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CHAIRMAN'S JOTTINGS

DEREK ANTHONY

If you were with us at either the March or April meeting you will have noticed that the top floor of the museum is being fitted out with new permanent exhibitions. These exhibitions will honour Mr. Willis, the Museum's founder, and some of his particular interests and will also tell the story of Basingstoke from the earliest times to the building of the Basingstoke canal. Friends of the Museum have been providing information and physical assistance and your committee has offered financial help to enhance further the top floor gallery and its permanent exhibitions.

Speaking of exhibitions, if you haven't yet been to the exhibition of holograms in the ground floor Sainsbury Gallery do try to get along before it closes on 19th June. It is a revelation. I, for one, never realised how dramatic a hologram could be until I visited this exhibition.

At the time of writing we have enjoyed four of this year's interesting and varied monthly talks. Coming up in May is a talk on the updating of the Victoria County History for North Hampshire, in June one on the Wessex Film and Sound Archive and in July the Basing House raised work embroidery.

In addition to these monthly evening meetings, on the afternoon of Saturday 26th June we have arranged a guided walk around the village of Steventon, including a cream tea. If you would like further details join us for either the May or June evening meeting or telephone me on 01256 322073.

On a sadder note, your committee was shocked to learn of the death of Chris Cullingham, the young man who helped us to set up and maintain The Friends website. Chris had been in hospital for major surgery after which he contracted an infection which proved fatal. The family asked that Chris be remembered not with flowers but with donations to either the Jubilee Sailing Trust or ICE Basingstoke. In the name of The Friends I sent a donation of £10 to the Jubilee Sailing Trust. The Trust is a UK charity which runs sailing ships crewed by disabled youngsters. Chris was fortunate enough to be chosen as a crew member on three occasions and thoroughly enjoyed his times "before the mast".

REMEMBER

**ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS
(£10 PER PERSON)
ARE NOW DUE**

JOHN ARLOTT TALKING OF GEORGE WILLIS

DEREK WREN

With the permanent exhibition of Mr Willis's founding of our museum due to be on show soon, this seems an appropriate time to print the script of a talk John Arlott gave on the wireless in 1957 about Mr Willis. It was a case of one of the two outstanding Basingstokers of the nineteenth century talking of the other one.

This is a very good example of John Arlott's mastery of the English language, his gift of expressing his ideas in ways that hold our attention whether they are written or spoken. Margaret and I were lucky to meet John Arlott and to hear John speaking with that rich Hampshire accent which seems now to have disappeared altogether.

"I hesitate to talk in superlatives about George Willis – Alderman George Willis – not because they over-praise him but because I can see him – quite clearly – blushing at them for, although he has been a public man, in his own small town, for many years, he remains a modest – even shy man.

You don't often find men outstanding in local politics. As a rule they achieve prominence in another field and turn to local government almost as retirement, or if they make their mark early, they are soon away into big politics. Above all you rarely find a local politician for whom there is complete local affection but George Willis has held the respect and the affection – so far as I could ever ascertain – of everyone who has ever known him in his native Hampshire town of Basingstoke where he first became a councillor in 1916 – forty one years ago.

He hasn't changed much with the years: his keen eyes are still very gentle behind his glasses: he smiles as kindly as ever and still the rubbed top of his collar stud winks at you over his tie. Lean he is and neat: his hair still silky and apt to be blown about when he lifts his crumpled trilby hat.

George Willis is eighty years old. The only independent on the council; and shrewd as ever, yet he never seems cross: only sometimes, as a magistrate, when someone comes before him for an offence not just illegal – he has a gentle

belief people can be illegal without being wicked – but an offence which he thinks is mean: then his indignation flares – I remember his scorn of a woman who had stolen some flowers off a grave: it was so strong and just and flaming. He still works five and a half days a week mending watches and clocks – except when some duty calls him away.

He is still local secretary of the Hampshire Field Club and reporter for the Ordnance Survey – a full twenty tumuli on the Ordnance map are there because he discovered them on his Thursday afternoon or Sunday walks across the local fields.

He is still Chairman of the governors of the local grammar school where he was once a pupil, and of the Girls High School too, Chairman of the Trustees of the local charities and, above all, Director – and tireless servant – of the Basingstoke museum which now bears his name. Still people all around bring him arrow heads, flints, fossils or Roman remains they have found – for antiquity, archaeology and clocks have long been his consuming interests.

He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Antiquaries and a member of the Antiquarian Horologists. His own collection? Oh no, he has nothing at all – he gives everything to the museum. Of course the Education Act of 1945, by a single stroke of the pen, took it all to the County Council – but never mind – it is well cared for and everyone can still see it.

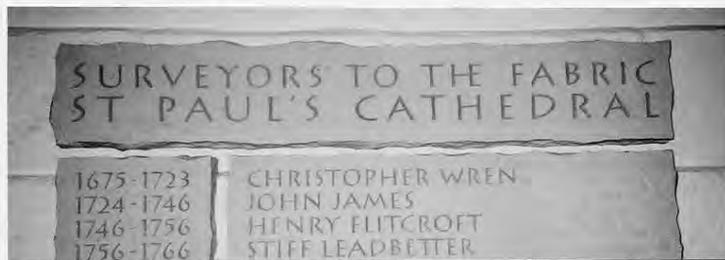
How does he do it all? Goodness only knows. He did have a couple of weeks in bed thirty years ago, but he has kept around since then.

Possessions mean little to him. Successful? His little business must have made him a steady income and his bachelor wants are simple – almost ascetic – but he was the first to put up the money to preserve the town's only timbered house from demolition and none of the old folk of the town who come to him for help go empty away. It is fitting indeed that George Willis should be the first and only Freeman of Basingstoke.

John James “not otherwise distinguished

By Colin Williams

An initial reaction on finding a mention of John James in Baigent & Millard's History of Basingstoke seemingly rather dismissively described as 'not otherwise distinguished' is to quibble: even in the seventeenth century his beating of small boys close to death was questioned by aggrieved and grieving parents. And while B & M writing in the nineteenth century might have had different views of John James as a Christian and educator from the 20th and 21st century - less tolerant or lax [*the reader can choose*] - nevertheless the comment seems odd. However, reading on into B & M reveals that another John James is being described and not **the** John James who was Vicar of Basingstoke and is commemorated at the Holy Ghost Chapel as Praeceptor of the Grammar School. Rather the 'John James' being described is the eldest child of the child-beating John James. [An aside: the father of the child-beater was also 'John James'.] 'Our' John James is -



The crypt St Paul's Cathedral

The definitive history of John James's life and work is to be found in S R Jeffery's dissertation "English Baroque Architecture: the World of John James"; this can be got from the British Library but is only available for in-library study. The very limited aim of this article is to give a brief view of his life and work locally.

John's mother is not known with certainty as no marriage record has been found although quite probably Elizabeth Johnson - that the eldest daughter was 'Elizabeth' seems significant; on her death the parish register merely describes her as 'Mrs John James'. No birth record for John has been found but other sources indicate 1672-3; his place of birth is unknown - his father had been Usher at Tonbridge School in 1669-70 and was, of course, appointed to the Holy Ghost School in July 1673 but where the family was between 1670 and 1673 is unknown; a possibility is Kingsclere.

Nothing is known of the young John's life but S R Jeffery makes this very credible comment : " James's education was presumably undertaken by his father at the Holy Ghost School . . . unlikely that James would been sent elsewhere while there was the possibility of a good education in parental hands . . . with nine other children alive in 1690 cannot have had much to spend on the education of their eldest son."



Children at play at the Holy Ghost site

That the family was financially pressed is evidenced by the 18 year old John not going to university, as his father and grandfather had, instead being apprenticed although to the King's Carpenter, Matthew Banckes. Seven years into his ten-year apprenticeship he married Banckes's niece, Hannah. [A good career move, no doubt.] Having served his time he was admitted to the Carpenters Company; he was to progress to Master in 1734. His subsequent career shows him to be at the heart of English architecture -

Assistant Clerk of Works to Greenwich; later Joint with Hawksmoor

Master Carpenter at St Paul's

Assistant Surveyor to Wren at St Paul's; later succeeded Wren

Surveyor to the Commissioners for Fifty New Churches; eight attributed to James including St George's, Hanover Square

Surveyor to the Dean and Chapter of Westminster

Surveyor to the Fabric of Westminster Abbey

Additionally, he translated books on architecture by Andrea Pozzo, Claude Perrault and A-J Dezallier D'Argenville. His father's method of teaching Latin - all stick and no carrot - was clearly effective.

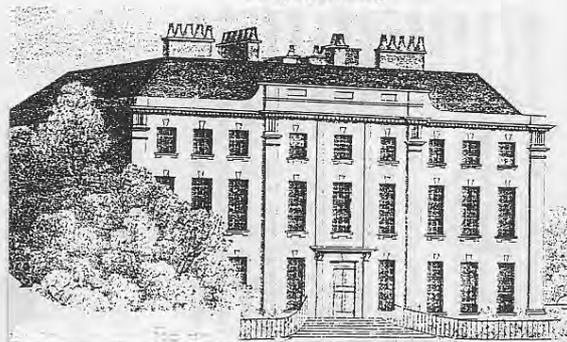


St George's, Hanover Square

[Reproduced from an original postcard by Judges of Hastings
www.judges.co.uk]

His works - church, other public and domestic - are listed in, for example, the Dictionary of British Architecture but of particular local interest is the former Herriard House.

John James's Herriard House for Thomas Jervoise, Esq.



With John being demonstrably a person of stature and substance, a portrait might be expected but none has been found. What might have been is to be found in the outlined figures in Sir James Thornhill's preliminary sketch for the Painted Ceiling at Greenwich where John was to represent 'Arithmetique' but the design was not taken up.

His success provided the means to build a house to his own design; this was Warbrook House at Eversley where the church is also thought to be his.

*Warbrook
House
Eversley*



James's only son, another John, was married at Eversley. However, his son was to die young, but not before fathering another John, followed by his own wife; and then he lost heavily in a business venture. He re-married and moved to Greenwich where he died in 1746. He was, however, buried at Eversley with his son and wife. No grave is identified but within the church is a memorial. And in the Church Room his life is depicted in six story boards, the first of which shows playtime at the Holy Ghost.

*Church
Room
Eversley*



Returning to Baigent & Millard, their comment that James was 'not otherwise distinguished' would seem to mean that he was 'distinguished' as an architect but not otherwise. However, their comment instead refers to John's involvement, with his brother Thomas, in the development of a new printing process; John invested substantially, as said above, but lost his money. And, without this out-of-kilter episode, presumably no mention would have been made of John. One can only wonder at B & M's judgement. In contrast, it is some compensation for Basingstoke's opinion, to see that elsewhere he is thought worthy of celebration .

LIVING IN BASINGSTOKE A CENTURY AGO: WHAT THE 1911 CENSUS REPORT CAN TELL US

JOHN HOLLANDS

I have always been fascinated by tables of statistics – the ones I can actually understand, that is - so I was rather pleased last year to come across a particular set of documents whilst cataloguing in the Local Studies Room. It was a mass of statistical tables photocopied from a book with this very long title: *Census of England and Wales, 1911: county of Hants, area, families or separate occupiers and population; also population classified by ages, condition as to marriage, occupations, tenements, birthplaces and infirmities.** It had to wait until 1914 for publication but this is no surprise considering all the number crunching that went into it years before there were computers to do the job. Here I thought would be useful background material for the gently growing number of people who come to the Local Studies Room to research family history, especially after the personal data from the 1911 census had come into the public domain, something that I believed would happen on its centenary. Soon afterwards I learned from a cousin who is researching the history of her father's (and my mother's) family that this data was in the public domain already. It had been made public about the time I had made this discovery. So here for anyone who shares my interest in statistics but with family history researchers particularly in mind is an attempt to share and interpret some of what I found.

This article will go into what this material tells us about the numbers, ages and marital state of population of Basingstoke in 1911 and the conditions in which they lived. Later I hope to write about occupations. Some of the information in the available excerpts relates to the county as a whole. Other tables refer to "registration districts", enabling one to make comparisons between Basingstoke and other parts of the county. Excluding the Isle of Wight, twenty "urban districts" were covered, of which the "Municipal Borough of Basingstoke" was one, and twenty-two "rural districts". Beside the municipal borough there was also a Basingstoke *rural* district comprising a listed group of surrounding villages and in fact including Kempshott and Town's End.

The most populous of the twenty "urban districts" was the county borough Portsmouth (population 231, 141) with Southampton second, whilst the one with the smallest population was the Fleet Urban District with a population of 3271. The municipal borough of Basingstoke was shown in Table 21 to have a population of 11275. Table 18, "Conditions to marriage..." tells us that this number included 3248 unmarried males, 2052 men that were married, and 162 widowers. There were 3529 unmarried females, of whom 1609 were aged between 15 and 45, 2079 married women, 1278 of whom were within this age range, and 470 widows including 53 aged between 15 and 45. Then as now there were far more widows than widowers. A breakdown of population by ages into five-year bands (table 16) shows that the most populous group in the town was in fact the under 5s with 616 males and 592 females. Each five-year band after that had a lesser number than the one before; the figures in the 30 to 35 age range for example were 445 and 490 respectively. At the bottom of the scale Basingstoke had four women and no males aged 90 to 95, with none above this age. In fact only a few Hampshire districts had people who were any older. We all know that far more people live longer than this today.

According to Table 20, over the county as a whole the youngest married female was aged 16 and the youngest married male was aged 17 – were they married to each other, I wonder - whilst at the other end of the scale there were two married men and three married women aged 95 to 100. The largest married group, the 30 to 35s comprised 23919 males (cf. 10970 unmarried) and 26775 females, (cf. 10843 unmarried). There were 341 widowers and 683 widows within this age range, an indication I think that, then as now, more men than women die in accidents and military action. Sadly the youngest widow in the county was aged 17 and the youngest widower aged 18.

Table 28 classifies dwellings. Basingstoke was found to have 2473 buildings used as dwellings (compared with 1997 in 1901) of which 2225 were "ordinary dwelling houses", accommodating 10244 persons out of a total population of 11540. These 2225 dwellings had 2256 "separate occupiers" suggesting that 31 of them were sub-divided into separate apartments. Perhaps this denoted an early stage in the process of turning large old houses into flats. Ninety three houses were unoccupied – this must have included new houses awaiting their first occupiers plus houses in the process of changing hands - whilst just eight were under construction; comparative figures for 1901 were 110 unoccupied and 54 being built, suggesting that the growth of the town was unusually slow at this particular time. Would you like to know how many Basingstoke people were living in "blocks of flats" in 1911: the answer is precisely none, a very different

situation from that which pertains today. There were however 177 shops that were also dwellings, (compared with just 33 shops that were not) and these housed 843, a reminder that most shops in Basingstoke then were small individual businesses, not parts of large chains as today. (You won't find many people living in Festival Place, will you?) In addition 37 "hotels, inns or public houses", accommodated 186 residents, and 9 offices, warehouses, workshops or factories" provided a home for 31 more whilst 20 "institutions" housed another 180.

A number of buildings not used as dwellings were also listed. These were 18 places of worship, 5 government and municipal buildings, the 33 shops already mentioned, 12 offices, 27 "warehouses, workshops or factories", and one "theatre or other place of amusement. Schools are not specifically mentioned so I assume that they are included in the institutions with residential accommodation; private schools would have been located in the home of the proprietor, and other schools would normally have had adjoining accommodation for the Headmaster or for a caretaker.

Sharp-eyed readers will have noticed that I have quoted two different figures for the population of Basingstoke 11540 in the last paragraph, and an earlier figure of 11275, a difference of 275. How come? My guess is that non-residents staying in the town at the time of the census, possibly including boarding school pupils may partly account for this discrepancy. The rest we can perhaps put down to the Basingstoke Union Workhouse which, though located in the municipal borough, as far as I am aware, was treated as a part of the rural district. At the time of the census it accommodated 131 male and 84 female inmates, plus four male and eleven female staff, making a total of 230. I am guessing here, and if you have a better explanation, please let me know.

This information came from table 9 which also listed the Cottage Hospital and the Isolation Hospital as institutions in the municipal borough. On census day the cottage hospital had six male and five female in-patients, and two male and seven female resident staff. There were no patients at the isolation hospital at all but two staff, one male and one female were enumerated.

Table 10, "Structurally separate dwelling, rooms and families" throws light on the size of dwellings and how crowded or otherwise they were. At one end of the scale three families were shown to be living in a single room; at the other 104 families had the use of nine or more rooms. The largest group of families, 1315, had exclusive use of a five-room dwelling. However: 152 further five-room dwellings accommodated two families and one accommodated three families, whilst three of the largest dwellings were divided among two families and two of them among three, perhaps an early stage in the process of dividing large old houses into apartments as suggested above.

Table 27, "Tenements in the occupation of private families in urban and rural districts" casts more light on housing conditions, by showing how many people were actually living in dwellings of various sizes. Taking the five-room dwellings as an example, the number of occupants varied from one (nine dwellings) to 12 (one dwelling), with a peak number of 145 dwellings occupied by 5 persons. .

Overcrowded accommodation is of course not unknown in the 21st century, but on average dwellings were clearly more crowded in 1911 than they are today. However the number of persons per dwelling was declining in nearly all of Hampshire's urban districts (though increasing slightly in rural districts), and the huge families we associate with the Victorian era were also becoming fewer in number. Table 29 which makes comparisons between 1911 and 1901 clearly illustrate this trend. The average number of persons per inhabited building in Basingstoke in 1911 was 4.67 compared with 4.9 in 1901, the lowest number in any Hampshire urban district being 4.12 in Fleet, and the highest 9.59 in Aldershot followed by Farnborough with 8.66. (I am assuming that in both the latter cases the figure includes military personnel living in barracks). Otherwise the district with the highest average number was Bournemouth with 5.53, and most districts were quite close to the Basingstoke figure. In all but one urban district, and all but two rural districts, the number of persons per family had decreased during the ten-year period. In Basingstoke it declined from 4.76 to 4.59. .

I hope this article gives some idea of what you can learn from this source of information, and that it will be of some use to researchers. If you are interested in making detailed comparisons between 1911 and what the most recent census reports, you will find a copy of the 2001 report in the local studies reference section of the public library. You may also like to know that we have in the Local Studies Room a report "based on the efforts of members of the WEA/University of Southampton Adult Education Class in Basingstoke, January-March 1986". This covers the period 1801 to 1901.

- I don't know where these photocopies came from but as there are multiple copies, I suspect that they are left over from an adult education course. Perhaps some of you know more.

THE PASSING OF THE VILLAGE PUB

DEREK WREN



The public house in the village of Chalton in West Sussex (as it was in 1935, when I took this photo.) There is now a large dining room on one side of the building.

“The last days of my childhood were also the last days of the village. I belonged to that generation which saw, by chance, the end of a thousand years life.”

“Cider with Rosie” by Laurie Lee

Last year Margaret and I had lunch in the ‘Woolpack’, the village pub at Slad in Gloucestershire where Laurie Lee grew up. *“So we left her (his mother) and scampered along to the Woolpack.”* This was to catch the charabanc that was taking everyone on the annual Choir Outing.

The building appeared to have changed very little since then but inside it was very different. Outside it was unusual to see a fair sized group of local men sitting on benches at a table drinking beer. Inside all the rooms appeared to be used for serving food. In our room there were three people at one table eating mussels and a family at another waiting for their order. Their eldest, a young boy, wandered about while his mother carried a younger child in her arms.

It made me realise how much that great English institution, the public house, has changed in my life time and how in time there will be no one left who will know how it has changed. The first time I tasted beer was in January 1943, when I joined the Army at a mining village in Yorkshire where, when you came out of the pub you could go next door for fish and chips. The pub was simply a place for men to go to drink beer and stand at the bar talking. In the south of England they commonly had two bars – the public bar and the saloon bar for those who considered themselves socially above the rest. No respectable women would have dared go in and children would certainly not been allowed in.

I can’t write about town pubs but I know that on the Isle of Wight now every village has one or more pubs serving meals. Margaret and I can’t remember when it was but we remember the occasion when we first took our sons into one for a meal. We had to sit, on our own, in a room which seemed to have been a stable and make sure that the boys went nowhere near the bar.

How much is known about how, why and when these changes took place? Did women, for example, start drinking with men during the war when they were serving in the Women’s Services? When did

the first pubs start providing meals? Is there any record of when the dartboards were taken down and television sets put up? When was wine first served?

If you look up an encyclopaedia you will be referred to inns but these provided accommodation for travellers and their horses as well as meals and liquor. Their history goes further back than Roman times. There were drinking places in ancient Rome but they were not places where any person of self respect would be seen. We know that when the Salvation Army first came to Basingstoke our public houses, and there were probably about fifty of them, were used for hard drinking. Could villagers afford to do that in the 1820s when Cobbett talked to them on his rural rides?

It is not only a way of life that has disappeared without trace but the buildings have been changed beyond recognition. There is a small, country pub near Petersfield where the landlady refused to make the changes the brewers wanted. I understand her daughters carry on the tradition which is what attracts the customers. Generally, the hard wooden floors, once covered with sawdust, have gone; benches have been replaced with upholstered chairs; curtains have been fitted to the windows.

Public houses are disappearing altogether at an alarming rate but has a single one been retained and restored to that earlier period? At Chartwell you can see how Churchill lived; at Batemans the room where Rudyard Kipling wrote and at Liverpool even the house where the Beatles gathered but I haven't seen that the National Trust has acquired a single pub? Yet the public house as a drinking place was an essential part of the England I grew up in. No village would look right unless it has a church and a pub, usually close to each other, handy for the bell-ringers to call in after practice.

I believe every county should have one example kept as an historical record. There should be no shortage of volunteers to play their part on both sides of the bar.

A BASINGSTOKE BIBLIOGRAPHY

BOB APPLIN

When Barbara and I edited Eric Stokes's *The making of Basingstoke* we included an extensive bibliography and guide to sources of information on Basingstoke's history. To make the compendium more widely available we have adapted it to be less specific to *The making of Basingstoke* and have updated it to add additional references and other information. It is now a stand-alone document that contains over 220 references in addition to the expanded guide to sources. This is available as paper copies in the Basingstoke libraries and in the Willis Museum Local Studies Room.

An electronic copy is available on the Basingstoke Archaeological and Historical Society website at bahsoc.org.uk. We regret that we are unable to supply paper copies.

The Making of Basingstoke is still available at Waterstones, the Willis Museum and Milestones.

PS

John Hollands.

I have now prepared an index to the articles in the Friends' newsletters. The Local Studies Room has a complete run of the newsletters and the index, which will be updated from time to time, is to be found at the front of volume 4.

SAINSBURY GALLERY EXHIBITIONS

Look In TV Annual

3 July to 18 September

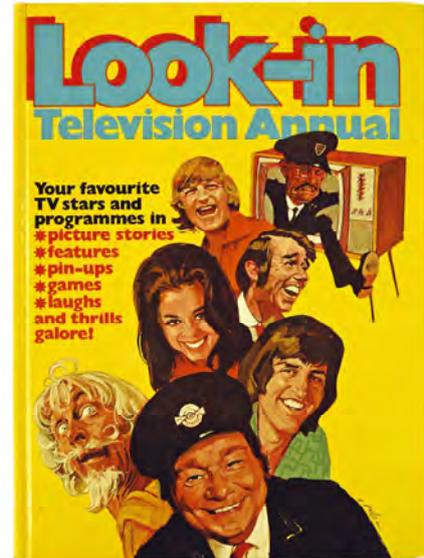
Take a step back in time at The Sainsbury Gallery to remember the strikes, punk rock, tank tops, flares and sideburns of the '70s. This exhibition takes a detailed look at fashion, sport, entertainment and some of the political and national events of the decade.

A giant replica of a view-master acts as a timeline for the '70s, known as the 'decade of discontent' because it was dogged by strikes, crises, go-slows and dominated by the troubles of Northern Ireland and the end of pounds, shillings and pence. It also captures some of the '70s sense of fun. Morecambe and Wise provided our Christmas TV viewing and the decade saw the rise of glam rock bands, and also the Bay City Rollers phenomenon, appealing to thousands of teeny boppers with a distinct, outrageous 'tartan-Mod' fashion sense.

Iconic items such as TVs, radios, other gadgets encased in vivid coloured plastic are displayed in stylish Perspex domes. Original album covers, patterns, magazines and annuals capture the flavour and style of the '70s, and contrast life and leisure in a computer and mobile phone free world of 30 years ago with that of today.

A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN HAMPSHIRE AND OXFORDSHIRE MUSEUMS SERVICES

AND STILL TO LOOK FORWARD TO 'THE MARY ROSE' ARRIVES IN THE WILLIS IN THE AUTUMN



BASINGSTOKE GALLERY EXHIBITIONS

Rediscovering Me!

3 to 31 July

A selection of Access to Higher Education Art and Design student art and design work.



St Michael's: Church & People

7 August to 4 September

Part of a season of events to mark the 500th anniversary of the rebuilding of the nave and tower of St Michael's Church, this exhibition focuses on people and events in the life of the church since Tudor times and the role that this ancient building has played in the town and community of Basingstoke.

Views from the EDGE!

11 September to 9 October

Presenting an exhibition of work created by young people from all over Basingstoke & Deane.

100 Years of Happy Guiding

16 October to 20 November

An exhibition celebrating 100 years of Guiding in Basingstoke.

Shot Silk

27 November to 24 December

Amateur photographers from Hampshire and surrounding counties have captured in photographs the magic and history of Whitchurch Silk Mill with its sumptuous silks, craftsmanship and beautiful location. Together with fabric and artefacts from this iconic working Mill, it is vividly brought to life in the heart of Basingstoke.



EVENTS

Every Thursday during term time, 1.30 - 2.30pm

Craft and Music with Octopus Children's Centre

If you have children under the age of 5 why not come and join Octopus Children's Centre at a craft and music session whilst enjoying the wonderful surroundings of the exhibits of the Willis Museum. (Over 5s welcome with their under 5 siblings.)

26 July to 3 September

A Summer Inspired by the 70s

Find out if the 1970s were the decade that taste forgot? Discover the 1970s, while making good use of bad rubbish! A summer of re-crafting rubbish into useful things. Admission and materials free, sorry on unaccompanied children.

26 to 30 July

Glam Rock Jam Jar Tea lights

Make a jam jar tea light inspired by the Glam Rock era.

2 to 6 August

Disco Wind Chimes

Create a disco inspired wind chime with lots of bits and bobs.

9 to 13 August

Punk Charms and Key Chains

Craft Punk inspired paper clip charms, button key chains and jewellery.

16 to 20 August

Luvilee Jubilee

Make red, white and blue pom-poms fit for the Queen's Silver Jubilee.

23 to 27 August

Pretty Penny Money Box

Celebrate the arrival of the New Pence with a unique 1970s inspired money box to make and take away, it won't cost a penny.

31 August to 3 September

May the Force be with You!

Find out more about the 'Star Wars' craze with plenty of inspirational make and takes to do and take home.

29 July 10am – 4pm

Archaeology Road Show

We don't do Dinosaurs – looking at the differences between archaeology and palaeontology or Pots Vs Fossils! A chance to handle some objects alongside family friendly activities. There will also be a display about Iron Age / Roman food production – find out just how hard it was to grind enough flour for the daily bread!

25 to 29 October 10am – 4pm

The Mask of Tudor Royalty

Discover the Tudors in our amazing exhibition on the 'Mary Rose', and make a souvenir mask of Henry VIII or Anne Boleyn to take home. Admission and materials free, sorry no unaccompanied children.

27 October 10am – 12noon and 1 – 3pm

Big Beautiful and Bold Christmas Baubles

Learn a variety of decoration and paint techniques with local artist Owain Hughes to ensure your bauble is big, beautiful and bold. All baubles will be exhibited in the grand staircase of the Willis Museum throughout November and December. You can take it home in time for Christmas! Free, limited places for makers, please book in advance.

19 November 10.15am and 11.15am

Sing-along for Children in Need

In partnership with the Octopus and Buttercups Children's Centres, please bring your best singing voice on the day as all voices count. Admission £1 per family, with all proceeds going to Children in Need.

4 December 10am – 3pm

Christmas Arts and Crafts Fair

As Basingstoke celebrates the start of the festive season join local artists and craftspeople at the Willis Museum for a Christmas fair. Plenty of creative and imaginative ideas for Christmas presents, all made locally.