

Halesworth and District Museum

Museum News and Update July 2020

Reopening of Museum

We are working on the reopening of the Museum. We need to ensure that we have everything in place to ensure the safety of our visitors and volunteers. As soon as everything is in place we will be announcing the re-opening of the Museum. Sadly, for obvious reasons, our Museum's Talk series has been cancelled for this year. Hopefully we will be able to move the talks to next year.

Before the "shut down" some of our volunteers were working on redisplaying the items in some of our cabinets to make them easier to interpret. It is well worth coming in, when we re-open, to see how well they have done.

Silver Owl Award



Prestigious Award for Halesworth Museum Founding-Father

Brian Holmes has worked tirelessly for the Halesworth and District Museum since 1984, as one of its founding-fathers, as a volunteer, a Trustee and Chairman. Now nearly half a century of service to the cause of Halesworth history has been acknowledged in an award made by SHARE Museums East, the body which supports and champions museums throughout the East of England. In a small 'lockdown ceremony' at the Museum Brian was presented by the current Museum chair, Pauline Wilcock, with the Suffolk Silver Owl award, presented to those who have given more than 25 years of service to their local museum.

Brian came to Halesworth in 1967. He taught at the local Edgar Sewter Primary School for nearly thirty years until his retirement in 1996 and is known to generations of Halesworth children and parents. His keen interest in the local area and his skill in sharing that enthusiasm have played an important part in creating and building up the Museum from its first start in a small room in Steeple End to its transfer in 2000 to the former Railway Station. A keen railway enthusiast in his own right, he was responsible for building a number of the railway models in the Museum, has rescued local railway artefacts from overgrown back gardens and from salerooms and was at the heart of a campaign to save the town's signal box after it became redundant.

Brian retains a host of stories about objects now in the Museum collections. He remembers the arrival of the mummified cat, found during the demolition of an old Halesworth maltings and the rescue of the bell which summoned generations of inmates at the Blything Workhouse. And he remembers many of the fascinating personalities who worked alongside him to make the Museum what it is today. At 82, he is still one of the Museum's strongest supporters and an inspiration to those who have come to the Museum, as visitors or as volunteers, in more recent years.



Cookley Hoard

The Halesworth and District Museum is pleased to say that it has recently purchased (May 2020) a hoard of Silver Roman Denarii discovered in Cookley. We have yet to collect them from the British Museum, which we will do once normal times resume.

There are 58 silver coins and two forgeries in this hoard, which cost £4,5000. We have been fortunate to receive funding from the V&A Grant Fund and the Headley Trust of £3,250 but further donations to help the Museum cover the cost of this very important addition to its collections will be welcome.

For a more detailed description see the *Report for H M Coroner – Treasure Number: 2018T677* and examples of the coins at <http://halesworthmuseum.org.uk/wpress/cookley-silver-coin-hoard/>

New Area

Until recently the station building has had three tenants. Apart from ourselves, HACT and MENCAP have shared the building. Recently MENCAP have moved out of the building and the Museum has been fortunate to take over the lease. We need to do some decoration and tidying up of the area. As yet we have not decided how we are going to use this space, but we have lots of ideas. We need permission to breach the wall between this space and the existing museum gallery. More news as it happens.

Research Work

Although the doors of the Museum have been closed over the past few months due to Covid 19 restrictions, the Study Room has had a number of queries most of which have been resolved successfully. It has also proved a welcome opportunity to work on and develop our archive documents and records. We are in the process of putting more and more information into a data base format which we hope will prove more accessible. The most recent addition to this collection will be St Mary's Church Registers 1653-1912 which includes Monumental Inscriptions.

Mystery items

Cornet Cleveland

The Halesworth and District Museum is not known as a museum that collects military uniforms. However we have two headpieces and a belt in the museum that are a mystery and one possibly connected to Cornet Cleveland of the 17th Lancers, a survivor of the "Charge of the Light Brigade".

One is a headpiece, a brown busby, possibly from the 8th Hussars, with a distinctive red bag without braiding. The other is Russian, possibly from an artillery regiment, although it is catalogued as from a grenadier regiment. These items were offered to the museum by the same person, but it is not recorded when.

Who was Cornet Cleveland, how did his belt come to the Museum and are the other items related? This much we know. If anyone has any more information do tell us.

Pictures and more information can be found at:

<http://halesworthmuseum.org.uk/wpress/mystery-items-from-the-crimean-war/>

A Research Request

The Museum has had a request for information: *"I am a PhD student from the University of Bristol researching, 'The Materiality, Memories and Material Culture of Princess Mary's 1914 Christmas Gift to Soldiers and Sailors during the First World War'.*



Part of my research is to find and interview persons still in possession of their relative's embossed brass 'Mary Tin'.

Face-to-face interviews are now impossible because of the Covid-19 crisis and I am adapting to either speak to people 'virtually' or by telephone.

Would you be willing to assist me in finding people to interview by posting an invitation on your website?

I have ethical clearance from the University of Bristol and can provide academic or personal references if required. More detailed information about the project is available if required."

Can anyone help? Email the Museum and we will pass your information on.

Bringing Home the Milk

Some month ago we supplied some pictures of Halesworth for article on railway milk collection which includes the Halesworth Dairy building. The article is in the July 2020 copy of the Great Eastern Journal.

It makes facinating reading. A copy is in the Museum's Study Room for you to read.



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