



NEWSLETTER

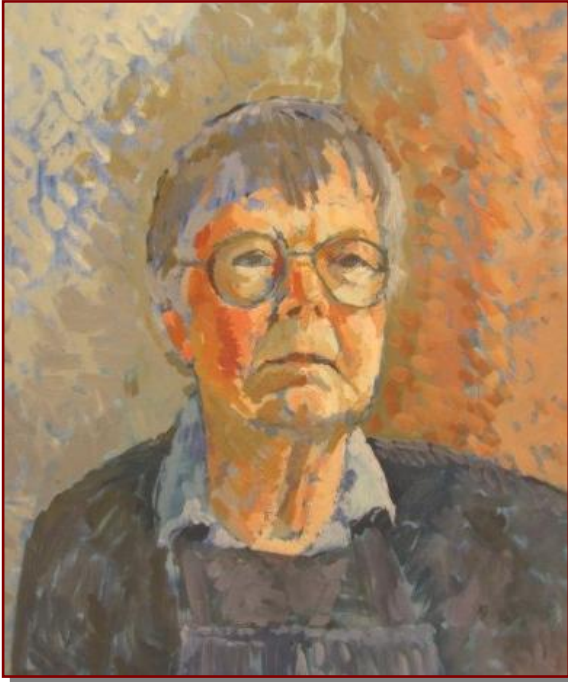
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SHEILA JESSOP – ARTIST AND SCULPTOR

Local artist Sheila Jackman, also known as Sheila Jessop died peacefully at her Boxmoor home last October, she was 83. Her family have donated to us a large collection of her work.



Sheila worked in a variety of media, sculpture, painting and printmaking. There are visual links in her paintings to the work of Cezanne and early Henry Moore or Barbara Hepworth in her sculptures. Of particular interest were the human figure, landscapes, the natural world and animals, all displaying a strong sense of form and movement. Her imagination dealt with symbols, iconic places and figurative themes that reappear over the years. She played an important part in the artistic life of Hemel for over 50 years.

Trained as a painter at Southend School of Art and Leeds College of Art just after the war, Sheila then taught art. In the late 1950s Sheila and Richard Jackman (also an art teacher), moved to Hemel on their narrowboat home. For a time she worked in the card design department at Dickinsons. In the early 1970s she studied Landscape Architecture, working on a number of public and private garden schemes, whilst continuing to paint and sculpt.

During the 1980s and early 90s she worked on a number of figurative commissions, including a set of portraits in relief for the new St. Mary's Hospital, Paddington, a sculptor's residency in Lincolnshire running workshops and making sculptures for roadside village signs. Commissions for portraits and commemorative pieces

came too. She made stage sculpture for the dance company 'Full-o-Beans', and modelled the clay originals (for casting in fibreglass) for various displays at EuroDisney!

She exhibited regularly from the 1980s until 2006 in mixed shows in Hertfordshire, Essex and London, these included the Hertfordshire Open Art In The Making, a travelling exhibition 'Multiple Choice', the Royal Society of British Artists, the Eastern Open and the Herts Open Arts exhibitions. Hertfordshire Visual Arts Forum workshops and exhibitions at Stevenage and the Open Studios. In 2006 she showed drawings in 'Women Draw Life' in Tring.

Sheila was active in the local visual arts scene, with Berkhamsted and St. Albans Art Societies and the Hemel Art Group since the late 1950s.

She supported the Boxmoor Arts Centre for Young People; and designed and painted (with volunteers) the re-decoration of the former St. Paul's Hospital. In her later years (2003-7) she instigated a new exhibition space in the restaurant at Hemel Hempstead Hospital and organised a changing programme of exhibitions by many local artists.



Photos: Left – self-portrait c. 1999 oil on board. Right 'Circus on the Moor' watercolour dated 1983.

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THE DEMOLITION OF LAGLEY HOUSE – THE END OF AN ERA

Lagley House's history was that of a large country house providing a home for wealthy families. The place name 'Lagley' dates from 1607 and in 1832 Mr. W. A. Duncombe built a large mansion on this field. It was built out of yellow stock bricks with a stone stepped porch to the front door which was adorned by Greek Doric fluted pilasters and columns. This country house had its own stables and coach house, with accommodation above. At the end of WWII the house was converted into flats.

My mother and I lived there from 1962 until she was moved to the Ashlyns estate in the late 1970s. I remember picnics on the lawns behind the house which were surrounded by hedges and provided a lovely play area for children. There were rumours of hauntings in our flat above the garage and over what used to be the stables and coach house. Saucepans would fall 'out' of the cupboard and sometimes one would hear footsteps coming up the



stairs. I once heard chains being dragged across the yard. Once sleeping in the main bedroom I was awakened by someone knocking on the window. I wondered how on earth someone had managed to get a ladder and climb up to the second floor. I went over to see but there was no one there.

The Duncombe's history has been studied by Jenny Sherwood, who wrote that the Berkhamsted Local History & Museum Society purchased, through auction, a letter with a black wax seal and family crest written in 1774 by one Thomas Duncombe of Berkhamstead St. Peter's. There is a Duncombe Road in Northchurch and Duncombe

Terrace and Duncombe Farm in Aldbury. The Duncombes can be traced to Stocks, Aldbury in the eighteenth century. William Duncombe was Bailiff of the Manor of Ivinghoe in 1442 in the reign of Henry VI. A book of the family tree shows the family married into families in Bucks, Herts and Beds. A William Duncombe born in April 1707 lived in Northchurch, first at The Hall, Berkhamsted and then later at Northchurch House.

Lagley was the family house for the Duncombes in 1832. Bert Hosier writes about his mother having been in service as cook for Mrs Douglas in the 1920s and the Douglas's were spoken well of, with Hosier writing the following, 'A caring employer and well run household'.

The life of a maid in those times was hard and the last person to have been engaged as a maid at Lagley, between 1937-1940, said work started at 6:30 am. cleaning all the fire grates in the many rooms: scullery kitchen, servant's hall, morning room, dining room, drawing room and the six main bedrooms.

The villagers of the 1930s went to Lagley as it was a venue for the Annual Scout Fete.

Mrs Douglas died in 1940 and the army took over the house until the end of the war when Colonel and Mrs Johnston lived in it. It was said that Colonel Johnson had had a mysterious death however.

Later Dacorum Borough Council bought it and made it into flats before later demolishing it in the 1970s.

When we still lived there, I had occasion to go into the main house sometime in the late sixties and I saw that it had not been looked after or maintained because it smelt musty and the stone work had been neglected. One entered through the large front door and found oneself in a large hallway with a wide winding staircase. I think it was made out of stone. One could imagine in its heyday in winter, a large Christmas tree standing in the hallway covered in bright coloured decorations with presents stacked underneath it. Parlour maids would be hurrying about in their crisp white aprons and large fires warming the house and gladdening the hearts of the Squire and the people who lived there and people who would come visiting, having been invited to the 'Big House'.



It is such a shame it was demolished as so many of the large houses in this area have been.

I will never know the reasons for the strange goings on in my mother's flat above the old coach house. I would be interested to hear from anyone who has further news about this. You can leave a message for Kathy at The Museum Store or kcrdht@hotmail.co.uk

Kathy Ridges

Photos: Top – taken c. 1965. Bottom – wall plaque dated 1832, with William Duncombe's initials. Both images are from the Berkhamsted Local History & Museum Society collection cared for by Dacorum Heritage Trust.

ANTIQUES VALUATION DAY AT ASHRIDGE HOUSE

We held our first Antiques Valuation Day on Sunday 13th October, it was a new fundraising initiative, our Curator has successfully run these 'Antiques Roadshow' type events over many years, but it was a first for DHT. We would like to thank Ashridge House for allowing us to use their magnificent venue and also Amersham Auction Rooms for supplying experts in different specialties. The company was founded in 1877 as Pretty & Ellis, specialists in the valuation and sale by auction of fine art



and furniture; they still provide this professional service and advice today.

I think we picked the wettest Sunday of the year, but taking that into account we had a reasonable turnout and earned over £200, together with a good amount of book sales.

Photos: Top left - Ashridge House c.1975, from BLH&MS collection cared for by DHT. Bottom left - Amersham Auction Rooms experts: Back row l – r Jacqui Arbery, Chris Lewis, Simon Knowles & Barrie Twyman. Front row l – r Hugo Lemon, Paul Hyman (DHT Curator) & Dick Ellis. Bottom right – Valuations in progress.

CURATOR'S CORNER

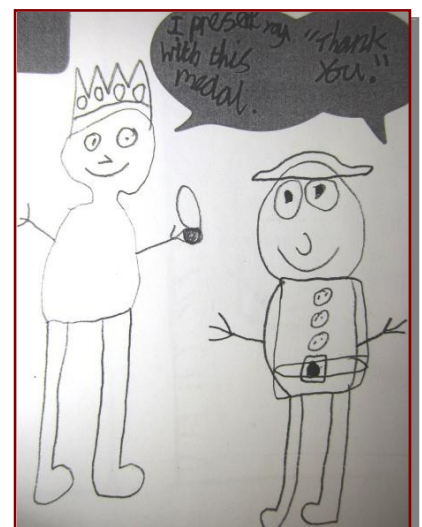
Half Term Workshop. During the October half term we hosted an object handling event at Kings Langley Library. It was fully attended; over 30 children took their parents along. We began looking at objects from the Second World War, which included medals, a blackout shield, a piece of an American fighter plane, but most people like looking at the bomb.

By allowing the folks to see, touch and smell the objects used during war time, we hoped this would encourage an interest in the past and understand a little more of what it was like to have lived through a war.

After choosing an object, the children then drew themselves discovering the artefact, how the item would have been used, how they would find out what it is, and what they decided they would do with it. You can see more drawings and comments on our website.

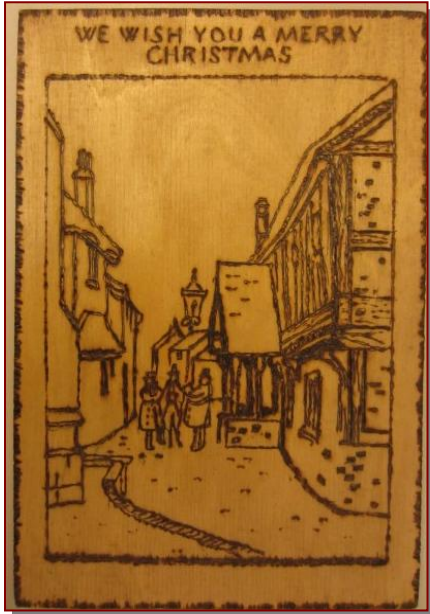
The following are some of the comments made by children:

- 'The odd shape of the bomb'
- 'Very interesting and fun looking at the medals'



- 'The writing on the items particularly the date on the bomb and the medals'
- 'The bomb made in Apsley and made in 1915'
- 'All the things we saw was interesting. That the lady brought'

New Loan Box Launched. As part of our activities to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the start of The Great War, Assistant Curator, Nina has successfully applied for a grant to put together a new loan box, which is available to book for community or workplace groups, schools or social clubs from next January.



Art and craft groups could use it as inspiration to create something commemorative, it could make an interesting alternative to a lecture or it can be displayed during your group meetings or during breaks. Groups could use it to inspire writing or collecting WWI family memories and stories.

Our WWI box includes authentic objects from the period, as well as replicas, together with information and photographs of people and places in the local area.

You can hire our loan box for only £10 for a 2 week loan, plus a refundable deposit of £50. If you would like to book this box or any of our other boxes (listed on our website), or you would like more information please contact Nina 01442 879525 or assistantcurator@dacorumheritage.org.uk hurry, we have quite a few bookings already.

Christmas Display. If you visit Berkhamsted Civic Centre you can see our new display of items from the collections. Including an unusual pokerwork design on a light wood plaque, which is a view looking from St. Peter's Church towards the Court House, Berkhamsted. From BLH&MS collection.

SHENDISH MANOR – ANTIQUES VALUATION DAY






We held our second antiques valuation day on Thursday 14th November at Shendish Manor together with Bonhams auction house. Our fundraising event made nearly £950; and we would like to thank the staff of both Shendish Manor, which is a fantastic venue, and Bonhams Auctions for helping us to make this possible.

An interesting item was presented for valuation, this novelty clock (pictured), made from gilt metal and mounted on a stone base; it was manufactured in conjunction with the Exposition Universelle (World's Fair), Paris in 1889.

Photos: Left – Bonhams experts l-r Michael Welch, Lizzie Hill, Frances Noble & Toby Messenger. Right - Michael with clock.

We wish you a very Merry Christmas & a Happy New Year

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