



# REDBOURN VILLAGE MUSEUM

**Friends of the Museum Newsletter**

**Winter 2023  
Issue 143**

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year

(Better early than late!)



I would like to sincerely thank all our volunteers for contributing so much over the year making it a very successful one for our museum. This can best be seen by taking a look at our last four visitor survey comments as they were written:

It was very nice part – quiz corner that it made entertain my child a lot.

Nice place, that let you feel a bit how the things looked like in the past.

Very interesting to see history of Redbourn.

Wonderful displays and interactive displays and items for children that encouraged discussion of times past.

A valuable asset.

We have recruited a further seven voluntary stewards for 2024 which will hopefully make compiling the rota a little easier.

John Ridgwell, Chairman, Redbourn Village Museum

#### Latest News - Saturday 18th November:

The museum garden has been awarded First Prize in the Community Building category awarded by Redbourn in Bloom. Congratulations to lead gardener Barry Welch and all the team.

**Email: [redbournmuseum@gmail.com](mailto:redbournmuseum@gmail.com)**

**Website: [www.redbournmuseum.org](http://www.redbournmuseum.org)**

**Museum Registration No: 2106 Company Registration No: 03652790 Charity No: 1072828**

## Chicken Of The Woods...Continued



Following my piece about the Chicken of the Woods fungi in the last newsletter, it didn't take too long for my prophecy to come true regarding the destruction of the fungi.

After I sent round the newsletter I was delighted to receive the following email from mycology expert and Museum Friend, Mike Richardson.

Thanks for the *Autumn Newsletter* – some interesting contents as usual for an old ex-resident. As one who earned his living studying fungi [mycology] some comments:-

Nice photographs! A pity about the fate of the 'chickens', A sadly all-too-common British attitude to fungi, which considers any fungus, mostly cultivated mushroom, not bought in a supermarket as being something to be avoided at all costs! Our Continental neighbours have a much more interesting approach to fungi – eat them! But care is needed – some are very poisonous [the sort that should be eaten only once!], and the rule is 'do not eat any that you are not certain are edible', or obviously past it. No harm will come, however, with contact, so no need in the interest of public safety to kick them into the ground! Fungi - one fungus, several fungi – are vitally important. One usually sees 'Plants and Animals' as the phrase to represent wildlife and nature, but that is wrong - it should be 'Plants, Animals and Fungi'. The fungi belong to a separate Kingdom. The majority of plants form a special association with fungi [mycorrhiza – literally 'fungus root'], without which they would not grow so, put simply, NO FUNGI, NO PLANTS; NO PLANTS; NO ANIMALS; NO ANIMALS, NO US! They are also great recyclers – without fungi, bacteria and invertebrates liberating the elements of life [Carbon, Nitrogen, Sulphur etc., etc.], resources for new life would soon run out.

Chicken of the Woods [*Laetiporus sulphureus*] is common and widespread in the UK, growing parasitically on trees, especially Oak, and also other deciduous trees, but also frequent on Yew [I could not be sure of the species of the tree in the photo]. Once the tree is dead the fungus continues to grow and rot the wood and appear on the stump. There are many recipes to be found on Google, but they can be used in the same way as 'normal' mushrooms. If cooking for vegetarians check that they are not already being consumed by insect larvae!

## EXTRA

I've just received a copy of "Extra" which was the employee newspaper of Brooke Bond Oxo and Batchelor Foods. This one is from June 1988 and features our greatly missed former Chairman, Peter (Podge) Fox.



One of Podge's golfing triumphs

### Fearless Fox

There were certainly no signs of nervousness from Redbourn's Peter Fox who hammered out a dazzling 41 points – as brilliant as the weather – to win the morning Championship round. He was followed closely home by Lancashire's Pat Johnson with 40 points; pensioner Fred Hutton with 39 and Trafford Park's John Bewley with 38.

# TEA TIME FOR PRESIDENT

THE PRESIDENT of Tanzania visited Redbourn factory this month and it was a true state occasion.

President Ali Hassan Mwinyi and his party arrived at the plant, which was flying a Tanzanian flag next to the Union Jack, in a convoy of black state cars.

There he met the Chairman of Brooke Bond Tea Estates Group, Tom Brazier, Chairman of Unilever's Central Tea Group, Hugh Thwaites, general production manager of Brooke Bond Oxo, Peter Evans, and factory manager, Ray Frith.

The President spent the morning touring the factory. He showed spe-

cial interest in the laboratory, where he tasted various Tanzanian teas as well as several Brooke Bond brands, including the company's brand-leading PG Tips.

While watching the production of tea bags at 2,000 sachets a minute he stopped to speak to machine operators Karen Murray and Sue Curnow.

He asked Sue if she enjoyed her job and whether it got boring. She said: "It was nice he spoke to us. He seemed like a very nice man."

The President particularly asked to visit a Brooke Bond tea packing factory because he wanted to see a modern, high speed plant and so

understand better the changing requirements of the industry.

After lunch the President and his party had to move on. In the afternoon he was due to meet the Commonwealth Secretary General, Sir Shridath Ramphal, and officials from the East Africa Association.

Then in the evening he was dining at Lancaster House in London, with Lynda Chalker, the Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

The President was on a week long official visit to Britain in which he was due to meet Government Ministers and dine with the Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher.

## Redbourn Classics - Saturday 2nd September

Whilst the main common hosted the classic cars, the area directly in front of the museum was host to six brand new electric cars from Palmers garage in Cupid Green. On the previous weekend we had the steam engines on site so the electric cars were a real contrast to them and to the 'classics' on the common. During the day we had over 100 visitors to the museum which was a real bonus. We did have a 50 year old MG in the display which you can just see.



---

## Redbourn Porsche Club



More kind generosity!

We are writing on behalf of the Redbourn Porsche Owners Club to express our continued appreciation for the ongoing partnership we share with the Redbourn Museum.

Your efforts in preserving and promoting local history resonate deeply with our members, and we are committed to supporting your cause.

We are delighted to inform you that, from the proceeds of our club's summer barbecue raffle ticket sales, we have successfully raised **£150** earmarked for donation to the museum. We are pleased to contribute to the invaluable work you do in preserving the heritage of our community.

Karan & James

## KEEPING MY HAND IN

I hope my annual excursion to Northamptonshire to 'dig' with CLASP (Community Landscape & Archaeology Project) will be of interest to you, the Friends of Redbourn Village Museum. The choice of CLASP to work with is that it is a community dig; all of us are volunteers, anyone is welcome to join in, each role is undertaken by these volunteers who make everyone very welcome on site. Training is provided. CLASP has worked in this area for more than a decade, uncovering nearby a specialist villa with two bath houses dedicated to providing R and R for the upper echelons of the Roman Legions in the area. This seasons' task was to further explore the realignment of Watling Street, looking for the continuation of the stone discovered last year, and to explore the suburbs of the small Roman posting station and town. To this end six trenches were opened. Two of these were soon abandoned as without interest, whilst a third may contain a small metal smelting area, with a hearth and lumps of slag. A cremation urn made of very fine pot and its contents was carefully excavated from another trench. I joined the team of volunteers a couple of days into the dig, beginning to uncover a significant amount of large stone, evidently placed there. Talk of 'wall' became talk of a 'structure' and the trench itself was extended to more than twice the original size, as we 'chased the wall.' I should say that the group spend the rest of the year on post excavation, surveying, field walking and etc. which provides background evidence for what we should expect to find in the following years excavation. A sample of bodies excavated is sent to labs for dating and DNA analysis, which has revealed really interesting data regarding the multiple origins of the people on the site over the extended period of occupation from very soon after the Roman Conquest to its end. The site has also identified Iron Age roundhouses. People have always wanted to live in pleasant surroundings! [https://claspweb.org.uk/WHITEHALL/htmlfiles/site\\_plan\\_aerial\\_popup.html#](https://claspweb.org.uk/WHITEHALL/htmlfiles/site_plan_aerial_popup.html#) We did find considerable evidence of burning in the trench, and many burnt animal bones. My personal favourite as I uncovered it, a jaw bone, but there were boar tusks and the usual sheep teeth and lots of ribs and larger animal bones. The pottery included samples of local Nene Valley fineware (slipped and decorated), Samian (some decorated with figurines) and local grey ware. One of my favourites, because I found it, was a few pieces of what is called a Bag Bowl, decorated inside and out. Part of a cosmetics collection perhaps? The majority of these finds were of fine quality manufacture which hints at the nature of the 'structure'. I also found several metal pieces, mostly hand-made nails, but also a latch fastening. Finally, I uncovered a large piece of what I thought was a very beautifully made bowl, again, very thin and delicate. I imagined the lady of the house serving her figs to her dinner guests in it. And why not?

I would recommend the CLASP website to anyone who is interested in the story of the area, which does contain some lovely illustrations and pictures of the project over the years, and look forward to hearing over the winter months the results of this years' findings.

Anyone coming with me next year?

Helen Stamp, Museum Friend and Events Committee member.

## Peacocks Auction Centre Visit - Wednesday 4th October



24 Museum members and non-members had a thoroughly enjoyable visit. The welcome sign was a nice touch, if we forgive the spelling of Redbourn.

We began with an introductory talk by two of the auctioneers about the history of the company and how the auctions are organised. They can auction up to 3000 items during one of their Saturday sales!

We then had a tour of some of the auction rooms finishing up with a quiz about five items in one showroom with questions like, "Where's it from" "Who made it" and "How much is it worth."

Then we had a very substantial lunch before leaving for home.



Our group just before our introductory talk



A showroom seen from the cafe



And finally, a Goldwing motor bike with my initials on it!

No...I didn't go back on Saturday to bid for it.

One of our party said that the trip, "Exceeded their expectations"

## Hertfordshire Puddingstone

Many of you will have seen the Facebook posts on the 'Museum' page and 'Redbourners' regarding Hertfordshire Puddingstone. I am indebted to Museum Friend, Mike Thain for sending me this very comprehensive article which tells you everything you need to know!

Hertfordshire Puddingstone is so named because of its appearance. It is found only in Hertfordshire, is sought after by collectors throughout the world, and is regarded by geologists as the most unusual conglomerate in the world. Results of surveys estimate that no more than 2 million tonnes exist. Its hardness is 7 to 7.5 on the Mohs scale. *(Editor: Ten minerals make up the Mohs Scale from softest to hardest, they are talc (1), gypsum (2), calcite (3), fluorite (4), apatite (5), feldspar (6), quartz (7), topaz (8), corundum (9) and diamond (10). )*

The conglomerate is of Palaeocene or Eocene age (60 million years old). Pebble beds formed during this period were raised above sea level and were re-submerged when the sea returned during the succeeding period. At this time, soil deposits containing heavy concentrations of Silica buried the dry pebbles. Wet and humid conditions then prevailed for thousands of years. Pressure from soluble Silica separated the gravel and pebble beds, the reason why the pebbles in Puddingstone rarely touch each other. Eventually, cementation took place.

Contamination by various minerals is the cause of the staining of the original flint pebbles and this has resulted in the variety of colours – red, brown, yellow, blue – the latter being the rarest of all. The red centre of a flint pebble is generally the result of haematic (iron) staining. A mixture of oxides contributed to establishing the variety of colour. The earliest recorded use of Puddingstone is the fashioning of Querns, worked from large conglomerates using flint tools by Mesolithic Man (1500 BC).

There are many local names and myths associated with Hertfordshire Puddingstone. Most are associated with good luck. One popular name is Growing Stone, in the belief that this conglomerate 'grows'.

Below are some pieces of polished Puddingstone displayed on the landing at the museum.



# Remembrance

The story of just two young men who quickly volunteered to serve their country in the Great War 1914 - 1919

## Robert Ridgwell (My Great Uncle) & Jack Sydney Rust

They both enlisted at Chelmsford in Essex on the same day and volunteered to serve in one of the two county Regiments, The Essex Yeomanry and at the time of their volunteering were both living in Wethersfield. They were both friends in this small village in North Essex and were inseparable.

**Private Robert Ridgwell** was aged 20 when he was killed in action during the regiment's assault on the Frezenberg Ridge in Belgium that started on the 13th May 1915. He lived at Chapel Cottage in Wethersfield and was the son of Benjamin and Ellen Ridgwell.

He has no known grave and is commemorated on the walls of the Menin Gate in Ypres together with no less than 55 of his Yeomanry comrades.

**Private Jack Sydney Rust** was aged 22 when he was severely injured alongside Robert Ridgwell on the 13th May. He did survive for a short time but died of wounds two days later on 15th May. He was the son of Samuel and Emily Rust of Brook Farm in the village. His body was found and he is buried in Bailleul Community Cemetery Extension.

Robert's regimental number was 1275, Jack's was 1277.



Robert would have been entitled to receive the medals shown on the certificate.

Left to Right

The 1914 - 1915 Star.  
Known as 'Pip'

The British War Medal 1914 - 18.  
Known as 'Squeak'

The Allied Victory Medal.  
Known as 'Wilfred'

## Fundraising

We have some incredibly generous people living in Redbourn, as we all know. I received this email from 'A Redbourn Resident':

**Hi John, I have just had a letter saying my Winter Fuel Payment will be £250. Which is quite ridiculous but I wonder whether the Museum is saving up for something? If so I'll chip my windfall in to that, so please let me know. In fact there must be quite a few Museum Friends who could donate their Payments.**

Unbelievable - and so kind and thoughtful.

---



This is where we send our used inkjet cartridges and the last box sent gave us our usual healthy boost to our funds. This time £32.45. Please continue to donate your used cartridges.

---



This is where we raise money while doing our internet shopping. The total raised so far (Nov. 14th) by 11 Museum Friends is **£117.21**

It costs you nothing and involves a simple click of your computer mouse while doing your shopping. Having reviewed the payments received I see that the maximum 'cashback' from one Friend's transaction was £13.15 and the minimum was 5p but as you can see it all adds up.

Here's the link for you to sign up! Copy and paste into your browser!

<https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/redbourn-village-museum>

---

## SumUp Card Reader

Although not strictly a 'fundraiser' we do get donations we wouldn't otherwise have received as it's a good response to the increasing number of people who don't carry cash any more. Obviously it's invaluable for sales to those who also don't carry cash.

**We gratefully acknowledge the generous support received from the following:**

Redbourn Parish Council



Ashtons Estate Agents



Austin Trueman Associates



Aylett Nurseries



Changing Views



Halsey (Builders) Ltd

Hertfordshire County Show



J.G. Bryson (Printer)



R.S. Harding Ltd



Redbournbury Mill



Redbourn Electrical Contractors

Redbourn Porsche Owners Club



The Cricketers Public House



The Miller Group of Companies



Tring Brewery



**Would your company like to become a**

**Business Friend of Redbourn Village Museum?**

**The cost is £30 per year**

**Please contact [redbournmuseum@gmail.com](mailto:redbournmuseum@gmail.com)**

**Redbourn Village Museum  
Silk Mill House  
The Common  
Redbourn, Herts. AL3 7NB**



Museum Location:  
**[oasis.royal.shared](https://www.oasis.royal.shared)**

**Patron: Sir Simon Bowes Lyon**

**Museum open February to November  
Saturday & Sunday 2:00 pm to 5:00 pm**

**Last admission 4:30pm**

Tel: 01582 793397

Email: [redbournmuseum@gmail.com](mailto:redbournmuseum@gmail.com)

Visit us on the web at:  
[www.redbournmuseum.org](http://www.redbournmuseum.org)

Museum Trustees:

John Ridgwell: Chairman  
Membership Secretary  
Newsletter Editor  
Email: [John-R@ntlworld.com](mailto:John-R@ntlworld.com)  
Tel: (01582) 626055

Roy Woods: Deputy Chairman  
David Forbes: Company Secretary  
Legal Advisor

Diane Whiskin: Curator  
Susan Aldridge: Assistant Curator  
Procurement Officer

Sandra Langstone: Treasurer  
James Millers: Local & Family Historian  
Mark Webb: Local & Family Historian  
Cat Newley: Museums Advisor  
Victoria Mead: Events Committee  
Pauline Ridgwell: Minutes Secretary  
Events Committee Chair

Co-opted Committee Members:

Colin O'Donovan: Parish Council Liaison  
Tom Finnis: I.T. Advisor

