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EDENBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL
SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT
FINAL REPORT
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Achievements during 2020-21

The period from the interim report (3rd September) is the most challenging to accurately report on Museum activity for. From the 5th November through to 2nd December 2020 the second national lockdown occurred, followed by regional lockdowns at levels 3 and 4 in December and the third national lockdown from 3rd January to 17th May, all of which prevented the Museum opening to the public. In addition, while opening indoor venues was possible from 17th May, due to the small size of the location and need to retrain the volunteer workforce it was decided to postpone opening until the first normal opening day after the scheduled lifting of all restrictions on Wednesday 23rd June. As such, of the last 39 weeks the Museum has only been allowed to open for 10, and has chosen to remain closed for 2 of these for the reasons stated above.

Nevertheless, while the location itself has been closed for the bulk of the period the Staff and Volunteers have been incredibly busy with online resources and preparing changes to the Museum itself.

The Museum was open in September and October, seeing 82 adults and 1 child visit in September 2020 (compared to 199 & 23 in September 2019) and 246 adults, 41 children in October (compared to 238 & 32 in October 2019). While the numbers were significantly lower in September than the previous year (understandable since we had just come out of a lockdown and social anxieties resulted in a significant drop in visitors to attractions across the country) the fact that we improved on the previous years figures in October is largely due to the success of the Bonfire Society exhibition.

The Exhibition itself was a particular success not only due to the visitor figures it garnered, but as a community event allowing members of the public to remember past Bonfire celebrations in a year that the event itself could not take place. It also highlighted the town to the wider Kent community, with interviews and reports taking place for both BBC and ITV regional news programmes.

The Museum has prepared two new exhibits for opening 2021. The first of these explores the Archaeological evidence for Roman occupation of Edenbridge (a significant portion of which highlights new finds and discoveries); the second will be to celebrate the 901st Birthday of the parish church delayed from 2020.

Online activities

The Museum has been particularly busy on social media and the web, continuing to improve our offerings and beginning to host live streamed talks. A highlight of that activity is bulleted in brief below.

- November 2020: in the runup to the December talk a series of posts looking at the history of ‘Annie’s’ place – the Queens Arms in Cowden Pound, with an update on the latest happenings with this institution of the local area
- 5th December 2020: Live streamed talk on the History of pub signs on Twitch – a successful and fascinating talk which drew an audience of 37
- October-March: Histories from the High Street: a series of posts on social media looking at the history of particular locations and buildings in Edenbridge Highstreet from the Medieval records through to the present day accompanied by historic and period photos
- September – March: A continued series of photo posts on social media touring the historic images of the villages surrounding Edenbridge.
- 31st March 2021: Baking During the World Wars, a talk hosted on Zoom via Eventbrite.
- A new section of the website has been put up providing a selection of activities for children with a link to historic Edenbridge and exhibits within the Museum
- One particular children’s activity is linked to the Wheels of Time E-badge scheme. The museum is part of the Wheels of Time scheme, which awards badges to children who attend a Museum and this new enterprise is an extension, asking participants to visit Museum websites and complete an activity to be awarded a digital badge
- Our Object of the Month page, detailing the historic context of one item from the Museum collection has also continued on the website, accruing a positive response

Changes in the Museum

The Museum has also spent the time during lockdowns productively by making changes in house to improve the service offered to visitors:

- A new permanent oral history exhibit has been arranged in the Buttery for both entertainment and to improve inclusivity for the visually impaired. Based on a 1940s rotary telephone, visitors are able to pick it up and dial to hear recordings from our collection. This new exhibit, set up as part of a SEMDP grant and in collaboration with the British Library will enhance the experience in the Museum and is sure to prove popular with children due to its interactivity
- Two Cabinets previously housed in the shop area have been moved to the Courtyard bedroom Gallery and erected with new lighting. This has mainly done to open the window area they previously blocked however the move has the added benefit of creating a cohesive display area for the permanent World War exhibits they house. This is particularly beneficial due to their consistent appreciation by audiences.
- The aforementioned window, now opened, will be a major benefit to high street attraction and the Museum’s High street presence and will be used for display of Museum shop stock
- The Museum shop itself has been renovated with new displays and a major investment in stock, it is the hope of the Museum that this will draw in trade and visitors while offering a new High street gift shopping option for the local populace

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- The Bolebroke cup acquired in the 2020 Museum appeal is now housed in the box room gallery and has become a focal point for a display reviewing the town’s long association with the stock trade.
- The 2021 appeal focussed on Algie the ‘Monkey from Macks’ – A well known curio from the towns past, it sat for many years in the Macks greengrocers opposite the Museum on the top of a pole, creating fond memories in many of the long standing populous who frequented the shop from the ‘60s to late ‘80s. Sadly time had taken its toll, and the toy was in need of preservation. A successful online appeal raise over £250 toward the preservation costs and the now healthier looking monkey is in place as the central exhibit of our Highstreet Bedroom toy display.
- The lower hall stairwell, which houses our main information board, has been upgraded to allow the Museum to better display free leaflets on local walks as well as our own advertising. This is particularly useful during our Saturday and Sunday openings when the Council office is unavailable for tourist information services.

Statistics

- While visitor activity is limited this year, as already mentioned the Museum was able to attract a larger visitor figure in October 2020 than the corresponding month of 2019
- Applications to our Research service are up on the previous year from 25 in 2019 to 27 in 2020
- The most significant changes (as expected during a lockdown year) have been in visitors to our various online resources. In addition to the lockdown, our focus on digital activity over the last year has greatly increased across the board. Two tables representing our current online activities for the 2020 and 2019 financial years are shown below.

2019	Website (unique visitors)	Facebook page views	Facebook likes (running total)	Twitter followers (running total)	Instagram Followers	Google views via search or map	Google requests telephone / directions
Apr	676	44	288	463	NA	3,490	96
May	729	43	238	462	NA	4,063	15
Jun	591	92	264	461	NA		25
Jul	528	127	279	465	NA	0	0
Aug	581	125	300	467	NA	5,047	81
Sep	566	70	307	465	NA	4,676	18
Oct	587	75	309	466	NA	8,280	89
Nov	0	93	318	472	NA	6,860	55
Dec	0	99	324	473	NA	6,523	43
Jan	993	146	349	477	NA	7,840	24
Feb	1,536	93	355	477	NA	10,618	19
Mar	2,061	184	392	477	57	7,038	18

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2020	Website Number of visits	Facebook page views	Facebook likes (running total)	Twitter followers (running total)	Instagram Followers	Google views total searches	Google requests telephone / directions
Apr	1,902	229	430	479	69	4,085	5
May	2,908	387	531	486	77	27,208	23
Jun	2,269	300	576	492	84	21,079	30
Jul	2,167	225	607	500	96	19,700	43
Aug	1,877	285	633	503	105	21,200	22
Sep	2,313	272	643	513	112	17,032	34
Oct	884	215	663	514	113	21,143	14
Nov	768	225	706	523	119	29.3k	22
Dec	1,131	187	801	527	128	27.8k	17
Jan	685	507	808	527	139	30.86k	19
Feb	607	352	832	528	143	31.2k	27
Mar	1,152	215	849	529	155	30.5k	38

Key
 Lockdown

Looking Forward

After an amazingly difficult year for everyone the Museum is looking forward to returning to normality and re-engaging with the town and visitors from further afield. As such we already have a number of exciting activities and events coming up in June and a continuing schedule of activities as we slowly return to normality.

- 19th June: The Museum will open for two hours during the morning, working in collaboration with Edenbridge Historical Society to give a first look at our two new exhibitions, and a renovated shop and all other changes we have made over the last few months. This will drive inclusivity and engagement with locals by combining with a Museum volunteer drive.
- 23rd June: first opening to the general public with the new shop and exhibitions
- 26th June: A Museum social event will be taking place from 5pm – 9pm in Rickards hall, the courtyard and the Museum itself. We invite members of the public and Museum membership to attend the ticketed event which will consist of alfresco drinks and hors d'oeuvres in Rickards and the courtyard (included in ticket price), guided tours of the Museum followed by a talk relating to the new archaeological event in Rickards. Despite their theoretically being no limitations on social events by this time the Museum will be maintaining social distancing rules and limiting the tickets to 40 (half of Rickards capacity). Along with all future talks, this will

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also be available as a live stream from Rickards on the evening in order to allow those unable to make the event to attend.

- At least one more exhibition on the local history of Bee Keeping and two further talks held both in person and via live stream will be taking place throughout 2021, with the talks being planned to take place around September and December, further lockdowns permitting.
- The Museum is also planning to continue its engagement with the community online and via social media during the coming year, with new weekly posts in planning on transportation images from our collection as the next in line to be published.



Martin Frost
House Manager
Eden Valley Museum Trust