



This report from Barnet Museum is a summary of Museum activities over the last twenty months or so (ie from March 2020).

The Museum closed its doors to the public in the face of the Covid pandemic on 9th March 2020. Our series of lectures was curtailed after just three talks. We opened again on 17th August 2021.

In the lockdown period the Museum moved its focus to:

- maintaining our online presence (www.barnetmuseum.co.uk)
- maintaining our social media presence www.facebook.com/barnetmuseum; and Twitter: @Museumbarnet
- online dissemination of local history articles and data including photographs;
- issuing VE day and VJ day anniversary journals, authored by Jeff Gale;
- occasional Zoom presentations;
- promotion of other institutes offering online lectures etc;
- responding to requests for information and enquiries;
- creation of a 550-year anniversary Battle of Barnet calendar;
- devising a Key Stage 2/3 education programme with lesson plans;
- publishing two volumes of our annual Barnet History Journal and two books, "100 Years of the Chipping Barnet War Memorial" and "The Battle of Barnet – In Fact and Fiction".

We updated parts of our archive (when attendance to the Museum was possible) including additions to the Hadley Wood Archive.

All the while the Museum fabric was cared for including roofing works and regular and frequent attention to the Museum's dehumidifiers.

2021 saw the 550th Anniversary of the Battle of Barnet and a lot of Museum work centred around the commemoration. Events were affected by the lockdown, particularly the Medieval Festival which had to be postponed from June 2021 to September 2021. However the Museum was able to contribute to proceedings: the

Battle of Barnet banners which were painted by the Museum were hung on the High Street lampposts from April 2021 to October 2021 to fit with the actual anniversary (April) and the Medieval Festival (September), instead of June to August as originally planned. As mentioned before, a souvenir 2021 calendar and a book on the Battle were also released.

The Museum arranged for four paintings by local artist Keith West to be displayed at St John the Baptist Church (Barnet Church). This exhibition was opened on 11th September with a solemn service conducted by Rev Fr Tristan Chapman in a medieval style. This was followed by a procession to the opening of the Medieval Festival. The Medieval Festival itself (which was originated by, but now only tangentially involving, the Museum) was deemed a success with some 5000 visitors over the weekend.

The Museum received six arrowheads and the seal of the Earl of Warwick on long term loan from the British Museum; after a three-year negotiation (somewhat delayed by the lockdown) these important artefacts are now on display in Barnet Museum.

The Museum commissioned and advised on a play, *The Fog of War*, which was written by a local playwright (James P Godwin), directed by a local woman (Siobhan Dunne) and performed by a local amateur dramatic company (The Bull Players).

In non-Battle work, the Museum is involved in an attempt to conserve and preserve "Chudys", a small shop (no 54a) on Barnet High Street. Chudys has a near-complete timber-frame dating from 1360 (the exact date has been confirmed by Historic England dendrologists); this is the second oldest timber framed building in London.

Old photographs of Hadley, Hadley Wood and High Barnet have been exhibited in The Spires Shopping Centre by Barnet Museum. Actually it is an "old" new exhibition – the photographs were displayed in Hadley Highstone Memorial Hall in the 1990s. The photographs have been expertly reproduced and mounted and captioned by Rob Brimson, Lyn Brimson and Jane Downey. They are on 27 display boards donated to the Museum by Lyn Brimson.

The Physic Well has been reopened. It was opened on the third Saturday of September, October and will be on 20th November.

In early November, we were honoured to host a visit from Agnes Slocombe, who in 1997 became the first black Mayor of Barnet. She featured in our 2021 Barnet History Journal and is a life member of BMLHS.

Since reopening the Museum we have visited one school (Trent) to give a talk on the Battle of Barnet. The school also borrowed our Battle of Barnet Loanbox.

Our immediate plans include hosting two school visits, a visit from a Scout Troop and a talk to a Synagogue social club.

Volunteers will carry out a major exercise to repair and restore The Battle of Barnet banners, ready for hanging in 2022.

We are researching the prehistoric enclosure on Hadley Wood.

We have introduced "The Toybox" a loan/resource box of older toys (part of Key Stage 1/2 curriculum). This is for lending to schools and for visits to the Museum. It has been used successfully by one school (Church Hill) and will soon be visited by another (Christchurch).

The Museum now handles archive enquiries through our new Archivist, Hilary Harrison. Our photography expert, Graham Willcocks, has been analysing old photographs showing new aspects on social media, particularly our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/barnetmuseum.

We are looking at the position on various Covid restrictions before we attempt to relaunch our monthly lecture series. We are processing ideas for speakers and topics. We intend to return to the annual Gillian Gear Memorial Lecture; again, Covid concerns dominate our thinking at the moment.

The same applies to our Reminiscence Box (a package of handling objects that we take to Care Homes and Dementia Meetings/"Cafes"). Our stakeholders here are amongst the most vulnerable to Covid and therefore we have suspended the use of the box for the time being.

The Museum is regaining its momentum after lockdown vis a vis governance and staffing – we have managed well thus far but we always want to strengthen our volunteer cadre.

Barnet Museum and Local History Society welcomes new members, currently we have approximately 300 members, of whom about 70 are life members.

Michael Noronha
Curator
Barnet Museum
6th November 2021

Trustee Scott Harrison examines the weather-beaten banner of the Duke of Exeter



Former Mayor of Barnet Agnes Slocombe visits Barnet Museum

Barnet Museum's publication
"Battle of Barnet – In Fact and Fiction"

