



Members' News

June 2022

Issue 2

Museum marks Platinum Jubilee

Whitstable Museum celebrated the Queen's 70 years on the throne with a Jubilee Fun Palace on Sunday 5 June.

Museum volunteers arranged a wide variety of activities for children from 3-16 years old, many with a royal theme. *The 1950's Child* quiz was quite a challenge for the older children and often the parents or grandparents had to be roped in to provide answers about dipping pens and school milk. The *Shove Ha'penny* board was new to many and proved surprisingly difficult to master. Dating objects such as a *Codd's Wallop* bottle, a box camera and a medal on the 200-year timeline was a further challenge. Dressing up is popular for the younger children and was



Picture: Tom Banbury

brought out of storage for the Jubilee. The *Spot & Dot* observation task and *Child of 1950 quiz*, designed by Maggie Banbury, was great fun. The youngest children also enjoyed colouring the royal themed cards.

Many children made themselves a crown, and had their photograph taken wearing a realistic coronation crown beside 'Queen Elizabeth' (or was it a life-size photo?). Thanks Angela, Linda and Dave for the exhibition. The floor puzzle looked easy but caused much head-scratching before it was correctly assembled.

The Jubilee Exhibition will be available for the whole of June. Several dozen "Memories of 1952" postcards are also on display, which are the work of children who quizzed grandparents or elderly friends and carefully recorded their memories.

The community is grateful to the volunteers who gave their time on the Sunday and indeed many days before in creating and making the games.

Have you paid your Museum subscription yet?

Annual subs were due on 1/4/22. The Museum relies on your support. If we do not hear from you by 31/7/22 we may have to suspend your membership.

To pay:

- download a membership form from the Museum website (www.whitstblemuseum.org) or pop into the Museum Thursday to Saturday.
- It would be great if you could make an annual Standing Order through your bank
- Current subscription rates listed on our website

Membership@whitstblemuseum.org



Picture: Tom Banbury

Making an exhibition

In Whitstable Museum new exhibitions are an important way to keep things fresh and attract the public. Behind the scenes this requires a dedicated team of volunteers, led by Trustee Steve Keeler, who bring a unique mix of skills to each project.

Steve Keeler's connections to exhibitions in the Museum go back a long way. When the Museum was still run by Canterbury City Council he was approached by Manda Gifford, then the exhibitions curator for Whitstable and Herne Bay. Steve had just retired from running Keeler News and Stores in Island Wall and was looking for new challenges. He became a Trustee of the Friends of Whitstable Museum.

So began ten years of learning the ropes in exhibition building and bringing his retail expertise to the mix. At its peak there were four exhibitions a year at Whitstable and another four at Herne Bay. "It seemed that exhibitions were going up and coming down all year long – a real learning experience," says Steve.

Steve also got involved with 'Telling Whitstable's Story', an oral history project which gave him valuable experience in sourcing and gathering information.

Lost and Found

It can take up to a year from initial idea to hanging the panels: exhibitions take a long time to create. "And the public only see about 25% of all the work," says Steve, "as the exhibition has to be tailored to fit the space."

The recent **Lost and Found** exhibition is a case in point – huge amounts of archive material, photographs and objects covering



buildings and artefacts. It was hard to leave things out. The challenge is to appeal to everyone, both those who want bite-sized information and those who want a good read. "The way we do it," says Steve "is to divide the exhibition into sections and have a short summary at the beginning of each." There are then longer, more informative, captions within each section. The narrative of each exhibition goes from left to right, following the way a visitor usually goes round an exhibition.

Like a giant jigsaw

The team place all the panels and illustrations on the floor to get the layout right before anything goes on the walls. "Some exhibitors, particularly artists, want everything to go straight up. Drill, drill, drill, and then find it won't fit."

Finding the right objects and photos from the Museum storage and archives is a painstaking business, recording which items have been removed. That falls to Trustee Gail Rogers, a key member of the team. Designing what goes on to the panels is the preserve of Pam Porter and Jackie Harvey along with a lot else. DIY expertise is provided by Gail's husband Ross.

So what is coming next for the exhibition team? This Summer there will be a display of art from the Museum collection – the majority of which has not seen the light

of day for many years. Researching and preparing will be a lot quicker than for a historical exhibition but 23 paintings still require frames, and each picture needs a 'back story'. Krystyna Matyjaskiewicz, an art specialist, and consultant, formerly from Canterbury Museum Service is advising the team and volunteer Dave Newman is researching local newspapers and other documents to find the stories of the artists displayed.

This art exhibition is the first for many years," says Steve, "and we see the framing of the Whitstable artwork as a valuable investment for the future."

The exhibition team also gets involved with the new compact exhibition space. Steve oversees selecting the local organisations who wish to display there, which range from artists to the



The compact exhibition space in action

Coastguards to historical groups. For the Queen's Platinum Jubilee there is a special exhibition looking at memories of the Coronation and Whitstable in 1952-1953, along with exhibits from the time,

All too soon the next exhibition will need to be planned. But Steve Keeler and the team show no sign of losing their enthusiasm.

Steve Keeler, WCMG Trustee, Chair Exhibitions Committee, Member Archives and Collections Committee.

New film about Invicta move to Whitstable



Have articulated truck, will travel. Invicta arrives in Whitstable

The Canterbury Film Society has been making a film about Invicta's move from Canterbury to Whitstable. This is now finished and it is planned to have a celebratory screening at the Museum. Volunteers, members and some guests will be invited and a DVD of the move will be available at cost on the night. The date will be circulated in the near future.

Museum at Kent History Day

Museum volunteers put on a fine show at this year's Kent History Day, with new 'pull-up' exhibition panels and a wide range of publications. The event co-ordinated by the University of Kent had the theme "Kent: Gateway to the World."



Wonderful 'Pudding Pan' gift to Museum

Sometimes amazing things happen, and so it was one Thursday morning when Peter Holden and his wife, on holiday from Suffolk, came into the Museum.

Peter said he had a box of pottery in the car which might be of interest to us. The collection had been passed down through the family and he knew it had a Whitstable connection.

Peter's distant ancestor was William Holden, the 18th century Whitstable jeweller and antiquarian who had amassed a huge collection of 2nd century Roman Samian ware. He had bought it from local oyster fishermen who had dredged it up from the seabed and given it to their wives for pudding dishes. When we opened Peter's box it was full of near perfect condition Samian ware. He has very kindly donated it all to the Museum.

This is a wonderful donation," said Museum Trustee Peter Banbury. "Two of the bowls are of



Lillie Cripps, volunteer archivist at the Museum unpacks the box

a shape not currently in our collection. We will be consulting an expert to learn more about them."

Turning the wheels of time

The museum now subscribes to the "*Wheels of Time*" initiative designed to encourage young children (aged 5-11) and their parents to visit the many museums in Kent.

Museum trustee David Roberts and his wife Pat attended the official launch at Crabble Corn Mill in March, together with a cross section of representatives from 52 other museums and



David in costume with the Whitstable Museum stand

attractions in Kent.

This was an ideal opportunity to compare notes with like-minded people all dedicated to



A Wheels of Timer displays his lanyard of badges (Photo Tom Banbury)

preserving the County's heritage and making it accessible to children and the general public," said David.

The scheme went live on 1 April and to date we have had visits from over 35 'Wheels of Timer's'. Children receive a special badge from each Museum they visit and 'reward badges' for each multiple of 10 they achieve.