

Elstree & Borehamwood Museum Friends Newsletter May 2014 Issue Number 5



THE NEW MUSEUM A GREAT START !

The new museum has now been open for almost 6 months and we have had nearly 4000 visitors to date. Saturday has proved the most popular day with an average of 35 people attending. The half term holiday saw an increase in numbers with many school children spending some of their free time enjoying the displays.

Vania Ermolly, our Community Learning Officer, has produced a series of museum trails which are proving very popular with our younger patrons. They are divided into age groups ranging from the under 5's to 14 years, the idea being to find various objects in the museum and answer related questions. A question sheet and magnifying glass are provided and they go about the task with great enthusiasm. It adds another dimension to their visit and is very successful. Help is always available if required, and there is a prize for all participants.

One new addition to the museum is a specially made automaton depicting a scene from the film 'Moby Dick'. A pound donation starts Captain Ahab in pursuit of his Great White Whale. The model is currently silent but there are plans to add music in the future. Most people will know that the 1956 film 'Moby Dick' was made at Borehamwood and a water tank used in some scenes now lies beneath the 'Big Brother' house on the studio site.



Captain Ahab in pursuit of the Great White Whale

A children's activity centre has also been recently installed. This colourful, low level unit, has a number of small cupboards and drawers with questions about the local area. Open them to find the answers and a related object. The classic ring and wire game is also featured. The 2 large drawers at the base of the unit will

contain costumes related to the films made at Borehamwood. Children love to dress up and some good photo opportunities are in prospect!

Meanwhile at the old museum most of the original displays were still in place and required dismantling. Due to the limited space at 96 Shenley Road, a storage facility at 'Safestore' in Stirling Way has been rented for

the short term and at the end of March the remaining contents of the original museum were moved there.

The keys to the old museum have now been returned and sadly we have no more involvement in the premises where it all began.

On the 22nd March at a Civic Reception at Elstree Studios, Ann and Alan Lawrence, two of the original museum founders and Dave Armitage, manager of our new museum, were presented with awards for their excellent work in establishing and running the museum. Congratulations to them on their very well deserved recognition.

Thank you all for your continuing support.

A sample of comments from our visitors book:

Looks absolutely splendid! Very attractively presented. Heaps to see. Congratulations to all! It all looks amazing! Excellent showpiece for Borehamwood. My family really enjoyed it. I like the film clips. Packs a lot into a small space. Most enjoyable journey down memory lane. Well researched. Lovely! Well worth a visit. Such a joy to walk back in time.

Focus on J.B.B. Wellington

Among the displays in the new museum is a feature showing prominent people from the local area.

J.B.B. Wellington is near the top of that list and is celebrated as having started the first factory, Wellington and Ward, in Borehamwood. His contribution to the growth and development of the town was considerable. As well as being a very successful businessman, he was a hugely influential photographer of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.



J.B.B. Wellington. c1910

Wellington was born at 18 Gay Street, Bath, in 1858 and given the rather magnificent names of James Booker Blakemore. He learned to paint and practiced as an architect for a short time, but around 1890 while on a visit to America he was introduced to photographic manufacturing by George Eastman of the Kodak Company of New York who made him the first manager of Kodak Works in Harrow and his future career was determined. Back in England, he served there from 1891 to 1893 and also worked for a short spell at Elliot and Sons in Barnet. In 1894, together with his Brother in Law, H.H. Ward, he established the first factory in Borehamwood on part of the site now occupied by the Boulevard shopping centre. The factory produced photographic materials with Wellington as it's scientific and technical director and Ward taking the responsibility for engineering.

Borehamwood was a small rural hamlet at this time and part of Elstree Parish. There was some development in Theobald Street but the area was still almost entirely farmland with its few associated buildings. There were some large houses including 'The Firs' on Shenley Road opposite the entrance to Furzehill Road, 'Glenhaven House' on the corner of the street which now bears its name and 'The Elms' standing next door to 'Glenhaven' and the home of Wellington from 1897 until 1901.

The opening of a factory in this rural area and the opportunity of long term employment, must have had a huge impact on the town and it became the largest employer of local people until the 1920's.

As scientific and technical director, Wellington was in charge of improving the plates, films, and papers that the firm developed and manufactured. For many years, they published the Wellington Photographic Handbook, which contained extensive technical information and promoted its own products. Indicative of its popularity, the handbook went through at least seventeen editions by 1928 and was translated into no less than six other languages, including Japanese.

The company was extremely successful with photography becoming increasingly available to the general public and Wellington was able to move from 'The Elms' in Borehamwood to 'The Leys' in Barnet Lane, Elstree - a house designed for him by the eminent Scottish architect George Walton in 1901. Built in the Arts and Crafts style, it was and remains one of the finest houses of its type in Southern England. Wellington lived there until the start of WW2 when it was loaned to the Ministry of Defence for the duration of the war.

Wellington's personal interest in photography began in the late 1870s, and by 1887 he was a member of the Royal Photographic Society, serving on its exhibition committee. In April 1890, his work was featured in Sun Artists, an exclusive set of eight monographs on artistic photographers that firmly established his reputation in the field. Its four, signed photogravures revealed his strength in genre scenes and landscapes, influenced by the artists John Constable and Thomas Gainsborough.

Wellington exhibited his work internationally from the late 1880s until around World War I. He showed in Vienna in 1888 and 1891, New York in

1899, Paris in 1900, and at the St. Louis Louisiana Purchase exposition in 1904. The London salon frequently accepted his pictures.

In England, important organizations embraced him and periodicals reproduced his images. In 1892, he was elected to membership of the Linked Ring Brotherhood, the country's most advanced group of photographers. The Royal Photographic Society granted him an honorary fellowship in 1935 (Hon. FRPS). 'Photograms of the Year', England's internationally read annual, featured his work ten times between 1897 and 1917. Wellington was so mechanically and technically adept, that he reportedly created by hand most of the photographic materials he used for his own work, from his plates to his wooden cameras.

As a result of the Midland railway extension from Bedford to St Pancras in the 1860's, Elstree Hill tunnel was constructed and a brickfield established to utilise the excavated clay. The site is now occupied by Lakeside Court, off Deacons Hill Road. The brickfield closed in 1915 but the chimneys for the brick kilns remained and provided a landmark for the increasing number of prowling German Zeppelins. They were therefore demolished in December 1916 and Wellington was there to capture the moment in this dramatic photograph.



On the 20th February 2011, Wellington was featured on the Antiques Roadshow when his great niece, Diana (shown above with expert Marc Allum) brought some of his photographs and medallions which he had won from exhibitions all over the world. He was described as a major mover and shaker in the processes of mass producing photographs and one of the best amateur photographers of the Victorian period. He invented a machine that could produce 10 million prints in 2 days - a staggering amount. The presentation included some of his most famous photographs including 'Eventide' and the wonderfully clear, late 19th-century photographs of the Taj Mahal, taken on his trip to India. Because of it's historical significance the collection was valued at between 10,000-15,000 pounds.

100 years ago when John East, Percy Nash and Arthur Moss Lawrence built 'Neptune Studios' on the site now occupied by the BBC, Wellington was a successful businessman, celebrated international photographer and inventor of 'state of the art' photographic equipment. His factory was situated a 'stone's throw' from 'Neptune' and it seems inconceivable that he wasn't consulted on the suitability of that first Borehamwood studio. So can we add '*Influential in bringing the film industry to Borehamwood*' to his impressive C.V. ? I don't know the answer - perhaps somebody out there does!

In 1929, 'Wellington and Ward' was acquired by Ilford Ltd. J.B.B. Wellington died in 1939.

Museum Outreach News

Following the Teachers' Open Afternoon at the Museum earlier in the Year and extensive leafleting of both schools and local organisations in the area, there has been an increased interest in the Outreach Service that the Museum has to offer.

In January, the Museum was represented as part of Community Action Hertsmere in Farriers Hall. Our displays gave people a flavour of the work of our volunteers and, as a result, we recruited some new volunteers to work front of house.



From left: Vania Ermolly, Helen Stamp and Lynda Marshall at Farriers Hall



Vania at Meryfield School

February was a busy month with two bookings from Meryfield School. Sixty, Year 1 pupils, aged 5-6, listened to a short presentation, 'Time Traveller's guide to Borehamwood', followed by an object handling session. The children were able to touch and explore a selection of objects including a Bakelite telephone, butter pats and an Edwardian ceramic bed warmer. Making use of Handling and Discussion cards, produced by Vania, Community Learning Officer, the children were prompted to look closely at the objects and think about their use in the past and relate them to life today.

The following week a Year 6 Teacher at Meryfield booked the Museum's World War 2 Loan Box for use with her 10 year olds.

Feedback was very positive from all the teachers:

'The Handling and Discussion cards are brilliant' - 'I can honestly say the children came away from the lesson knowing a lot more about the war than they did before the lesson and that was down to your resources!'

Forthcoming events.....

Saturday 3rd May:

A Pre-Festival afternoon will be held in the piazza outside All Saints Church, Shenley Road. The Museum's display is entitled 'The Changing Face of Shenley Road'.

Thursday 5th June :

The Shenley WI celebrate their 95th anniversary. Congratulations to them - An article will be included in the next Newsletter.

Tuesday 17th June:

Start of the 'Centenary Exhibition' at the Museum. This event celebrating 100 years of the film and TV industry by the Elstree Screen Heritage is expected to be very well attended and will be an exciting time for all concerned.

Saturday 28th June:

The museum will have a display at the Families Day at Meadow Park - this is always a popular event.

Sunday 29th June:

A 'History Walk' . Details to be announced.

Wednesday 1st October (approx):

An exhibition at the museum to mark the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War.

Volunteers are always needed. If you can help please contact the museum.

Elstree & Borehamwood Museum

96 Shenley Road

Borehamwood

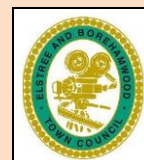
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Open 12pm - 6pm Tues, Wed & Thurs

10am-3pm Sat



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