Dear friends,

A very warm welcome to the Forum’s October newsletter. It seems to have been a busy year for everyone so far and coming to the end of the season for some. The Heritage Awards in July were one of the highlights of the year and a short article and some photos appear in this newsletter.

Don’t forget the Forum has a facebook page [http://www.facebook.com/NMHHF](http://www.facebook.com/NMHHF) as well as our website: [http://www.nmhhforum.co.uk](http://www.nmhhforum.co.uk)

Here we go with some member’s news:

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**EARLS BARTON MUSEUM**

The Trustees and volunteers ran a ‘photo workshop’ in the local Church Hall as the museum is too small for these sessions. They all worked very hard and the volunteers can now continue to monitor the photo collection when they are on duty at the museum.

Hard at work in the Earls Barton Church Hall

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**A NEW IDEA!**

We would like to highlight an artefact or interesting fact about any of your museums in the newsletter each month. To start off with this time is Boughton House and you can read their article on page 6. We would welcome anything for the newsletter to make it a ‘news’letter, many thanks.

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More news from Earls Barton and the new Jeyes Pharmacy Museum:

PREBENDAL MANOR AND TITHE BARN MUSEUM

“We were all very pleased to have been given the Best Community Project Award and to tie with Sywell.

The WW1 exhibition has increased our visitor numbers and has been very well received by everyone who has seen it. Just after we had sent all the text and photos to the printers I had a phone call from an old man living in Peterborough who said that he had some things to show me.

They turned out to be the Canadian medals that belonged to his father Victor Arnold Lock and fourteen cartoons drawn by his father during WW1.

Realising that this collection could have some value I took them to the Antiques Roadshow, which was being held at Kirby Hall, where they were valued. When I later phoned the owner he was very surprised by my good news. I also took them to the Northampton Record Office where we removed them from their plastic folders and put them into Melonex sleeves for safe storage. I had them photographed and the copies are now on display in the Tithe Barn Museum. Victor was gassed on the Somme and so discharged from the Canadian Army. He eventually returned to Nassington where he originated”.

The Museum is now closed for the winter, opening again next spring.
LAMPORT HALL

‘The Life and Works of “BB”’

Lamport Hall was host to an exciting exhibition this summer: ‘A Celebration of The Life & Works of “BB”’. Denys Watkins-Pitchford (1905-1990), known by his pen-name as ‘BB’, was a local author, illustrator and artist born in Lamport. He was a keen contributor to The Shooting Times for over sixty years but is perhaps most famous for his authorship and illustrations of sixty books, half of which were for children.

‘BB’ was a talented artist. He studied at Northampton School of Art and the Royal College of Art, London. After teaching art at Rugby School for some seventeen years, Watkins-Pitchford left his post to pursue a full time career as a writer and illustrator. It was during this time he developed the pen name ‘BB’. He considered his full name ‘unwieldy and forgettable’- ‘BB’ being somewhat more cryptic, deriving from the size of lead shot he used as a wildfowler.

‘BB’s’ most famous book The Little Grey Men (1942) was awarded the Carnegie Medal in 1942, an award for the best children’s book of the year. The book focused on the lives of four gnomes: Dodder, Baldmoney, Sneezewort and Cloudberry. It is thought inspiration came from the gnomes in Sir Charles Isham’s rockery in the Hall’s gardens.

For the exhibition the Carriage House was transformed by the BB Society who brought together a collection of over seventy of ‘BB’s’ paintings and first editions of each of his books. The exhibition incorporated archive footage of television adaptations of his books The Little Grey Men and Brendon Chase, original scraperboards, his last ever painting (only half finished) and even ‘BB’s’ own fishing rod. The exhibition was a hit with adults and children alike.

The appeal of ‘BB’ to children was extended to local schools. Pupils from Northgate School Arts College in Northampton were the lucky winners of the BB Society’s Creative Arts Award and were invited to Lamport Hall to make their own scraperboards in the style of Denys Watkins-Pitchford. The pupils were joined by Helen Skelton, presenter of BBC’s Countryfile, and featured in the episode ‘Kids Countryside’ on 25 August 2014. Celebrating the 70th anniversary of the publication of Brendon Chase, Countryfile explored ‘BB’s’ childhood home of Lamport with a visit to the Hall, as well as local sites of natural beauty to explore his pastimes of carp fishing and butterfly conservation.

Lamport Hall is extremely proud of its connection to such a prestigious author, illustrator and artist as Denys Watkins-Pitchford and recently unveiled a permanent display of his life, work and art.

BB’s last unfinished painting

Countryfile filming at Lamport
LYVEDEN NEW BIELD

With the beautiful weather over the summer months we’ve achieved record visitor numbers at Lyveden. To date we’ve welcomed over 22,100 visitors to the property, reaching our 2014/15 visitor target of 21,500 five months ahead of schedule – an amazing achievement!

We organised two different kinds of events in September. The first was our Apple Weekend, where visitors enjoyed finding out more about the different apples varieties in our orchard and sampling some of our pressed apple juice. The second was a 10k run across the fields and woods surrounding Lyveden. The event attracted over 150 participants and spectators from nearby towns and villages, many of whom had never visited Lyveden before.

However our most exciting piece of news comes in the form of an old key, found close to Lyveden Manor. Initial investigations suggest the key dates from the later medieval to early post-mediteval period typical of c.1450-1600. The key is heavily corroded and has been damaged in antiquity; however we’re hoping that an x-ray will assist with refining the date range and identifying any detail currently obscured with corrosion. Could it be that we’ve found Sir Thomas Tresham’s front door key? We’ll keep you updated!

DESBOROUGH HERITAGE CENTRE

Desborough Heritage Centre volunteers are very pleased to have won two Northamptonshire Forum Heritage Awards this summer, one for the Expansion & Development of the Heritage Centre over the past five years, the other as Heritage Site of the Year.

Now they have an outstanding new exhibition, launched at the beginning of August: Desborough 1914--1918: Men at War and Families at Home, the result of a team's intensive research and design work over the past year. In addition to a theatrical presentation of men in the trenches in one of the Centre's large front windows, the building carries a long gallery of the faces and histories of the 145 young men of Desborough who died in WW1; this is set under a time line of the four years of battles so will allow further detail in displays to be added over coming years. Free standing exhibition panels describe other soldiers’ stories, present their relationships through correspondence with their employers and their families at home, and much much more. We continue to collect information about the 580 young men who returned from the War. Tables of soldier’s equipment plus uniforms (plus mirror & sandbag wall for photographs) are available with information for children (and adults!) to try. Several hundred school children have visited the exhibition as part of their WW1 projects and several hundred have yet to come for the demonstrations from some of our "enthusiastic volunteers". Thank you to the Heritage Lottery Fund (£10k) and to the local Feakin Trust (£3k) for enabling us to provide displays of a high standard worthy of the subject.
A major collection of artworks by celebrated artist Peter Newcombe has been donated to Northampton Museum and Art Gallery.

The exquisite collection of 12 ink and wash drawings illustrate the poetry of Northamptonshire Peasant Poet John Clare. Newcombe grew up in the Northamptonshire countryside in the 1950s and the countryside he saw was just as Clare described it in his third collection of poems, The Shepherd’s Calendar. In 1968 Newcombe began the drawings which bring Clare’s words to life. Each of the drawings was completed in the appropriate month and together they depict the changeable nature of the Northamptonshire countryside through the year.

Fellow artist Jackson Stops said about the series of drawings: “It is as if they are a ghostly insight into an actual vision of the past.”

The drawings were first exhibited in Northampton Museum and Art Gallery in 1968 to great national acclaim and became Newcombe’s first major success as an artist. Since then he has exhibited widely, including at the Royal Academy, Royal Institute of Painters in Watercolour and Royal Society of British Artists. One of his more recent showings was at the Northampton museum where he exhibited his Shepherd’s Calendar series and other paintings as part of a special exhibition to mark the 150th anniversary of John Clare’s death (1793-1864).

The gifted drawings represent a significant art donation to the museum and will be “much appreciated by visitors and scholars for years to come” said Councillor David Mackintosh, leader of Northampton Borough Council which runs the museum service.

Councillor Mackintosh added: “As the Shepherd’s Calendar drawings were shown for the first time at our Northampton Museum and Art Gallery, it somehow seems very fitting that they are to return. Peter Newcombe is a wonderful artist who absolutely captures the natural beauty of our county; his love for Northamptonshire shines out. This is a very exciting gift that we are absolutely delighted to accept.”

Working in partnership Northampton Museums and Art Gallery and Royal & Derngate Theatre will investigate and explore the history and heritage of Northampton Borough during WWI. This will include researching physical collections (objects and archive), cultural heritage (plays, poetry, film, photography) and family oral history.

Our diverse communities and schools will engage with and learn about the shared history and heritage of WWI in a way that is relevant to their lives and locality. Our project will be key to the town commemorations in the Cultural Quarter.

Volunteering

We are looking for volunteers to help the project with research, oral history, exhibitions, theatre, events and activities, digitising collections and helping with the archive. If you would like to get involved please email janeseddon@northampton.gov.uk or museums@northampton.gov.uk
Sancho and the Boy Charles
Ignatius Sancho (1729-1780)

He was born on a slave ship and baptised at Cartagena (Spanish America) and brought to England when two years of age. Sancho was then given to three sisters in Greenwich as a slave-servant and describes this part of his life thus: “The first part of my life was rather unlucky, as I was placed in a family who judged ignorance the best and only security for obedience. A little reading and writing I got by unwearied application – the latter part of my life has been – thro’ God’s blessing, more fortunate.”

His plight was noted by John, 2nd Duke of Montagu who “brought him frequently home to the Duchess, indulged his turn for reading with presents of books and strongly recommended to his mistresses the duty of cultivating a genius of such apparent fertility.”

He entered service with the Montagu family in 1749/50 and rose to become butler – when the Duchess of Montagu died in 1751 he was left a legacy of £70 and annuity of £30 a year. Having left the household, he is noted as being somewhat profligate with his money, both on gambling and women but gaining a large circle of friends in the theatrical world.

In 1758 he returns to service with the Montagu family, acting as a valet to the 3rd Duke of Montagu and was able to marry Anne Osborne on the 17th of December. He was able to take advantage of the Families enthusiasm for art, literature and music and produced and published several works himself. 1766 saw the publication of a letter to Laurence Sterne and he became widely known as a man of letters. Painted by Gainsborough in about 1768 as a superior servant, he retires from service in 1773 and sets up a grocery store with varied callers to his shop including aristocrats and other patrons. As a financially-independent male householder living in Westminster, he qualified to vote in parliamentary elections of 1774 and 1780, and is the first known black person of African origin to have done so in Britain.

He died on December 14th 1780, receiving an obituary in the Gentleman’s Magazine and in 1782 his Letters were published to great success with 1181 subscribers including the Prime Minister, Lord North.

Charles
Portrayed in the painting of Lady Mary Churchill, Duchess of Montagu. Attributed to Enoch Seeman in the 1720s.

He is identified in the family cash books as “ye Black of her Grace” and “The Boy Charles” and unusually was paid wages as a servant. The cash books reveal that he was educated, nursed when ill and clothed in fine livery or exotic outfits. Indeed, his shoes were made by the Duchess’s own shoe maker.
SYWELL AVIATION MUSEUM

What a terrific year for us at SAM! Having had the pleasure of hosting the Forum Awards in July (and winning an award!) the Museum hosted 10,000 people at the Sywell Airshow in August (a very healthy boost to Museum funds). Plans are afoot next year to finally repaint Heidi the Hawker Hunter in to her original 257 Squadron markings and look toward Museum expansion with the acquisition of an English Electric Canberra bomber cockpit section (if we can find one!) and new Museum buildings....

In the meantime the Museum welcomes donations of second-hand military and aviation books and model kits and any artefacts relating to aviation in Northamptonshire. We close at the end of September but our Grand Opening for 2015 will be on Easter Saturday with a warbird display, re-enactors and military vehicles! Our Winter Talk programme begins on the 3rd November with a talk by RAF Museum Curator Darren Frady on their epic recovery of the world's only Dornier 17 bomber from the sea! The 5th January sees a talk on the Flight of Rudolf Hess and more talks will be announced in due course. For more information please contact sywellaviationmuseum@gmail.com 07968061708 or www.sywellaerodrome.co.uk

2014 HERITAGE AWARDS

A superb evening was had by all this year in July at Sywell with a full house of guests arriving at Sywell Aviation Museum for a quick tour before the ceremony.

The awards ceremony was hosted again by BBC Radio Northampton's John Griff and was also attended by many VIP's including Northamptonshire's new Lord Lieutenant David Laing and the Mayor of Wellingborough Councillor Jim Bass. The awards were sponsored by The University of Northampton and supported by BBC Radio Northampton and Museum Development East Midlands.

The winners were:
Best Exhibition: Winner Rushden Museum for WW1 Centenary Exhibition
Best event: Winner Kettering Museum and Art Gallery for the Alfred East Art Gallery Centenary re-opening event
Community Award: highly commended Daventry Museum for a Wall of faces – 2 winners Prebendal Manor and Tithe Barn Museum for ‘a zeppelin over Yarwell’ and Sywell Aviation Museum for young aviator tours.
Best Volunteer project: Northampton and Lamport Railway Preservation Society for the restoration of the only 10 tonne W Roller of 1899.
Best special Project: highly commended; Kettering Museum and Art Gallery for Museum and Gallery signage and the winner Desborough Heritage Centre for expansion and development of the heritage centre.
Best project on a limited budget: winner Kettering Museum and Art Gallery for Kettering High School Centenary exhibition.
Judges special awards – Jeyes heritage and pharmacy museum for a unique heritage experience and also Canons Ashby for innovative collaboration.
People's Choice award: Kettering Museum and Art Gallery
Heritage Site of the year: Desborough Heritage Centre