

Sevington School Newsletter



Summer 2019

Dear Friends,

On 19th May we were delighted to welcome our supporters, Friends and neighbours to the Grand Reopening of Sevington School. The School, of course, has been open for business again since the Autumn, but we wanted both to show off our new toilet block, improved pathways and replanted garden and to thank everybody who contributed in any way to the success of those projects.

The sun shone, the rain held off and the gardens looked beautiful. Prosecco and delicious refreshments were provided by Trustees Karen and Jenny and a friendly and relaxed atmosphere prevailed. Meg Gomersall, our Honorary President, welcomed guests with a speech in which she referred to three phases in the history of Sevington School. The first phase was in the late 1980s, when Don Williams, our former President and at that time a Senior Educational Adviser, saw the potential of the School as an educational resource where primary school children could learn about the Victorians through drama and role-play. Unfortunately the Local Authority was unable to offer financial support, so the School was set up as a charity, relying heavily on the support of volunteers.

The second phase came in 2012/13, when the lease on the building expired and the then owner, Mrs Neeld, decided to sell the property. Through fundraising and with the help of a Heritage Lottery Grant, the Trustees were able to purchase the property and secure its future. The third phase was in 2018/19, when the Trustees decided that improvements were long overdue to ensure a more accessible and enjoyable experience for all our visitors. We were fortunate to be able to call upon people with influence and skills, who willingly volunteered their time, and we are very grateful for the support of so many national and local charities, groups and individuals. Meg concluded by saying that the Trustees have always taken great pride in the quality of experience offered by Sevington School, only achievable because we have been blessed over the years by the unfailing help and support of our community. A toast was drunk to the future of the School.

2019 celebrates the bicentenary of the birth of both Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. There are special exhibitions this summer at, amongst other places, Kensington Palace, Buckingham Palace, the Victoria & Albert Museum, the British Museum and Osborne on the Isle of Wight. And of course, much closer to home, it's easy to engage with all things Victorian at Sevington Victorian School! Please do come to one of our summer openings and relive for yourself daily life at our small village school. We look forward to seeing you - dates of events are included again at the end of this Newsletter.

With best wishes from all at Sevington,

Isobel

Isobel Moore

The Grand Reopening



New bed, paths and toilet block



Edward, our Treasurer, welcoming guests



Trustees Jenny and Karen at work in the kitchen



Enjoying the gardens



A magnificent spread



Meg addressing the gathering



Viewing the schoolroom

Clueless comes to Sevington

On 3rd March this year I turned up to Sevington to be a clue reader for the Wiltshire Radio quiz *Clueless*, which airs live every Sunday on Wiltshire Radio. I didn't know anything about the programme other than that the team was coming to Sevington and I would read a clue out to the listeners. They were late! I later found out when I listened to the podcast at home that they had got lost. They are not allowed to use the sat nav and instead use the listeners to solve a cryptic clue and tell them how to get to their location.

So, let me explain. Clue 3 was read out to the listeners and it was:

"Now initially some education, values, ideas, near Grittleton, thanks Old Neeld. Go back in time and start learning."

A listener soon phoned in and told them that the beginning letters of some of the words in the sentence spelt out Sevington. They then made their way to the school, getting a little lost on the way due to inaccurate instructions.



Sue live on air

They eventually turned up and it was my turn to read out Clue 4, which I had to open live on air and read to the listeners. It said:

"Your next location is a colourful joint, your clue keeper will be nursing young shoots."

As they were behind with their race to answer all the clues, they quickly chatted to me and then sped off in their car to try and solve the next clue. I didn't have any idea what the answer to my clue was until I tuned in to Wiltshire Radio to listen to what happened.

A listener soon told them that they had to go to Pinkney (pink knee - colourful joint) where there was a garden nursery and where they slowly headed next.

They eventually ran out of time that week and never made it to their final destination. It was a very good programme and a great way of getting people to know about Sevington and where we are.

Sue Sunderland

A Victorian Holiday

So, as our thoughts turn towards summer holidays, what would have been happening in Victorian times?

Queen Victoria would doubtless have decamped with her family to Osborne on the Isle of Wight. The Osborne estate was bought by Victoria and Albert in 1845 and the house was built between 1846 and 1851 as a seaside retreat for their growing family. Osborne was Albert's passion and he was closely involved in the design of the house, gardens and grounds.



Victoria referred to Osborne in her diaries as "a little paradise". It had a temperate climate and boasted magnificent sea views over the Solent, reminding Albert of the Bay of Naples. A



timber Swiss Cottage, built to imitate an Alpine chalet and hidden in trees in the grounds, was added for the royal children. Albert was particularly keen that the children should be encouraged to further their education at all times, and they used the Swiss Cottage to learn housekeeping (they ran a toy grocer's shop), cookery (they prepared teas and luncheons for their parents and guests) and

gardening (Albert paid them the market rate for any vegetables which were up to standard). Holidays were not just for play in the life of a Victorian Prince or Princess!

At Osborne there was also a family beach where Victoria and Albert spent many enjoyable hours with their children. As Victoria wrote in her diary in 1846: "We drove down to the seashore and remained there for an hour playing with the children who were so happy." It was here that the children learned to swim and loved collecting shells. Albert installed a Bathing Machine so that Victoria could also bathe without compromising her modesty.



It was during the reign of Queen Victoria that taking a holiday gradually became accessible to men and women of all social classes. In 1869 the *Standard* newspaper claimed that large numbers of people “from the heir to the throne to the humblest greengrocer” were adopting the “good wholesome practice” of taking a summer holiday. By the 1890s an annual break had become “not a luxury of the wealthy, but a necessity of the workers as much to be reckoned with as the universal need of food and clothing”.

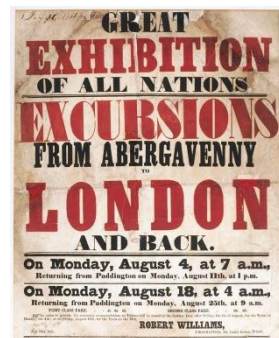
The availability of holidays was due in great part to the growth of the railways. Fares



gradually became cheaper and, as the standard of living rose, more and more people were able to afford a day at the seaside, using the many excursion trains provided by the railway companies. Before the 1870s most working class families could not afford to lose a working day's pay, but this changed in 1871 when the Bank Holidays Act created the August Bank Holiday.

This was originally the first Monday in August, a popular day for an outing.

In 1841 Thomas Cook started his travel firm in Leicestershire which began by organising temperance society trips and Sunday school outings throughout the region served by the Midland Counties Railway. But it was the Great Exhibition of 1851 at Crystal Palace which really got people travelling and by the end of the Exhibition season, Thomas Cook had taken 150,000 people from Yorkshire and the Midlands to London.



Seaside resort towns grew rapidly during the 1850s and 1860s and by the early twentieth century around 100 piers had been built in Britain. However, the influx of rail trippers was not always popular



with the residents of the seaside towns. In Weston-super-Mare, for example, it was forbidden in the 1880s to have music, donkey rides or Punch and Judy shows on the foreshore or on the promenade, as it was felt these things lowered the tone.

So how did the Victorians spend their time at the seaside? They bathed, walked on the promenade and sat on the sand. There was musical entertainment and dancing, sideshows, fairground

amusements and public houses. Not so very different from today, then.

Isobel Moore

Garden Update

The gardening team has been busy over the Spring, preparing the beds and putting in the plants you have so generously donated. Regular readers may remember in the last Newsletter we appealed for the kind of cottage garden plants Miss Squire might have had in her garden. The response was brilliant, and we ended up with literally hundreds of beautifully grown perennials to fill our empty borders.

A combined planting team of Rotarians and Friends put them in one sunny day at the end of March and we were lucky with the weather so now they're galloping away, and the garden is beginning to look really good.

We've got the vegetable patch going and the strawberries and raspberries are looking good. There are sunflowers growing up the side of the wash house and all we need now is a scarecrow to keep the pesky pigeons off the broccoli.

The project has been a real joy to manage. So many people have offered their time, their plants and their particular skills, and thanks to these many volunteers it's thriving again. Special thanks are due to Richard and Karin Meek from the Rotary Club of Chippenham who have given hours and hours of their time to bring the garden back to life. We could never have done it without them.



Miss Squire leading the troops!

Dinah Starkey

Bees

One of the topics we offer at Sevington when the children visit us for the day is studying the beehive. There are no longer any bees in the beehive, but we are fortunate to have photographic images of the inside of a hive which we use to illustrate how we “look after” the bees. This tends to be an activity we cover with the boys as the girls at this time of the day are working in the kitchen and learning how to be housemaids!



The Beehive at Sevington



Photographic images inside the hive

As a consequence of introducing the boys to our beehive, the Misses Squire have become somewhat knowledgeable about bees. A hive such as ours might have held around 50,000 female worker bees, with of course just one queen bee and a few male drones. These drones are turned out of the hive in the winter when their job is done. The queen can lay about 2000 eggs per day and she remains in the lower part of the hive and is kept there by a queen excluder, a grille whose apertures are too small for the queen to pass through.



The queen excluder

This is not the case for the worker bees which pass through to the upper levels of the hive and thus any surplus honey which is produced there is available for the beekeeper to remove and will not disturb the queen.

The bees form a tight ball during the cold months to protect the queen and do not produce honey at this time although they require their stores of honey to stay alive. They are able to maintain the temperature of the hive at a fairly constant 35 degrees Celsius.

If Miss Squire had kept bees, she would have benefitted from the honey, the pollination of the plants in her lovely garden and of course the beeswax. This would have been used both to make beeswax candles - much sweeter smelling than animal tallow candles - and to make a superior furniture polish.

Victorian honey extractor



Victorian beekeeper

After examining the beehive, the boys make their own beeswax candle to take home as a souvenir of their visit to Sevington.

Beeswax sheets and a candle



Nikki Wright

Miss Squire's Portmanteau

Miss Squire has always believed that you can tell much about a lady from the contents of her reticule. Now she has kindly given us permission to open her own portmanteau. Inside there are ten objects which tell her life from the day when, as a nervous teenager, she first clutched the schoolroom key, till the time when she put on her pince-nez and retired to the parlour to read by the fire and enjoy a well-deserved retirement.



We will be opening Miss Squire's portmanteau on Sunday 16th June from 2.00 - 5.00 pm. Do come along and find out more.

Dinah Starkey

100 Club Winners

March: David Powell

April: Harriet Tupper

May: Isobel Moore

June: Meg Gomersall

If you're not already a member of our 100 Club, please do consider joining.

Information on how to join can be found on our website:

www.sevingtonvictorianschool.co.uk

Daring Rescue Bid

Aspidistra saved from certain death

Our correspondent writes:

Keen eyed visitors to Sevington will have noticed recently that the aspidistra in the parlour is missing. Following a tip off from the RSPCH (Royal Society for the prevention of Cruelty to Houseplants), the plant was liberated in a daring raid by the SAS (Special Aspidistra Squad) and is currently undergoing intensive therapy and debriefing in a secret location.



An unnamed spokesperson said “The plant has had a rough few months and was rescued in the nick of time, but it is now responding well to treatment and it is hoped that it will be restored to the parlour and to active duties within the next few months.”

Have you got a wilting Peace Lily? Is your cactus losing its spines? Remember the RSPCH never sleeps. Look after those pot plants!

Dinah Starkey

First time Visitors to Sevington



Two very welcome visitors to Sevington were friends of one of our Miss Squires. All three met at the age of eleven, when they went to the Girls’ High School in Chippenham.

Delia, right, grew up in Sutton Benger, has lived all over the world and is now in Farnham. Sue, left, was born in Castle Combe and now lives in San Francisco. Neither had ever visited Sevington before and found it fascinating.

Delia admired the mangle in the washhouse, saying “My Gran had one of those.” On seeing Sevington, Sue said in her American accent “Oh, it’s so cute! I must bring my daughter to see it, she wouldn’t believe it!” They both wanted to visit Sevington as a child in Victorian dress to experience a day here!

Sylvia Townsend

Sevington Victorian School

where history comes to life...



Summer 2019

Grand Reopening of Sevington Victorian School with its new disabled-friendly facilities

Summer Sundays at Sevington

There will be themed Sunday afternoon openings to the public on the following dates:

16th June 2019	2-5 pm	<i>Miss Squire's Portmanteau</i>
21st July 2019	2-5 pm	<i>A Victorian Education</i>
18th August 2019	2-5 pm	<i>At Home with Miss Squire</i>

Come and admire the Victorian schoolroom, schoolhouse and gardens.
Experience an authentic lesson in the schoolroom.
Enjoy refreshments with delicious home-made cakes.

Adults £2, children £1, family ticket £5



Open Heritage Weekend

Sevington School will be open to the public free of charge on:

Saturday 14th September 2019	2-5 pm
Sunday 15th September 2019	2-5 pm