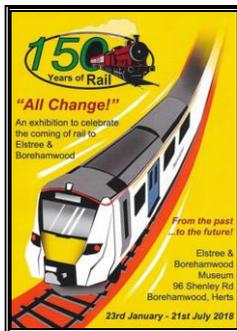


Elstree & Borehamwood Museum Friends Newsletter January 2018 : Issue Number 16



ALL ABOARD FOR "ALL CHANGE!"

Your latest Newsletter is standing on the platform and waiting for a steam train to travel through the railway history of Elstree and Boreham Wood. The reason? Our new spectacular Exhibition, which opens on Tuesday 23rd January 2018, is entitled *All Change!*



It celebrates the arrival of the Midland Railway into the Parish of Elstree 150 years ago, splitting off the sleepy hamlet of Boreham Wood, an area centred around Theobald Street and the west end of Shenley Road, from Allum Lane and Elstree village. While Elstree grew around the High Street crossroads, the sleepy hamlet became a Village and gradually expanded over the years as more and more industries, travellers and home makers used the railway nexus to create a new area to live and work.



So when the Midland Railway Company built its extension from Bedford to St Pancras, it opened a station called Elstree in July 1868. The arrival of the railway was critical to the growth of the town and of its film industry in the early years of the 20th century - land for

studios was cheap, and now there was quick access to Central London.



Today, the station Elstree and Borehamwood is used by passengers making 4 million journeys every year and is among the busiest 5% of main line stations in the country. The Exhibition is part of a year-long project which proposes to celebrate this milestone 150th anniversary. The project involves a programme of activities designed to engage local residents and groups.

The background to the project comes from the past six years when the Town Council, Hertsmere Borough Council, Hertfordshire County Council, train operator Thameslink and local volunteer group Elstree Screen Heritage have worked together as "First Impressions" to create a more attractive and welcoming public environment to the town. The welcome plaques and boards, the street information signs, and the lamp post banners have all highlighted the film and tv business of the area. It is this multi-agency framework who are behind the planning and delivery of an ambitious programme of celebratory events.

As we saw in our previous exhibition, *From Village To Town*, the demographics of the town have changed significantly in recent years.

As families who were connected with the Film and TV Studios have aged, the balance has shifted to new community groups who have recently migrated to the town. The railway has played a key role in that migration by making the town so accessible to people whose work is in London. Part of this anniversary is creating awareness of how this railway service has and will continue to be a key factor in shaping the town.



The Museum already has an extensive collection of photos and railway ephemera. Together with the huge interest and amount of knowledge in the form of Honorary Trustee, Alan Lawrence, who has contributed a great deal of information and research to the project. The Museum also has contacts with St Albans Signal Box heritage organisation and is working with Elstree University Technical College students to film local residents and ex-railway workers. These oral histories will form part of the six month exhibition at the Museum as well as informing learning activities with schools.

The project was awarded Heritage Lottery Funding, along with funding from Hertfordshire Association of Museums, which has enabled the employment of a part time Exhibition Co-ordinator, Mike Rollins, who has worked enthusiastically with Museum volunteers to create this exciting and ambitious Exhibition 'set', and some surprises for all ages.

TALES FROM THE RAILWAY : ONE : ACCIDENTS WILL HAPPEN

Although the "Midland Railway (Extension to London) Bill" was passed on 22 June 1863, the first tunnel through the area between Woodcock Hill and Scratch Wood, was started in 1865 and finished in 1868. "Elstree Station" was opened on 13th July 1868, and it was only a short time before there were a couple of accidents. The first was almost exactly 6 years later on 22 July 1874 when a train full of school children going to Haverstock Hill from a siding at the station was misdirected at speed into the earth mound at the end. The station porter admitted that he forgot to change the points onto the main line, and a number of adults and children reported injury.

Later that year in November far worse was to occur. A passenger was killed and others seriously injured when the Midland Manchester Express travelling at speed through "Elstree and Boreham Wood Station" (it was renamed thus in 1869), came apart in the middle, and the engine ground to a halt just into the tunnel as its wheels came off the track. Two of the carriages toppled over and were crushed together leading to the fatality and the injuries.

TALES FROM THE RAILWAY : TWO : MURDER WILL OUT

An undated article [either January or October] from the Hertford Mercury in 1867 explores the disruption to the area when the first tunnel was dug :

"On Sunday, the 27th ult, a brutal outrage, in which one of the men engaged on the Midland Railway works was killed, took place near Elstree. The spot at which the murder occurred – for less than murder it cannot be called – was in one of the huts which have been erected for the accomodation of the navvies in a valley between Barkham (sic) Wood and Deacon's Hill, about half a mile westward of the village of Elstree. Here has sprung up, since the tunnelling and large cuttings of embankments in progress in the locality were commenced about three years ago, a regular navy settlement or village. The arrival of so many "roughs" as permanent residents soon changed

the character of what had previously been a remarkably quiet and out-of-the-way district... The last winter has, however, served to show that however much good had been done with some of the men, there is still a large number whose coarseness and depravity is little, if any, abated... only on Monday last a gang of navvies went to the King's Head Inn, Mill Hill, and in the course of a drunken riot committed violent assaults on the landlord and his wife."

There follows more examples of drunkenness and violence in the area causing uneasiness amongst the locals, and then we get to the nub of the murder :

"On the day mentioned the deceased was seated by the fire in one of the huts (used, we understand, as a temporary beer-house), when three men suddenly appeared at the door saying "That's the d---- we want to fight". One of them knocked him off his seat to the ground, and immediately got engaged in an altercation with the landlady, who – we are told – took up a poker to defend the prostrate man. The two others dragged him as he lay on the floor outside the hut, and there knocked him about in a very severe manner, until one of them, having the usual navvy boots on, kicked him behind the ear and killed him."

After further beating and abuse they ran off and escaped. One was quickly captured and remanded before the Edgware magistrates. Two others were apprehended, although the principal offender was still in hiding as the police closed in. The outcome of this sad business is currently unknown to this scribe...

TALES FROM THE RAILWAY : THREE : THE TUNNELS

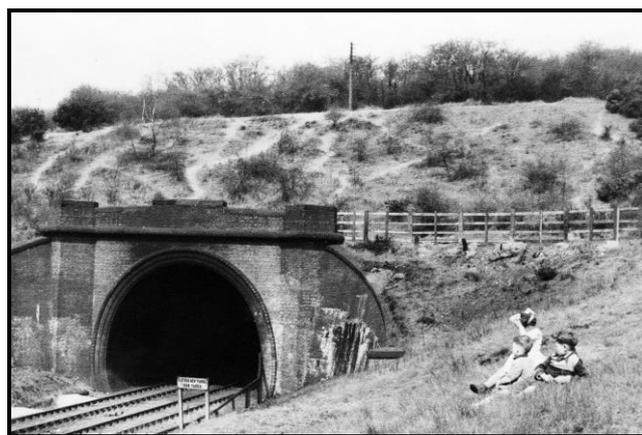
Although the first tunnel was dug by the itinerant navvies who appeared for a few years and then moved on, when the second tunnel was dug in 1895, it seems to have been a much more professional affair. Of course the area was now rapidly growing outwards and the town would not stand for such shennanigans. In fact several local families can date their presence in the area from their forebears arriving as labourers for tunnel work and then settling down.



Carol Crampton : "The man second from the right is my Grandfather William Hannell, and the man in the middle fourth from the right is his brother my great uncle Joseph Hannell."

The spoil from the original tunnel led to the establishment of the brickworks in the area of the navy camp, and the bricks found their way down to the railway by means of a narrow-gauge track over the tunnels themselves, and into the sidings. Just as walking paths would also cross over the tunnels giving access to Woodcock Hill and the west of the tracks, so locals would regularly walk through the tunnels to get home a bit quicker from a night out in Mill Hill. Needless to say one eye was always open for the Night Mail!

Thanks to Robert Bard, and FB page BNE - particularly Carol Crampton, Ian McKay, and John Gates



RECENT EVENTS ROUND-UP :

The Habs Connection One :



The Friends were delighted to host Dr John Wigley of Haberdasher's Aske's Boys School on the evening of Wednesday 18th October. Dr Wigley informed us about the school's illustrious history, which dates from 1690. Starting with the school's first two centuries in Hoxton, East London, Dr Wigley explained the school's foundation by the Haberdasher's Company and Robert Aske's bequest. With the aid of historical and contemporary pictures, Dr Wigley followed the school's history to its site in Cricklewood, North West London to Elstree, to which it moved in 1961. Everyone who attended thoroughly enjoyed the talk, and at the end, all of us Friends were most grateful to be invited to the school for a guided tour in the New Year.

The Habs Connection Two :



Twenty boys from Haberdasher's Aske's Boys School visited the Museum in November. They listened to a 30 minute presentation about the changes and development of Borehamwood since 1940. This was followed by interviews with five people about the changes they had seen in their lifetimes. They were brought in by the school. Of course some time was also spent playing with the games inside the museum.

The Sheriff in Town :

The High Sheriff of Hertfordshire, Will Hobhouse, visited Borehamwood to meet as many volunteers as possible. His theme this year is "Celebrating Volunteers", and many of the local organisations gathered in All Saints to show him how much volunteers contribute to the work of the town.

Here we see Will with the Mayor of Hertfordshire, Dave and some of our volunteers



Monksmead Visit Us :



In November a delightful group of 5 and 6 year olds from Monksmead Primary visited the Museum to look at our *Toys, Games and Gadgets* exhibition. The children had lots of fun playing with the early electronic games on show, while the adults reminisced about their own childhood toys. The children were also given the opportunity to play a varied collection of games, from Magnetic Fish and Jenga to Connect 4 and Snap, as well as handling a range of old fashioned and 'retro' toys. An exhausting but fun morning. Thanks to Vania, David, Lynda Marshall, and Museum Photographer, Derek Allen.

NOW ON SALE - a range of items with our new logo - pens, keyrings and tote shopping bags. Make sure that as a Friend you remind all your friends to purchase these items to help the Museum's funds!



Elstree & Borehamwood Museum

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Twitter : <https://twitter.com/EBWMuseumHerts>

Open : Tues, Wed & Thurs : 12pm - 6pm Sat : 10am-3pm

Supported by Hertsmere Borough Council

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