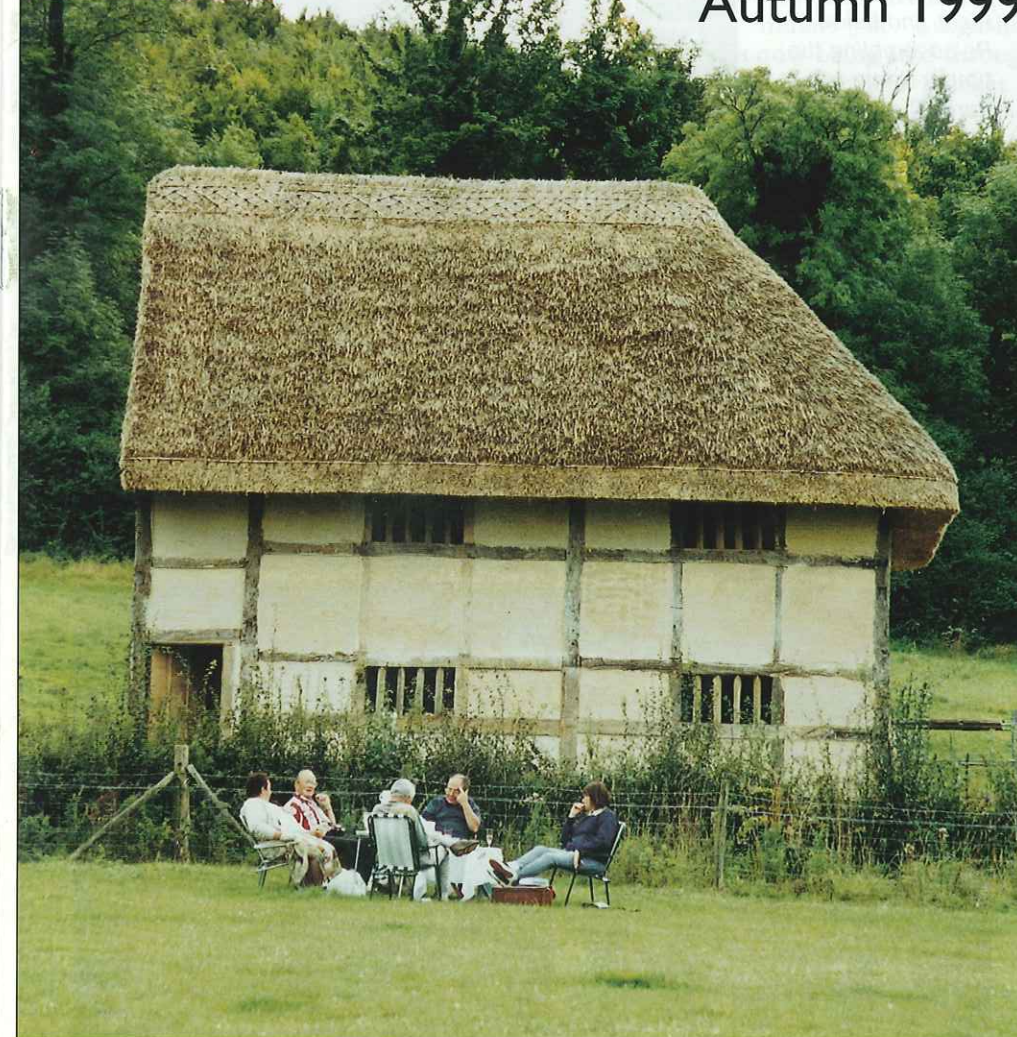




WEALD & DOWNLAND OPEN AIR MUSEUM

Autumn 1999



Poplar Cottage takes on new life at the heart of the Museum

The 16th century smoke-bay house, Poplar Cottage, became the 46th building exhibit following its re-assembly at the very centre of the Museum site. The cottage is the Museum's permanent memorial to its founder, Dr Roy Armstrong.

Re-building a timber-frame is a core part of the Museum's work and visitors were enthralled as the giant jigsaw of timber parts was fitted together, and enjoyed watching the processes of wattle infill, daubing, thatching and lime-washing. Inside, carpenter Roger Champion, who repaired and restored the frame, has been busy on the many details necessary to finalise the rebuild-

ing – from inserting the stairs and fitting wooden shelves to making and hanging the doors. Once the floor is made, attention will switch to creating an appropriate garden and environment around the cottage and working out details of its interpretation.

Poplar Cottage was built between 1550 and 1630 as the home of a landless labourer on what is now the Wiston Estate at Washington Common, below the scarp slope of the Downs. Its importance as a smoke-bay house was

Building Conservation Centre work begins in New Year

Work on the Museum's next major project, the Building Conservation Centre and Store, will begin immediately after the New Year break.

The Museum's trustees and the Heritage Lottery Fund have agreed the project can proceed, although there is still a small shortfall on funding. The Museum is confident that the gap can be closed well before the project is completed.

The most important recent development in the funding of the spectacular "gridshell" structure was the Wolfson Foundation's decision in July to award the project £50,000. This generous

donation is one of the largest to have been received for the building, which has caused a great deal of interest in the architectural and engineering press.



HERITAGE
LOTTERY
FUND

The Centre will be built along the contour of the hill above Longport House, where it will blend into the surrounding landscape and at the same time provide a spectacular view across the valley. The first task will be the clearance and excavation of the site and the installation of services.

The building, designed by Edward Cullinan Architects and Buro Happold Engineers, has received £1.70 million funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund and will be the largest gridshell structure to be built in the UK. The Museum intends the new centre to be an innovative piece of modern architecture marrying the use of sustainable timber with state-of-the-art technology to contrast with and complement the historic building exhibits.

When completed visitors will be able to watch timber-frames being restored inside, take part in lifelong learning courses and have full access to the Museum's nationally-important collection of building materials and rural life artefacts. The building will provide the country with a national centre for the teaching and demonstration of traditional timber-frame building techniques.

→ Page 2

Poplar Cottage takes on new life

discovered by Roy Armstrong during a buildings survey, and the owner, Harry Goring, generously donated the cottage to the Museum.

The cottage has enabled the Museum to fill in a gap in its story of traditional house development. Houses heated by fires within a smoke-bay represent the half-way stage between the medieval open hall where smoke from the central fire drifted up into the roof space and the introduction of the chimney. The rebuilding of Poplar Cottage was supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and a range of other trusts and donors. The project was led by the Museum's research director, Richard Harris.



Right and below, Re-assembling the timber-frame in April. The process attracted many visitors, including the annual conference of the national Vernacular Architecture Group, held at the Museum this year.

Left top, Daubing the oak wattle upstairs.

Left bottom, Chris Tomkins thatching the roof.



Would you like to adopt a building?

The Museum is encouraging local businesses to sponsor individual building exhibits as a way of ensuring their preservation and maintenance. Some companies are helping by sponsoring equipment too.

Whittaker's Cottages are being cared for through funding provided by Cox Restorations, while specialist painters, Joy and Wilm Huning, frequent visitors to the Museum, are donating their skills to look after the Toll Cottage. Millwood Homes Ltd is paying for the upkeep of Bayleaf Farmhouse. And the maintenance of our JCB, a vital piece of site

equipment, is now being sponsored by Geoffrey Osborne Ltd of Chichester.

The Museum is now looking for assistance for – Pendean Farmhouse, Poplar Cottage, Walderton House, Winkhurst, Lurgashall Watermill, North Cray House and the Petersfield Brick Drying Shed.

Or your company may prefer to contribute towards the costs of keeping the farm livestock, the working Shire horses, the horsebox, or the upkeep of our five historic gardens.

For further information please contact the Museum Director, Chris Zeuner on 01243 811363.



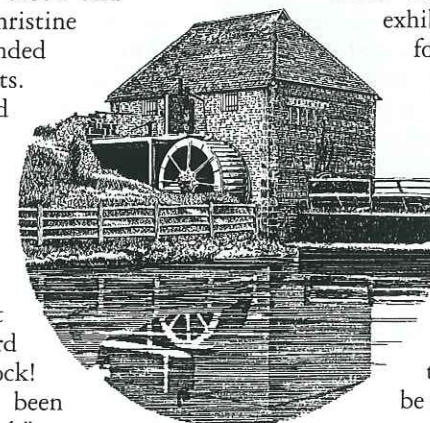
As part of its objective of encouraging rural skills the Museum is promoting the produce of a group of coppice workers based in ancient hazel woods within a five-mile radius of the Museum site.

The woodsmen cut hazel stools right down to the ground annually from September to March every seven to nine years, allowing new growth without the need to replant. Coppicing enables light to reach the woodland floor and allows flowers and plants to flourish for two to three years until the hazel canopy regrows. In a well-run coppice cants of hazel can be seen at every stage of growth providing a superb habitat for flora and fauna.

Museum flour sells like hot cakes at Surrey farmers' market

Stoneground wholemeal flour produced by the Museum's volunteer millers at Lurgashall Watermill is now being sold through a new outlet, the farmers' market at Secretts Farm, Milford, Surrey.

Peter and Ruth Stock and Brian and Christine Weekes have attended three of the markets. At the first they sold out of produce, including biscuits made with the flour under the Weald & Downland Open Air Museum label. At the second and third they took more stock! "The markets have been extremely successful," says marketing officer Gail Kittle. "We have supplemented the shop sales and promoted the Museum as a place to visit and as a supplier of life-long learning programmes." Secretts Farm has arranged a special Christmas Market on 12 December – why not go along?



Farmers markets give local farmers and producers a new opportunity to sell their produce direct to the public and give consumers the chance to buy fresh locally grown fruit and vegetables, locally reared meat and home made produce. The Secretts Farm market exhibits very strict criteria for participation which perfectly meets the Museum's own high standards and integrity. Chichester District Council started fortnightly farmers' markets in October and the Museum booked in for the first two, hoping these would be equally successful.

● In the summer the Museum experienced an unprecedented level of flour sales – connected to the food scares reported in the media perhaps, or it may be that people just like Lurgashall Mill flour! Thank you to the volunteer millers who put in extra hours to keep up with the demand.

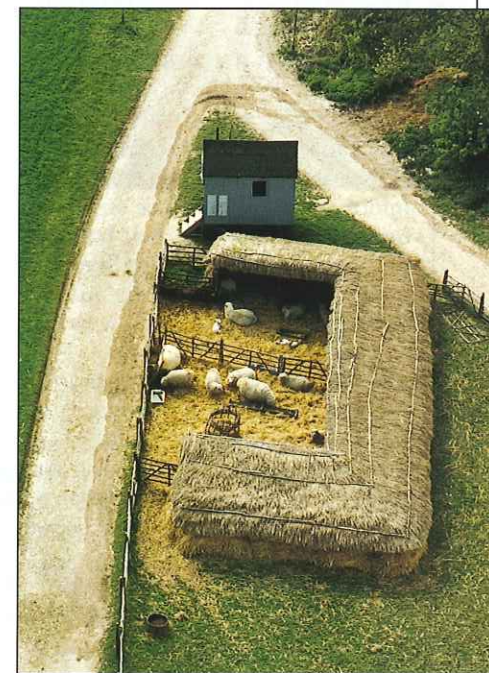
Promoting local coppice workers

The cut hazel is turned into a variety of products and sold to the public, providing valuable employment for local people as well as the environmental benefit of carefully managed woodlands.

Local craftsmen are now making the following products – hurdles, pyramid plant supports, besom brooms, pea sticks, bean sticks, flower supports, trellising, turned products, continuous hazel fencing, walking sticks, logs, kindling wood, stick chairs, spars, rustic garden furniture, charcoal, wood chipings, soil improver, rose arches and supplying hedgelaying services.

Some of these products can be seen and bought at the Museum shop. Further information: Paul Pinnington on 01243 811553 or email: paulpinnington@hotmail.com.

New sheep and shepherding display



The Society of Sussex Downsmen has supported the new display featuring a traditional sheep fold, once a familiar sight in the South Downs, and the shepherd's hut with two new information panels.

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New programme of courses

The Museum's busy programme of building conservation and lifelong learning courses in rural crafts and skills has made a significant contribution to our activity this year.

Through seminars, lectures and workshops, our core activity of preserving and interpreting traditional buildings and rural life has been enhanced for an ever-growing number of Weald & Downland Museum users. Quieter days have often been transformed by a busy

course on the site, demonstrating how the Museum is successfully widening access to its work.

Courses are available on all levels from those designed for professionals in the building conservation sector to individuals with a keen interest in one of our subject areas who are after a day of fun and enjoyment as well as information.

Diana Rowsell, who co-ordinates the programme, has drawn up a busy new programme for the next few months.

Course news in brief

■ The Museum's highly successful programme of building conservation courses was supplemented this year by an innovative day on **lime mortars** led by Gerard Lynch and Douglas Johnston from Edinburgh, who demonstrated the whole traditional process of producing lime putty from burning chalk through to wet and dry slaking. A new **ironwork** course with Charles Brooking of The Brooking Collection of architectural artefacts and Amberley Museum's blacksmith in residence was also a success, with every delegate given the opportunity to make their own staple in the forge.

■ **The Home-owners' Day**, held in partnership with one of our sponsors, Jackson-Stops & Staff, will be repeated on 11 May giving owners of historic houses and cottages access to expert information and guidance on how to manage and maintain their home.

■ **Timber-framing from Scratch**, the unique course offered by the Museum in which participants learn how to create a

timber-framed building starting with the tree, was a sell-out twice over. Led by framers Joe Thompson and Phil Jones and overseen by Museum research director Richard Harris, 15 participants sweltered in the hottest week of the year learning the demanding skills of hewing and framing.

■ The partnership with West Dean College and English Heritage in the **Masterclass** programme of building conservation courses saw very well attended and well received courses in the repair of traditionally constructed brickwork and the conservation and repair of timber, which will be repeated. Full details of this programme can be obtained from West Dean College on 01243 811301.

■ The Museum can arrange **special training days** for specific groups. The building workforce of the Thames & Chiltern region of the National Trust visited the Museum in the summer for carpentry and leadwork demonstrations and a guided tour of Poplar Cottage under reconstruction.

■ New for this year are two courses on making **Herbal Christmas Gifts and Decorations**, on 7 and 12 December. **Continuous Hurdle Fencing** is offered on 19 January, and you can learn how to make **corn dollies** on 19 February.

■ The much-sought after **Heavy Horse Experience Days** continue, with courses planned right through the winter, spring and early summer. Emphasis is on enjoyment and gaining skills and confidence working with these giants of the horse world. A ploughman's lunch is always included! Tutors are experienced Surrey horseman Rob Dash and Museum horseman Peter Albon.

NOVEMBER

- 4 Repair of timber-framed buildings: Richard Harris
- 6 Heavy horse experience days – ploughing: taking it forward: Rob Dash, Peter Albon
- 17 Joinery by hand – sash windows: Ged Gardiner, Charles Brooking
- 20 Ritual and Practical Marks on Building Materials: Timothy Easton, Richard Harris.
- 20 Heavy horse experience days – more experience: Rob Dash, Peter Albon
- 25 Timber decay and its treatment: Brian Ridout



Research director Richard Harris with a group of students during the Recording Vernacular Buildings for Conservation course, part of the Museum's extensive building conservation courses programme.

DECEMBER

- 7 Herbal Christmas gifts and decorations: Tina Stapley
- 12 Herbal Christmas gifts and decorations: Tina Stapley

JANUARY

- 15 Heavy horse experience days – care and management: Rob Dash, Peter Albon
- 19 Continuous hurdle fencing – a practical workshop: Bob Holman
- 27 Recording vernacular buildings for conservation – day one: Richard Harris

■ A new partnership with the Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group enabled us to extend our range of traditional rural crafts and skills courses on offer this year. At the first participants learned how our landscape had been made and how fragile it is under modern commercial farming methods. The second day explored the life and habitat of barn owls.

launched

FEBRUARY

- 19 Heavy horse experience days – an introduction to driving heavy horses: Rob Dash, Peter Albon
- 19 Corn dolly workshop: Verna Bailey
- 24 Repair of timber-framed buildings: Richard Harris, Roger Champion

MARCH

- 1 Dealing with change in historic buildings – day one: James Strike and other specialists
- 16 Recording vernacular buildings for conservation – day two: Richard Harris
- 18 Heavy horse experience days – chain work: Rob Dash, Peter Albon
- 29 Dealing with change in historic buildings – day two: James Strike and other specialists
- 30 Leadwork – design and specification: Nigel Johnston, Lead Sheet Association

APRIL

- 8 Heavy horse experience days – shaft and pole work: Rob Dash, Peter Albon
- 27 Recording vernacular buildings for conservation – day three: Richard Harris
- 28 Dowsing – an introduction to this ancient craft: David Russell

MAY

- 2-4 Historic forms of jointing and pointing historic brickwork: Gerard Lynch

Timber-framing from Scratch – our unique course which offers the opportunity to create a timber-framed building starting with the tree – was over-subscribed this year, so two were run side by side. Hewing, right, and laying out, below, are two crucial skills for the students. Another course will be run next year. Contact Diana Rowsell at the Museum office for details.



- 11 Home-owners day with Jackson-Stops & Staff
- 13 Dawn walk, with breakfast: Bob Holman
- 15-17 The Lychgate Workshop: Richard Harris, Roger Champion
- 15-21 Timber-framing from scratch: Joe Thompson
- 21 Heavy horse experience days – plaiting and show preparation: Rob Dash, Peter Albon

Further information – Diana Rowsell on 01243 811363.



Discover a Millennium of Herbs next year

The new gardening courses held during the year proved popular and successful and a new series is planned for this year.

Highlights of the herb day at Bayleaf Farmstead in July included making tussy-mussies (tightly bunched herbs and flowers) and calendula ointment from marigolds, with Jay Greenland and Tina Stapley. The autumn day was spent gathering produce from the Bayleaf garden, which was cooked in late medieval style with bacon and eggs in Winkhurst kitchen, under the direction of Val Mars and



Rosemary Moon.

Next summer we offer a special series *A Millennium of Herbs*, five day schools each covering 200 years of herb history. This will be led by Museum gardener Bob Holman and herb specialist Tina Stapley.

A Millennium of Herbs, day school one, is on 7 June and covers the years 1000 – 1200. Day school two (1200 -1400) is on 23 June, day three (1400 – 1600) is on 12 July, day four (1600 – 1800) 28 July and day five (1800 – 2000) is on 13 September.



Midhurst estate agents Jackson-Stops & Staff sponsored the Museum's building conservation courses programme. In the photograph Andrew Ferrier presents Museum director Chris Zeuner with the company's cheque.

1999 was a year of non-stop activity!



Wood retains a special fascination and visitors to **The Out of the Wood Show** were treated to a festival of all things made out of this remarkable natural material. Walking stick making (with Patrick Currell) was one of the many special demonstrations during the weekend.



Close encounter with an earlier century! Visitors stop to chat to one of the members of the Coldham family, who inhabit Pendean Farmhouse for a week each year, showing how a farmer and farm servants would have lived in the 16th century. **The History Re-enactment Workshop** presents skills of domestic and farming life, interwoven with the everyday problems such a family would have faced 400 years ago.

Our interpretation of **food and eating in medieval times** was greatly enhanced by the visit of food historian Peter Brears and his team of interpreters in July. The leading authority on the history of food, Peter spent three days at the Museum, running a training course for volunteer stewards and staff, giving a lecture for the Friends and masterminding a medieval meal in North Cray hall house, an evening to remember for all who took part. Peter returned in September to deliver a two-day course on historic domestic life from the 16th – 19th centuries, including visits to Cowdray House and Petworth House. Delegates from the National Trust and the History Re-enactment Workshop joined in. In the photographs, top right, Peter demonstrates medieval table settings to the Junior Friends in Bayleaf and visitors are immersed in medieval cooking methods in Winkhurst kitchen.



Shire horses Gym and Baron cut a spectacular **crop of 6ft tall rye**, grown by the Museum in response to a request from The Countryside Agency and a small group of harness makers who need the material to stuff the pad of horse collars. Very little of this rye is grown today and harness makers frequently face a shortage.

Children are fascinated by the wide range of activities on offer at the Museum. On the **children's activity days** and at other special events throughout the year they find themselves learning all sorts of building techniques and countryside skills – an important way in which the Museum furthers its education objective and generates interest in rural life. Here young visitors become blacksmith, hurdle-maker and brick-layer for the day!

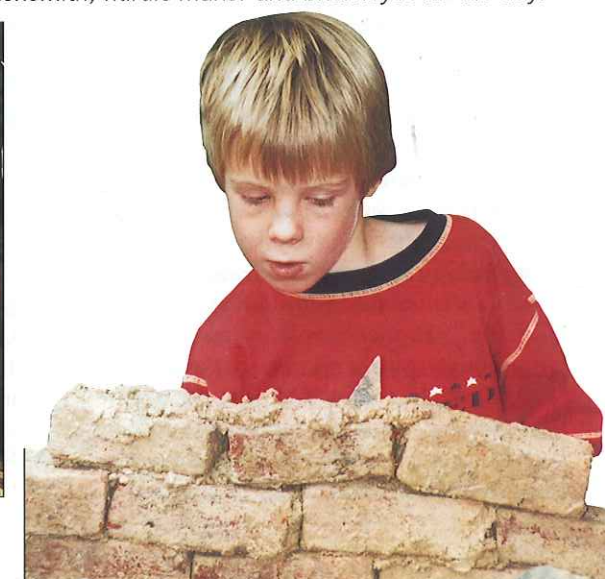


Museum director Chris Zeuner lost amongst the **Frank Gregory Collection** of publications, photographs, cine film and postcards of mills. Thought to be possibly the most comprehensive collection of mill archive material in the country, it takes up 70 metres of shelving. Sorting and cataloguing is to begin soon.

Frank Gregory, who died last year, left his collection to the Museum, of which he was a great supporter.



High summer – and the visitors are flocking to the **Rare Breeds Show**. Stalwart volunteers Michael Hickling, Winnie Gage and Walter Greenway welcome them at the Gonville Cottage entrance. Below right, Anne Nicholls' champion Exfold Princess gilt was determined to rest after her labours as judge Austin Mitchell helps attach the champion's sash. Far right, me and my sheep! A little girl takes part in the young handler's class. Right, the business side of the day – Jean Piggott, left, and Ann Allen collate the results.



FRIENDS NEWS

SPRING TOUR 2000 – 4-9 MAY. Edinburgh is the destination for the annual Friends tour next year, with a whole day spent in Glasgow. The programme includes an evening tour of the Georgian House, Edinburgh, a tour of the city with a Blue Badge Guide, and a visit to the Museum of Scotland with a talk by a member of staff. In Glasgow the tour visits the Burrell Collection and the House for an Art Lover, inspired by Charles Rennie Mackintosh. On Sunday there will be an opportunity to attend church services and a visit to Trahair House at Innerleithen, the oldest inhabited house in Scotland, opened to the public by the Maxwell Stuarts. A free morning in Edinburgh will be followed by a visit to Leith to see the Royal Yacht *Britannia*, and finally a visit to a Tartan Weaving Mill is planned.

The cost will be around £465 including flights, coach travel and half board at the Swallow Royal Scot Hotel, Edinburgh, a four star hotel with swimming pool and full facilities. Entrance costs and tips for coach drivers are included but not hotel gratuities, lunches, drinks and personal choice of visits in Edinburgh. The cost does not include holiday insurance but participants are strongly advised to make their own arrangements.

Please apply for a booking form to the secretary, Jean Piggott at the Museum office enclosing a stamped addressed envelope, or tel: 01243 811363/01730 813126. Bookings will be treated on a first come, first served basis. A limited number of single rooms is available.

• **Weald & Downland Open Air Museum Magazine.** The British Association of Friends of Museums have awarded our twice-yearly magazine first prize in the "liveliest newsletter award." This will be presented to our Editor, Diana Zeuner, at the BAFM annual conference in Glasgow in October. Well done, Diana!

• **Bring the grandchildren!** A change in the Friends' rules means that family membership now covers two adults plus children or grandchildren. If you would like to update your category of membership to take advantage of the change please contact the Friends office.

- **AGM.** The annual general meeting of the Friends will take place on Saturday 8 April 2000 in the Old Library at West Dean House.
- **Summer programme.** The Friends trips this summer were well supported and included visits to The Vyne, Chenies Manor House, Finchcocks and Gospel Green Cheese and Cider. The Friends took their stand to Neptune House, by kind invitation of Robin and Patricia Borwick to

financial and other support to the Museum. To publicise the Friends and encourage new members, we provide a presence on special event days and as many weekends as possible during the summer season. If you can spare a few hours to help please write to the chairman of the Friends, Tim Heymann or telephone the Friends office.

- **Footnote.** Free entry to the Museum is a privilege granted to the Friends

Good practice for volunteers



The Weald & Downland Open Air Museum was the first museum to sign up to the new Heritage Volunteers Handbook and Charter produced by the British Association of Friends of Museums earlier this year. The BAFM project is designed to encourage good practice for volunteers working in the heritage sector. In the photograph are Museum vice chairman Neil McGregor-Wood and Tim Heymann, chairman of the Museum Friends.

publicise the historic gardens at the Museum when their garden was open under the National Gardens Scheme.

- **Christmas Gift?** Why not give a year's membership of the Friends of the Museum as a gift this year? Write to or telephone the Friends office for application forms. Completed forms should reach us by the first week in December so that membership cards can be sent before Christmas. Subscription rates for 1999-2000 are: family £30, individual adult £14, senior citizen £12, junior or full time student £8.
- **Recruiting new Friends.** The Friends provide a valuable source of

by the Museum trustees and we ask all members to respect this by ensuring that their membership card is only used by those qualified to do so. Thank you.

- **Contacting the Friends.** Please send all correspondence for the Friends to: The Friends of the Weald & Downland Open Air Museum, Singleton, Chichester, West Sussex PO18 0EU. For telephone enquiries please ring 01243 811893. The Friends office is not manned full time, but please leave a message on the answer machine and you will be contacted.

Geoffrey Godber

Geoffrey Godber, who died in April following a long illness, was a leading figure in the establishment and development of the Weald & Downland Open Air Museum. He met the Museum's founder, Roy Armstrong, soon after his arrival in West Sussex in 1966 and became a firm supporter of the project from its infancy.

As chief executive of West Sussex County Council he involved and interested the council and many others in the county in the project, spending much time writing personal letters to obtain support. He became a trustee, serving as chairman and then vice president of the Weald & Downland Museum.

In his retirement hardly a day went by when he would not walk from his home in the village of Singleton to the Museum to help with or advise on the wide range of activities and decisions constantly underway. He also spent considerable time encouraging local people in the West Dean valley to help out at the Museum. One of those was his wife, Norah, who spent many days manning the ticket kiosk at the



Geoffrey Godber and members of staff with The Times/Shell Community Museum of the Year Award, 1990.

Museum entrance.

Former Museum chairman Nigel Stephens says "Geoffrey's contribution to the Museum has been unique. His help in the early days played a major part in getting the Museum established at Singleton. His involvement was greatly appreciated by all involved, in particular by Roy Armstrong and the

small team he got together to found the project.

"That the Museum has achieved national significance is largely due to the enthusiasm and commitment of those who founded it and saw it through the first 20 years. Geoffrey was one of these and will always be remembered as such."

News in brief

■ **Visitor numbers are 8% up this season – an excellent result compared to many other museums and leisure attractions, which all suffer increasing competition.** Museum director Chris Zeuner says it is always difficult to identify the reasons but we have had considerable publicity all through the year and the weather has largely been kind. "We need to continue to work hard to maintain these numbers," he adds.

■ **The Museum's fifth year of its DOVETAIL arts programme was blessed with magnificent sunsets and warm weather ideal for picnics.** The Copper Family – so popular they came twice – and Illyria's performances of Twelfth Night and The Water Babies were magical and well supported. The DOVETAIL programme provides income for the Museum and considerable enjoyment for the audience, many of whom were new to the Museum.

■ **The Museum's revised guidebook went on sale during the summer and includes sections on Poplar Cottage, Whittaker's Cottages and Longport House, as well as a range of other**

minor alterations and improvements. Research director Richard Harris redesigned the publication himself having installed the professional publishing software required. This achieved substantial savings and will enable easier updates in the future.

■ **The Museum is now licensed for civil weddings, and two have already taken place in the 15th century Crawley Hall, an appropriate venue as its original use was as a meeting room for the local community.** Reception services are also available, ranging from champagne by the lake to a seated four-course meal. Further information: Diana Rowsell on 01243 811363.

■ **The indefatigable Tuesday Gang continues to undertake a wide range of useful jobs at the Museum.** This year they have included making a new gate for Bayleaf Farmstead, re-upholstering chairs in Crawley Hall and umpteen general maintenance jobs. They have also been repairing and restoring the flatbed waggon used regularly by our working Shire horses, with the help of livestock volunteer Marie Merritt and her husband. Tuesday Gang members are Reg Knight, John Herniman, Ted Talmadge, John Hill, Paul Shove, Tony Caffyn, Ken Wellman and John Munro Thomson.

Tom Collyer

Tom Collyer was a vital member of the Museum's Tuesday Gang – a group of practical supporters of the Museum who meet every Tuesday to undertake a variety of tasks vital to keeping the Museum look shipshape. Tom, who came from Cosham, was adept at carpentry skills and his contribution and effort on behalf of the Museum will be greatly missed. Our condolences go to Tom's family.

Welcome to new staff

Welcome to three new members of staff who joined the team at the beginning of the season – Janet Sandys-Renton, as Museum director Chris Zeuner's secretary, Gail Kittle, who is our new marketing officer and Christine (Chris) Standing as the new office secretary. Welcome also, to the new volunteers who have joined us during the year and are now part of the Museum's dedicated army of workers!

News in brief

■ Our new group of NADFAS (National Association of Decorative and Fine Arts Societies) volunteers have already achieved a great deal of work in cataloguing and interpretation for the Museum. One group has catalogued the historic items in the Plumbers Workshop, the Carpenters Workshop and Whittakers Cottages. Another group has been busy interpreting Whittakers Cottages and Walderton House for our visitors. And yet another has been involved in organising and cataloguing books and papers in the library. The group's leaders are Jane Rofit and Mike Piggott.

■ New items continue to be accepted for the Museum's collection. This year they have included parts of buildings being demolished on the line of the Channel Tunnel rail link, general builder's equipment from Hove and plumbing and carpentry tools. Museum director Chris Zeuner is keen to develop other areas within our collection policy, for instance traditional field gates. The Museum is always interested in samples of building materials such as bricks or joinery from known buildings or yards. Please alert the Museum on 01243 811363 if you know of anything which might be relevant.

■ The Museum's working Shire horses took part in an international event in October – La Route du Poisson in northern France. Museum director Chris Zeuner and horseman Peter Albon accompanied Gym and Neville for the draught horse relay race which commemorates the days when fresh fish was rushed from Boulogne to Paris overnight by horse. The event has been reborn as a way of promoting draught horse breeds. The Museum was part of the first ever British team of 10 pairs of draught horses. Gym and Neville excelled themselves, taking part in four legs of the race, each up to 19km long, and easily passing the vet's inspection for heart-rate and temperature at the end of each run.

■ Ray Ashdown, who has done sterling work on cataloguing a wide range of items from the Museum's collection for some years now, has a new helper, Jim Burnham, a former museum director from America.

www.wealddown.co.uk

Website brings virtual and real visitors!

The Museum's website has attracted over 10,000 visits from all over the world since its launch in February 1999. "We know from the visitor survey that 1.5% of our visitors were prompted to come to the Museum this year through the website," says Museum trustee Jeff Houlton, who set up the site and maintains it. "Many of these were from abroad, and hopefully this will increase as the website becomes more widely known. Clearly no other method of marketing the Museum allows us to reach such a wide audience."

Website "visitors", from Europe, USA, Australia, Africa, South America and the South Pacific have stayed up to 25 minutes gleaning information from the pages. Most popular are the "guided

tour in words and pictures", "visitor information", the "special events diary" and the "news section." The website is regularly updated and includes a Poplar Cottage construction progress section: the same will be done for the Building Conservation Centre project.

Jeff has received numerous emails praising the layout and content of the website. One Californian man celebrating his 80th birthday emailed us to say he had enjoyed the website which reminded him of a visit he made to the Museum on his 70th birthday.

With the initial success of the website under our belts we are now reviewing how to improve the content to make it more effective for marketing purposes and decide what other information should be provided.

Young people get busy

- More schools than ever booked the special activities and workshops on offer this summer, despite a drop in school bookings due to the increased cost of coaches. Volunteers are always needed to help run the activities. If you are interested please contact Sue Shave at the Museum.
- During the winter the highly successful Tudor and Victorian workshops will be offered again to schools – November and most of December are already booked up. Dedicated volunteers brave the cold to deliver these excellent activity-packed days.



Junior Friends enjoying a ride behind a steam engine after all their hard work, steaming up, polishing and cleaning engines earlier in the day at the Downs Steam Show.

New events 2000

The Museum is fired up with enthusiasm for a brand new event – The Fire Event – due to start off the 2000 season with flare on Sunday 26 March.

Fire – powerful, beautiful, vital, dangerous – will be the theme for demonstrations and exhibitions ranging from cooking in the Museum buildings and blacksmithing in the forge, to a fireplace trail, lime burning, glass blowing, bronze casting, music and dance and a horse-drawn fire engine display. A bonfire party will bring the day to a glowing finish.

May is Museums and Galleries Month 2000 and the Museum will take part with a variety of activities. *Inspired by the Past* will include Gordon Rushmer as artist in residence taking day classes and working on the site, a *Timber-framing from Scratch* course, Tim Sandys-Renton working on an exciting new sculpture project, the return of the popular Dawn Chorus and Nightjar Walks with Bob Holman, an evening talk by ancient woodwork specialist Damian Goodburn and a traditional wall painting day with Joy and Wilm Huning.

More details will be revealed in the Spring Magazine, or contact Carol Brinson or Diana Rowsell at the Museum office.

- A literary pack based on Bayleaf Farmstead is being produced, with contributions from volunteers Jon Roberts and Pat Goodwin. It will contain background information on the Tudor period, written sources and illustrations and suggestions on the use of the sources for the literacy hour in schools.
- The Junior Friends group continues to go from strength to strength with this year's monthly meetings including celebrating a traditional May day, making a wattle and daub bread oven and cooking bread and learning how to make mortice and tenon joints. For their summer camp they joined forces with the Downs Steam Show, operating model steam boats on the mill pond, "steaming up", polishing



The stage is set

The Museum was the venue for more filming than ever before this year, beginning with the extraordinary Tenth Kingdom, which involved a film crew of considerable size, the use of many buildings and environments within the Museum site, and the sheep – prettily dressed with pink bows. More importantly we hosted the BBC on a number of occasions filming for the new Millennium History series, using especially our



medieval and Tudor buildings. In the summer the market square was the backdrop for a BBC Grass Roots gardening programme, and Bayleaf Farmhouse was used for a programme for the under-fives. Filming provides the Museum with valuable extra income as well as increasing our public profile.

and preparing the steam engines and enjoying a ride later in the day. Earlier in the week they enjoyed activities with a local re-enactment group, including long bow shooting and drama with a performance in North Cray House. They also created a Romany feast for the Saturday night, cooking on an open fire. Altogether a summer camp to remember! To join the Junior Friends (open to eight-year-olds and above) contact the Museum office for details.

- Education officer Sue Shave is now south-east co-ordinator for the Group for Education in Museums (GEM) and is organising a training day for education officers and museum professionals in November tackling the new numeracy hour and the challenge

this poses for museums. Some 50 participants took part in the day at the Museum. Sue is also the educational liaison officer for the Council for British Archaeology, south east, and is producing a resource booklet on archaeology and education to be published this autumn.

Designated status enables the Museum to take a "giant leap"



Pendean Farmhouse will benefit from Designation challenge funding.

The first fruits of the Museum's newly-Designated status will be plucked this winter when we begin a programme of major improvements to our nationally recognised collection of traditional buildings and associated artefacts.

The Museum was awarded one of the largest grants made to the small group of 43 museums Designated by the Government last year for the outstanding importance of their collections. £72,800 has been allocated for a new research, documentation and building reconstruction project.

The money will be used to improve the analysis and documentation of the historic buildings, both those re-assembled on site and those in store, and our collection of building materials and technology, and to make this fascinating information accessible to visitors.

In the next phases of the project, grants to be announced, new interpretative displays and improvements will be completed for two of the Museum's most popular building exhibits – Winkhurst, the 16th century kitchen and the c1600 Pendean Farmhouse.

The grant comes from £15 million challenge funding set aside by the Government to give much-needed support to the country's finest collections. "Imaginative and innovative projects" have been rewarded from the fund.

Museum director Chris Zeuner says "The Museum's Designated status and the grant which goes with it will allow us take a giant leap in the way we record and present information about our historic building exhibits. Visitors will eventually be able to use a computer to look up information about, say, the

social history and timber research undertaken on Bayleaf Farmhouse."

The grant enables the Museum to fund a short-term post to carry out the initial analysis of the collection. Mike Wall has been appointed collections manager for the 30-month duration of the project. Museum research director Richard Harris will undertake the information technology aspects.

The Designation scheme is intended to focus attention on the outstanding work of the best museums in the country and strengthen their claims for financial support. The Weald & Downland Museum is one of the UK's major independent museums, receiving no regular local authority or central government support. Considered the leading museum of historic buildings in England, it has achieved a national reputation for the quality of its building restoration work and recognition as a leader in the study of building conservation.

Celebrating trees

On 5 December we celebrate the life-giving properties of trees with our annual Tree Dressing day – this year's theme is *The Four Seasons*. One of our busiest days in the winter, people of all ages join in with dancing, singing, story telling, mummers plays and lantern making. If you would like to take part in the lantern making workshop, don't forget to bring a jam jar and a night light! Beginning at 12 noon the celebrations last until 4.30pm. Rabble Folk Theatre leads the activities, with the help of the Museum's Junior Friends.

Diary 1999-2000

Winter opening –
Wednesdays and weekends
1 November – 29 February 2000
(10.30am – 4.00pm)
Christmas and New Year –
26 December – 3 January 2000
(10.30am – 4.00pm)
2000 season – Daily
1 March 2000 – 31 October
(10.30am – 6.00pm)

DECEMBER

5 **Tree Dressing** – celebrate trees with song, dance, stories and lantern-making
20 **Carols** in North Cray House

FEBRUARY

21-25 **Half-Term Activities**

MARCH

26 **The Fire Event** – one-day event built around the fascination and practical qualities of fire and the uses people have made of it through history to the present day

APRIL

2 **Mothering Sunday** – free entry and daffodils for mothers and grandmothers, pram concours, traditional children's games and lots of fun!
23/24 **Easter Traditional Food Fair** – superb opportunity to buy regional food from makers throughout south-east England. Egg-based fun, brass band entertainment and cookery demonstrations

MAY

Museums & Galleries Month 2000!
A series of activities, including sculpture and art projects, the return of Bob Holman's Dawn Chorus walk, talks and demonstrations

29-
2 June **Half-Term Activities**



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