

Elstree & Boreham Wood Museum Friends Newsletter September 2013 Issue Number 3



A New Museum : Almost Time to Move in!

The new development which will house the Elstree and Boreham Wood Museum is nearing completion.

We are due to move there in late October 2013. The building will then be known as '96 Shenley Road' - the '96' in very large numerals will be on the front of the building.



96 Shenley Road, September 2013

The Museum will be located on the top floor of the Community Building, next to the Library's Local Studies area.

There will be a 'Youth Service' area and rooms for hire by the community.

In the foyer will be an information point.

Above the Library enquiry desk on each floor, it is planned to have a digital screen which will have information about the museum.

In the front window on wire supports, signs showing the organisations and logos of those involved in the project will be displayed.

The launch of the new museum will feature 'Timelines' on Elstree and Boreham Wood and a frieze of local photographs from the past, plus carefully chosen interesting artifacts on exhibition and areas which children will find interesting.

These will include touch-screen kiosks displaying the extensive Museum photographic collection and 'listening posts' for visitors to hear local residents reminiscing about their lives. Also available will be films on DVD showing the changes in our area.

2014 will celebrate the founding of the film industry in Boreham Wood on a date to be decided. The Museum will host an exhibition by 'Elstree Screen Heritage' this will be in place for two months.

The volunteers are very busy getting ready for the move from Drayton Road including packing and documenting all the items to be transferred to number '96.

If your group is interested in hearing a talk about the Museum please contact us on 020 8953 1258.

A Walk into History

The ninth day of the Boreham Wood Civic Festival marked the Museum's 2013 'Walk into Boreham Wood History'. David Armitage set out with 18 walkers to see and recapture the past in the evolving Elstree and Boreham Wood district. We were shown appropriate historical photographs along the way.

The starting point was the Museum in Drayton Road - the earliest road built in Boreham Wood where the first houses in 1887 were intended for local families and workers.

In 1896, Charles Braithwaite opened the Boreham Wood Engine Works and Loco Packing Company, at the top of the road, making packing materials for Loco and Traction engines. He built 20 houses for employees in Furzehill and Brownlow Roads.

We went through the 21st century housing estates to Station Road and the site of Whitehall Studios built in 1928, this became a sound studio in 1929.



Site of 'The Gate Studios'

Lack of soundproofing meant that a look-out man was stationed on the roof to warn of the approaching trains.

During WW2 the Military took over the studio to store their photographic equipment. By 1947 the building was renamed 'The Gate Studios'. J.Arthur Rank Group used the site. The last business there was Harkness Screens which closed in 2006.

Further along Station Road, our group reached 'The florist with a chequered past', originally built as a Baptist Chapel in 1894, it became the 'Gem' cinema in 1914, where local people could watch themselves as 'extras' in silent films made in their village. In the 1930s the local council used the building as offices and finally it became a Public Convenience before the present florist business took over.



The 'Gem' Cinema

We then moved on to Allum Lane.

Where Barham Avenue begins, there once stood one of the most prominent properties in the area, Barham House. There had been a house on the site since circa 1600 which had changed occupants many times and was renamed over the years. The last owner, famous publisher Andrew Chatto, was there in 1897. His son sold the property. In 1931 a local Estate Agent bought and demolished the house. He divided the ground into lots and this was the start of Barham Avenue, built 1932.

Continuing through the remaining parts of 'Old Boreham Wood' we emerged into Parkfields, a local park maintained by Hertsmere Council and used by many dog walkers. The group then crossed 'Robinson's Bridge' over the railway, lately the scene of two tragic deaths and turned into Red Road stopping at No. 1 'The Gatehouse'. Joined to this building once stood the home of Ray Davies, 60s singer with the Kinks.

We then came into Theobald Street and the site of the convent and school 'Our Lady of Sion' demolished in the late 50s. The extensive grounds once stretched back to the railway. The earlier mentioned Robinson (Henry), built a row of shops in Theobald Street in 1871 known locally as 'Robinson's Folly' as the locals thought the venture was destined to fail. He piped water to many of these buildings and also owned much of the local land.

On reaching 'Brickfield Cottages' we were told they were built in 1858 by Charles Morgan, who owned the brickfield next door. Henry Robinson gave two of these cottages to his daughter as part of her dowry.



Brickfield Cottages

The first National school in Boreham Wood opened in 1896 is now in a very dilapidated condition. It is off the road near the Boreham Wood Working Men's Club.



The first School has seen better days

We were shown a photograph of the row of Midland Cottages built in 1868 for railway workers. They were to the right of the old coal yard now the entrance to the station car park. There we concluded this most interesting and informative walk into history.

2013 Activities in Brief....

'Families Day' in Meadow Park, 29th June.

The Museum's stall at this ever popular event was received with great interest by adults and children alike. One well received feature of the display was an exhibition of 'Old schools in Boreham Wood'. It was an excellent and enjoyable day and the weather was very kind to us.

'Local History Day' at the Library, 21st August.

This event held in conjunction with the Library, showcased some interesting objects from the Museum. There was also a rolling film show depicting Boreham Wood through the years and entitled 'Then and Now'. This proved to be of very great interest.

'History Walk' with Offenburg Twin town, 18th September.

This event is part of the ongoing liaison with schools and local clubs of our Twin town.

A Note from the Women's Institute who are celebrating their 90th Anniversary, in October.

At the Boreham Wood Womens Institute there is cause for celebration. In October we will reach the 90th Anniversary of the founding of our local group. We are 13 in number plus two new members who joined recently.

Our meetings take place every month. We enjoy many activities and speakers visit to talk on various subjects. We also have quizzes which are very well attended.

The group have regular outings, the latest one was very successful. We visited the Lavender Fields and had afternoon tea.

If you would like to come to a meeting we are at Allum Hall every 2nd Monday of each month at 2pm.

If you have any queries please ring 8207 1580.

How our Museum Began

By Ann Lawrence



1998. It was the last day of a display on Boreham Wood and on a return visit a resident saw that his was the only signature in a book inviting people to join a history project. He was later to become our curator.

1999, November. Our small history group helped with a community history road show in the church hall. 400 people came and enjoyed the 'Then and Now' display. Some were very enthusiastic about local history.

I was asked to find local people to interview and one man had been a studio props master. He spent eight hours recording his life story.

We gave his wife some flowers as he should have taken her out to dinner that night!

The museum now holds many memories of local people.

2000, February. At a meeting the mayor Bill Moir tried to form a committee and asked me to propose my husband. 'OK if it gets him out of the house' I said. 20 people were there, 8 already involved and 11 were elected to the first Boreham Wood and Elstree Community History Project Committee.

2000, Spring. We produced our first 'Traces' Newsletter for the history project.

2000, June. We joined in the annual families day at Meadow Park.

2000, Late June. Premises in Drayton Road became vacant and we were eager to be there. Both councils helped financially and we cleaned and decorated. A local man made and donated the storage. We gathered artifacts from local residents hoping to open later that year and we did (See photograph). The History Room was ready!

2000, November 11th. Opening on Armistice Day, we built a small photographic display with a model of the local war memorial, decorated with poppies given by Boreham Wood British Legion and a book commemorating our local men.

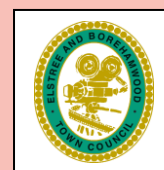
A fellow researcher had gathered information on local men who died in the two World Wars and I suggested that a memorial book would be needed. Many volumes followed and they are to be held in a special bookcase in the new museum.

2013. It is 13 years since we opened and a phenomenal amount of research has been done and recorded with much being passed on to visitors. All our Museum helpers past and present are much appreciated. We thank them for their help over the years. Of course we also thank our faithful visitors, many of whom have contributed greatly to our collections and knowledge.

The present Museum in Drayton Road will remain open until the move to '96 Shenley Road'

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Open 11am - 3pm Thur, Fri & Sat



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