

Medieval murals in 15th century Piccotts End cottages are to be shown for first time in decades



Published on the **26** August
2013
12:39
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A row of 15th century cottages housing priceless medieval murals which have not been on show since the 1990s will soon be opened for a limited series of tours.

The hidden historical gem at Piccotts End features five colourful Catholic painted panels, which lay under a linen sheet and layers of wallpaper for more than 500 years, before being rediscovered in 1953.

It is thought the murals were covered up to avoid defacement during the Protestant Reformation, but members of the Dacorum Heritage Trust have tried for years to set up a small museum at the site, so people can finally enjoy them.

The group failed in their bid to create the museum in 2002, and since then the Grade I-listed property – also the site of Sir Astley Cooper's 1827 cottage hospital – has been sold to private individuals who have allowed access to small parties.

The Trust now hopes that with support from Dacorum Borough Council, the Heritage Lottery Fund and people living nearby, plans for a museum can finally take shape.

Chairman Roger Hands said: "The Dacorum Heritage Trust has long been of the opinion that the cottages, and especially the wall paintings, are a significant part of our local heritage and need preserving, interpreting and exhibiting to a wider audience.

"There are not many other Grade I-listed buildings in the area."

Open days at the medieval cottages will be held from Thursday, September 12 to Sunday, September 15 from 10am to 4pm.

There will be six hour-long tours each day, with a maximum of 12 people per tour. Appointments are first come, first served and must be made in advance at the Dacorum Heritage Trust museum store on Clarence Road, Berkhamsted, or by calling 01442 879525.

Questionnaires vital to the Heritage Lottery fund application will be given to all visitors after their tour.