

Ewelme Millennium Exhibition

Ewelme News, July-Aug 2000

The Exhibition was held in the village hall over the Whitsun week in May 2000. It was achieved after five years of work, and overall, the committee believed it was a great success, and looked back with a certain amount of pride at a job well done. This was largely due to Christine Brown who, as chairwoman, calmly and efficiently administered the whole project from its inception.

Thanks were due to the many villagers and other interested parties who contributed to the book and Exhibition. We to those who gave generous financial contributions, the members who kindly volunteered to man the entry and assist visitors with queries. Thanks were due to Sue Cooper for handling the pre-publicity, to John Cooper and Vernon Miners for their 'building' works and to Neil Blake and his computer for last minute 'panic' graphics.

The Exhibition opened on Friday May 26th with a Preview for those who had contributed in various ways with Wendy Robertson for organising the canapés and wine for the sixty guests.

The professional production drew many compliments. This was due to Verity Saunders' vision in transforming the interior of the Village Hall. It's surprising what 80 yards of white muslin, a colour scheme of blue, white and gold and strategically placed lighting will do. Newcross Design provided and erected the exhibition stands on which 62 large boards, containing text (kindly prepared by Bill Jacobs) and photographs, were displayed.

The organisers were glad to meet so many interested and interested visitors. The Visitors Book records the names of 558 individuals, although we know some did not sign in and many returned for a second or even third visit! The majority of visitors came from Ewelme and the Oxon, Bucks & Berks area with a sprinkling from other English Counties. There were also individuals from New Zealand and Australia, France, Scotland and Wales. Three couples from the Wirral [Knowles family] and Cornwall [Bob and Sylvia Quixley] who had past Ewelme connections stayed locally for three days. Those with former ties were particularly appreciative and eager to share their memories. One comment in the Visitors Book was - "*A wonderful trip into the days of my childhood.*"

The reading material presently consists of 38 files on various subjects from 'Agriculture' to 'Women's Role' containing nearly 550 items of information. In addition, there are separate lever-arch files holding the Interview Transcripts, Interview Transcripts Summary and the Summary of Parish Council Minutes, as well as various donated Minute/Account books (eg Cricket Club, Women's Fellowship); the Band of Mercy and Queens Flight Commemorative books and the Elm Club scrapbooks. New material is still being added and the a suitable place to store the archive was required so that it can be available to all for examination and study.

Roger Moore's impressive maps presentation drew much attention as did the RAF Benson stand. Flt Sgt Mick Harris put together a fine cross section of exhibits, depicting RAF Benson's past, present and future, together with some interesting items from the wartime Photo Reconnaissance Unit era, including a camera. (One significant item was the log book of the Spitfire pilot who 'discovered' the German battleship Tirpitz). These complemented PRU artefacts in our possession which included a Spitfire Instructor's log book, photographs, and wartime articles excavated by Anne Williams who lives on the PRU site. Mrs Williams acquired a photograph of the 1942 Ewelme wedding of Spitfire

pilot F/O Gordon Green DFC to a WAAF Officer Beryl Puttick for us to display. Beryl Green, travelled up from Sussex and kindly offered her husband's memorabilia to RAF Benson (for Flt Sgt Harris's proposed permanent display), including the original photograph of F/O Green's most important 'find' the battleship 'Scharnhorst'.

The Oxfordshire TV news channel, BBC Channel 6 spent two hours at the Exhibition and broadcast a news item. Subsequently, as a result of the Exhibition, ITN Central News visited the old PRU site on June 27th and filmed Anne Williams with Flt Sgt Harris, and expressed interest in his proposed PRU Exhibition at RAF Benson.

Margaret Blake produced some beautiful needlework kits depicting views of the village. Marie Darkin's imaginative tile project positioned on the outside wall of the village hall drew universal praise and the attention of the local press.

The only disappointment was the failure of the book, *Glimpses of an Oxfordshire Village* being available for sale at the time. This was due to circumstances entirely outside the control of The Ewelme Society. The word *Glimpses* in the title was well chosen by editor Anne Chisholm. A dictionary definition is '*a momentary or partial view*'. Whether we glimpse an object, a scenic view, or an event in time, our recollection or interpretation depends upon our individual perspective. As Christine Brown emphasised in her foreword, the book was not designed to be a definitive history. We hoped it recorded, as accurately as possible, the main events of the 20th century, but it also reflects the life and times of the village as seen through the eyes of those individuals who lived it.

The Heritage Lottery Funding was granted for the making of the video of Ewelme. Lisa Holmes generously offered her expertise and professional contacts for this project which resulted in the issue of a 23-minute video 'Ewelme – A Hundred Years of Change'. Covering a year in the village with interviews and events, it was delayed due to the outbreak of Foot & Mouth in Oxfordshire, but is available converted to DVD or memory stick.

Ewelme Village Archive