

Elstree & Boreham Wood Museum

Friends Newsletter January 2013

Issue Number 1



A New Year and A New Museum for Elstree and Boreham Wood

Its exciting times ahead for our museum. By the end of this year, we will be in a completely new home...96 Shenley Road.

Plans have been afoot to move to the new community facility on 96 Shenley Road for many years but it has not been until 2012 that plans have really come to fruition. Building work started on site at the beginning of September and after many meetings, documents and drawings, the museum volunteers have created something rather special that will be for all to see in late Autumn 2013.

This new community facility is situated in the centre of town and is on the site of the older 'Village Hall' which you may remember was a popular venue for many over the years. The museum will be located in this new facility along with a large hall, a community library, youth services area, café and internet access as well as further exhibition space and meeting spaces. Hertfordshire County Council is the project leader for this building and both Hertsmere Borough Council and Elstree and Borehamwood Town Council are partners.

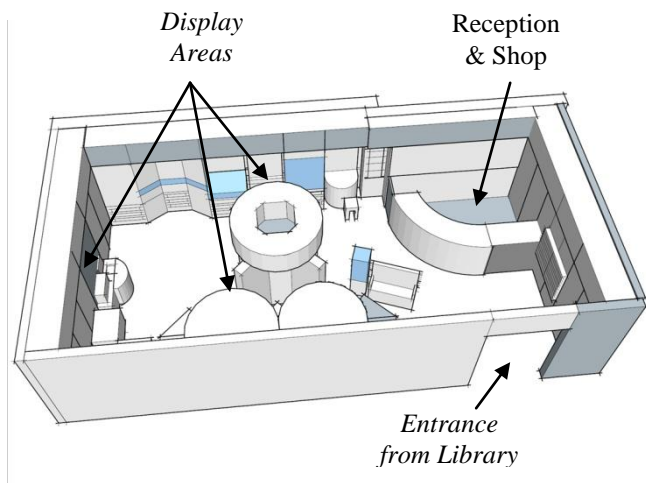
The museum has been allocated a dedicated space on the second floor, next to the Local Studies section of the library. This is a great opportunity for us to work more closely with our library colleagues and we are very much looking forward to being their neighbours. The museum has been working with Hertsmere Borough Council's Heritage and Museum's

Officer to prepare for moving to this new site. The museum space will be a 'blank canvas' and it will be up to the museum to take this once in a lifetime opportunity to create a dynamic and accessible museum where our local community will enjoy and get involved in their heritage.



Artist impression of new building at 96 Shenley Road

Hertsmere Borough Council recently funded an external museum designer to work with the museum volunteers and the Heritage and Museums Officer to produce a concept design. This design shows that there are permanent displays that tell the story of our town and its people as well as temporary display areas so that people will want to revisit. There will be touch screen kiosks to showcase the museum's amazing photographic collections and local videos that document the changes in the area. The museum will also have listening posts where visitors can hear locals reminiscing about their lives.



Artist impression of new museum space

The museum designer has also created a distinct area for children within the museum which will be both interactive and informative and suitable for different ages. This includes two areas which are very much like a 'hands-on mini museum' that is both fun and educational.

The total cost of our project is just over £200,000. This includes all the museum refurbishments as well as the employment of a freelance Community Learning Officer. He/she will work with local schools and groups to develop an exciting learning programme including hands on sessions both in and out of the museum. Themed 'resource boxes', which will be available to hire, will contain real and replica objects and photographs. Themes could include 'Going out in Borehamwood', 'Elstree & Borehamwood during WW2' or 'Shopping in Borehamwood'.

We have recently applied to the Heritage Lottery fund for a grant of £98,000 towards this important project, and we should know the outcome by late February. Hertsmere Borough Council has generously supported this project with a grant of £70,000 and we are busily trying to raise the remaining funding. Can you help?

Volunteers are the main stay in making the Museum a success. They work in all aspects of the museum's services, both front of house and behind the scenes. From the consultation questionnaires that were produced recently, it

is clear that the local people value the work that our volunteers do.

Therefore, it is really important that this project involves volunteers and is not just a passive museum display.

As the museum enters into a new era, we have developed a number of 'volunteer role descriptions' which will help strengthen the museum and its services. These roles include a volunteer coordinator, marketing, collections, fundraising and learning volunteers. If you think you can offer help with any of these, please do let us know.



Curator Alan Lawrence, 2nd from right, with Museum volunteers Bob, Ann & David

As film and television heritage is at the very heart of the area, it is important that this is celebrated in the new museum space. There will be a small display within the museum that tells this story. As 2014 marks the 100th birthday of film in the town, we will be working with Elstree Screen Heritage to celebrate with a two-month long high-profile temporary exhibition and series of events in the summer. To create maximum impact, and to respond to demand, the temporary exhibition will fill the entire museum space for those two months. Following this exhibition, there will be a touring exhibition that will be available for hire by groups and organisations in the area and across the UK.

As well as maintaining the day to day running of the current museum we are working hard towards achieving a smooth transition into the new premises. We hope you will join us in working towards this exciting project.

A Brief History of Libraries in Elstree & Boreham Wood

There were several private lending libraries in the area around the 1930s/40s. Boots the Chemist in Shenley Road had one and another was in Acason's the tobacconist situated at No 3 Studio Parade. Both ceased lending books circa 1940. There was also a local branch of Foyle's Library which closed in 1947, and local resident, Ronald Treacher, ran a private mobile lending library after the war, but its demise came with the popularity of television in the mid 1950's.

The first record we have of the County branch library is from the minutes of a meeting held on 15th June 1936 at Boreham Wood County Council School (later Furzehill School) when Mr Gernat, headmaster, stated that 'he with Miss Sterrey as honorary librarian took over the charge of the library on 29th April 1936'. A similar scheme was run by school mistress Miss Best at Elstree Junior Mixed School.

Infectious diseases were rife at the time and many books from infected households had to be destroyed, Books and tickets went missing so a fine of 2d was imposed to issue a new borrowers card. At first the libraries were staffed by volunteers, but in April 1938 an Assistant Librarian was appointed on a salary of £78pa. There was a subscription of 1 shilling which was reduced to 4d due to falling membership and competition from private lending libraries.

By 1939 user numbers had doubled and a new library was needed. After much debate in 1940 the library moved into a back room of the premises of local baker EH Freestone on the corner of Shenley Road and Glenhaven Avenue. The stock increased to 2,000 books and the opening hours were extended.

Membership increased and when the lease ran out in 1947 the library moved to Clarendon Park, Clarendon Road in an existing building also used as a first aid post and welfare centre



Clarendon Road Library in 1946

In 1950 Elstree was served by a mobile library until a new centre was opened in Elstree Congregational Chapel on 25th April with 1,000 books.

On 6th December 1956 the newly built library in Elstee Way was opened, and the number of books lent increased by over 50%. In 1957 the stock was 25,786 with issues of 53,690. Favourite authors included Daphne Du Maurier, Neville Shute and newcomer John Braine with 'Room at the Top'. The opening hours increased to 39pw in 1961, although the library was still closed all day Thursday and Sunday.

2013 heralds a new era with the opening of a purpose built library on the site of the old Village Hall next to All Saints Church in Shenley Road.

New Museums Officer for Hertsmere

Many of you will know that Helen Giles, has left Hertsmere to take up the post of Curator of St Ives Museum in Cambridgeshire. We thank her for her dedication and hard work over the past 15 months in steering us towards our new premises and hopefully gaining the Lottery Grant that we so desperately need to fund the project. We wish her every success in her new venture.

We welcome on board her replacement, Ruth Stratton, who will be joining us early in the New Year. She is currently Curator of Stevenage Museum and we look forward to working closely with her to bring our dreams and aspirations for the new museum to fruition.



Ruth Stratton

Annual History Mystery Walk

During Civic Festival Fortnight held in June 2012, the Elstree & Boreham Wood Museum held its fourth annual History Mystery Walk. Each year we try to take participants on a 2 mile walk to different areas of Elstree and Boreham Wood rarely seen in everyday life. This year we covered the area that was once the site of the offices of Elstree Rural District Council and then went on to visit All Saints Church graveyard, which many people didn't even know existed.

Clarendon Park came next and we talked about the place where the County Library once stood at the end of the second world war.

The highlight of this particular walk was a tour through part of the BBC Studio's, which started off life as Neptune Studios in 1914, with a photo opportunity outside the original 1930's Fairbanks Offices occupied by Douglas Fairbanks in the 1950's. We continued our walk across Meadow Park and on towards what was once Bullbaiters Farm near the top of Bullhead Road, this marked the highest part of the route.



Inside BBC Studios with Fairbanks Offices on the left and Neptune House to the right

Finally a look at the changes to Hillside School (now Yavneh College) before terminating at the Tesco car park. We passed near to the Big Brother House which is sited within Elstree Studios. Although the weather was not ideal, the rain confined itself to the first 10 minutes of the walk, making the rest of the afternoon, most enjoyable. We look forward to your company in June 2013.

The new museum will house a dedicated area for children and it is planned to purchase two interactive pieces of equipment for their use. We have in mind a couple of items both of which cost around £6,000 each.

Funding for these items is very limited and we are therefore seeking donations towards the cost from local people and businesses. If you are able to help please send your donations to the Treasurer at the address below, clearly indicating that it is towards the children's equipment at the new museum.

During the coming months we hope to take a small exhibition to local venues to raise the profile of the Museum in the area and hopefully secure donations towards this project. So look out for us around the town!

The rising cost of postage, printing and paper is a constant worry for the Friends newsletter team. We are therefore sorry to say that for the first time in many years the subscription for 2013 – 2014 will have to increase by £1 to £5 to meet these ever increasing demands.

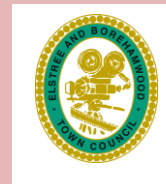
In an effort to keep further rises to a minimum we would like to trial sending the newsletter by e-mail from the next issue. If you are able to help us in this way please send you e-mail address to the Friends Secretary at

friendsofeandbwmuseum@hotmail.co.uk

For those of you who are unable to receive e-mail or would still prefer the newsletter to be sent by post, do nothing, and it will pop through your letterbox as usual.

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Supported by Hertsmere Borough Council
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