

# Elstree & Borehamwood Museum Friends Newsletter September 2018 : Issue Number 18



## THE TRAINS ARRIVE FOR FAMILIES DAY

We continued our *All Change!* Exhibition theme for 2018 into Families Day in Meadow Park on the last day of June. We always have a stall at the annual Civic Festival organised by the Town Council, and so it was fitting that the coming of the railways 150 years ago was celebrated with a real train. We had two stalls on a hot sunny afternoon : one table was covered by Tony De Swarte's amazing model of Elstree Station in 1900, which we featured in the last Newsletter, and the other included information about the Museum and the current Exhibition. It also served as the ticket point for a ride on the steam train.

Rail ticket punch to create a "welcome aboard" experience. Needless to say it was a most successful attraction with hundreds of families queuing up for their ride.



Tony adding the final touches

Tony's model drew much interest as well, everyone marvelling at the details of the station and the surrounding area he has created in miniature form. When three of the team dressed up as British Railways operatives they set the scene, along with the train's noises, the steam whistle and the real ticket punch.

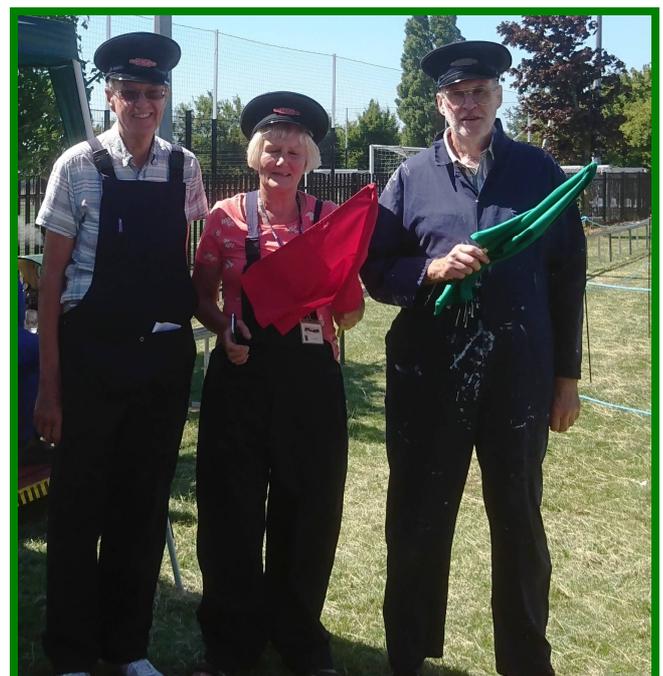


All Aboard!



Down The Line

The steam train was built and operated by the St Albans Model Engineering Society. It was a real miniature train complete with miniature coal, real steam and whistle, and its own track. So all day it was delighting all ages with a short trip up Meadow Park and back. We were handing out our own tickets advertising the Exhibition, and using a British

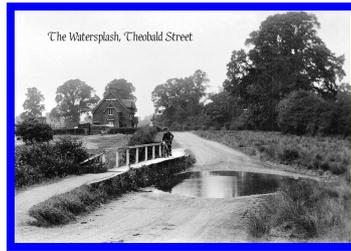


Dave, Helen and Simon go to work

## OUR HISTORY WALK THROUGH THE NORTHERN 'WOOD'S

Our annual History Walk is part of the town's Civic Festival, and this year it took us through an area of North Borehamwood that we've never explored before. And we soon found that far from being a land of little report, it's full of stories and strange legends.

We met at the small park on the Organ Hall housing estate, where we were launched on our way by Town Mayor, Victor Eni, and fell under the guidance of Museum Manager, David Armitage. Dave's first mention of the Organ Hall Estate was the old farm that burnt down in the 1970s and upon whose fields the houses were built. Our knowledgeable Friend and walking companion, John Cartledge, informed us that all the roads on the estate are named after organists!



Pressing ever northwards, we stopped at the house currently called 'Fields' but which was originally Little Organ Hall Farm. After it had fallen into disrepair it was rebuilt in the last few years as a private dwelling. But there is an engraving Dave showed us of another Organ Hall of a much grander design. It seems its whereabouts are not in this vicinity, but much further up towards Radlett.



**The Farm After The Fire**

Walking north we crossed over Theobald Street, past the weird "temporary" prefabs still standing over 70 years later, and towards the current Organ Hall Farm. Now it's just a hay producing area with no real farming output, and we ventured further up the road. We saw an old gypsy caravan to our left on a small plot of land, and because it has been in place since the 1960s alongside a house, is now a permanent dwelling due to squatters' rights.

Our next stop on this hot and humid day was the appropriately named "The Watersplash". Here the road to Radlett has always met Tykes Water and it wasn't until the 1930s that the river was placed permanently under the road. Dave mentioned that his mother used to play here. Below is the well-known post card of the original ford, and we soon walked past the house shown in the background.



**A Tale of Two Organ Halls**

Crossing Theobald Street we followed a footpath through some woods towards the railway line. We found where the Borehamwood Brook from Woodcock Hill meets Tykes Water from Brockley Hill before it heads off to Radlett and the River Colne. Walking under the railway and down a part of the ancient track of Tykeswater Lane, we had a look at the area of the Kendall Hall Estate and Farm. Originally owned by the Phillimore family the Hall is now Hertsmere Jewish Primary School, while it seems the delapidated Farm will now become a residential building.

After a discussion of the history of the parish of Titeburst, or Titburst, which once covered all this area from Watling Street up to Shenley and Ridge, we returned down Tykeswater Lane, back under the railway again to the rear of Organ Hall Farm to re-cross Theobald Street.

Into Rossington Avenue we progressed and across the land of Brooklands Farm - one of the five that were on Theobald Street before WW2 - and we passed the almost hidden entrance to the 1372 Squadron Air Cadets Centre. The Air Cadets have been in the area since the 1940s. We saw The

Shooting Star pub, now remained The Oak, built in the 1950s before there was easy access to central Borehamwood for the partakers of hard liquor, and beer.

Following the path round we headed south through Haggerston Park, observing the rear of the Catholic church of St John Fisher & Sir Thomas More which was built in the late 1950s. Crossing Aycliffe Road we saw the shops built by the LCC in the 1950s when, again, there was limited access to Shenley Road for most of the new residents when the houses were built in this area.

Carrying on south we came to Gateshead Road. On our left is the Church of England St Michael And All Angels which was opened by Princess Margaret in 1952, and on our right was the site of Lyndhurst School. This school was another 1950s creation for the area and was of advanced design for the period built of 'Holoplast'. This material of tough plastic and paper was considered a replacement for bricks which were in short supply after the war. It had other distinctive features such as a moat, bee hives, and A-frame structures. But it had a troubled history with serious arson attacks in 1976 and 1993, and with declining pupil numbers it closed down in 2001. Part of the area is now housing, and part a primary school as we were to discover later.



**The 'Moat' at Lyndhurst School**

Walking down to Croxdale Road we saw where the Trinity Methodist Church from 1956 is still standing behind the current Synagogue. The land was purchased 20 years later to create the large centre it is now. On the opposite corner stood The Woodcock pub from the 1950s which was closed by the police in 2006, and then demolished for more housing. We headed down Croxdale to stop for a while at The Haberdasher's Rugby Football Club. They moved here in 1935 after purchasing a 7 acre field from Tilehouse Farm for £2,500 with donations and loans. They have been here ever since.

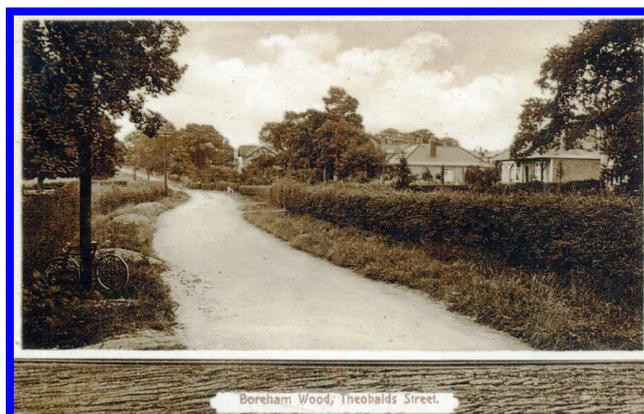


**John, Dave and Walkers outside Habs Club**

Coming out onto Theobald Street we had to try to imagine the area during the Second World War when there were two or three army camps, made from Nissan Huts. One was for training the Royal Army Ordinance Corps, one was called Orchard Camp, and another was near the current Boulevard. Many Polish servicemen who wished to settle here after the War were processed through the camps.

Returning up to Organ Hall estate we saw where the dog breeder and trainer F. Winton Smith had lived in the late Victorian period. He kept over a 100 dogs in The Beeches, on the corner of the current Beech Drive. Lastly we passed Meryfield Primary School, now on the site of Lyndhurst, and on the land that had once been Theobalds Farm. As an article on F Winton Smith put it in 1901 : "The country about Elstree and Boreham Wood, although but a few miles from London, is very pretty and quite secluded. The demon jerry-builder has not yet set his destructive foot upon the soil, to transform charming landscapes into hideous streets of bricks and mortar". We had to wait 50 years for that to happen.

Thanks to Dave Armitage, John Cartledge, and John Woolston for such an enlightening walk through time.



**Boreham Wood, Theobalds Street.**

## WE VISIT HABS IN AUGUST



**The Famous Clock Tower Greets Us**

When Dr John Wigley gave us his talk on the history of Haberdasher's Aske's Boys' School last year, he invited us round for tea. Thanks to the efforts of Maureen and Brenda, the Friends were only too delighted to take up the invitation. Arriving in the rain, which quickly passed, we divided up into three groups, each led by a Habs' staff member very familiar with the history of the school.



**John Greets Us With Our Guides**

The party in which your scribe found himself was led by the Habs' archivist, Keith Cheyney. Explaining that he once had an aunt who lost her head in the Tudor times, he took us into the main house which was extended and renovated by Hucks Gibbs, the 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Aldenham in the 1870s. Habs has occupied the site of the Aldenham estate since 1961, and considerable expansion and development has taken place.

After a tour of the ground floor of the original house, where we saw the refectory and the chapel, we ventured through the courtyard and out towards the new buildings. Passing the rather run-down 'BBC Buildings', created in the 1940s when the BBC requisitioned the site, and which are due for demolition, we visited the Medburn Centre, the brand new state-of-the-art sports facilities which were highly impressive. Passing the indoor sports pitches and the outdoor hockey and football area we came via the music department, the Library and the Hall. The librarian answered our questions with aplomb, and it was excellent to see how well equipped the school is with all manner of reading material.

Returning to the main house via the well-managed gardens, we had to indulge in the obligatory tea and scones, with a round of thanks after a particularly interesting and history-filled afternoon.



**Tea And Scones**

### STOP PRESS : 1

Our New Exhibition in October will tell the story of the campaign thirty years ago to save Elstree Studios from closure. By the mid 90's the then derelict site was up for sale as a shopping centre and yet today the future of the studios is more secure than ever. It is home to some of the most popular shows on television including *Strictly Come Dancing* and *Big Brother*. And recent film credits include *The King's Speech* and *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story* among many others. It was a remarkable victory for the campaign and its Chairman Paul Welsh and shows what determination can achieve even against superior odds. The new exhibition tells the story of that 8 year uphill struggle and its eventual successful outcome.

### STOP PRESS : 2

We hope to have a Friends Evening in November to be confirmed at a later date

### NOW ON SALE - Museum Merchandise

A range of Museum items - pens, keyrings, local magnets and tote shopping bags. Make sure that as a Friend you remind all **your** friends to purchase these items to boost the Museum's funds! On sale in the Museum or on our website.

#### Elstree & Borehamwood Museum

96 Shenley Road, Borehamwood, WD6 1EB

Tel : 01442 454888

Email : [info@elstree-museum.org.uk](mailto:info@elstree-museum.org.uk)

Web : [www.elstree-museum.org.uk](http://www.elstree-museum.org.uk)

FB : [www.facebook.com/EBWmuseum](http://www.facebook.com/EBWmuseum)

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

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

Supported by Hertsmere Borough Council

Elstree & Borehamwood Town Council

The Heritage Lottery Fund Registered charity No 1157770

**VISIT OUR WEBSITE AND BECOME A FRIEND**

