

Thirtieth Anniversary and Accreditation Renewal

by Dorothy Bone

This year Emsworth Museum reached a very important milestone. It is thirty years since the Earl of Bessborough (the Trust's first President) unveiled a brass plaque officially declaring the Museum open to the public. The plaque, which is now displayed in the Archive Room, is mounted on timber salvaged from J D Foster's fishing boat *Echo*. A commentary on the event was recorded by Keith Stoneman and several days later Michael Kennett and son Richard rented a video recorder (how technology has changed) and took a snapshot of the town.

David Rudkin, Founder of Emsworth Maritime and Historical Trust, grew up in Thorney Road and watched the fishing boats sailing in and out of the harbour. Much later when he returned to the area he saw *Echo 2* lying unfinished and rotting in the mud alongside the Ark and dreamed that he might be able to salvage and preserve it. In 1975, he and a group of friends joined together and formed the Emsworth Maritime Trust with the intention of rescuing the boat and establishing a maritime museum. The group consisted of David as Chairman; Arthur Rule, Vice-Chairman; John Saunders, Treasurer and Terry Warrick, Secretary. John Glanville was appointed legal advisor.



From left to right: Johnnie Rutherford (the first administrator), Sybil Jaques, Mayoress of Havant and Lady Bessborough on opening day



The Earl of Bessborough opening the new Museum on 29th July 1988

In 1978 the project was abandoned because of a lack of funds: Chichester Harbour Conservancy declared the wreck to be a danger to navigation and work began to remove it and the old Ark.

Gradually David gathered together various artefacts and historical documents with the object of establishing a museum which would also include local history. The name of the Trust was changed to Emsworth Maritime and Historical Trust and the search for premises began. This was a very lengthy process and to maintain an interest in the project several exhibitions were held in the South Street Centre (now Hewitt's). Eventually Havant Borough Council offered the lease (initially for three years) of the rooms above the Fire Station and the document was signed in the Council Offices on Wednesday, 9th December 1987.

In the February 1988 issue of *The Emsworth Echo* David Rudkin wrote "After fourteen years of vision, advertising and searching, hopes and disappointments but unrelenting persistence, the Trust is on the threshold of its deserved reward. Before very long the Emsworth Museum will be opened, and this worthy old town will be enriched with a repository of cultural and educational value and interest".

Continued overleaf

30th Anniversary and Accreditation Renewal continued

Then the work began to raise funds and prepare the rooms for the opening.



David Rudkin in 1994 with his newly published WW1 booklet. Picture: The News, Portsmouth

Over the years the Museum has gone through a number of changes but it continues to provide a home for artefacts, memorabilia, photographs and documents that would otherwise have been lost or destroyed.

On 29th July 2013 Dr Margaret Rule visited to help us celebrate the 25th anniversary of the opening and said that the Museum is a bit like an onion – the outer skin rather boring and dull but behind the façade is a gem with a wealth of knowledge and amazing stories to stimulate visitors of all ages.

Even with the increasing use of computers the Trust has been able to retain David Rudkin's original wish for the Museum to illustrate the history of Emsworth in an attractive and informative way, and to be relevant and accessible to all members of the community. Gradually the records, documents and photographs are being digitised so that everything will soon be readily and quickly available to researchers and visitors – but one important feature that hasn't changed is the cheerful and welcoming voice of the duty Stewards as visitors reach the top of the stairs.

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In 1994, six years after opening, Emsworth Museum became a Registered Museum and was given the registration number 524 by the Museums and Galleries Commission. The next stage was to apply for accreditation and in 2008 the MLA (Museums, Libraries and Archive Council) granted provisional accreditation and this was followed by full accreditation in 2013.

After extensive form filling, completing questionnaires, preparing and writing a variety of documents and policies during the last quarter of 2017, the Emsworth Museum's application for renewal of its accreditation status was approved by Arts Council England in July. This confirms that Emsworth Museum continues to meet nationally agreed standards of management, documentation and care for the collections it holds. For a small independent museum run by volunteers this is a great achievement and we are very pleased that our efforts have again been rewarded. The work was challenging but the end result is very

satisfying. This award of full accreditation is valid for approximately three years at which time we will be invited to provide evidence that we continue to comply with the Accreditation Standard.

The certificate announcing the renewal of accreditation is proudly displayed in the Reception Area.



L to R: Clive Pugh (see article p19), Dorothy Bone (EM&HT Hon. Sec.) and Tony Stimson (former EM&HT chairman). Picture: Wendy Bright