

# Ten Years Of Our Museum



Windsor & Royal Borough Museum was opened by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in 2011. This exhibition showcases some of the objects and stories we have collected over the last ten years. It celebrates the dedication of so many who have worked hard to share and preserve our local history for future generations. The Museum is not just for the community but is also built by the community.

## Friends of Windsor & Royal Borough Museum

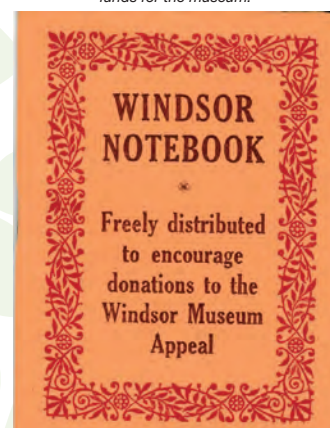
The Museum was originally founded in 1951 when local resident, Maitland Underhill, created an exhibition about the history of Windsor. It was located at Windsor Guildhall and was part of the celebrations for the national Festival of Britain. People donated objects and many of these are still in our collection today. The exhibition was so popular, it remained at Windsor Guildhall until 1982.

The collection then moved into storage, but was displayed for a few weeks every summer at the Guildhall for over ten years. Local residents formed the Friends of Windsor & Royal Borough Museum and campaigned for a permanent museum. For over 20 years, they raised funds, distributed petitions and advocated for a space to share and discuss our local history. Their hard work and dedication paid off and since our opening, the Friends have continued to champion the Museum through fundraising, volunteering and support.



Our first curator Maitland Underhill.

A notebook produced to raise funds for the museum.



2017: Staff and volunteers of Windsor & Royal Borough Museum.

## Volunteers

Our volunteers use their knowledge and passion to inform and engage our visitors. For ten years they have delivered tours of Windsor Guildhall and shared the local history of the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead. Behind the scenes, they help us to catalogue, digitise, research objects and record oral histories. In fact, for the 30 years that the Museum was in storage, it was volunteers who cared for our collection.

## Donations

Since 1951, people have donated items that have a local connection to the Royal Borough. This can be anything from teapots to letters, beer bottles to uniforms or archeology to artworks. Local memories and experiences of living and working in the borough have also been recorded. Each and every item donated has a unique story to tell.

**Would you be willing to donate an item or tell us your story?**



A glass tankard for the Edward VIII Coronation on 12 May 1937, being donated.

**1951**

The Guildhall Exhibition was opened in 1951 by Princess Elizabeth as part of the refurbishment of Windsor Guildhall.



**Early 1990s**

**1991** – The Friends of Windsor & Royal Borough Museum was founded.

**1992** – Our collection was registered provisionally as a museum.

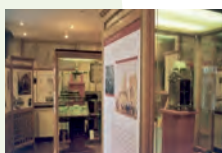
**2011**

Windsor & Royal Borough Museum moves back to Windsor Guildhall and is opened by Queen Elizabeth II.



**1980s**

The Guildhall Exhibition closed in 1982 and went into storage. It was renamed the Royal Borough Collection.



**1995**

'Town and Crown' exhibition opened at 24 High Street, Windsor to display our collection. It closed in 2006.



## New Beginnings

This photograph (right) shows the museum space under development. Lots of work was carried out by staff, Friends and volunteers behind the scenes. New objects were acquired and over 100 objects were packed ready for display. The Friends and museum staff recorded Windsor Theatre Guild members as the voices for the audio spots in the museum. Around 60 volunteers were recruited ahead of our opening on 12 March 2011. Approximately 20,000 people visited the museum ahead of our official opening by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on 9 December 2011. Below are a few of the 122 objects donated during our opening year.



### Memorial Plaque

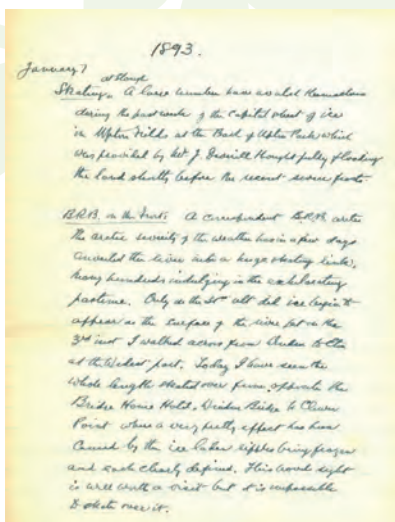
Dedicated to Dr Judith Hunter MBE, this memorial plaque is special to us because she was curator of our collection between 1977 - 2000. The beech leaves represent Burnham Beeches, a place Judith loved. The hops vines represent the subject of Judith's PhD - the pubs and inns of Berkshire. It was made for the Town & Crown exhibition at 24 High Street, Windsor.



### Notebook, 1891-1893

Donated by a Windsor resident, this notebook was used by an unknown reporter of the Windsor & Eton Express. It shows the issues that local people were concerned with at the time. For example, the winters of 1891 and 1892 were severe and caused a lot of suffering in the town. In 1890, a distress Relief Fund was established for the first time in ten years. On 29 December that year, 600 people arrived at Windsor Guildhall to receive soup and bread rations.

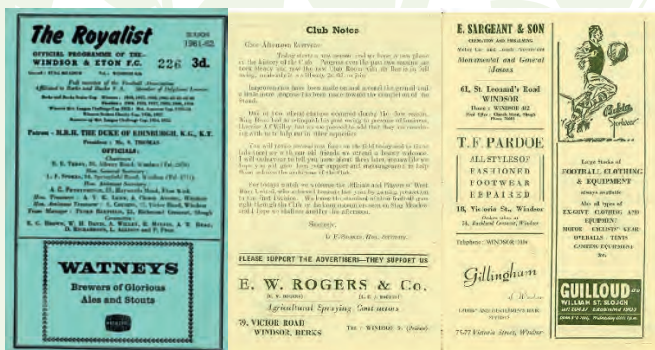
Local events are described in the 189 handwritten pages. It records the lives of ordinary people, sometimes missed from other historical records. This notebook is special to learn about the reporters editing process and how they gathered information. We have a searchable digital transcript of the notebook, thanks to the dedication of late volunteer, Jenny Evenden.



### Windsor & Eton Football Club Collection

Items related to Windsor & Eton Football Club (established 1892) were donated in 2011. They include photographs, posters, shields and editions of the official Club programme, 'The Royalist'. The items date from 1949 to the Club's disbandment in 2011. They tell the history of the Club and are valuable for learning about the social history of the area.

**Do you have memories of Windsor & Eton Football Club?**



Programmes: 1958-59 (left), 1961-62 (right)

### Plaque, 1942

In the Second World War, saving schemes were started to aid the war effort. Often the aim was to purchase a specific item like an aeroplane, tank or battleship. Windsor bought a Hawker Hurricane aeroplane (designed by local man Sir Sydney Camm). This plaque of recognition was discovered and recorded in the collection in 2011. We have a similar plaque for Maidenhead's purchase of a Spitfire aeroplane in 1942.





## Olympics Games - Then & Now



It is important that we collect items and record people's experiences of current events in the Royal Borough for future generations to learn about.

For the London 2012 Olympic Games, rowing and canoe sprints took place at Eton Dorney Lake. One resident donated their ticket, travel card and brochure from the event they attended. In the same year, another resident donated an official programme from the 1908 Olympic Games held in London. The marathon route for the 1908 Games was from Windsor Castle to London.

Although these paper documents may seem like throwaway items, we can use them to compare and contrast various aspects of the two Olympic Games.



### Listen to Clare's story of being a Games Maker.

In 2014, we interviewed Clare who volunteered at both the Olympic and the Paralympic Games at Eton Dorney.



Do you have any items related to the London 2012 Olympic Games that you could donate?

## Family Stories



### Granny Sowden, 1920s

A Windsor resident donated this photograph as it is an important record of local history. Her mother wrote the following words on the back: 'Granny Sowden, Charles St. Windsor. The first piece of free coal given to the old people of Windsor. The Queen's Gift for Xmas'.

'The Queen's Gift' was a tradition started by Queen Victoria who gave food, clothing and coal to the poor of Windsor for Christmas. Later, it was coal alone that was gifted in a sack weighing 51 kilograms. People receiving the gift used it to heat their homes. Applicants had to be over 65 and have lived in Windsor over five years. Granny Sowden was gifted her coal by Queen Mary.



### Handbag, 1950s

Various members of two fascinating local families - the Rye family and the Smart family - have owned this handbag (left).

It was gifted to us by Frances Rye, a resident of Windsor whose oral history we hold in our collection. Frances experienced the Second World War as a child in France and later moved to London, where her mother helped to design Queen Elizabeth II's coronation dress.

The handbag belonged to Frances' daughter. It was given to her by her sister-in-law Dolly Smart. Dolly was the daughter of Billy Smart, the showman who founded Billy Smart's Circus and financed Windsor Safari Park. He died before the Park was completed but his sons carried out his vision. It was open between 1969 - 1992. The site was later converted to become Windsor LEGOLAND®.

### Listen to Frances' wartime memories



## 2012 Heritage Highlights

◆ 1626 hours volunteered ◆ 20 oral histories recorded ◆ 336 people attended our Victorian Christmas event



## Your Ordinary, Our Extraordinary



Here at Windsor & Royal Borough Museum, we believe that your ordinary is our extraordinary. We want to collect items and stories relating to everyday life. They will be valuable for people in the future to understand current times.

In 2013, a collection of items relating to local man Harry Franklin were donated. He was a bus driver for the Green Line Bus Company for 33 years. The items not only allow us to learn about past transport connections in the Royal Borough, but the emotion behind the items help people to connect with our shared heritage.

One of the items in this collection is a postcard of a Green Line bus. Harry wrote on the back the routes he worked on from 1953 - 1986. Also included are the medals he was awarded for safe driving and the tie pin he is wearing in the photograph. It is a privilege for us to safeguard Harry's prized possessions to ensure future generations can learn from them and remember his dedication to his career.

**What would you donate to represent your career?**

## Beyond The Castle Walls

Recording memories is a powerful way to document local history. It brings events and objects to life. Listening to first hand experiences allows visitors to engage closely with the past.

Our National Lottery Heritage Funded 'Beyond the Castle Walls' project ran from 2012 - 2014. It developed our interpretation and opened up local history to a wider audience. Recording life stories was a big part of this project. Volunteers were trained to record interviews. Thanks to their fantastic efforts, 32 stories were recorded in 2013 alone.

**Scan the QR codes below to listen to some local stories.**

### The Ricky Tick Club



John Mansfield founded the Ricky Tick Club.

### Civic Life



Baroness Shreea Flather, Royal Borough Mayor, 1986 - 1987. First female Asian Mayor in Britain.

### Theatre Memories



Museum volunteer Len, used to work as a stage hand at Theatre Royal, Windsor.

### An Evacuee's Story



Doreen Crowhurst, evacuee, from London's East End to Windsor in 1939.



As part of the project, we organised a series of events to help build connections with the local community. Each event focused on a different decade, including the 1920s, 1940s, 1960s and 1980s.

Staff and volunteers organised food tasting, crafting and dance sessions. We also recreated a night at the Ricky Tick Club at Windsor Guildhall.

## 2013 Heritage Highlights

- ◆ 107 volunteers were involved in the project.
- ◆ 4,414 visitors attended our events
- ◆ 738 school pupils engaged with our project resources

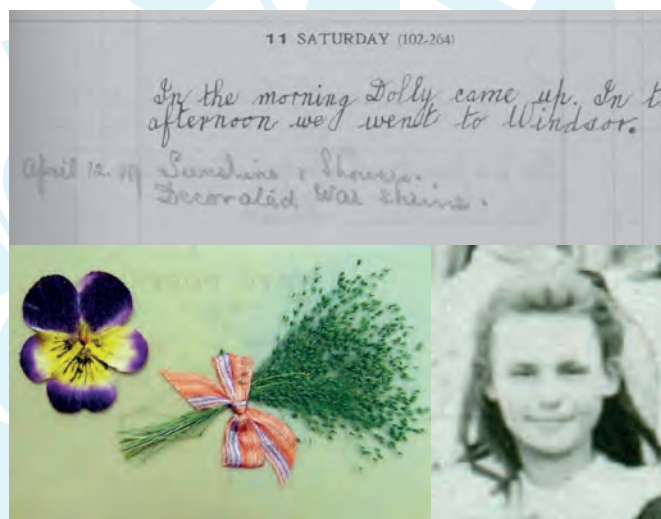
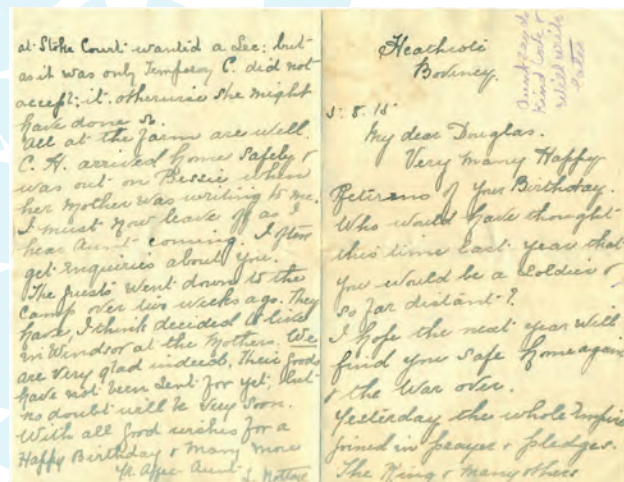


## Remembering The First World War

### Letter, 1915

The 100th anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War was commemorated in 2014. This letter was found and recorded in our collection that year. It was sent to Private Douglas Ashman of the Berkshire Yeomanry from his Aunt, Mrs Nottage. The Ashman family were dairy farmers in Eton Wick. Douglas and his brother Cyril attended Windsor Boys' School. The Nottage family lived next door to them.

The letter was written on 5 August 1915 and starts by wishing Douglas a happy birthday. It continues 'who would have thought this time last year that you would be a soldier so far distant? I hope the next year will find you safe, home again and the war over'. Tragically, Douglas died only two weeks later on 21 August 1915. It is possible that Douglas never read this letter and it was returned home unopened.



Top: Extract from Cicely's diary.  
Bottom left: Postcard, sent by William Musk, 3 September 1916.  
Bottom right: School photo of Cicely, taken in 1905.

### Diary, 1908 - 1919

Many lives were entirely transformed by the First World War. This is illustrated in the diary of Douglas' cousin, Cicely Nottage (Mrs Nottage's daughter). Her diary entries in 1908 talk about playing with the Ashman brothers. There was a trip to Southend with Cyril, fishing trips with Douglas and visits at Christmas.

Cicely used the same diary in 1919. In April of that year she wrote, 'Decorated War Shrine'. The shrine was possibly for her cousins. Cyril died at Passchendaele, two years after Douglas.

The postcard (left) and a letter was sent to Cicely by her childhood friend, Private William Albert Musk. In the letter he said he thought it was pretty and that she might like the postcard. He died one month later at the Battle of Le Transloy on 9 October 1916.

## For King And Country

Windsor & Royal Borough Museum launched a National Lottery Heritage Funded project called 'For King and Country' from 2014 - 2016. The aim was to create an online resource that included every name from every memorial in the Royal Borough. A team of local volunteers researched the stories behind the names.

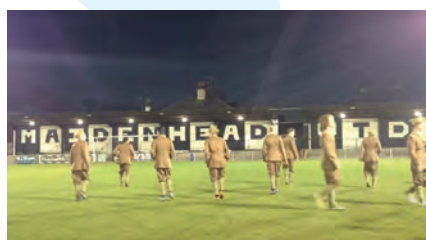
We worked with local heritage organisations to create a series of centenary events. Our partners included Windsor Local History Group, Maidenhead Heritage Centre, Berkshire Family History Society and Berkshire Rifles Museum. The 1914 Christmas Truce was commemorated with a football match. Roadshows were held in the community for residents to share their objects and stories with us. The stories uncovered were performed by local actors at Ascot Racecourse on 3 July 2015.

Read more on the project blog.

Scan



Volunteers researching First World War stories.



Christmas Truce football match, York Road, Maidenhead.



Performance at Ascot Racecourse, 3 July 2015.

### 2014 & 2015 Heritage Highlights

◆ Over 100 Volunteers took part in the project ◆ 400 objects recorded at our roadshows ◆ 13 talks and walks were developed between 2015 - 2016

## Commemorative Plaques

The Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead's Commemorative Plaque scheme celebrates people, places and events linked to the local area. There are over 30 commemorative plaques around the borough.

2015 saw the unveiling of a plaque at Windsor Royal Station to commemorate Sir Daniel Gooch (1816 - 1899). The application for the plaque was organised by the Friends of Windsor & Royal Borough Museum. It was installed to mark 200 years since his birth.

Born in Bedlington, Northumberland, Gooch had several connections with the Royal Borough. He was the first locomotive engineer for the Great Western Railway (GWR) and drove the first train from Windsor to Slough on 23 November 1849. He regularly drove the Royal Train for Queen Victoria.

Gooch became Brunel's right hand man, rising to General Manager of Great Western Railway. In 1859 he moved to Clewer Park, Windsor. He had many business interests. He organised laying the first transatlantic telegraph cable using Brunel's ship 'SS Great Eastern' in 1886. He gained his knighthood for this remarkable achievement. He is buried at St Andrew's Church, Clewer.



The late Mayor Dee Quick unveiling Gooch's plaque, 15 October 2015.



Malcolm Lock, former Chair, Friends of Windsor & Royal Borough Museum with our Gooch exhibition, 2015.

## The River Thames

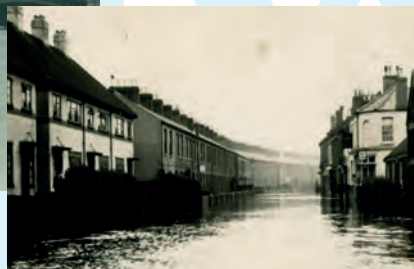
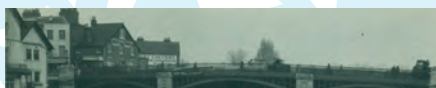
The River Thames runs along the border of the Royal Borough. This river produces fertile land which has encouraged settlement for thousands of years. The river continues to shape our lives in many ways.

Local industries and trades used the river as a transport link which developed the area and allowed it to prosper. The river has also been used for recreation, including, fishing, swimming, rowing and pleasure boating.

Areas of the borough are prone to flooding because of the river. In March 1947, a sudden thaw of snow caused major floods across the area. Over 2000 homes were flooded in Maidenhead alone and emergency supplies were made by boat. Photographs of the 1947 floods (below) were found in our collection in 2015. There was more devastating flooding in 2014, and for many it was the worst flooding in living memory.

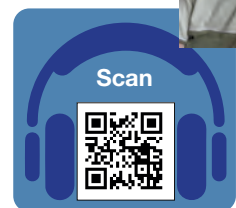
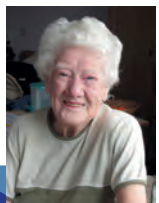
**Can you help us? Do you have a story to share about flooding in the borough?**

Below and right: Photographs showing the river Thames frozen over at Windsor in the 1940s.



Above: Flooding in Datchet, 1947.

Listen to Betty's 1947 flood story.



## Celebrations



The Thames has been at the centre of many celebrations and commemorative events.

In 2015, the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead united with Runnymede Borough Council to host a river relay to commemorate the 800th anniversary of the signing of the Magna Carta. The photo on the left was taken from Maidenhead Bridge and the photo on the right shows the relay approaching Cookham.

