

# Woodhall Spa Cottage Museum



The stall in the Courtyard at “Christmas Past”  
was kept very busy!

Newsletter No.52  
March 2026

# Woodhall Spa Cottage Museum

## A Note from the Editor

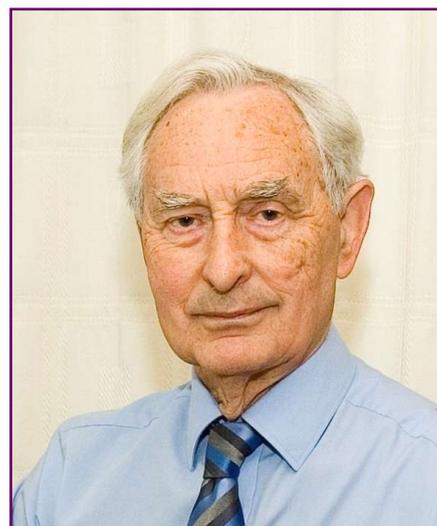
A Happy New Year to you all. Well here we are at the beginning of yet another season for the museum. It is in fact the 39th year since the opening of the museum back in 1987.

In this issue we say goodbye to a much valued volunteer - Ken Mair, who with his wife Jean, has now moved to his beloved Aberdeenshire. Tom Johnson has written an appreciation of all the invaluable work he has done for the museum on page 3.

A great deal of work has been going on over the winter period. This includes sorting out and re-arranging display cabinets in the museum and preparing this season's displays. There has also been extensive work in the front garden to prepare extended storage facilities to house additional chairs for the outdoor events and moving the Arnhem Memorial to a new site near the museum building with space for a memorial garden. This gives far more space for the ever popular outdoor events, such as the highly successful "Music in the Garden" series of concerts held every August.

The first event of the season is The Spring Talk, details of which are on page 5 together with information on the 40s Day in July. We also have our regular features with Nicholas Duke-Cox's "From the Collection" and Marjorie Sargeant's letter from Bertha and more from the Mellow Observer and "Axle Cooling".

The museum continues to look for additional Trustees to join the Board, so if you would like to become a little more involved in the running of the museum do contact us. In the meantime I look forward to meeting you at one of the many events planned for this season.



**Philip Groves**

### Front Cover Story

Our picture shows that business was brisk at the stall on the Museum Patio for the Christmas Past Event held on Saturday November 22nd. The event was a great success and you can see a report on the day on page 4.

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### The Newsletter

Editor - Philip Groves

To contact the Newsletter please write to:-

The Cottage Museum, The Bungalow, Iddesleigh Road, Woodhall Spa, Lincs. LN10 6SH  
or email [philanddeliagroves@gmail.com](mailto:philanddeliagroves@gmail.com)

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## Appreciation of Ken Mair

The museum had to say good bye to one of its longest serving volunteers, Ken Mair, who has provided invaluable building maintenance skills over the past 12 years. On leaving school in Aberdeenshire he commenced training as a carpenter and joiner. He subsequently qualified and eventually went to work for the National Trust. For various reasons Ken denied his services to the Trust and eventually joined the RAF as an Air Traffic Controller and finally came to Coningsby, settling in Woodhall Spa where he and his wife spent 40 years.



*Ken Mair centre with his wife, Jean & Museum Chairman David Hill who presented him with a small token of appreciation*



*Ken Mair with some of his museum colleagues at his leaving event at Petwood on 9th November 2025*

under Ken's watchful eye the windows were made and installed.

His skills went beyond carpentry and joinery. He frequently turned his hand to a variety of jobs needing his services at the museum, indeed, very often at short notice. He was a true master of his trade and much around the museum, although not clearly on show, was down to his resourcefulness and knowledge. One such project for which he was heavily involved was the replacement of the museum window frames. Having kept the weather out of the museum for 130 years they were beginning to prove beyond his endeavours to keep the rain from creeping into the building through the wooden frames. A firm specialising in heritage conservation was found and

Ken and his wife Jean had been considering returning to Aberdeenshire for some years as they had family still living in that area. They finally settled on a bungalow in Portishead and moved on a wet Friday just before Christmas. We are all aware of the snow and blizzards raining down on Aberdeenshire and we hope that they are comfortable in their new home. A farewell afternoon tea at Petwood Hotel was held for Ken and Jean where directors and volunteers could express their sincere thanks for all the years of dedicated service. Chairman David Hill presented Ken with garden vouchers and also gave him the Certificate awarded to him in 2014 as the "unsung hero". The skills and willingness in helping the museum are in this instance truly "irreplaceable" not to mention the money and time saved by not having to find a suitable "trades person". We all wish Ken and Jean a long and happy life in their new home and remember with sincere gratitude his association with the museum.

**Tom Johnson**

## Woodhall Spa Cottage Museum

### The Annual Memorial Lecture - "A Footnote in History"



*Mike Ingham delivers his talk*  
still is the world's largest airlift of people.

The Annual Memorial Talk which was held on Saturday November 8th was very well attended. In this illustrated presentation, aviation historian and author Mike Ingham, a founder member of the Aviation Heritage Lincolnshire partnership, recounted the little known story of the forced marches of 500 miles on foot by allied Prisoners of War at the end of the Second World War. They were eventually airlifted home by a large combination of different air forces, which included the RAF, RAAF, RCAF, USAAF and Polish and French airforces in an operation code named Operation Exodus. Operation Exodus was and

The story was a very personal one for Mike Ingham, as his father was one of these POWs and the talk was illustrated with quite a few photographs that his father had managed to take at the time.

It is a little known bit of history, hence the title of the talk – "A Footnote in History" and with the experiences of his father to draw on Mike was able to take us through what happened in great detail. Museum Chairman David Hill gave a vote of thanks at the end of the afternoon.

### Philip Groves

### Christmas Past

On Saturday 22nd November the museum held its Annual Christmas Past Event. The museum was decked out in Edwardian style with decorated Christmas Trees and festive bunting and there were Christmas themed displays in the various cabinets. The Woodhall Community Band played for Community Carol Singing, with one session in the morning and another in the afternoon. Soft drinks and snacks were available in the Temporary Exhibition Room. Outdoors there was a stall selling cakes etc. and various Christmas items, together with a Numbered Squares draw for a beautiful Christmas cake. In the Community Room the Learning Team had various craft activities available for children to try, which were very popular, together with a Christmas Songs Trail in the museum for the children. The event was very well attended, in spite of the poor weather conditions and was a great success. We would like to thank all the volunteers who gave so generously of their time to make this event possible and special thanks are due to Jan Middleton for donating a Christmas tree and decorations and to Maggie Hyde who donated the cake for the cake raffle, which was won by Denise Hayes. The Hamper was won by Barbara Scholey. Grateful thanks are also due to the Woodhall Brownies and Rainbows and to our Craft Club for their contributions to our displays.



*The Band playing for Carol Singing*



*Craft Activities in the Community Room*

### Philip Groves

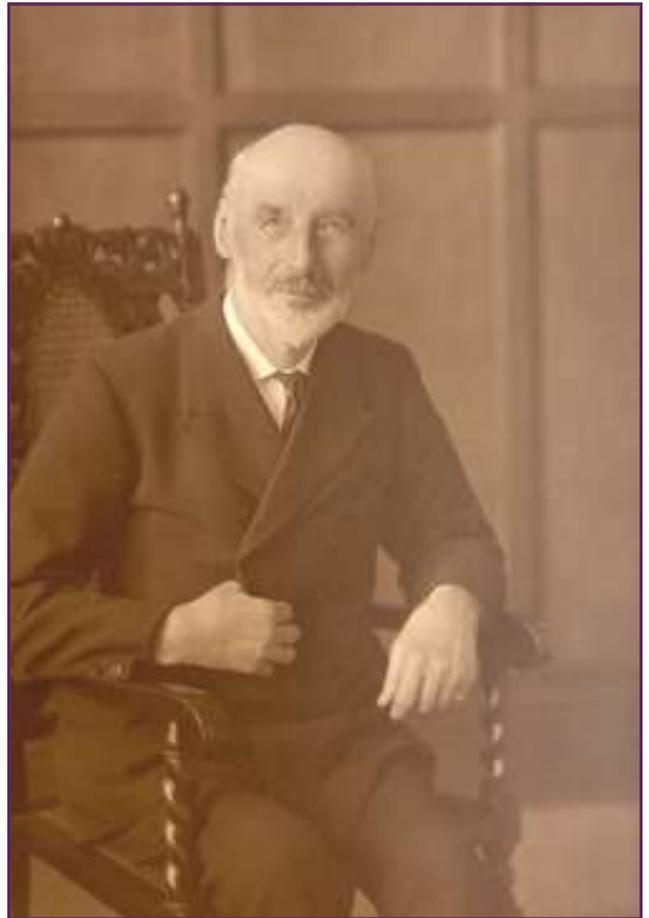
## The Spring Talk - The Life & Work of W.K.Morton

This year's Spring Talk will be held at The Golf Hotel at 2.30pm on Saturday 11th April, (Doors open at 2pm). This fully illustrated talk will cover the life and work of W. K. Morton, the Lincolnshire Printer and founder of the Horncastle News. The talk will be presented by Robert Bell FRICS, FAAV, whose family were land agents for "The Woodhall Estate".

W. K. Morton was a strict Victorian entrepreneur whose newspaper, covered local events, including the reburbishment of The Victoria Hotel in Woodhall Spa and Horncastle getting through to the fifth round of the FA cup in 1886. Mortons also had a stationery office on The Broadway in Woodhall Spa.

Tickets at £8.50 each including refreshments are already available ONLINE at our website [www.cottagemuseum.co.uk](http://www.cottagemuseum.co.uk) or in person from Museum Reception on Iddesleigh Road from Tuesday March 31st., Tuesdays - Saturdays 10.30am-3.30pm. There will also be a RAFFLE.

This promises to be a fascinating talk on a very local subject so do make sure you book your places as this is a PRE-BOOKED TICKET EVENT. We look forward to seeing you.



*W.K.Morton - Founder of the Horncastle News*

## 40s Day

Arrangements are now well advanced for the museum's involvement in the 40s festivities being planned for the weekend of July 11/12th. The museum plans to have its event, similar to last year, on Saturday July 11th.

The plan is for Rachel Bea to sing sessions of 40s songs throughout the day on the front lawn.



*Audience enjoying the music at last year's event*

There will also be refreshments available from the Courtyard Café behind the museum.

**Philip Groves**

### 200 Club Winners

#### **November 2025**

£25 [199] Dianne McElwee  
£20 [82] Robert Bell  
£15 [176] Ruth Gordon

#### **December 2025**

£100 [53] George Kane  
£75 [153] Sandra Morgan  
£50 [199] Dianne McElwee  
£25 [165] Myra Puttick



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## Woodhall Spa Cottage Museum

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### From The Collection - A Gruesome Death at Petwood

This and the next newsletter are dealing with new information on Petwood. For this newsletter I thank Mr R. Hudson of Twyford near Winchester for informing me of the incident. It occurred during World War II but has nothing to do with the RAF. At the time and since 1933, Petwood became a hotel, managed by John and Peggy Flury. In 1941 the hotel head porter was Robert Myler. He and his wife Elizabeth and their son Robert Charles aged 9, resided in a cottage in the grounds. On September 30th 1941 both Robert and Elizabeth left for work at the hotel saying farewell to their son at 8.15am. That would be the last time they saw him alive.

It was the school holidays and young Robert occupied his time by playing in the grounds. By the time his parents returned in the late afternoon, their son was nowhere to be seen. They commenced to search for him and were joined by friends. Mrs Myler spoke to a neighbour, Barbara Butcher of Staff Cottages. The latter said she heard a child screaming on and off from about 10.00am coming from the direction of the stables. It ceased at about 11.40am. She thought it 'sounded like a child locked up for punishment'.

One of the searchers was Charles Leach, the head gardener. He joined the search at about 6.30pm and knew the grounds. He knew of an old disused well surrounded by rhododendrons near the main drive. The rotten wood covering it was dislodged and he became suspicious. He asked Mrs Flury to phone the police. Subsequently Constables Young and Needham left for the estate at 6.40pm. On reaching the well they recovered the body of a boy at 7.00pm. Dr George Armour attended at 7.15pm and pronounced life extinct and that death was due to suffocation by drowning. He stated at the inquest that he was familiar with the Petwood gardens for 14 years but had no knowledge of the existence of the well. The coroner, Mr W.C. Howard returned a verdict of accidental death.

The question could be asked why was this well at Petwood? In an era where main water supplies were few and far between especially in rural areas, many properties bored their own well. On old maps this can be seen frequently with the familiar 'W' denoting the presence of a well. In modern times with a water supply directly tapped to homes these wells became redundant and were filled in. I offer the following theory.

The presence of a well near the main drive at Petwood probably pre-dated the building of Baroness Eckardstein's house in 1906. The original site had, at the junction of Stixwould Road and Monument Road, a smithy and abode. The well was undoubtedly for its use. However the

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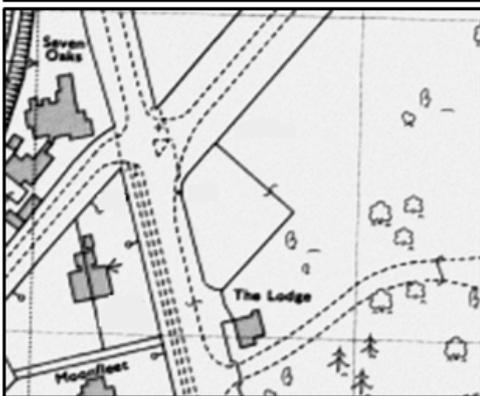
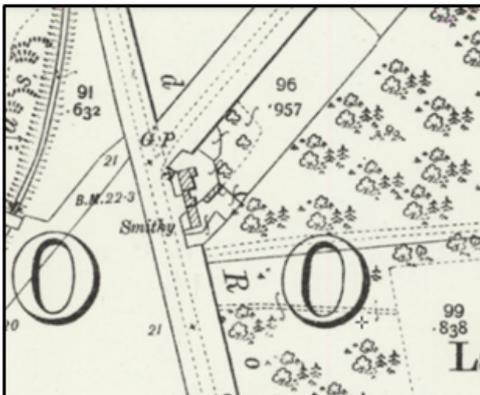
Morning, afternoon, evening or all day rates.

Maximum number of people 16

For further details and bookings please contact:

[info@cottagemuseum.co.uk](mailto:info@cottagemuseum.co.uk)

## A Gruesome Death at Petwood continued from page 8



Detail of OS maps 1905 and 1973 showing the Smithy site

OS maps show no recording of a well before or after the building of Petwood. Perhaps the authorities were unaware of its existence. When the main drive was constructed, we know the Smithy site was cleared. It seems however, that the well remained, maybe for possible use to the new Lodge but unlikely as there would have been a mains supply to such an important house and its buildings. It unfortunately led to the death of this young boy.



A drawing of the Smithy in the Museum's Collection.

Nicholas Duke-Cox

## Preparations for the New Season

The relocation of the display cabinet in the main display room is now complete. A team of volunteers: Nigel Webb, Bob Smith, Gary Southcott, Tom Johnson, Bob P and Lee Blake (observed by Annette and Faith) spent a full morning on Tuesday 13th January moving, modifying and resiting the cabinet. Five new remote sockets have been added to allow all the display cabinets in the main, war and temporary rooms to be switched on/off remotely. Bob Smith has relocated the working display touch-screen onto the desk which is now located in the War Room.



L to R Bob Smith, Bob P, Lee Blake, Gary Southcott, Nigel Webb & Tom Johnson

Outside the laurels have all been removed and disposed of (by Ben Price), the stumps ground down and the area is now ready for Andrew Bannister to build a small retaining wall and pave the area at the side of the Museum in preparation for a new shed to be placed there. Additionally the Arnhem memorial will be re-sited. to this area and signage added to explain to visitors the significance of the memorial. All this is hoped to be achieved before the re-opening of the museum at the end of March.

Nigel Webb

Answers to Puzzle:- 1.Swallow, 2.Pied Flycatcher 3. Osprey 4.Turtle Dove 5.Swift 6.Cuckoo 7.Nighthar  
8.Blackcap 9.House Martin 10. Chiffchaff

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## Woodhall Spa Cottage Museum

### Axle Cooling

When we stand in front of the sober war memorial in Royal Square, it is difficult to imagine the area in 1890, with formally dressed gentlemen, ladies in long gowns, heavily laden servants and messenger boys scurrying around in the vibrant atmosphere of a glass covered shopping Mall, set in pretty gardens.

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Evidently, the Mall was well regarded with businesses from elsewhere taking up premises there. There is Jos. E. Walter advertising his Auctioneer and Estate Agency in Bank Street, Horncastle while Samuel. P. Walter Auctioneer and General Valuer shares Mr. Came's office at 24, the Mall. There is still a Walter Estate Agency in the Spa.

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Similarly, Mr. H.H. Aldiss, Draper, based in Horncastle, took up number 17 the Mall, while William H. Truman, established in Lincoln almost half a century earlier, opened a Branch Establishment at number twelve.

**Marjorie Sargeant**

### Come and Join Us

The backbone of the Cottage Museum is our volunteers and some of them are putting a lot of hours in and could really do with a hand. Can you help? Do you have a few hours to spare in the month? It does not have to be a massive commitment. There are numerous opportunities to suit most interests. If you would like to find out more without committing yourself then please call us on **01526 352456** .



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## Woodhall Spa Cottage Museum

### Bertha, March 1926

Dear Readers,

March 1926

This winter I persuaded Perce to take me to the Kinema. It was to see Epic of Everest. Oh, it was gripping but so sad because after all the awful hardship, the climbers, called Mallory and Irvine, both disappeared. I do hope they reached the summit first but Perce says we will never know.

The Kinema has been showing films for over three years but concerts are still held there and I went with my friend Annie to one in aid of the District Nurses' Fund. It was a nice change but nothing compared with seeing a film!



*Queen Alexandra*

*Bertha*  
*March 1926*

### Through the Winter Months

The museum is closed over the winter months but the volunteers who look after it remain busy and vigilant. Trustees and team members check for issues and take readings of utilities check monitoring equipment relevant to temperature and humidity and ensure computers are working, whilst other volunteers prepare for new displays and ensure artefacts have a permanent marking before being displayed or stored. The quietest time is over Christmas and this year a large deposit was prepared for marking each item. This required the Community room, which is regularly hired out but free during December, and the photo shows the work in progress.

*Patricia Duke-Cox*

The whole country was sad when Queen Alexandra died last November. She was charming and ladies copied her high necked dresses and choker necklaces. She supported many charities, such as the London Hospital and launched the Alexandra Rose Day Appeal to commemorate 50 years since she came to England from her native Denmark. Even though she never came to Woodhall Spa, we were allowed to name our hospital after her. News of her death was relayed on the wireless at the Kinema and the performance was cancelled for that evening and again on the day of her funeral.

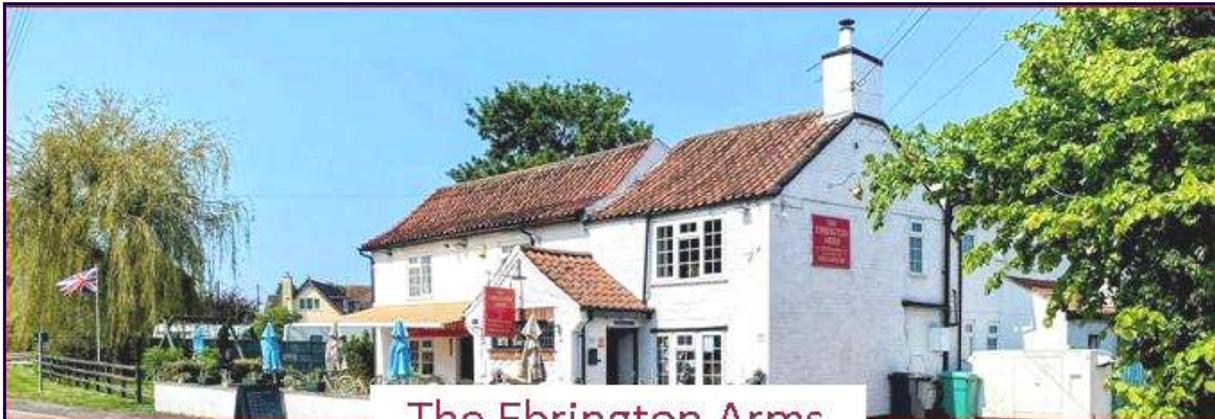
Perce went to a Ratepayers meeting at the beginning of February which he described (remarkably mildly for him) as "lively at times." The shouting and banging on tables was about the rise in the rates if the U.D.C. takes over the Baths from Sir Archibald. He bore a loss of £1,300 keeping them open during 1923 and 1924. Now a Ratepayers Association is to be established.

Soon it will be the Season! Tradesmen are grumbling about money, like miners elsewhere who are dissatisfied. A good Season could make all the difference to us.

*Marjorie Sargeant*



*Artefacts set out for marking*



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### LOKI'S PAGE

I hope you all had a lovely Christmas and New Year. I had a great time with my Master (your Editor) and my Mistress. We were out for both Christmas Day and Boxing Day. As you can see we have a Spring Bird Puzzle for you this time and when you next visit the museum there is a Spring Bird Trail to follow, Have fun! Bye for now LOKI



## Children's Trail

The next CHILDREN'S TRAIL in the Museum this year will be 'THE SPRING BIRD TRAIL'. We think that there are 10 different bird species nesting in and around the Museum. Can you find their names? We will give you some hints as to where they might be.

## SPRING BIRD PUZZLE

Can you rearrange the letters to find the bird names? We have given you the first letter of each name. All these birds migrate to Britain in the Spring.

1. Slwomla
2. Pedi yatccfrehl (2 words)
3. Opysre
4. Ttrelu odev (2 words)
5. Stwfi
6. Ccouko
7. Ngjhrati
8. Bccaapkl
9. Hueos rtaimn (2 words)
10. Cfahfifcfh

Answers on Page 9

Jane Hodgson



# WILLOW HOLT

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## The Friends of the Woodhall Spa Cottage Museum

**Committee:** Annette Southcott

**Membership Secretary:** Kelly Jestin  
(Hours of work Wednesday - Friday 9.00-4.00pm  
Email: friends@cottagemuseum.co.uk)

Dear Friends,

Annette is doing well but feels she is not back in the loop enough yet to write her Friends page, so I am once again writing the Friends Page on her behalf.

2025 has been a very successful one for the museum. The Friends raised £2,300 from memberships, donations and lectures, while a further £2,300 was raised by Museum volunteers for Music events and Christmas Past. This is a great achievement and we would like to express our sincere thanks to you all for working so hard in so many different ways to achieve this result. From our dedicated band of cooks, who once again have produced endless quantities of delicious cakes, to all those who have erected and dismantled the Gazebos and stalls and put out and put away the countless chairs etc. which most of the events require, plus the hours of planning and preparation that goes into all the events. Thank you all so very much.

The 2026 Season is now upon us and plans are well ahead for all the various events we are staging this year. The first of these is The Spring Talk, which this year is being delivered by local business man and long time friend of the museum Robert Bell. Robert is going to take us through the life and work of local Printer W.K.Morton, who amongst many other achievements founded the Horncastle News. It promises to be a really fascinating afternoon so do be sure you get your tickets in good time. Tickets cost £8.50 each including refreshments and are available from our online shop on the museum website [www.cottagemuseum.co.uk](http://www.cottagemuseum.co.uk) or from museum Reception from March 31st between 10am and 4pm Tuesday to Saturday. Do remember admission is by ticket only.

Best Wishes.

Phil Groves pp Annette Southcott

### Friends and Volunteers Coffee Mornings

A coffee morning is normally held on the second Wednesday of the month, to enable volunteers from the various teams to meet each other and to meet some of the Directors.

The next event is planned for Wednesday 11th March from 10.30am. until 12 noon.

**Please check our website, or social media for the latest information.**



### What's On Guide

#### Spring Talk

#### Life & Work of W.K.Morton

#### Speaker

**Robert Bell FRICS FAAV**

**2.30pm Sat April 11th  
The Golf Hotel**

Doors open 2pm

Tickets £8.50

inc Refreshments

Available online from

The Museum Shop

[www.cottagemuseum.co.uk](http://www.cottagemuseum.co.uk)

or from Museum Reception  
after March 31st.

**PLEASE NOTE THIS IS A  
TICKET ONLY EVENT**

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#### 40s Day

**Sat July 11th**

**10.30am to 4pm**

**40s music and songs**

with

**Rachel Bea**

Refreshments

Admission Free

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For the latest information visit  
[www.cottagemuseum.co.uk](http://www.cottagemuseum.co.uk)

