



Museum Musings

Newsletter of Sleaford Museum Trust

No.4 February 2008

www.sleafordmuseumtrust.org.uk

Hello Friends! We would like to wish you a belated Happy New Year to start this, our fourth, Newsletter. We have our usual mix, with some items to give you food for thought and some to make you smile and would welcome feedback and comments, as well as contributions for future issues, e.g. museum reviews if you have visited somewhere, articles, puzzles, pictures, postcards or information about local events or places of interest. Our virtual museum is online at www.sleafordmuseumtrust.org.uk and is constantly being updated and improved by our Webmaster, Brian Clifford. Our next event will be on Thursday 6th March at 7.30 pm in St Denys Rooms, Market Place, Sleaford, and will be a talk by Jeanne Furnival on "Down Your Way", radio recordings of local people. **Sue Titmuss, Secretary, 01526 833964, 07949 116564, sootit@btinternet.com**

Upcoming Events for 2008

Thursday 6th March, 7.30 pm., St Denys Rooms, – Talk by Jeanne Furnival, "Down your way" in Sleaford – inc. radio recordings. £2 to non-members. Refreshments, raffle

Thursday 3rd April, – evening outing to Romany Museum, nr. Spalding, arriving at 7 pm. A fantastic place to visit, take a look at their website www.boswell-romany-museum.com. £7 per head entrance inc. refreshments. As this is our first outing, and we are still a small group, the committee feel that shared cars with petrol contributions (£2 per person?) is our best option, rather than trying to fill a coach. Contact Sue Titmuss asap (01526 833964) if you would like to go, and say if you are a driver willing to take passengers. We need minimum of 15 people.

(TBC)

Thursday 1st May – 7.30 pm, St Denys Rooms – Talk by Bourne Heritage Trust on setting up their museum., followed by A.G.M. Refreshments, raffle, £2 to non-members.

Sunday 8th June Day trip to Eyam, Derbyshire, the Plague Village, Eyam Hall, (entrance & guided tour £6.25) (website eyamhall.co.uk) Eyam Museum, (£1.75 inc. 15 min. video presentation) (eyammuseum.demon.co.uk) earliest public fresh water supply etc. This outing is suitable for all, everything is within a 5-7 minute walk of car park. Great day out for £8 + transport (We need minimum of 10 people) **(TBC)**

Full details at March meeting or ring Sue Titmuss 01526 833964



This picture of Ruskington High Street is reproduced with the permission of Valerie Dear, from her 2008 Calendar of Sleaford. Valerie, our Treasurer, kindly donates some of the profits from the sales of her books and the cards she makes to SMT. The Hudson's shop building is now a butcher, baker & estate agent.

Our January talk was given by our Chairman, Dr Richard Shaw, on "A Journey through South America". It was a very interesting travelogue, illustrated with some beautiful slides of the people and places Richard came across as he travelled. Members were amused to see the women wearing their bowler hats.

The scenery was absolutely stunning and Richard illustrated the talk not only with the slides but with anecdotes, stories and lots of information about the people and places which featured in his talk.

The following two articles have been contributed by two committee members and give us food for thought for our long-time goal of a walk-in museum for Sleaford. This first one has been contributed by Steve Woods, our P.R. Committee Member, who recently moved to Eastbourne but remains a valued committee member and continues to handle our P.R. matters.

“Nil Desperandum!” – contributed by Steve Woods, P.R. Organiser, Committee

Readers of this newsletter are only too familiar with the Herculean effort that is required to establish a district museum in Sleaford. But in Issue No.2 we had a very encouraging report about another determined museum group, in Ashby de la Zouch. And now there is word of another local campaign, which may give grounds for guarded optimism in North Kesteven.

In Eastbourne, the public collection of historic artefacts has for many years been the responsibility of The Eastbourne Society (The Civic Trust). Until 2006, a large part of the collection was displayed in the basement of the Manor House, a handsome 18th Century building in the Old Town. The rest of the building was occupied by the Towner Gallery, a major regional art collection. Some years ago, the Trustees of the Towner decided, for a variety of reasons, that the art collection would have to find a new purpose-built home. Eventually, funding was secured from various sources, including Eastbourne Borough Council, to the tune of £8.6 million. The new Towner in Devonshire Park, which will include public meeting rooms and a conservation workshop, is scheduled to open later this year.

Unfortunately for the tenants in the basement, the plans for the new Towner made no provision for a history museum. The Manor House was to be sold with vacant possession, and as a result, new temporary storage for the collection has had to be found. The archaeological collection (very impressively displayed in the old Towner) has been stored in The Redoubt, one of the Martello Towers dating from Napoleonic times, which is now the museum of the Royal Sussex Regiment. Much of the rest of the collection, including the vulnerable paper artefacts, has been found a temporary home in a store near the new Gallery.

One further feature of the town's museum scene (and there are others for which there is no space here) must be mentioned now. And at this point, Sleaford eyes may roll heavenwards. By the 1980's, Park Cottage, a quirky Victorian house which had been built by the 7th Duke of Devonshire for one of his managers, had fallen into disuse and disrepair. (The imprint of the Devonshire family on the town will strike a chord with historians of Sleaford) With demolition its probable fate, The Eastbourne Society stepped in and after strenuous campaigning and fundraising, managed to rescue and modernise the house and transform it into the Eastbourne Heritage Centre. Here, not far from the Promenade and at a peppercorn rent, it displays a selection of items from the collection, telling the story of the district from prehistoric to modern times.

On the lower ground floor, there are some reference books, documents and illustrations, and a button-operated 15-minute DVD on the development of the town. The Centre is open to the public during the afternoon from April to October, with a £2 entry charge. There is a small gift display area and workshops are available for school groups. It is staffed entirely by volunteers and the Visitors' Book records comments from all points of the compass, home and abroad.

Although, from an SMT perspective, this may not sound like a hand-to-mouth existence, the temporary storage facilities for the bulk of the collection will mean just that. But now (and none of the volunteers want to count their chickens) there is possibly a chink of light. After several years of the lobbying of previous Councils by the museum activists, the new (May 2007) Lib.Dem. Council has apparently been persuaded of the case for a new local museum. An Eastbourne Museum Committee has been formed, drawn from three local organisations, together with a representative from the Borough Council. The organisations are the Eastbourne society, The Local History Society and the Natural History and Archaeological Society. The Council has asked the Committee to submit a proposal, by June this year, for a new museum and local history facility in the town. At present, the Council is not committing itself to anything and the project will inevitably require substantial outside funding.

One moral of the stories coming from Eastbourne and Ashby (and there are surely others) seems to be that a pooling of efforts by local organisations may well produce results that a single organisation, however determined its members, may be unable to achieve. We know that several of the funding bodies in the heritage arena look favourably on joint applications, even if only one of the parties has a specific heritage remit. Any coalition that would increase the bargaining power of SMT needs to be considered. But these examples also suggest that if a motto for SMT is required, it might do worse than “NIL DESPERANDUM”!

The second article contributed by our Chairman, Dr Richard Shaw, shows that we are already starting the networking process with other organisations, and incidentally, our May meeting will be a talk by the Bourne Heritage Trust on how they set up their museum, funding sources, etc.

NK Heritage Network

On 27th March 2007, a meeting was held at Metheringham Airfield with archaeology, history and heritage groups from all over North Kesteven to discuss forming a NK Heritage Network. This was organised by Suzanne Saunter, Community Development Officer (RACol) of the Healthy Communities, Economic Regeneration Department of the Development Directorate of Lincolnshire County Council (Lincs C.C.). She was supported by Sarah Grundy, Historic Environment Officer, of Lincs C.C.) and Alisdair Aldous of ArtsNK. There was a good turnout with about fifty people there, in groups from Norton Disney to Washingborough. Sleaford Museum Trust was represented by the Chairman.

Suzanne opened the meeting, giving the background of the idea, then David Start, Director of Heritage Lincolnshire (who gave a talk at SMT's AGM in 2005) spoke about the value of community heritage and the great contribution that local groups and societies can make to our knowledge about local heritage. Then there were presentations from Navenby Archaeology Group and Branston History Group, after which there was general discussion in two large groups. The consensus at the end was that the NK Heritage Network should be formed with regular meetings every three months.

On 19th June the second meeting was at Heritage Lincolnshire in Heckington. About fifteen people attended the meeting. The first speaker was Sue Chambers, who is a funding advisor at North Kesteven District Council (NKDC) and she talked about applying for Heritage Lottery Fund funding. Then Sarah Grundy spoke about what we have in the Lincolnshire Historic Environment Record. There was a demonstration of the Washingborough Archaeology Group (WAG) internet forum.

The third meeting was not held until 30th October and was at the Thomas Garrett Heritage Rooms in Heighington with about fifteen people present. By then, Suzanne Saunter had left Lincs.C.C. and Alisdair Aldous had also gone. Sarah Grundy has taken over organising NK Heritage Network and she chaired the Heighington meeting.

The first speaker was Dennis Mills who spoke of his considerable experience researching the history and archaeology of North Kesteven. He provided a detailed parish history template with extensive sources. Of interest to SMT in his references is the fact that the Society for Lincolnshire History & Archaeology (SLHA) are building up a catalogue of all Lincolnshire oral history tapes. He also mentioned the NKDC collection of archive photos and aerial photos and oral history tapes. Next came Victoria Blyth from Bishop Grosseteste University College (BGUC) with a Powerpoint presentation on what the proposed BGUC Heritage Consortium can offer to heritage groups in Lincolnshire.

She asked first "Why have a heritage consortium?" This would pool and share knowledge, create a bank for publication/research/interest, provide a resource for the community, provide educational and social events for the community and enable partnerships between students and local groups. "How will the consortium operate?" It will have a constitution and a committee, there will be a series of lectures throughout the year chosen by the committee, there will be a number of workshops by BGUC, plus social events and trips out. BGUC will fund lectures for the first year so they will be free the first year. The committee will budget for speakers and trips for the coming year and then give an idea of the cost, thought to be just over £12 per person. BGUC will subsidise some of the costs, such as providing rooms.

In November, a meeting at BGUC of interested parties elected an interim committee. At this November meeting, it was wondered whether the Consortium would absorb the NK Heritage Network. Washingborough Archaeology Group might find their online noticeboard needs realised by the Consortium. It was agreed there is a need to watch overlaps between heritage organisations. Lincolnshire Heritage Forum is a separate organisation and managed by Lincs C.C. After the meeting, the Chairman of SMT had a useful conversation with Catherine Wilson, President of SLHA and Craig Spence, resident archaeologist of Bishop Grosseteste, about SMT, the Bass Maltings and other Sleaford topics.

The final speaker at the Heighington meeting was Adam Daubney, the Lincolnshire Finds Liaison Officer for the Portable Antiquities Scheme, who gave a colourful and fascinating talk, backed up with a large box of Neolithic axes, Roman coins, Anglo-Saxon brooches and other antiquities which were passed around with great interest.

The next meeting of NK Heritage Network is on Thursday 28 February at 7 pm, again at the Thomas Garrett Heritage Rooms in Heighington. The agenda is: Brenda Webster on the Society for Lincolnshire History and Archaeology oral

histories project: Civilians at War; Adrian Wilkinson with an Introduction to the Lincolnshire Archives; refreshment break; Peter and Sheila Gill on "Mrs Smith's From Cottage to Museum,' an illustrated talk with slides and a Blue Peter Demonstration and how we went about obtaining grants". I heard the last talk before at Sleaford and District Civic Trust and can recommend it. For information on the NK Heritage Network contact Sarah Grundy, Historic Environment Officer at Lincolnshire County Council and at sarah.grundy@lincolnshire.gov.uk

From Sleaford Gazette 29th July 1882 - A building struct by lightning (sic)

On Monday afternoon last, during a heavy thunderstorm, the electricfluid passed through one of the windows of the warehouse of Mr E.J.Brewitt, Southgate, setting a quantity of bacon on fire. The fire was discovered by a young man named George Clay and extinguished before it had obtained a serious hold. The premises are fully insured in the County Fire Office, whose agent at Sleaford is Mr H.Ingoldby, and it is needless to state that the claim made has been recognised and promptly met. The damage estimated at nearly £30.

Advertisement in the same newspaper - Sleaford Market Monday July 3rd 1882

Messrs Mastin & Son have received instructions from the County Fire Office to sell by auction a quantity of home cured bacon and hams (in lots) salvaged from the recent fire upon the premises of Mr E.J.Brewitt, Provision Merchant, Sleaford. Sale at 12 o'clock.

Old Country Sayings

- Sneeze on a Monday, you sneeze for danger;
- Sneeze on a Tuesday, you kiss a stranger;
- Sneeze on a Wednesday, you sneeze for a letter;
- Sneeze on a Thursday, for something better
- Sneeze on a Friday, you sneeze for sorrow;
- Sneeze on a Saturday, your sweetheart tomorrow;
- Sneeze on a Sunday, your safety seek,
- The Devil will have you the whole of the week.



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