the Vyne Community School, whilst its name was transferred to the linked Queen Mary (Sixth Form) College in Cliddesden Road.

The school could trace its origin back as far as 1556 (and indirectly to the 13th century). It was in 1556 that Queen Mary endowed this school in its first home, the Holy Ghost Chapel's Chantry that had been closed down by her staunchly protestant predecessor the short-lived King Edward VI along with its administrative body, the Guild of the Holy Ghost which had had an educational function itself.) Later it moved to a separate building nearby. The new Holy Ghost School catered for about ten boys and was taught by a schoolmaster endowed with a salary of £12 a year.

The school moved to Worting Road in 1870 where it had a considerably larger intake and was renamed Queen Mary's School and from there it moved to purpose built new premises in Vyne Road in 1938.

A famous 18th century scholar at the Holy Ghost School was the Selborne parson and naturalist Gilbert White (1720-1793), who once got involved in a schoolboy prank that caused part of the chapel ruins to fall in the middle of the

night with a crash that locals mistook for an earthquake! A famous Worting Road scholar was the writer, poet, and radio and television cricket commentator John Arlott (1914-1991) so well remembered for his celebrated Hampshire burr.

The Holy Ghost School had a famous schoolmaster, too, in the person of Charles Butler (1560-1647), "the father of English beekeeping", though his most important work was done after he had resigned from the post to become the Vicar of Wootton St Lawrence. It was he that established that beehives are ruled by a *Queen Bee*, publishing his findings in a book entitled "The female monarchie or the historie of bees" written in a phonetic alphabet of his own invention. After nearly four centuries it is still in print.

The image on the cap and badge depicts the Holy Ghost descending towards Jesus in the form of a dove after his baptism by John the



Baptist. The School Motto was *Spiritus Nolite Extinguere* ("Never Extinguish the Spirit") which was also the title of the school song.

*Were you a pupil of this school or related to one, and did you wear these items of uniform? Can you tell us the words of the QMSB song? Do you have any interesting memories of wearing a school cap or girls' school bonnet at another school? Please share your memories with the editor to make a feature in the May issue of our newsletter. **And I'd love to hear about YOUR choice of exhibit for the next feature in this series. If you'd like to photograph it and write about it so much the better, but if you'd prefer not to, I will do the rest.***

Book review: Marple: Twelve New Stories, Harper Collins, 2022, reviewed by Steve Crudge

Agatha Christie has long become a brand, her status as the "Queen of Crime" underlined on a regular basis. Interpretations and re-interpretations of her stories and leading characters appear each year. Writers, directors, and actors have recognised in her work an adaptability to the 21st century that is not always immediately apparent but more evident than in the work of many of her, very fine, contemporaries in the field of crime fiction.

The likes of Dorothy Sayers, Ngaio Marsh and Margery Allingham were regarded as at least the equals of Agatha Christie in the third quarter of the 20th century and their novels remain eminently readable. However, they have since comparatively faded from view while the Agatha Christie "franchise" has developed an irresistible momentum. This pre-eminence is, I believe, particularly the result of two factors. The first is the very successful transfer to television of Agatha Christie's two leading creations, Hercule Poirot and Jane Marple, notably their brilliant interpretations by David Suchet and Joan Hickson respectively. Other Poirots and Marples are available but should be treated with a degree of caution - Suchet and Hickson remain definitive in my view.

The second factor is social change and shifting outlooks. Agatha Christie was obviously a very clever writer and underlying her ingenuity was a subtle critique of the Britain of her time and the setting for her novels. She chose, with calculated mischief, two outsiders as her leading protagonists. Hercule Poirot was a refugee from war and palpably not English. As such he is subject to considerable prejudice of varying forms. Jane Marple is very much English but overlooked because of her gender and her age (the latter making her a subtle forerunner of Richard Osman's Thursday Murder Club). Her invisibility works both for her and against her; shut out and disregarded by the powers that be but scarcely noticed as she investigates murder.

The modern taste for those battling against prejudice and preconceptions has fuelled the success of these two great fictional creations and reinforced Agatha Christie's reputation. Writer and characters remain emphatically in fashion.

In this vein, twelve new Miss Marple stories have been published. Each is written by a different author, all women. Some of the stories are very much written in an Agatha Christie style, as if newly discovered pieces by the author herself, while others adopt their own approach but all of them are respectfully faithful to the personality of Jane Marple – she remains identifiably the character created by Christie.

Settings also vary widely, a number using the device of nephew Raymond West's generosity and indulgence to take Miss Marple to a variety of exotic locations, including New York, Hong Kong, and Italy. In a more traditional vein "Miss Marple's Christmas" by Ruth Ware works particularly well but my personal favourite is Elly Griffiths' "Murder at the Villa Rosa", beautifully set on the Italian coast not far from Naples. Again, Miss Marple is very much herself but otherwise the story is not quite what it appears to be – a very clever twist worthy of the Queen of Crime herself!

What's on at the Willis

Now until 22 Jan: Last few days Trinity Buoy Wharf Drawing Prize Exhibition *Promoting and celebrating excellence in contemporary drawing practice, the Prize provides an important platform for drawing. For artists, designers and makers it serves as a catalyst within their careers. A notable "first" for Basingstoke, supported by the Trinity Buoy Wharf Trust.* **Sainsbury Gallery**

29 Jan, 2– 3.30 pm: Sunday afternoon talk (followed by tea or coffee and cake): **A Day in the Life of a Magistrate, by Dr Tony Hersh.** *Interactive talk: give your own verdict on real life cases from Basingstoke Magistrates' Court.* **Archaeology Gallery.** Admission £5. Book on-line at www.hampshireculture.org.uk/willis-museum, call in or phone 01256 465902.

2 Feb-1 May Shoes inside out. *An exhibition of shoes from the Hampshire Cultural Trust's own collection, with a strong emphasis on the social history of the items, and some interesting X-ray photography.* **Sainsbury Gallery**

11-19 Feb: Half-term activities: (1) **Elves and the Shoemaker trail.** *You are an elf in search of the materials and tools you need to make the shoes. Search around the museum to find the missing pieces that will make up a secret word or phrase. Free but donations welcome* (2) **Design your own Shoes:** *Using the template provided create your ideal pair of shoes, add your own laces, and then add them to our design wall. Free but donations welcome* (3) **16 Feb and 17 Feb, 11am-12noon and 2-3 pm: Family Workshops: Decorate your own Shoe Clips.** *Taking inspiration from our shoe exhibition, decorate your own shoe clips. Use bows, sequins or tassels, the choice is yours! All materials will be provided. Cost £3 per child. Recommended age 5+ Pre-booking required. Children must be accompanied by an adult at all times.* **Ellaway Room 16 Feb, 7.30 pm (Friends' event): The history of Shaw House, by Sarah Somerville.** *Currently owned by West Berkshire Council as a conference centre and visitor attraction, Shaw House on the edge of Newbury is an important example of an early symmetrical H plan Elizabethan mansion.* **Archaeology Gallery**

26 Feb, 2 – 3.30 pm: Sunday afternoon talk (followed by tea or coffee and cake) **The twists and Turns of the English Republic (1648-1660) and why it failed, part 1, The road to regicide, by Tim Craven.** Admission £5. Book on-line at www.hampshireculture.org.uk/willis-museum, call in or phone 01256 465902. **Archaeology Gallery**

16 Mar, 7.30 pm (Friends' event): The real Downtown Abbey, by Ian Porter. *The Highclere Castle story.* **Archaeology Gallery.**

19 Mar, 2 pm – 3.30 pm: Sunday afternoon talk (followed by tea or coffee and cake): **Birds of the South Atlantic and Antarctica, by Keith Betton.** *A second treat for budding ornithologists from the Chairman of the Hampshire Ornithological Society, Admission £5. Book on-line at www.hampshireculture.org.uk/willis-museum, call in or phone 01256 465902.* **Archaeology Gallery**

1-16 Apr Easter School Holiday activities: (1) **Cinderella Trail:** *She needs a dress, a carriage, and some footmen! Help The Fairy Godmother and Cinderella find all the things needed to let Cinders go to the ball. Free but donations welcome* (2) **6 & 13 Apr 11 am -12 noon and 2-3 pm Suncatchers Workshop.** *Whilst the days get longer, as spring takes hold, create a suncatcher and make the most of the sunshine. Cost £3 per child. Recommended age 5+ Pre-booking required. Children must be accompanied by an adult at all times.* (3) **Flower Windmills Workshop, 7 & 14 Apr, 11 am -12 noon and 2-3 pm:** *Using templates and origami, make a hand-held windmill with a floral theme. Cost £3 per child. Recommended age 5+ Pre-booking required. Children must be accompanied by an adult at all times.* **Ellaway Room**

20 Apr, 7.30 pm (Friends' event): Special Operation in WW2 and the training of secret agents at Beaulieu, by Nick Saunders. **Archaeology Gallery.**

13 May-30 Jul: Windrush. *Commemorating the 75th anniversary of the Empire Windrush's arrival in Britain in collaboration with local groups.* **Sainsbury Gallery.**

18 May, 7.30 pm (Friends' Event): *The Willow of Basing: the life and times of Sir William Paulet (d 1572), by Alan Turton. Archaeology Gallery. The owner of Basing House who survived so many political and religious storms as a willow and not as an oak. Archaeology Gallery.*

Details of the Basingstoke Gallery exhibitions during this period are not yet available, and nor are details of the Sunday afternoon talks in April and May. These details will be available at the museum as soon as possible. Call in or phone 01256 465902. They will also be emailed to our email groups.

What's on elsewhere

Basingstoke Archaeological and Historical Society (BAHS) www.bahsoc.org.uk

Meetings will take place at Church Cottage starting at 7.30 pm. Admission is free for BAHS members. There is a £3 charge for non-members payable on entry.

9 Feb: *The Andover Workhouse Scandal reviewed, by Professor Michael Wheeler, Visiting Professor, University of Southampton*

9 Mar: *Recent Archaeological Discoveries at Manydown, ahead of town development, by Susan Porter, MOLA*

15 Apr: *Towards the Neolithic: Two Sites in South East Turkey, by David Whiter*

11 May: *The Mammoths' Graveyard at Cerney Wick, by Professor Keith Wilkinson, University of Winchester*

Tadley and District History Society (TADS) www.tadshistory.com

Meeting on the second Monday of the month at Baughurst and Heath End Hall, Heath End Road RG26 5LU at 8.00 pm. Free to members. Non-members £3.00.

No meetings in April and May (Easter Monday and Coronation Day Bank Holiday)

13 Feb: *All things British: eccentrics, heroes and tea, by Susan Howe*

13 Mar: *A walk through Tadley, by the TADs Project Group*

Friends of the Curtis Museum and Allen Gallery, Alton

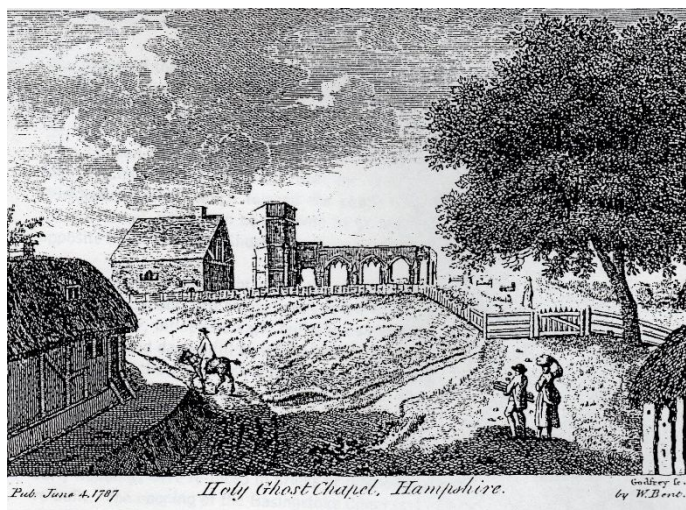
Meeting 7.30 pm at the Allen Gallery, 10-12 Church Street Alton, GU34 2BW No charge for non-members but donations are welcome. Further information: Jane Hurst, 01420 86701

9 Feb: *How safe are our medicines? From Curtis to Covid, by John Taylor*

9 Mar: *GF Watts, "England's Michelangelo", by Jane Taylor*

13 Apr: *Maria Heath (nee Curtis) and her designing sons Romney and William, by Keith Baker*

Also, 11 Feb and 18 Feb, 1100-1500 (weather permitting): *Snowdrop Saturday, Allen Gallery Garden.*



Tailpiece: The Holy Ghost Chapel and School in 1787.

The school is the building to the left of the tower.