

Woodhall Spa Cottage Museum



The Donkey Leads the Way

Newsletter No. 37
March 2021

Woodhall Spa Cottage Museum

A Note from the Editor

At last we can see a route to freedom and a future that even resembles normality. If the first three Steps along the “Roadmap” are achieved on time, we plan to re-open the museum on Thursday May 20th. The museum will be open Thursdays to Sundays from 10.30am to 4.00pm (last admissions at 3.30pm) plus Bank Holidays, until Sunday October 31st. In addition many of our usual events are planned to go ahead, subject to any restrictions at the time and up-to-date information will be available on our website www.cottagemuseum.co.uk and our Facebook, Twitter and Instagram pages. The plan is outlined on page 12.

When we open, the long awaited Railway display will be available in the Temporary Exhibition Room. This marks the 50th anniversary of the closing of the railway through Woodhall Spa and is a joint venture between ourselves, local railway enthusiasts Alan and Sue Stennett and the Horncastle History and Heritage Society. It is also hoped that an accompanying lecture will be given. Details of when are still being worked on, due to the Covid uncertainty, but definitely an event worth attending.

Once again the Friends of the museum are being offered a chance to look around the museum on one of the days when it is closed to the public, probably a Wednesday. This concession is free of charge and is a great opportunity to browse the exhibits at length.

The museum’s new publication “Taking the Waters” about the Spa Baths and surrounding area is now available and Patricia Duke-Cox gives us an update on page 3 opposite.

How this season pans out is very much in the lap of the gods, but given a following wind we should have a longer season than we had last year, so let’s cross our fingers and hope we will all be able to meet each other in person at some of the events this year. I look forward to it.

Philip Groves

Front Cover Story

Our steel silhouette Donkey has become a popular feature amongst visitors and recently an interpretation board has been added to tell its story. See page 4 for the full story

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The Newsletter Committee

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or email philanddeliagroves@gmail.com

Reg. Charity: 1114268 Reg. Museum:1929

Museum Collections and Displays for 2021



Railway poster for Woodhall Spa

During 2020 some 89 new items were added to the museum's collection. Some of these are planned to go on permanent display including a number of photographic items donated by John Wilkinson.

Patricia Duke-Cox, Head of Collections, was able to attend some Zoom webinars during the lockdown period. These were related to Collection Care and also administration and documentation procedures. Annette Southcott also attended a meeting on manuals and documentation procedures.

All the photographic items were removed from the Darkroom at the close of last season and are being cleaned prior to being returned during March. There will also be some new items in the Darkroom display this season.

The Temporary Exhibition Room was also cleared in readiness for the brand new display on the railways and Woodhall Spa, covering the arrival of the railway and the closure 50 years ago. New display boards have been prepared courtesy of Alan and Sue Stennett, to illustrate this fascinating story. The last train ran on 5th April 1971, but sadly we will not be open, due to the restrictions, to celebrate that date as hoped.

Philip Groves & Patricia Duke-Cox

Latest Publication

The latest addition to the Museum's range of books on the history of the area and dissemination of access to the visual assets is the book "Taking the waters at Woodhall Spa: from the archives of the Woodhall Spa Cottage Museum". It was decided to have a short print run of 150 cased books for this title as the "Gardens of the Petwood: from the archives of the Woodhall Spa Cottage Museum" sold out within a year of publication.

Pre-publication prices and local advertisements have enabled more than 50 copies to be claimed ahead of the book launch. This was intended to be a social event but Coronavirus restrictions have curtailed that idea and orders have been fulfilled by a staggered invitation to visit the Community Room behind the Museum in early March.

A book launch is being considered for Wednesday 19th May in the afternoon. Please check the website to see if that option is available.

The remaining books are now available on-line and in the shop at the Museum for £20. Postage and packing costs will be added for those who need the book sending. Please see <https://www.cottagemuseum.co.uk/shop/taking-the-waters>.

Patricia Duke-Cox

Woodhall Spa Cottage Museum

Our Donkey at the Gate

Our beautiful steel donkey silhouette, which is located just inside the main gate as you enter the museum garden, continues to attract interest, with many people asking what is its significance.

For a long time the Directors had wanted something eye catching, particularly for children, to attract people to notice the museum and hopefully pay us a visit. A couple of years ago the idea of placing a donkey of some sort, to reflect the use of donkeys by the Wield family at the site was mooted. Finally the idea of a donkey silhouette made from steel plate, along the lines of the horses in Horncastle was suggested. Tom Johnson took charge of the project and after discussions with Mick Toyne Engineering in West Ashby, near Horncastle, the project got underway. The donkey was finally delivered and installed on March 22nd 2019 by James Wilderspin, who now runs the business. The project was generously funded by a grant from the People's Postcode Lottery Trust, for which the Directors are very grateful.



The Donkey being delivered, March 2019

To allow people to understand the significance of the donkey and hopefully, to tempt them to visit, Lynnette Needham has had an interpretation board produced, which Ken Mair has framed and erected. The board outlines the story of Thomas and John Wield and their donkeys. Briefly the building which is now The Cottage Museum was the home of the Wield family from 1887 until the 1960s. Thomas Wield and his son John set up a business using donkey-drawn and hand-drawn chairs to transport patients from the Railway Station and the various hotels in Woodhall Spa to the popular Spa Baths.

John Wield himself was a keen photographer and it is his photographic collection that forms the basis of the museum. The collection includes several pictures of the donkeys, together with his family.



Philip Groves

Volunteer Coffee Mornings

A coffee morning is normally held bi-monthly to enable volunteers from the various teams to meet each other and to meet some of the Directors. It affords a great opportunity to exchange ideas and make suggestions, or just have a general chinwag! It is hoped to resume this event as restrictions for Coronavirus are relaxed, so please check our website, or social media for the latest information.

Carols in the Garden

This year, due to the Covid restrictions, it was not possible to run the normal Victorian Christmas events, but there was some seasonal cheer in the form of the "Sing it Loud" singing group. The group have been meeting for choir practice in the museum garden most weeks and just before Christmas, on 18th December, they performed a morning of Carols and other festive music, with Liz McIntosh leading the group with her usual enthusiasm and gusto!

Sadly not many people were around to hear their efforts, but those who did were treated to a very enjoyable morning and the choir members all had a great time. Well done to "Sing it Loud".



Liz McIntosh conducting

Research and Use of the Collections

Approaches were made to, and welcomed by, the Museum during the recent lockdown periods in 2020 and 2021. Some relate to family history and others from researchers for books or university dissertations, whilst others might be just general curiosity. Our collections team and researchers use the Museum database along with open access websites such as Ancestry, British Newspaper Archive, Forces War Records for example. In some cases, the request is passed on to someone with greater knowledge of the area of interest.

Family history enquiries this year have included a request from a Polish descendant to identify if a camp site was at Roughton. Another was to find out more about a haberdashery shop in Woodhall Spa that a grandmother had run and similarly another was to find why the current Bookfayre building is also known as Matthew Temple House. It should be noted that it is not always possible to resolve an enquiry.

A lady from America wrote with grateful thanks to the Museum for the history she learned from the website. She is writing a book on the life of Elspeth Grahame, wife to Kenneth Grahame of "Wind in the Willows" fame. She was able to share letters written by Elspeth in 1904 that are in the collections of the Bodleian Library and we were able to decipher the writing and offer explanations of the medical conditions therein.

Academic research was also the reason for a local archivist for the U3A to contact the Museum about a survey of the High Street changes over the last 40 years and the guidebooks in the Museum's library were consulted to help establish what businesses were in existence over that period. More recently a university student of history is preparing her first dissertation with a focus on Royal Square where the Royal Hydropathic Hotel and the Mall were situated.

Lincolnshire County Council are undertaking a 3-year project focusing on 30 towns, of which Woodhall Spa is one. A meeting with three directors, past and present, enabled the sharing of information for the survey and it is hoped that later this year there will be a "pop-up" exhibition when the results can be shared with the general public.

In some cases, pictures are requested along with previous history of a place. Most recently there has been interest in a business on The Broadway where Fuller's Garage was sited and a petrol pump still remains.

Recently an insurance valuation was suggested for an autograph book that was on display in the Museum last year. It contains over 80 signatures from air force personnel from World War II with rank and honours included. Research is currently continuing to identify all those named within the pages and the majority have been found.

The Museum is proud of its collections. The opportunity to share some knowledge about them has been agreed with the support of a heritage grant from Museums Development East Midlands and the Earth Museum website. It is intended that 50 items will be posted this year and similar for the subsequent two years. There will be more information on this project in future editions of this newsletter.

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From the Collection

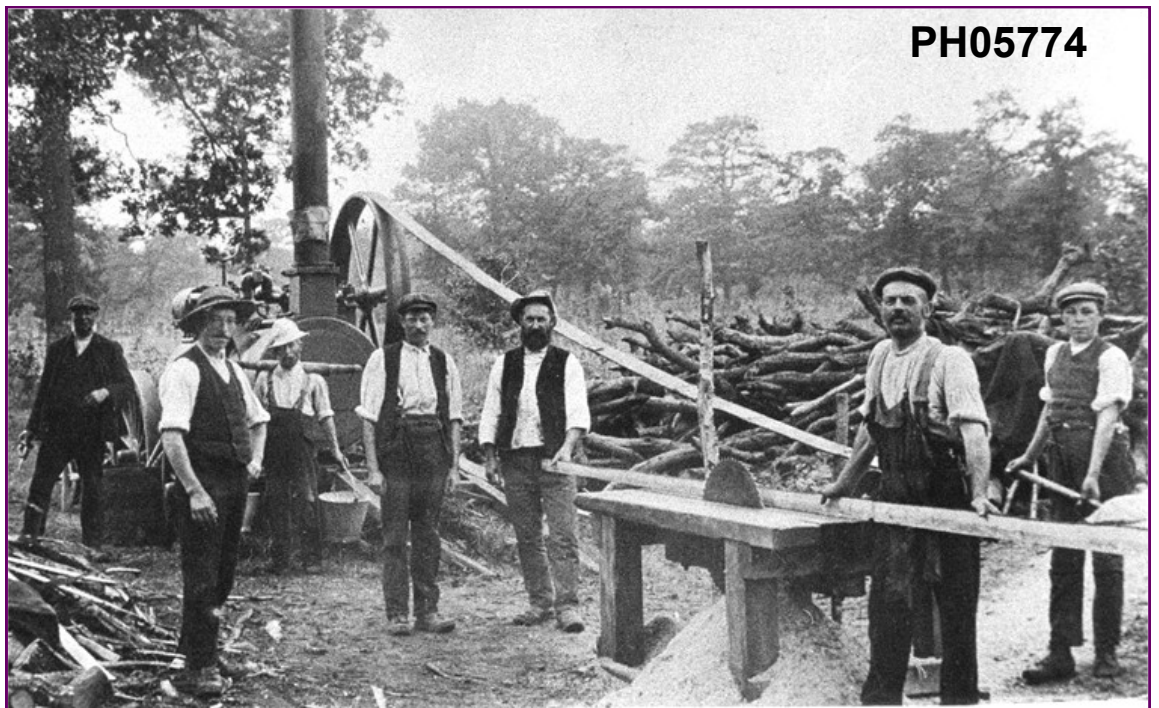
HARD WORK



Hopefully as this current lockdown is coming to a release, I thought we would turn to work and I mean work. Three views of labour. Our first view is from the fens showing a gang digging dykes. This is all done by hand. Note no hi-vis, hard hats or mechanical diggers. Taken

at a time when Health & Safety did not exist. The gang are of all ages and they are literally up to their ankles in mud.

Still outside and this time at a timber yard. Suggestions are it is Holmes yard at Wragby. This gang of seven are cutting timber with a steam-driven belt saw. Again, they are of all ages from the old man stoking the boiler to the young lad shovelling the wood sawdust.

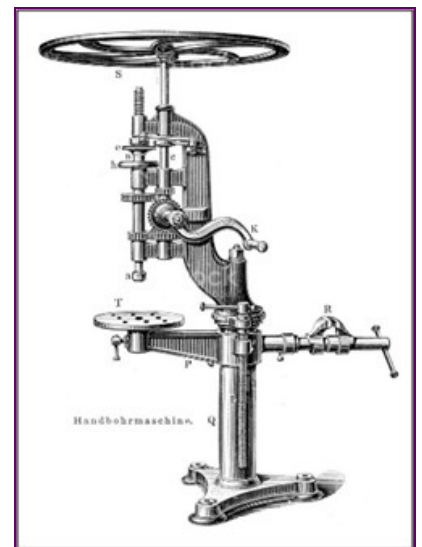


A view from a bygone era, two thirds would now be replaced by a mechanized saw and the task probably conducted in a factory

From the Collection continued



Our third view is from inside. A great deal of speculation exists where this was taken. It is a small indoor engineering workshop with two occupants. The elder holds an extremely large screwdriver and the young man has his hand resting on a hand drilling machine. See the attached catalogue picture I found. On the right-hand wall there are a number of bicycle wheels and hanging on the shelf at the rear is a bicycle seat. On the bench upside down is a cycle frame. I suggest this maybe from Humpherson's bicycle shop on Tattershall Road but I cannot see our two workers to the left in the gathering outside the shop.



Nicholas Duke-Cox

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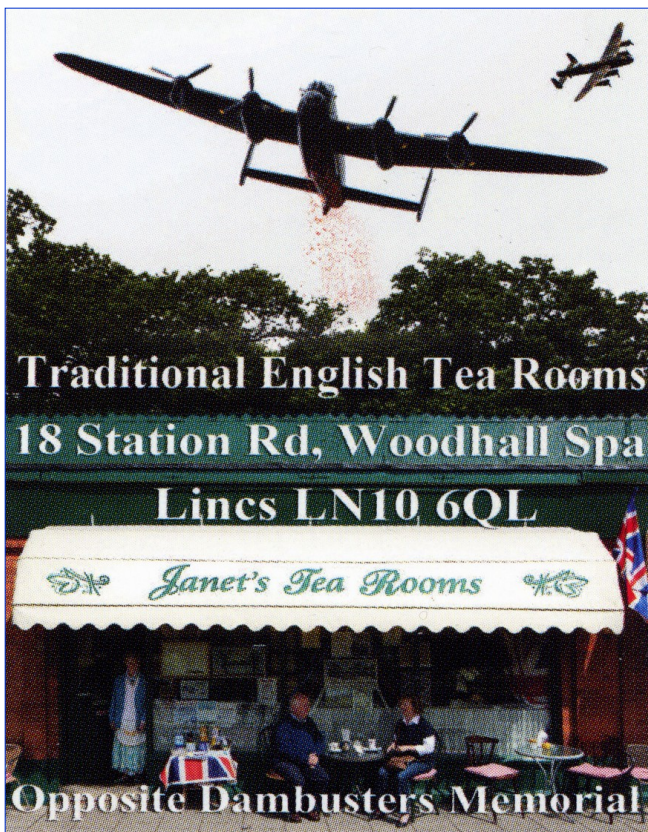
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Woodhall Spa Cottage Museum

Events Planned for 2021

As things stand at the moment the museum will open its doors to the public for the 2021 season on Thursday 20th May. The plan is to open on Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays from May 20th until the end of October from 10.30am. to 4.00pm. plus Bank Holidays. The government's Road Map for releasing lock down measures is to be back to near normality by June 21st. It is therefore with this in mind that some of our usual events are now planning to go ahead.

Jane Hodgson has organised a Quiz trail in the museum for children, which will be up and running from day one. If the 40s Weekend goes ahead over the weekend of July 17th/18th, the garden with usual tents for the various displays etc. and the covered patio area will offer refreshments from the Café. It is very unlikely a music event will take place in the Methodist Hall on Friday evening July 16th given the small space and numbers of people involved.

We have a full programme of "Music in the Garden" events booked through the month of August. Over the last few years these Sunday afternoon musical events have become very popular and quite often there is barely a spare seat to be had, as can be seen from our picture taken at the CATS performance in 2019. The Patio Café is planned to be open for all these garden events.

This year the line up is:-

Sunday 1st August - Trad. Jazz with Colin and Gerry (Provisional booking)

Sunday 8th August - "Sing it Loud" singing group

Sunday 15th August - Mike Warwick singing hits from the 1950s to 1990s

Sunday 22nd August - "Between the Lines" Popular Lincolnshire Folk band

Sunday 29th August - "CATS" - Coningsby and Tattershall Strummers Ukulele Band

The Heritage Open Day is planned for September, but the date is still to be finalised. There may be a "Music in the Garden" event on this day as well. On September 4th the Education Team are running a Treasure Hunt and on either Saturday November 6th or 13th the Annual Memorial Lecture is being organised. Its subject will be The International Bomber Command Memorial at Lincoln and will be given by Air Vice-Marshall Paul Robinson. Finally the annual Victorian Christmas event is to be held on the weekends of 27/28th November and 4th/5th December 2021 from 1 pm to 4 pm.



1940s Weekend July 2019



"CATS" at the museum in 2019

Philip Groves

Answers to Puzzles on Page 18
Groups of Birds: Owls - a Parliament, Parrots - a Pandemonium, Geese - a Gaggle, Crows - a Murder, Eagles - a Convocation, Ravens - an Unkindness, Starlings - a Murruration, Robins - a round
What Are Young Called: Newt - Eft, Bee - Larva, Dragonfly - Nymph, Eel - Elver, Ferret - kit, Fly - maggot, Goose - Gosling, Alpaca - Cria, Mole - Pup, Nightingale - Chick, Porpoise - Porcupette, Giant Panda - Cub.



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£10 [133] Delia Groves

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Woodhall Spa Cottage Museum

Woodhall Spa - March 1921

Dear Readers,

Spring is here and fields and woodlands are sprinkled with the wild flowers which so delight our visitors from smoky towns.

There has been much anxious discussion about the sad ruin of our renowned Victoria Hotel. Sir Archibald and Lady Weigall have graciously offered Petwood as a prestigious hotel in its place. Of course, they are residing at Government House in Adelaide, in the far away continent of Australia but their kindness towards this village is boundless. Perce came back from the Mall with the information that the remains of the hotel are to be sold but from which of his dubious acquaintances in that hostelry he gleaned this, I know not.

What elderly residents call "horseless carriages" are still the cause of mishaps on our roads. Perce's pal, Albert Chapman, was proceeding to work on his bicycle when the mail van from Horncastle caught his back wheel, causing him to be tossed into the dyke. The driver had the good grace to fish him out and convey him to his home, where Dr. Gwyn was summoned. He pronounced Albert to be shocked and swollen but as well as could be expected.

Trade Announcements.

Spring Renovations.

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Trade Announcements.

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Of course, the upper class ladies of the village patronise Chapman's London and Manchester Stores, at the crossroads. They have freshly ground coffee, fine teas sent all over England and cheeses and hams from the continent of Europe!

Then there is Mackellar & Co., wine merchants on the Broadway, who carry an astonishing array of bottles, half flagons and casks - but I must not write of them, lest the susceptible among you are tempted into the evil of drunkenness.

*Adverts from the Horncastle
News of February 1921*

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Marjorie Sargeant

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POPPY'S PAGE

Well here we are again. Hopefully you children are all back at School now and we are looking forward to opening the museum on May 20th. In the meantime we have some great ideas for making a walk in the country more enjoyable and also some great quizzes to keep you occupied. Good luck!

Bye for now, Poppy



Springtime Activities and Quizzes

THINGS TO DO ON A SPRINGTIME WALK IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

CAN YOU FIND SOMETHING:-

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|---------------|
| 1. Prickly | 2. Yellow | 3. Beautiful |
| 4. Round | 5. Alive | 6. That grows |
| 7. Colourful | 8. Wavy | 9. Fuzzy |
| 10. Wiggly | 11. An animal home | |
| 12. Something that animals eat | | |

ENJOY HUNTING!

What is a group of each of these bird species called?

Owls	Parrots	Geese
Crows	Eagles	Ravens
Starlings	Robins	

Choose from the following:-

a gaggle, a convocation, a pandemonium, a round,
a murder, a parliament, a murmuration, an unkindness.

Answers on Page 12

What are their young called?

Newt	Bee	Dragonfly	Eel
Ferret	Fly	Goose	Alpaca
Mole	Nightingale	Porpoise	Giant Panda

Answers on Page 12

Puzzles set by Jane Hodgson



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The Friends of the Woodhall Spa Cottage Museum

Committee: Annette Southcott
John Wilkinson
Gill Noble

Membership Secretary: Judy Everitt

Dear Friends

As I write this on the last day of February, it's a beautiful spring day in Woodhall Spa. Blue sky and bright sunshine, Snowdrops and Crocus in the woods and gardens. The visitors are starting to find their way back to the village. The COVID-19 lockdown is still with us. It continues to affect all of our lives. Many of us have had at least one vaccination and in March the lockdown will start to ease. Unfortunately, activities at the museum will still be restricted. The museum should open in May and, as we did last year, we intend to allow "Friends" members to book a visit on a day when the museum is closed to the public .

VOLUNTEERS

We need volunteers to assist and help at activities and events such as the 40s weekend in July and in August, "Music in the Garden", making cakes, working in the Café, erecting and taking down awnings, putting out chairs and tables etc. If you would like to help with these type of activities, please let us know what sort of activity you can help with.

We are still hoping to be able to hold our monthly coffee mornings once again, starting in a few months' time. "Music in the Garden" will run on Sunday afternoons through August. The singers and musicians have been booked. In November the Memorial Lecture will take place. It will be a talk about the International Bomber Command Memorial. The Memorial opened a few years ago and is at the top of Canwick Hill in Lincoln.

John Wilkinson

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



What's On Guide

Events planned for this year
but subject to change
dependant on Covid
restrictions

Museum Opening

From Thursday May 20th
To Sunday October 31st.
10-30am to 4.00pm
Last admissions 3.30pm
Thursdays to Sundays
Plus Bank Holidays

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40s Weekend

July 17th and 18th

Stands on the lawn and re-
freshments on the patio

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"Music in the Garden"

Aug 1st - Trad Jazz with Colin
and Gerry (Provisional)
Aug 8th - "Sing it Loud"
Aug 15th - Mike Warwick
Aug 22nd - "Between the
Lines" local folk band
Aug 29th - CATS Ukulele Band

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Heritage Open Day

September date TBC
Free Admission to museum

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Annual Memorial Lecture

**The Bomber Command
Memorial in Lincoln**
Air Vice-Marshal Paul Robinson
6th or 13th Nov – Golf Hotel

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Victorian Christmas

Weekends of
27/28th Nov & 4/5th Dec
1 to 4pm

For the latest information visit
www.cottagemuseum.co.uk
& www.woodhallspa.org

