



The Friends of Church Farmhouse Museum

NEWSLETTER

Winter 2009
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FAREWELL...AND WELCOME

At the last AGM in September, Elizabeth Lawrence stood down as Chairman of the Friends. Liz has been a first-rate Chairman. Committee meetings led by her were always short, sharp and to the point: decisions were made, tasks were allotted, things got done. Liz's skills, and her commitment to Church Farm, were, perhaps, most clearly highlighted when the Museum was under threat at the beginning of 2008. Thanks to her prompt and decisive intervention the threat... went away! Liz is a good Friend of the Museum, and, even more importantly - and I know I speak for all of us - a good friend. I am delighted that Liz has decided to remain a member of the Committee. She has our sincere thanks.

The new Chairman is David Bicknell. Dave has a long and intimate relationship with Church Farm, as for some thirty years he was line-manager for the Museum and for the Archives: part of his brief as Head of Reference Services for Barnet Libraries. Gratifyingly, those thirty years have not dimmed his enthusiasm for the Museum. We congratulate Dave, and feel assured that the leadership of the Friends will continue to be in safe hands.

'THE EYE OF CHILDHOOD'

Our exhibition on children's writers and artists in Barnet borough proved a great success, receiving some 2800 enthusiastic visitors, and gaining unusually wide coverage in the press - from the Hendon Times to Time Out. I'm also glad to say that the many contributors to the exhibition enjoyed it, too. Indeed, two of them were so taken with the Museum that they decided to join the Friends: a warm welcome to Helen Craig, illustrator of the Angelina Ballerina stories, and to Christine Sheppard, daughter of the illustrator and painter Raymond Sheppard. Many thanks to all those who generously lent material to the show.

RAYMOND SHEPPARD

Towards the end of the time that examples of Raymond Sheppard's children's illustrations were being displayed at Church Farm, a major exhibition of his splendid paintings and drawings of birds and animals was on show at the Wildlife Art Gallery at Lavenham. That exhibition, which was obviously very successful, coincided with the publication of a new book on his wildlife work, *Capturing the Moment*. The book, with a text by Andrew Haslen, contains a superb selection of Sheppard's pictures, and although, sadly, a bit too pricey (at £37.50) for us to try to sell in the Museum shop, is well worth checking out. *Capturing the Moment* is published by the Langford Press.

'THE EYE OF CHILDHOOD' COMPETITION

During our Summer exhibition, visiting children were invited to draw illustrations to their favourite story books, or to write a poem or short story on the subject of 'the magic book'. We had hundreds of lovely entries, which were displayed around the first floor walls, and it was very hard to single out the best. However, we eventually chose three drawings and a poem, all by children aged between seven and twelve, and presented them with small prizes - bears in winter costumes! The winning entries are on display at the Museum until the end of November 2009.

FILM FUN

The Museum was filmed for an episode of the BBC TV show *Cash in the Attic* in October 2008. At long last, the programme is to be broadcast on BBC1 on Wednesday 25 November at the - not especially convenient - time of 11.30am, though it will be repeated a few times over the following months. The programme's introduction features presenter Gloria Hunniford showing viewers aspects of Church Farm's period furnished rooms and garden.

GR

AGM

Once again there was a very small turnout for the AGM, (15 in all) which is a shame as it is a chance to meet up with other Friends and listen to a talk. The Chairman, Curator and Treasurer reported on the past year. The Museum has had many visitors with the exhibitions being a great success as you probably know from the Newsletters. The 2 social events were well attended and raised modest surpluses for the funds. The Friends have not spent any money this year as Gerrard asked for it to be kept for the 350th Anniversary next year. Plans are still in progress as to what will be done. John advised he had recovered a repayment of Gift Aid Tax of £163 for the year which is a welcome addition to our funds.

Elizabeth Lawrence retired as Chairman after 6 years as Chairman and Deputy Chairman. David Bicknell agreed to take up the position of Chairman and we are delighted with his appointment and look forward to working with him. The Honorary Officers, John, Irene and Pam remain the same and the committee consists of Jeremy Czerkas, Elizabeth Lawrence, Stanley Ellis and Douglas Rumsey. There are still vacancies should anyone be interested in applying. (If so, please contact David).

After a break for refreshments, Lottie Collins, the Curator of the Harrow Museum gave us a really interesting talk about the Museum. It has the advantage of being much larger than Church Farmhouse with several buildings with a café and shop. Most of us did not know much about the museum beforehand and after Lottie's talk are keen to visit.

ERL

CROMWELL AND THE JEWS

In the run-up to Church Farm's 350th anniversary celebrations in 2010, the Museum has presented some exhibitions on the events of the 1650s. Last year we held a small display on Oliver Cromwell to mark the 350th anniversary of his death. Now we are showing an excellent exhibition, prepared by the Cromwell Museum at Huntingdon, entitled Oliver Cromwell and the readmission of the Jews to England in 1656. The exhibition shows how the actions and debates of Cromwell's Protectorate opened the way for the gradual return of Jews to England after their expulsion by Edward I in 1290. The exhibition, which is shown for the first time in London, runs until 14 February 2010. **(Can you help? The Cromwell Museum is keen to acquire, either by purchase or gift, a copy of the medal struck in 1956 to commemorate the 300th anniversary of the readmission of the Jews. If anyone owns an example which they might consider parting with, please contact Gerrard or Hugh at Church Farm on 020 8359 3941.)**

BLACK HISTORY MONTH 2009

Every October, Church Farm presents an exhibition, either at the Museum or at a Barnet branch library, for Black History Month. This year the Museum showed an updated version of Individuals within Communities: Black and Asian history in Barnet borough before 1965. More information on the topic keeps appearing, and there will be a further - revised version of the exhibition for next year.

THE WELSH HARP

To mark the 175th anniversary of the Brent Reservoir (the Welsh Harp), Heritage Officer Hugh Petrie has prepared an exhibition on this important local feature, one of the most popular recreation areas for Londoners in the late 19th Century, and now a significant nature reserve. The exhibition will be on display at Church Farm over Christmas, and then will be shown at Brent Museum and the London Canal Museum in 2010.

CHRISTMAS PAST...AND PRESENT

As ever, the Museum's 1850s dining room will be decorated for a Victorian Christmas from 6 December until 6 January. This year, too, we will feature a display of Christmas cards especially designed for the Museum by members of the North London Lettering Association, whose exhibition of calligraphy, Words Made Visible, proved so successful here in 2008. There will also be a special Christmas version of our hugely popular Teddy Bear Trail, and new material - thanks again to Friends' member Brenda Faris - in our now permanent exhibition The Moving Toyshop.

SEASON'S GREETINGS

The Museum staff thank the Friends for your generous support in 2009, and hope to see you at the Twelfth Night Party in January. We wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

GR

As the new chair of the Friends I would like to wish you all a happy Christmas and a peaceful and prosperous New Year. I have been associated with Church Farmhouse Museum in one capacity or another for over thirty years, so it has a very special place in my heart and I am looking forward to working with the committee of the Friends and with Gerrard and Hugh to make 2010 not just the 350th anniversary of the house but one of the best years for the museum ever.

DB