



VICTORIANA: CRINOLINES AND CURIOS

February 2011 – December 2011

The highlight of the exhibition is a magnificent mourning dress worn by Queen Victoria in 1892. She was grieving for the loss of her eldest grandson “Eddy” Duke of Clarence who died tragically young during an influenza epidemic at the age of 28. The exhibition illustrates different aspects of Victorian life, at home, at work and how they spent their leisure time. The display includes a range of costume, Victorian underwear, lace, jewellery scent bottles, furniture and other examples of Victorian ephemera.

Together with the mourning dress, the exhibition displays adults’ and children’s clothes from the same era and many of these items come from the old Manor Barn collection.

Medieval fashion on the catwalk

History made real—By Mo and Claire

The collection of costumes and artefacts are re-creations of Medieval life as we portray it at various places of Historical Interest. Some of the objects in the glass cases are authentic pieces, the rest are handmade replicas based on writings, drawings and remains found on archaeological digs.

We are part of a group based in Brighton with members all over the country. We re-enact life as it was from various periods with the Medieval time being our foremost period. The re-enactment season generally runs from April to September.



Christmas Festival at Portsmouth Dockyard

On Friday 26th. November last year, 41 members and friends went on the last Outing for 2010 to the Historic Dockyard in Portsmouth. The Xmas Festival is now a well established event with the magic of Xmas past brought to life with traditional festive fun for everyone.

There were street entertainers and bands, all dressed up in the appropriate apparel for the occasion, i.e. Dickensian dress. There was also entry to the usual Dockyard attractions such as HMS Victory, HMS Warrior, the Royal Naval Museum, Action Stations, and the Mary Rose Museum. Since the Mary Rose herself was not available to be visited, due to work on the new building to house her, we were able to go on a free boat tour of Portsmouth Harbour to view the various warships at anchor.

In addition there was a European style shopping village with craft stalls, a French Market, and plenty of activities to keep us occupied all day. The weather was kind to us, and after an eventful day we left for home at 4 p.m. A most enjoyable day out!

Bettina and Michael have now almost put together a fresh list of outings for this new year of 2011, which they hope will attract their usual stalwart supporters and hopefully be appealing to more new members and friends. In those never to be forgotten words, - EVERY LITTLE HELPS ! - please support your Museum !

Michael & Bettina Openshaw





Diary Dates

Bexhill Artists Workspace

Open Studio

Every Sunday until December 2011
Bexhill Museum Education Room

Lecture

'Was it worth it?'

by John Dowling,
2nd February 2011 2.30pm
St Augustine's Hall

Coffee Morning

3rd February 2011 10am
Parkhurst Hall

Afternoon Workshop

The Twilight of Victorian Painting

tutor Dr Graham Whitham
12th February 2011 2pm
Bexhill Museum Education Room

Lecture

'Birds and Birdsong'

by Mike Russell
16th February 2011 2.30pm
St Augustine's Hall

Afternoon Workshop

Historic Sussex Communities:

Working with the 1901 Census

tutor Geoffrey Mead
26th February 2011 2pm
Bexhill Museum Education Room

Lecture

'The Kent & East Sussex Railway'

by Harry Hickmott
2nd March 2011 2.30pm
St Augustine's Hall

Coffee Morning

3rd March 2011 10am
Parkhurst Hall

Lecture

'The History of Sussex Inn Signs'

by Dr Janet Pennington
16th March 2011 2.30pm
St Augustine's Hall

Afternoon Workshop

Hancox, a house and a family

Tutor Charlotte Moore
19th March 2011 2.30pm
Bexhill Museum Education Room

Guided Walk

Stepping Out to Earl De La Warr's Bexhill

with Heather Morrey
27th March 2011 2pm
meet by Bexhill Sailing Club

Special Lecture

'Sussex Trugs'

by Sarah Page
30th March 2011 7.30pm
Bexhill Museum Education Room

A word from our Chairman

2011 promises to be a demanding but also an exciting year for all concerned with Bexhill Museum. Demanding, because we face challenging financial times. Especially for the Society who as a small charity relies heavily on the generosity of the public to manage and maintain our museum. As with similar organisations we are engaged in the practical realities of day-to-day survival. But we have to ensure that this situation does not make us focus too much on the present problems rather than investing in new initiatives and projects.

As with all charities and other voluntary organisations the Society's purpose is not self-preservation but social change. Change in its broadest sense, not only encouraging interest in our heritage directly through displaying our collections but change through our many and varied in-house and outside activities. However, to be successful in carrying out these changes we have to 'market' ourselves. In other words adopt established methods of business promotion in all its forms. But we must never forget that the Society is an independent charity serving our beneficiaries - Bexhill Museum and the residents of our town, in the best possible way. So, you will not see us chasing money to 'keep up appearances' or to glorify ourselves.

Many believe that the success of a museum can only be measured in visitor numbers and by the size of its turnover or its reserves. That premise infers that if visitor numbers drop and money is in short supply the museum is failing. Nonsense, these indicators are not necessarily measures of effectiveness. Yes, 2010 could have been a better year for Bexhill Museum, with visitor numbers somewhat disappointing and a fall in projected income. On the plus side however our education programme really took off as did the numbers and successes of our in-house events. The museum's two temporary exhibitions brought in many first time visitors as did the weekly Bexhill Artists Workspace display held each Sunday in the education room. Also for one month, other artists' work was displayed throughout the museum under Coastal Currents 2010.

The museum shop was another huge success story, providing much needed revenue. Away from the museum the coffee mornings, coach trips, lunch outings, lectures and walks continued to be highly successful. Nationally, we were represented at many events. For example, two cars usually on display in our motoring gallery went to shows in Birmingham and Beaulieu. Further good news was the number of new volunteers who joined us during the year.

For those who are not aware, Bexhill Museum could not exist in its present form without volunteers. We employ just two persons, one full time administrator and one part time cleaner whilst our curator is employed by Rother District Council as their District Curator.

We intend to continue throughout 2011 doing what we have always done - being creative and maximising our resources. But we cannot do this without your help. For a start we need more local residents to visit the museum and more volunteers to come forward and help us manage it.

We also need to increase the membership of the Society. Look out for details of new membership deals to be published shortly. We have a great programme for the year ahead including new temporary exhibitions, many more in-house events for adults and children of all ages, exhibits never before seen by the public, art displays and of course the newly stocked shop and cafe.

So will you help to make 2011 the most successful year in Bexhill Museum's 97 years existence? We have been in the same building since 1914 serving many generations of visitors and residents. Now that we have so much more to offer in the shape of new galleries and facilities the current management team intend to build on this legacy to make our museum into one of the prime heritage and educational attractions in the South East. But we cannot do this alone, so please come along and spend a few hours enjoying and learning about your heritage.

John Betts



Coming Events

The Pratt boys remember a childhood in Windsor Road - Two Events for April

John and Reg Pratt are well known names in Bexhill. Many boys were taught by John at the Down School, and Reg was known to everyone who has been involved with the Rowing Club. Both are proud of telling how their grandfather, William John Pratt, had arrived in Bexhill in the 1880's as one of 'the squatters', people who came to Bexhill in search of work during the early years of the town's development. He became a very well respected builder living at 9 Windsor Road with his 'yard' in Reginald Road. Both 'boys' were born there and have happy memories of their childhood. Reg says that commercial property intermingled with the houses and with the school nearby and a shop on every corner there developed a very strong sense of community

In a special weekend to tie in with our new Victorian Exhibition we have two events which centre on the Windsor Road area of Bexhill. Often we look at the grander buildings in the town which reflect the aspirations of the land owners and business men who were developing the resort. However this activity was dependent upon this very different area where lived, and in many cases worked, the tradesmen and domestic staff without whom this growth would not have been possible.

On **Saturday 16th April** from 11.15 until about 12.15, with a break for coffee and biscuits, John Pratt will be reading from the collection of poems titled 'Up the Red Brick Alley' which he has been inspired to write about Bexhill and his childhood. He hopes this will spark memories which other people will share. There will be a collection towards the museum's reminiscence project.

On **Sunday 17th** there will be chance to visit the Windsor Road area to visit some of the locations John writes about. Before his sad death in October 2010 Reg Pratt put together a walk around the area, with the help of Heather Morrey, based on his research into the archives and his own memories. She led this walk on a cold wet day last October and would like to lead it again hoping for better weather! To take part meet at 2pm at the Lane Memorial opposite the Town Hall for the 2 hour stroll. There will be the usual walks charge of £2.50 for museum funds.



FROM THE CRADLE TO THE GRAVE

New display in the costume Gallery

February 2011 – December 2011

This exhibition looks at how objects and archives can tell the story of a person's life and assist family historians with their research. From Wedding Dresses and Christening Gowns, to birth, marriage and death certificates, photographs, censuses and wills. It also takes a look at some of the traditions and customs associated with births, weddings and mourning.

Claire Eden

Museum lectures

The first lecture of 2011 held at St Augustine's Hall on 5th January was given by an art historian Dr Graham Whitham. The Open Road - Art and the Automobile, an intriguing title perhaps. What is the connection? Quite surprising, as his extremely well-illustrated talk showed. From the earliest days of motoring in the early 1900s to the mass use of the ubiquitous car today, many artists of the twentieth century were inspired to put their own vehicle in their art, be it painting, sculpture or conceptual work, but most were keen motorists. An interesting photograph of 1908 showed the painter Monet sitting proudly in his motor car which, due to his success at that time, he was well able to afford.

Dr Whitham took the audience through all styles of twentieth century art. From the Italian Futurists of the early 1900s whose ideas were to depict movement and speed in their abstract work, to the stream-lined 1930s of Art Deco and the influence of Surrealism, when 'found objects' were the artwork. In America, during the 1950s and '60s when chrome and curves were the automobile's ideal, Pop Art and hyper-realism glorified these aspects. Conceptual art and performance events of the late twentieth century continued to make use of the car in various ways, some quite bizarre. Of especial interest was a fine collection of poster art of the 1930s and early 1950s when the Shell company commissioned artists of the day to produce designs that would encourage motorists to take to the road. It is interesting to think that the functional vehicle that we use today should have been such an inspiration to artists from the earliest days.

Judith Carey



Shop News

The shop continues to do well although the pre-Christmas period was quieter than last year. We are now reviewing the present stock and looking at new items for the coming season – please do come in to see us regularly to see what's new and there will be discounts on some of the older items. We already have a new range of children's/teenagers/family books written by our Chief Executive, Peter Fairhurst and a new book by Dr Graham Whitham (husband of our Director Rachel) on the De La Warr Pavilion.

Special Offer – we have acquired a number of good second hand copies of L J Bartley's 'The Story of Bexhill' published in the 1970s and until Julian's recent book this was THE history book of Bexhill and are now extremely rare. Having donated a copy to the collections we are now able to offer the remaining copies for sale on a 'first come first served' basis. Prices are £30 for SBM members and £35 for non-members, contact Chris or Emma on 01424 787950 or Don on 787955.

Thank you to all of you who have supported the shop during the year, your purchases mean there will be a good profit to pass to the Society at the end of the year.

Christmas Craft Fair



Our first ever Christmas Craft Fair was held on Saturday 4th December 2010. We were holding the event to raise money for the Museum's Education and Conservation Funds. Despite the snowy weather leading up to the day we still went ahead with the Fair.

The Museum entrance and shop area had been beautifully decorated by Ann Bourner, and the Education Room had been turned into a cafe for the day. Home-made cakes, tea, coffee and hot chocolate were available all day in return for a donation. The craft stalls were spaced out around the Museum so that visitors got to see the whole museum as well as the craft fair for the entry price of £1. The Craft stalls included handmade Christmas decorations, natural products, Raku, jewellery, hand-hooked rugs, books and children's gifts.

Sadly the school choir had to cancel due to the weather, but museum volunteer Cheryl Poole was able to step in at short notice to sing a few songs, including amazing performances of Ding Dong Merrily on High and Away in a Manger. This was followed by a

superb performance of a traditional Mummers play by the Hollington Tipteerers who also stayed around afterwards to answer questions about the Mummer tradition. Throughout the day there was facepainting and flag making for the children. At 4pm the day ended with the raffle drawn by Chairman John Betts and Rother District Curator Julian Porter and a performance of We Wish You A Merry Christmas.

We managed to raise over £650 from the day. The event was organised by Claire Eden and Emma Tickner. It was a brilliant day, with a great Christmassy atmosphere and a real feeling of team spirit among the volunteers.
Claire Eden



Volunteers evening

On the 16th March 2011 at 6.30pm we are holding our next Volunteers Evening. If you are already a volunteer or are interested in finding out more please come along and meet the team.

"To inspire people of all ages and promote learning and enjoyment among all Bexhill residents as well as visitors by encouraging discovery"

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