

Thirsk and District Museum Society

Spring Newsletter 2018



The Museum closed for the 2017 Season on Saturday 18 November and re-opens on Monday 26 March. The 2017 season was very successful with a 15% increase in visitor numbers and a 39% increase in donations. Full credit must go to our stewards for their very warm and friendly welcome and their excellent interaction with our visitors.

On the first Sunday afternoon in October we held an afternoon tea party in The Pantry to say thank you to all of the stewards for their hard work during the season. We were pleased to be joined by Jean Sampson and Arthur Whitehead and presentations were made in recognition of their services to the museum. The event proved very popular and successful and we intend to hold another one towards the end of this season. I am delighted to report that all of our stewards from last season are returning again this year and we have so far recruited an additional two volunteers, Sue Walker and Stuart Whyte to join our loyal and dedicated team.

Our secretary Allan Webster had to retire in June due to ill health and sadly passed away at the start of February. Allan had worked at the museum for many years and was a very popular and highly respected person. He devoted considerable time to his secretarial duties and was highly efficient. Allan will be greatly missed by all of his friends.

The autumn talks proved very interesting and were well attended. The September one was given by Anne Jenner on 'Pursuing Potters of the Past'. We were privileged in October to hear Professor Richard Bailey's talk on 'The Saxon Stones of South Kilvington Church' and in November Anthony Hughes from the Records Office in Northallerton gave a fascinating and humorous talk on 'Thirsk Treasures'.

Our first talk this Spring was given by Sarah Jane and Andrew Turnbull on 'Johnsons of Thirsk 1830 to 2018'. This proved to be a very popular talk and included an account of the York Gild of Butchers. Both Sarah Jane and Andrew have held the position of Master of the Gild following in the footsteps of Sarah Jane's father Ray Ballard who was the Master in 2010-2011. We are looking forward to the next two talks in March and April which will be given by Kindle Woods CIC on 'All About the Drop Spindle' and Julian Norton on 'From TB Testing to Television and the bits in between'.

A reminder that The Annual General Meeting will take place on Thursday 24 May in the Town Hall Annexe at 7.30pm. Further details will be sent at the beginning of May.

Since the Museum was accepted by the Arts Council to go forward to apply for accreditation the Committee has continued make progress during the course of the year in implementing the action plan for our Forward Plan for this year.

The Trustees accepted the recommendations of the Chartered Surveyors' Report following detailed survey of all areas of the building. This highlighted that a great deal of structural repairs need to be made. It is very clear that the cost of these improvements will be very expensive and will have to be carried over a period of several years. We are making a start on the work by carrying out improvements to the exterior of the museum. One of the attic windows and the guttering has been replaced. We are in the process of applying to Hambleton District Council for planning permission so that the remaining work can be carried out when sufficient funds are available. Obtaining planning permission for a listed building in a conservation area is not straight forward and requires a detailed Heritage Statement to accompany the application.

During the closed season a great deal of work has been carried out every Monday and Tuesday afternoons. We have been very fortunate during this time to have the help of Joe Williams, a Sixth Form Student from Thirsk School who has been on work experience. His assistance with a variety of different tasks has been invaluable.

We set ourselves a very ambitious programme of work to be carried out and I am pleased to report that all aspects have been achieved. The office has been re-organised with new shelving to provide greater storage space. All of our documents have been sorted into archive boxes and catalogued. This means that we will be able to deal with enquiries in a more efficient manner. All of the items on display have been audited and their precise locations recorded. Our next task will be to sort out and catalogue the many thousands of photographs in our possession.

We have made changes to some of our displays and produced new signage to assist our visitors when visiting the museum. Some re-decoration has also taken place. I thoroughly recommend a visit to see the changes that we have made.

In conclusion I would like to thank Mike Pospieszalski and all members of the Management Committee for their incredible hard work and support. We are looking forward to another successful season.

Jim Seymour (Chairman of the Management Committee)