



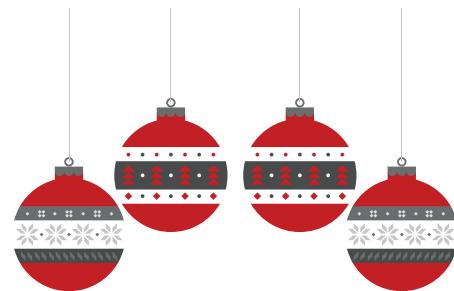
Friends of Horsham Museum & Art Gallery

Newsletter

Winter 2025-2026



'Middle Eastern Street Scene'
by DH Pinder



**We wish all Friends
a very Happy and
Peaceful New Year,
and thank you for
your ongoing support
for the work of
Horsham Museum.**



CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

I hope that you had a very enjoyable festive period, and the Committee and I wish you a happy and productive New Year.

Looking back during 2025, it was good to see so many members enjoy the comprehensive Verrio tour at Christ's Hospital school in May, and also attend the regular, and diverse, speaker events that were held during the course of the year. We have an equally wide-ranging programme for 2026, although an annual trip remains under consideration.

I have also been uplifted by the number of new members that have been encouraged to join the Friends this year; more than 10% of our existing membership. Inevitably, we have suffered some losses as well during a 12-month period. Anyway, thank you to our first-year Friends for taking the leap and I hope that we live up to all the aspirations of your membership.

2025 was notable for the receipt of sizeable donations. At the start of the year, a four-figure sum arrived from a mysteriously anonymous offshore banking representative. In Summer, the Horsham Blue Star Harriers submitted a very welcome amount in connection with their recent Museum exhibition. Since then, we've had another large donation from the 2nd Broadbridge Heath Guides following an overnight stay in the Museum (see separate article), and a very welcome donation from Horsham U3A in recognition of a talk given by Curator Nikki Caxton.

The Friends are the port of call for donations of all sizes to the Museum. As a Charitable organisation run by volunteers, with very little in the way of running costs, just about everything we receive is allocated back to the Museum so that its collection of artefacts and exhibition displays can be improved for the education and enjoyment of the Horsham community.

Of course, we all value the Museum as a long-standing institution within the town, but the



Friends are now very aware that the ongoing local government reorganisation will have an effect on how the Museum is managed in the future, and how those responsible envisage its status within a more parochial remit. We have contacted Horsham District Council, and the Wellbeing, Leisure and Culture Counsellor David Skipp, to indicate that we are an appropriate and responsible stakeholder representative group and should be included in all discussions when the proposals regarding the Museum clarify. There is a long way to go yet. As I write, latest discussions are being considered by Horsham District Council regarding the shape of a potential Horsham Town/Parish Council in lieu, although implementation may be later than originally specified. Consequently, any details about individual assets are not yet imminent. I would say that, in my view, Horsham District Council has always appeared commendably supportive towards the Museum, whilst Councillor Skipp (a member of the Friends) clearly recognises the Museum as a jewel in Horsham's crown. Naturally, we believe that the Museum's future needs to be a positive opportunity, not a negative worsenment, and we want to be involved to reinforce that.

Historically, of course, the Friends of Horsham Museum & Art Gallery were created as a charitable arm of the Horsham Museum Society. This august body actually initiated the Museum in 1893 and provided many of the artefacts which remain in the Museum's collection today. So our interest in the Museum's future is conjoined with the Friend's future too.

I do wonder what the reflections on this subject will be when I write my equivalent message next year. In the meantime, there will be future updates in the Newsletter as more details emerge.

Until next time

Paul French



MUSEUM NEWS

At the time of writing this, Jess Reeves and I have almost finished the preparation for the information panels for the exhibition, *Cabinets of Curiosity: Museums Past, Present and Beyond*. The next steps are that the text panels are sent off to production, and then over the Christmas period we will start the work of installing the objects in the gallery. It has been an interesting opportunity for us to explore the artefacts in the museum's collection which are usually kept in storage. Many of the objects which will be displayed in the exhibition do not fit our current collection policy, as they do not have any links to Horsham, so we have enjoyed immersing ourselves in these objects' stories and hope that you enjoy the exhibition once it opens in January.

If you have visited the museum recently then you will have noticed that the art gallery is currently closed. We are awaiting a repair to the Horsham stone roof in the back section of the museum which we are hoping will take place in the spring. We have a temporary solution in place to make sure that the museum stays dry in that space, but the stores in this section will need to be empty for the work. We have therefore begun the process of moving the stores to the gallery whilst the work takes place. Since we are currently undertaking a project to ensure that all objects are accurately catalogued and perfectly stored it has actually been quite nice to have such a large, bright space to work in. At this stage we hope to have everything back to normal by mid-summer, but the roof repairs schedule is still quite unknown, so this is subject to change.



Temporary storage in the museum's gallery

At the end of the year Assistant Curator, George Graham redisplayed the fossils and flints gallery, so you can now see the Bronze Age hoard which your support allowed us to acquire. Your donations have also allowed for us to display them in a completely new method, mounted on armatures projecting from the backboard. I hope that you have or will have an opportunity to visit this gallery and to see these new acquisitions in their final display form.



The redisplayed Fossils and Flints gallery

2025 has been another brilliant year at the museum, so thank you so much for your continued support. This year feels like many of the events which we have been developing over the last few years, such as the school holiday activities and museum lates, have really flourished. It is always a pleasure to see so many repeat visitors to the museum and to these events, and we look forward to welcoming you to the museum again in 2026.

Nikki Caxton

2025 EVENTS PROGRAMME STRATEGY AND REVIEW

The Committee decided to refresh the Events Programme for 2025 by spreading the net wider to identify a greater number of speakers offering a more diverse range of subjects. To make this work, we had to consider the entry fee for each event to ensure that we could cover any additional costs generated by higher speaker fees, including travel expenses. The historic admission fee had been £5 since time immemorial, and whilst we have retained this for local speakers, we decided to increase fees for nominated events to £7.50 so that costs could be covered for those travelling from longer distances.

Several of our speakers are accomplished in their own field and regularly undertake speaking engagements around the region and beyond, often to a variety of U3A, W.I. and Local History Groups. Consequently, they have a charging regime which, in a way, reflects their market value. However, some will reduce their fee for charities, or for arts and culture institutions, often quite considerably. Those from other charities may ask for an appropriate donation, and others request fees to perpetuate their work. Some very kindly do not charge at all. However, we apply a cap and providing we can cover their costs and the room hire, then profit made on the night goes straight into our funds to directly support the Museum.

We have now developed a programme of six bi-monthly events, plus one “wild card”, and we will also try to organise an annual trip, priced to cover costs only, if support is clear. We are always curious to see how many people, members and guests, will respond to our speakers and attend these events. Every speaker is asked to interact with the audience after the presentation.

We advertise our events on our own social media, in outlets via Horsham District Council, on posters in the Library and the Museum, in All About Horsham and on a quid pro quo basis with Horsham Arts Society. We are happy to consider other avenues that may be identified.

2025 event attendance

Date	Time	Speaker	Topic	Attendees
26/02/2025	14.00	David Allen	Agatha Christie	37 (inc. 13 guests)
16/04/2025 (AGM)	19.30	Claire Phillips	Strength and Struggle	32 (inc. 2 guests)
11/06/2025	19.30	Kathryn Ferry	Seaside Architecture	22 (inc. 5 guests)
30/07/2025	14.00	Rick Domas	Museum Watercolours	35 (inc. 8 guests)
24/09/2025	19.30	Ian Everest	Sussex Women's Land Army	20 (inc. 4 guests)
12/11/2025	14.00	Chris Hare	Hilaire Belloc	42 (inc. 21 guests)
03/12/2025	14.00	John Field	World of Magic	31 (inc. 9 guests)



John Field, talk on World of Magic

As shown on the chart below, encouraging “external” guests to attend and maybe join the Friends subsequently is a healthy aspect of the event strategy. In terms of attendance, we need about 25 people to break even, but we aspire to 35. A figure of 40+ is excellent.

Separately, we grapple with the challenge of an annual outing. In May 2025, we organised a successful Verrio tour at Christs Hospital for a group of 23. This involved a comprehensive guided tour, a rousing band display, an on-site Museum visit and good-sized cream tea. Members drove themselves for the short journey to the school so the only direct cost, which was very reasonable, was for the visit itself.

We would like to do more in the future and be adventurous, but the combination of organised travel, admission and property guide/lecturer fees and possibly refreshments can become prohibitively unattractive. We continue to examine the art of the possible but visiting a location that is easily self-driveable removes at least part of the cost.

Consequently, we have established the same principles for 2026 as we now organise the events calendar 12 months in advance. See the list of

attractions on our events page at the back of the newsletter. In fact, we even have some speakers lined up for 2027!

But what do you think? It's great to see so many



Chris Hare, talk on Hilaire Belloc

of you at our events and the feedback in all cases is generally positive, but is there something that you would like to tell us about the speakers, their presentations, the start times, the venue etc etc? Just let us know on fhmag1893@gmail.com; we would love to hear from you. Later, we hope to send out a simple e-mail questionnaire on the subject too, so that will be an alternative way to give your views.

But do continue to support the events when you can; it is one of the key ways to directly support the Museum, and also a great opportunity to interact with other Friends. I do hope that that the Committee and I may see you at such an occasion in 2026.

Paul French

JOHN FIELD'S 'WORLD OF MAGIC'- A REVIEW

There was definitely a magic feel to the December talk this year. Associate Member of the Inner Magic Circle, John Field, who has been practising the art for more than 50 years showed Friends and guests a World of Magic.

He guided us through its history, starting with Dedi, a magician from Ancient Egypt who performed the 'cups and balls' trick.

John explained that this and the 'Three shells game', along with 'Find the Lady', are still being used today around the world, but as scams to fleece anyone gullible enough to take part.

He then looked closely at the lives of two famous magicians. The first, William Ellsworth Robinson, was an American who found fame by pretending to be Chinese under the name Chung Ling Soo. He was very popular until his tragic death when his version of the 'bullet catch' trick went horribly wrong in 1918.

The second magician mentioned was another American, Erik Weisz, who also took another name and found fame as Harry Houdini (1874-1926). He was more of an escapologist and made a fortune touring the world.

John rounded off the talk with a series of tricks, and even showed one that the audience could do easily at the Christmas table. The final sleight of hand involved the Friends' chairman Paul French who took part in a 'cups and balls' trick.



John Field, talk on World of Magic



Steve Payne

COMING SOON: IAN GLEDHILL PRESENTS “THE STORY OF THE CRYSTAL PALACE”

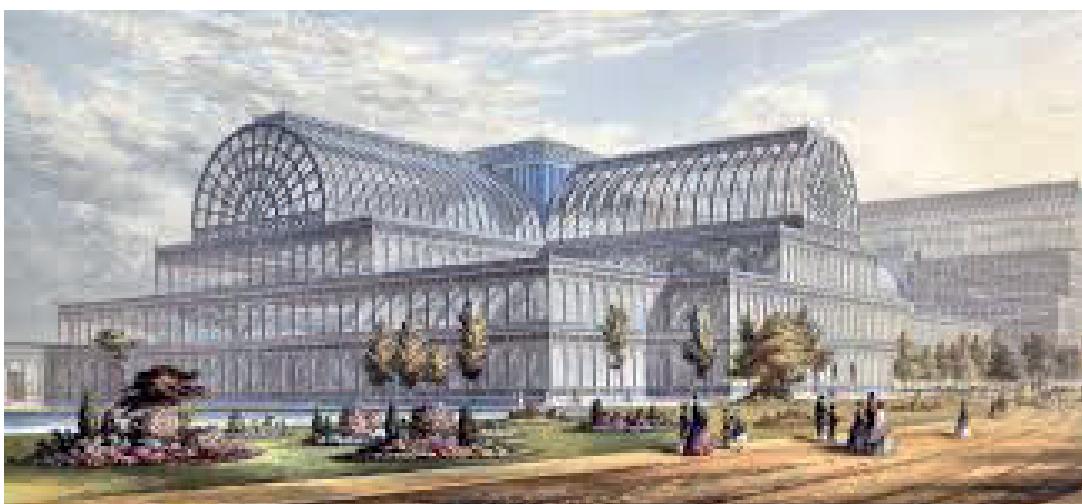
Our next event is on Wednesday 25th February 2026 at 14.00 in the Cornerstone Methodist Church, London Road, Horsham. Come and meet Ian Gledhill, a popular and versatile Sussex lecturer, who will outline the fascinating story of the unique Crystal Palace structure in South London.

Originally designed for the Great Exhibition of 1851, then transported to Sydenham and rebuilt and enlarged, the Crystal Palace was Joseph

Paxton's masterpiece, and was the largest iron and glass building ever constructed. It dominated the south London skyline for over 80 years until its tragic destruction by fire in 1936.

The perfect subject for a visual presentation so do please join us if you can.

Admission to all: £7.50, including refreshments



Paul French

ARTS SOCIETY - UPCOMING EVENTS

11th February 2026

Tamara De Lempicka - Art Deco Diva

Speaker: Ms Alexandra Epps

11th March 2026

Never mind quantitative easing: show us the bling - a peep at the Bank Of England's Artworks

Speaker: Mr Tim Kidd

8th April 2026

Cartoons and Contraptions: The wonderful world of W Heath Robinson

Speaker: Mr Barry Venning

For more information about The Arts Society Horsham please visit the website at:

www.theartsociety.org/horsham



CHRIS HARE'S TALK ON 'HILAIRE BELLOC'

The full and varied life of former Shipley resident (and Horsham Museum Society member) Hilaire Belloc was outlined in November's fascinating talk by West Sussex historian Chris Hare.

Chris has had an interest in the poet, politician and historian for much of his life and has written a book on the subject.

Of course, an hour is far too short a time to do anyone's life justice, but Chris gave what felt like a detailed and interesting overall picture of the man.

Belloc was born in France in 1870 to a French father and English mother. After some difficult times, including the death of his father, the family moved to Slindon in Sussex.

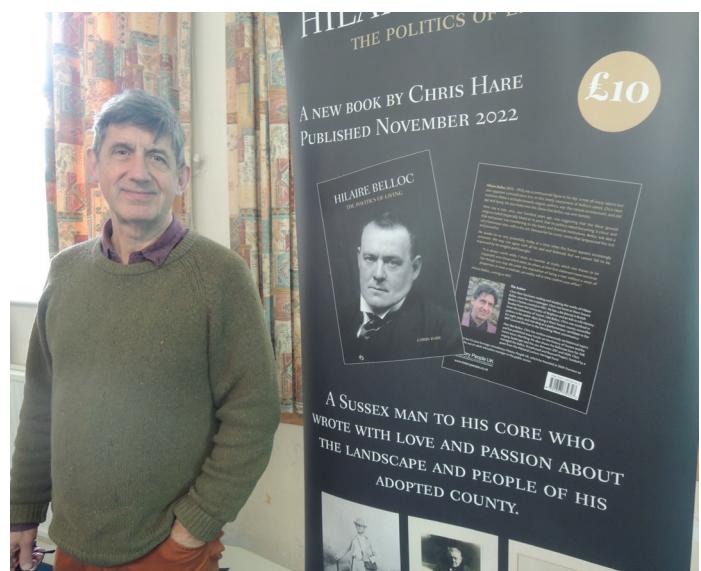
The young Belloc fell for an American, Elodie, who was on a European tour, and Chris explained how Belloc's pursuit of her hand in marriage proved a trans-continental and often frustrating (though ultimately successful) mission!

Belloc, after serving briefly in the French army and then studying at Oxford, became a politician.

In 1906 he moved to King's Land, Shipley, best known for its ancient Smock Mill featured in the BBC TV series *Jonathan Creek*.

While he became well-known for his writing and forthright speeches and discussions he also faced some very sad times, with his wife passing away in 1914, probably from cancer, and two sons dying while on active service.

Chris read out some of Belloc's more famous quotes and poems and even gave us a short song based on one of the poet's works.



Chris Hare

Belloc remains a controversial character due to some of his views and Chris didn't shy away from this aspect, but put it into context. He also revealed that Belloc, as a counter to the realities of life, would go sailing in his yacht on the south coast.

Sadly, Hilaire Belloc suffered a stroke in 1942 and never really recovered from its effects. He died in 1953 and is buried at West Grinstead Church where he regularly attended Mass.

It can't be over-emphasised just how well known Belloc was in his lifetime. He was a familiar figure in Horsham particularly and it's likely that he fell out of the public favour after his death as his views became seen as controversial.

Steve Payne

Museum Discount Scheme

Your 10% discount in the museum shop can be used as follows:-

Gallery Sales - January and August

Greetings cards/postcards - February and July

Food - March and November

Books - April and September

Plants - May and October

Gifts - June and December

Always show your Membership Card



SOCIETY HISTORY

As mentioned in the last newsletter, I am working on a comprehensive history of Horsham Museum Society. It's been a very interesting project, with numerous fascinating facts coming to light. So I have an intriguing question for you - what was the very first publication produced by the Museum Society?

Was it an in-depth look at the flora and fauna of the Horsham district or maybe an analysis of some ancient pottery unearthed in the district?

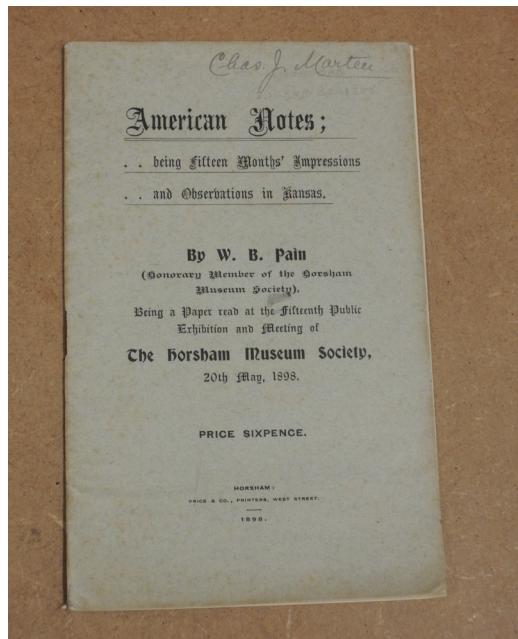
No. It was, to give it its full title - 'American Notes; being Fifteen Months' Impressions and Observations in Kansas'. This was a talk given to the Society in July 1898 by member Mr William Bowyer Pain. It was subsequently printed in pamphlet form and could be bought for 6d.

Back then, of course, few people in Horsham would have visited Kansas. However, the West Sussex County Times frequently included news snippets from America (many from Kansas), so readers already had their interest piqued. The talk included a detailed account of a cyclone Mr Pain encountered, saying he had never known what real terror was until that day!

Another experience was joining a church congregation where the ladies (there were few men) were chewing gum and fanning themselves

with 'gaudy fans' which local traders had supplied, using them as 'advertisement mediums'. The publication was evidently popular as it was advertised in the Museum Society's annual report for several years.

Mr Pain, who was made an Honorary Society Member, later emigrated to America and settled in Washington, dying in the mid 1930s.



Steve Payne

HOW DO WE KEEP YOUR PERSONAL DETAILS SAFE?

We are regularly being reminded of the risks of cybercrime, which appears to be ever evolving and potentially more damaging as our reliance on the internet grows. We hear regularly about attacks on both commercial and public organisations, with data breaches and losses arising. We would like to take this opportunity therefore to reassure you that we take the protection of your personal data very seriously.

We understand our obligations under the Data Protection regulations and have developed and recently reviewed our Data Protection Statement, a copy of which can be viewed online here:

horshammuseum.org/get-involved/friends-of-horsham-museum

Essentially, we undertake to hold and use your personal data in compliance with the General Data Protection Regulations.

We keep your contact details only for the purpose of keeping you informed about matters relating to the museum.

We do not share your details with any other organisation.

When you leave us, we will keep these details on our membership database for a maximum of 15 calendar months after your last active paid membership expires - so, for example, if you don't renew your subscription on the 1st January 2026, we would retain your contact details until the 31st March 2027.

We keep a full record of who holds your personal data and why, how it is used, where it is kept and how it is protected, which is also reviewed annually by your committee members.

If you want to know what details we keep or you want us to remove your personal information earlier than noted above should you not renew your subscription, please contact us by email at membership fhmag1893@gmail.com or write to The Data Controller, the Friends of Horsham Museum & Art Gallery, 9 Causeway, Horsham, RH12 1HE.

Sean Hannan

GARDEN UPDATE: LOOKING BACK AND LOOKING FORWARD

This time of year provides an ideal opportunity to look back at achievements, developments and highlights in the past year, and to look forward to 2026.

We have erected Agriframes trellises to support climbing plants which have been added to the garden recently and two new slate benches, one of which was made by Mark, (see photo) have replaced the old dilapidated pair. More plant sales, we hope.

We're tackling the rampant ground elder in the 'Sylvia Standing' garden on the south side of the garden, removing the plants during the autumn and are now in the process of removing the roots of the weed that survived the first weeding. We will start replanting once we are confident that most of the ground elder roots have been removed, with the aim, as far as possible, to re-create the original planting plan.

Similarly in the Willoth bed we been have clearing weeds, ivy and brambles, and taming the Pyracantha and black leafed hazel and have planted Acer and Hedychium rhizomes from divisions we made last spring. The Clematis (Winter

Beauty) climbing the wall by the gates. is well worth a visit to see its stunning white flowers. The Fig Tree, loving the hot dry summer, produced a good crop of figs this year, unusually going on well into the autumn. We believe it is of some historical importance being a cutting from one of the fig trees that once graced the Causeway.

While we have curbed some ivy, we have left a great deal as it is a fantastic plant for wildlife at this time of year. Its flowers are insignificant to us, but we have been astounded and delighted to see hundreds of bees feasting on the nectar in late autumn.

And next year? Sustainability, soil replenishment and planting. We're composting our soft material and building an additional compost bin to produce leaf mould. We will be planting tulips in the pots for some additional bursts of colour in the spring, and we'll be tending the plants to give of their best.

We hope you enjoy the fruits of our labours.

Adrian Holmes



MIDHURST MUSEUM

Although I visit Midhurst many times each year, the town Museum is one location that has continued to escape me. However, a concerted effort found me there in November 2025, and it is certainly worth a visit as it showcases a host of unusual items, many of which seem to be attractive 20th century ephemera.

The Museum has a relatively brief history, only opening in 2011 with one 8ft 6in x 8ft 6in room exhibiting a changing theme each month to maintain the interest of its visitors, and with much of its contents stocked by local collectors Dave and Tim Rudwick. Further premises were acquired in 2016, and this larger room concentrated on the development of Midhurst from the Stone Age to the current day. Two more rooms opened in 2023, with one featuring many fascinating and diverse lifestyle items from the Rudwick's collection, and the other focussing on working and social life in the Midhurst area.

Throughout the Museum, there is an appealingly odd and eclectic mix of domestically recognisable items, many of which will prompt forgotten memories from our own past. Despite space limitations, there is also a fine representation of the evocative town of Midhurst, a place which



always seems to me as being locked into the 1950's in perpetuity.

With 62,500 visitors since opening, of whom nearly 6,000 called in last year, Midhurst's Museum is not short of support. Additionally, there is always a knowledgeable volunteer or two in the lobby area willing to chat and amplify the story behind any artefact that you wish to mention.

Small, perfectly formed, and well worth a visit.

Paul French

FUNDRAISING REPORT

We've had a bumper year for adoptions in the past twelve months with several new adopters amongst our total of 25. There's not much room left for adoption labels around Shrubb's shoes, the Mummified cat or the Fire Engine - a new favourite this year. We've also had an uptake of two 3 year adoptions, a new offering launched during the summer.

The adoption scheme has raised a total of £1785 to date (6 December 2025) and with several of our patrons happy to renew on a regular basis we are happy to continue with the scheme for the foreseeable future. Application forms and the choice of artefacts to adopt can be found on our website friendsofhorshammuseum.co.uk.

The Horsham District Community Lottery has, regrettably, not seen much of an uptake of tickets throughout the year. We currently only have 12

tickets in the draw, but even these are on track to raise the Friends £363.50 in 2025 - just think how much more we could raise for the museum if more tickets were sold. We had 16 winners during the year, most winners of 3 extra tickets for the next draw, but we also had one winner of £25 cash. For more information or to sign up for tickets please go to horshamdistrictcommunitylottery.co.uk.

We have now been paid a total of £50.90 from Easyfundraising raised by our 4 supporters. If you would like to help us raise funds when you do your online shopping please sign up at <https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/> and choose the Friends as your Charity.

Thank you to everyone who has supported the Friends in any way during the last year.

Pam French

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We are always delighted to hear from our members about any subject that appears in our newsletter, on our website or regarding any matters of general local interest.

Please contact us via fhmag1893@gmail.com.

NEW FHM MEMBERS

We are pleased to welcome new members this year: Philip Smith, Janie and Norman Bamford, and Teresa and Vincent Barker.



GIRL GUIDES OVERNIGHT

Early in October 2025, the 2nd Broadbridge Heath Guides took inspiration from the American hit movie franchise “Night at the Museum” to arrange that very experience here in Horsham. With Curator Nikki Caxton and Guide Leader Sharon Newman at the helm, an unmissable experience was had by all. Sharon explains how it all came about: -

“Whilst on a monopoly type trail around Horsham one of the ‘properties’ was Horsham Museum. I asked my group of guides if they had visited the museum, but unfortunately only 1 or 2 had! I thought what a wonderful opportunity it would be if we could have a sleepover at the museum.

I contacted Nikki through Horsham District Council, who also thought it would be a great way to get young people into the museum. Nikki completed all the behind the scenes checks with insurance and the council, and I arranged for the museum to become a Girlguiding approved venue. Six months later, our Night at the Museum event started.

20 very excited guides and 4 leaders arrived at the museum at 7pm. After the house keeping rules, Nikki started the guides off on a ‘who done it’ type trail around the museum. Once the girls had completed this they could either go off on another trail or make a trail up of their own. The guides soon found the dressing up clothes and spent the rest of the evening role playing historical events.

Hot chocolate was served at 9pm and lights out at 10.30pm. The guides slept well although it was an early start to the following day - 5.45am! After dressing and tidying their bedding the girls headed downstairs for a continental breakfast. After breakfast we set the girls one last challenge before they were picked up at 10am. In groups they were to find a Horsham fact that would wow the leaders!

Our thanks to Nikki for making this event happen. I know all the girls had a great time as my phone was pinging all day with complimentary comments from parents.”



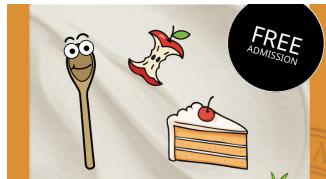
What a great adventure the girls must have had... and we think that they might want to do it again in 2026!

In the meantime, may we also thank them for their kind donation £105 to the Museum and also for participating in our Adopt an Object scheme - look out for their label on the Magic Lantern.

Paul French

FORTHCOMING EXHIBITIONS & EVENTS

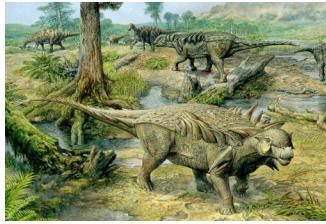
All Friends Events will be held at the Cornerstone Methodist Church, London Road, Horsham.



Museum Event | Food History: Children's Trail
Tuesday 6 - Saturday 31 January



Museum Event | Private View of Cabinets of Curiosity: Museums Past, Present and Beyond
Friday 30 January



Friends events | Ian Gledhill: The Story of Crystal Palace
Wednesday 25 February | 2pm | London Road Chapel



Friends events | AGM & George Graham-Payne: The Horshamosaurus
Wednesday 15 April | 7.30pm | London Road Chapel



Friends events | Dr. John Hilary: Nymans and the Messel Family
Wednesday 10 June | 7.30pm | London Road Chapel



Friends events | Jeff Thomas: The Story of Daisy (Restoring a 1930's tandem bicycle)
Wednesday 29 July | 2pm | London Road Chapel



Friends events | Dr. Alexandra Loske: Turner and Constable in Sussex
Wednesday 23 September | 7.30pm | London Road Chapel

Friends events | Rick Domas: Oil Paintings within the Museum collection
Wednesday 2 December | 2pm | London Road Chapel

Friends events | Simon Mott: Mantovani - What Makes a Superstar
Wednesday 2 December | 2pm | London Road Chapel

FHM COMMITTEE

Chairman: Paul French | **Secretary:** Ann Rattray | **Treasurer:** Brian Frogley

Other Members: Pam French, Audrey Coventry, Steve Payne, Sean Hannan, Patricia Barrett

Newsletter Editor: Gail Chapman

Contact email: fhmag1893@gmail.com | **Friends website:** www.friendsofhorshammuseum.co.uk

Contact address: Horsham Museum, 9 Causeway, Horsham, West Sussex, RH12 1HE

You can support Horsham Museum & Art Gallery by making cash or card donations, Adopting an Object, joining the Horsham District Council lottery, registering with www.easyfundraising.org.uk to do your shopping or by leaving a gift in your will.

www.friendsofhorshammuseum.co.uk

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