

The Annual Summer Exhibition 2011

The annual exhibition closed to the general public on Saturday October 1st 2011 with still some school visits scheduled before the end of the month. Prior to opening, the RAF display of the shelter section of the exhibition had been reorganised with the inclusion of an exhibit in the form of a section of Lancaster Bomber fuselage to include all our artefacts associated with the heavy bombers.

Once again we can record a successful season with well over 2,000 visitors to the Centre, which includes the Air Raid Shelter and part of the Hospital Annexe. The visitors came from all parts of Britain and abroad. This was the fourth year of the expanded Annual Exhibition enabling many more artefacts from civilian life to be exhibited. As in previous years many donations of artefacts had been received from members of the public and the number of school visits and visits by other interested groups continued to increase.

Once again we played a prominent part in Cirencester's celebration of English Heritage's "Heritage Open Days". Over the two days in September, with extended opening hours we had over 350 visitors. The two "War Walks" were also very successful. The Saturday walk was around central Cirencester, while on Sunday the lesser-known Southern end of the town was explored.

Closed season visitors and talks to outside groups

The demand was such for visits after the normal closing date of the annual Summer exhibition that the displays remained intact until the Spring. This allowed a number of organised groups take advantage. In February we were very pleased once again to welcome two groups of visitors from the Darvell Bruderhof in East Sussex. The Bruderhof had its origins at Ashton Keynes and Oaksey when they came as refugees from Nazi oppression in 1936. They remained there until 1940 before emigrating to Paraguay. They came to visit sites connected with their past and to learn from our LMHA archives of life at the Cotswold Bruderhof during that period of their community.

Another ever-growing aspect of our work has been that of going out into the community presenting talks to many groups and organisations within Cirencester and other venues in Gloucestershire and Wiltshire. The talks have called on the expertise of our members and are not based solely on the Second World War. We have covered a wide range of subjects beyond this, from Archaeological excavations in Cirencester and the changing face of Cirencester, to amateur dramatics and poetry.

With the coming of 2012, Jubilee Year, a request came from Cirencester Civic Society for Peter Grace to compile and deliver an illustrated talk on Cirencester at the time of the Accession and Coronation of the Queen. With the title "Cirencester the Jubilee and Coronation remembered" this proved to be popular and has now been added to our ever-growing list of talks.

We have continued to loans boxes of artefacts and ephemera to schools and other interest groups. All in all this has been a very busy, successful and fruitful year in terms of providing a local history facility for Cirencester. Having renewed the lease with the Cotswold District Council [CDC] we had hoped that the Home Front exhibition in the Annexe would continue to develop. Making visitors aware of the Centre's existence is a particular problem and we hope in the future to be able to finance permanent signage within the town possibly in the form of finger posts. It has been encouraging this year to see the success of our web site www.livingmemory.btik.com in bringing visitors from outside the town and enquiries from around the world. We have also issued a periodic newsletter to keep members and friends of the LMHA informed of events.

The Financial considerations and the future

We have, thanks to a number of grants, donations to the exhibition and fees from talks, been able to meet all our financial commitments to date as laid out in the Treasurer's report.

We have been in touch with the Winstone Trust, which we applied to in 2010 and Peter Grace presented a detailed proposal to in 2011 but as yet there has been no response.

The Annual Summer Exhibition 2012

The annual exhibition closed to the general public on Saturday October 5th 2011 with once again some school visits scheduled before the end of the month. Once again we can record a successful season with well over 2,000 visitors to the Centre and again the visitors came from all parts of Britain and abroad. This was the fifth year of the expanded Annual Exhibition but will be the last for the annexe section. (See subsequent paragraph "unwelcome news") Once again many donations of artefacts had been received from members of the public and the number of school visits and visits by other interested groups continues to increase.

English Heritage's "Heritage Open Days" were not arranged on a town-wide basis this year, as the committee felt that the Jubilee and Olympics would interfere with people's ability to organise events. However along with a few other organisations we decided to continue to take part in order to maintain interest and it was a successful venture. Our biggest problem was advertising, but thanks to the good offices of the Wilts and Glos. Standard, the Cirencester Town Council and Martin Portus of the Cirencester Civic Society we were able to obtain substantial publicity.

At a preview of the Salvation Army's Heritage Exhibition on the 7th September Peter Grace presented the "Cirencester the Jubilee and Coronation Remembered" talk in The Salvation Army Hall, Thomas Street.

At the Centre on September 8th and 9th, with extended opening hours we had over 250 visitors.

The War Walk on the 8th did not take place but on the 9th around 25 adults and children participated in the Walk around the Wartime places in the central area of the town.

During the actual town Jubilee Celebrations on June 4th Bill Irving took part as one of the narrators for the Pageant in the Abbey Grounds.

Unwelcome news

The future of the Memorial Hospital Building has been in doubt for some time and with the closing of the Register Office in July 2011 a number of rumours had spread around town. The rumours have now become a reality and following a telephone call from Mr Plews of the CDC on the 25th September 2012 we received official written notice from the CDC on 28th that we have to vacate our section of the Hospital by January 4th 2013. Evidently the building is to be sold. However included in the letter giving notice was the assurance that the CDC is trying to help find accommodation elsewhere for all the present tenants including ourselves. This matter is to be discussed by the Trustees at an emergency meeting on 8th October, which is the earliest date the meeting, could be arranged.

Peter Grace

Trustee and Correspondent to the Trustees of the LMHA

5th October 2012