



Chairman's Message

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It is most pleasing to report that the Museum is open to visitors once again. We reopened on 19th May and are currently accepting pre-booked visitors on Wednesdays and Saturdays. If the broadening of Covid-19 regulations - as currently envisaged - proceeds we will extend opening hours from 21st June. Adaptability will no doubt remain the watchword for a while yet, but it would be nice to think that we are moving towards normality at long last.

Looking to future developments, we have been included in a group of 10 museums to take part in an initiative being run by South West Museum Development under the title of 'Rebuilding the Foundations: Gloucestershire's Museums'. The key elements of this project are around audience development and volunteer resilience; both important areas for us. In addition to offering opportunities to network and exchange ideas with the other participating museums, we will receive input and personalised analysis from external experts in the field. I very much hope that we can secure some valuable outcomes from this initiative.

It was great to see so many of our Volunteers attending the get-together in Pittville Park on 18th May. Amazingly, given the weather before and after the event, the rain held off and we were able to enjoy tea/coffee and cakes in the open air and catch up with some people who we had not seen for a very long time. Perhaps we will be able to meet indoors before too long.

We are immensely grateful to all our Volunteers who enable the Museum to keep running, but I would like to make a special mention on this occasion of Paul Treble. Paul carried out PAT testing (Portable Appliance Testing) on all of the electrical appliances in the Museum. As well as identifying items that needed replacing, he produced a very thorough report, guidelines for future actions and an appropriate manual to ensure that we can comply with the regulations and requirements going forward. It is a remarkable piece of work for which we are very thankful.

There have continued to be developments on the Board of Trustees. I am delighted to say that Marina Moore retracted her proposed resignation and agreed to remain and take over as Membership Trustee when Tom Clarke completes his maximum term of office at the AGM. We would still like to recruit Trustees in the roles of Marketing and Fundraising.

That brings me to the AGM, which will take place via Zoom on Monday 5th July at 2pm. Full details of how to attend and obtain the relevant papers will be circulated shortly. There will be five Trustees standing for election, most of whom have been co-opted since last year's AGM, and one Trustee standing for re-election. Immediately following the close of the AGM, Mike Jenkinson will give a brief update on the 'Rebranding' initiative, with an opportunity to ask questions. I encourage as many members of the Trust as possible to attend the AGM.

Assuming that the elections are duly approved, the Trustees will meet following the AGM to appoint the new Chair of the Trust. My term as Chair will come to an end at the close of the AGM and so this is my last Chairman's Message. I would like to sign off by saying that it has been a pleasure and an honour to serve as Chair of the Holst Birthplace Trust for the past six years, to thank you all as Members for the support that you have given over those years and to wish you all, the Trust and the Museum every success for the future.

Steve Wood

Editor's Note: The AGM often marks a time of change and for me it is no different. After 8 years of editing the Newsletter, I am handing over the reins to Anci Seymenliyska. I wish her the best of luck.

Countdown to Launch

Another lunar landing or mission to Mars? Actually neither. After many years of debate about rebranding as 'Holst Victorian House', we have finally taken the plunge and set ourselves a September delivery date, coinciding with Heritage Open Days (10th-19th). Of course Covid-19 hasn't helped, in one way at least: trying to work out the best time to launch - with all the uncertainty around lockdown, new variants, vaccinations, easing restrictions and so on - was never going to be easy. On the other hand, with our Museum closed and plenty of time on our hands at home, we've had the opportunity to think through the changes and to plan properly.

We have reported in previous editions about the new interpretation, some new films and a few other things. Some of you may recall Alan Gilmour's article back in February 2020 - 'German Engineering & Gustav Holst' - where he made the case to widen our appeal by exploiting our unique selling point of 'the only Victorian period house in Cheltenham open to the public'. We've come a long way since then, using the combined talents of Staff, Trustees and Volunteers to give Alan's vision some tangible form. So let me give you some detail about what is coming and when.

Our big decision was to break the project into two: those elements which could be developed and delivered at minimal cost and disruption, and those that needed infrastructure changes and external funding support. Phase 1 (September) will deliver the new 'Holst Victorian House' brand. This is not just about a new design and logo, though we have a nice one of those! It also involves a new interpretation of the period rooms, with narratives around the residents who have lived in the house, including the Holst family. There is a redesigned website and newsletter, a new visitor guide, changed visitor pathways above and below stairs, and new films that set the scene and showcase our key exhibits. In parallel we are aiming to redecorate the front of the house, including returning the front door and railings to their original colours.

In Phase 2 we are planning to make the visitor experience truly immersive, by returning the hallway to its original look and feel and by installing period lighting and soundscapes. We will also revamp the Holst Museum rooms on the ground floor and provide an audio-visual virtual house tour that visitors can access on a phone or tablet. Visitors will also have better access to Holst archive material using smart digital technology. We are already applying for Heritage Lottery funding to support our aims and have ambitions to deliver that part of the project during 2022.

This has been a challenging, exciting and sometimes daunting project to manage. I am grateful for the efforts of Staff, Trustees and Volunteers who are doing their bit to achieve our goal. We hope that we can count on your support by spreading the word, attending our events, and coming to explore the Museum anew in the autumn. Our new website (holstvictorianhouse.org.uk) will go live at the beginning of August, when you too will be able to join in the countdown to 'lift-off'.

Mike Jenkinson

Volunteer News

Thank you to the Volunteers who have given their time to prepare the Museum for reopening and to cover Front of House. It has been great to see you there and in many instances meet for the first time in real life; not just on the end of a phone, in an email chain, or on a computer screen. Volunteers met up for a picnic tea in Pittville Park the day before we reopened. We had an excellent turnout and the horrible May weather held off just long enough - it tipped it down about 10 minutes after we packed up and left. Everyone enjoyed a catch-up, plus a coffee and walnut cake (John & Mandy Rowlands) and Welsh cakes (Sue Adlard). Thanks to both, and to Steve Wood for the drinks.

It gives me great pleasure to have 5 new Volunteers to introduce and welcome:

Emily Barnard recently completed her degree in art history and is considering a career in the museum sector. **Elizabeth Barker** is a retired primary school teacher, keen gardener, bridge player and good friend of long-standing Volunteer Sue Adlard. **Amy Pryce-Jones** has just completed her A levels and will be joining us for the summer before going to university to study Ancient History and Archaeology. **Evie Honer** has just completed her degree and recently started working part-time, but is keen to learn more about Victorian social history and the life of Holst. **Sophie Parish** has recently relocated to Cheltenham from New York, works part-time for her husband's company, but is also keen to volunteer, having seen how rewarding it can be from a family member.

Thank you all for thinking of the Holst Museum. It is great to have you on board as part of our team.

Judith Syvret

Personal Hygiene at 4 Pittville Terrace

Did the Holsts have a bathroom? This is a regular visitor query and one which is hard to answer definitively. Sadly, there are no photographs or accounts from when the family lived in the house. However, it is more than likely - at the time when the bathroom was in its infancy and when only the very wealthy had them fitted - that the Holsts washed in the bedroom. They would have stood at a washstand and used an ewer (jug) and basin, together with a flannel and soap. In this period bathtubs were used, but never on a daily basis and more likely in the evening. They were a bit of a faff: the maid had to carry the bath upstairs and then fill and empty it. Walking up and down the stairs carrying pails of hot water in long skirts can't have been much fun! Even carrying up hot water in a jug or a brass can for a stand-up wash would have been precarious in 19th century clothes. The basins and baths of dirty water, used by the various members of the household, can't have been that pleasant to deal with either.

In one of the films we've been making as part of the Museum's rebrand as Holst Victorian House, the maid goes about her daily chores, including those centred on the bedroom. Alongside the lengthy mattress-turning and tucking-in of sheets, one of her main jobs was to deal with the basin of murky water. In the film she points out the slop pail that was used to transport the dirty water from the bedroom to the drains. In the current bedroom display we have a matching basin, ewer and slop pail. Decorated with a pretty oriental style pattern of birds and flowers, it would have been an attractive set to own. It was not unusual to have a matching chamber pot as part of such a set.

The washstand on display in the bedroom is marble-topped, more effective against the odd soaking than ordinary wood. Stands were often decorated with colourful tiles, again helping to deal with the splash of the household's daily ablutions. When piped water eventually arrived in houses the same style of washstand was used, except that taps were plumbed in! Gradually an all-ceramic sink was introduced, which was easier to clean and more hygienic.

By the early 20th century many middle-class homes such as 4 Pittville Terrace had bathrooms. In *Cassell's Household Guide* of 1911 the sheer range of bathrooms available to those willing to spend is highlighted: "In the matter of bathing, the well-brought-up Briton is becoming as much of a sybarite as the patrician Roman; and there is hardly a limit to the luxury which the modern bathroom can afford. Costly marble or porcelain baths, with shower and needle fittings, sitz baths, foot baths, tiled or marble-plated walls, nickel-plated fittings, heated floors and towel rails, are a few of the fittings on which money can be lavished."

The Cassell's guide makes the point that the practice of fitting a house with a 'housemaid's closet' was considered outmoded. It's unlikely the Holsts ever had a closet for their maid to empty slops, but the reason these closets weren't built anymore was that plumbed bathrooms had taken over: "In so many houses the inmates take it in turn to wash in the bathroom that the washstands in the bedrooms are little used, and there are few slops to empty. Jugs and carafes are filled from the bedroom taps..."

Certainly the Holsts were living on the cusp of change. Washstands and jug and basin sets quickly became antiques in the years following the family's departure from the house. Did the Manners family - retired Colonel, wife and adult daughter - enjoy the luxury of a plumbed bathroom when they were residents in the 1890s? More than likely, although again we have no photographs or accounts to prove it!

Laura Kinnear

Future Events

Tuesday 7th September, 6.30pm (via Zoom): *'Conversation Piece? A double Holst Portrait'*

Acclaimed local speaker Adrian Barlow will present a talk based on a painting in the Holst Birthplace Museum by Theodor von Holst: a portrait of Theodor himself and his older brother Gustavus (Gustav Holst's grandfather). This talk will be a key part of the launch events for the Holst Victorian House.

Saturday 25th September, St Andrew's Church: The Birthday Concert

In a change to the original plan, this year's concert will feature the Oriel Singers. A 'real-life' concert is scheduled, with precise details still being worked out as planning for the event might be affected by any ongoing Covid-19 restrictions. Please see our website for the latest information.

Alan Parker

Ssssh Secret!

Cheltenham is supposed to keep secrets, but all was revealed by historian David Elder in his Zoom talk on the 'Secrets' of the town. On 1st April we had a record number online for the latest offering in the Museum's successful run of talks (100 tickets sold). Catherine Martin as ever professionally handled Zoom's technology for David's wide-ranging presentation on the curious side of our history.

And what an intriguing place this is!

(Katherine) Monson was that rarity of a lady architect and developer; ridge and furrow mediaeval ploughing can still be seen near the Sue Ryder hospice; 'Garden Reach' in Pittville Circus Road 1875 is now better known as the haunted 'St Anne's'; General Lefebvre's ring returned to the town; the Ullenwood nuclear bunker survives (as you'd expect, I didn't know we had one); and slavery played some part in local wealth.

David found more byways such as the Town Crier, the anti-Catholic riots, poor Vladimir Levinski (aka David Secombe) as a self-proclaimed 1950s Liszt and Paganini, the (John) Hampton parachute jump 1838, the One Horse Gurney, the (Clarence Street) Iamp 1900, (Dick) Saunders amateur jockey, and Tobacco Close (the leaf being farmed in Arle Court and Postlip).

Follow the underlining to reveal David's secret structure, Mr Gustav Holst.

A first class evening.

Tom Clarke

Membership of the Friends

We are delighted to welcome **Jonathan Taylor** as an Annual Benefactor of the Holst Birthplace Trust.

One of our membership benefits is that the **Cheltenham Trust** will give Friends a **10% discount** at all Trust eateries - the cafe at The Wilson, at the Leisure Centre, and the pop-up cafe at Pittville Pump Room. Simply show your membership card. We offer a £1 discount to visiting Friends of The Wilson.

We also have a reciprocal arrangement with the **Holst Society** (www.holstsociety.org), whereby Friends of the HBT are entitled to a 40% discount on membership of the Society.

If you are not already a subscribing Friend of the Trust, please do consider joining and also tell your friends. Not only will you have the satisfaction of giving financial and general support to the Museum, but you will also enjoy many other benefits. The Museum leaflet contains an application form.

Annual Membership rates are:

Single £20, Joint/Family £30, Young £5, Single Benefactor £60, Joint/Family Benefactor £100, Single Life £300, Joint Life £400, Gift Membership £20. For further details please contact me at membership@holstmuseum.org.uk or 01242 227720.

If you would like to become a **Volunteer** at the Museum, and thus a Volunteer Friend, please email volunteers@holstmuseum.org.uk.

While we do use cut-price stamps, we would prefer to deliver this newsletter exclusively by email where possible, which would save us both postage costs and effort. If **any readers** (whether or not on our mailing list) would like to take up this option, please email membership@holstmuseum.org.uk.

Tom Clarke



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