

Tom Brown's School Museum

Celebrate 2016 with us - a date for your diary - 9th December

As another year draws to a close, we would like to thank all the Friends and visitors who have supported the museum during 2016. We are very fortunate to have a rota of people who ensure the building is open every Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holiday during the summer, and a group of Friends who are responsible for completing a number of other jobs such as indexing our artefacts, cleaning the museum and general maintenance and upkeep. We had over 800 visitors during the year and this number continues to rise as we open during the week to support special research requests.

On Friday 9th December we will be opening the museum again between 6pm and 9pm. With wine and mince pies, and juice and sweets for the children. We would like to formally thank everyone and to let you know about next year's exhibition! Everyone is welcome so please drop in; we would love to see you. If you cannot join us then we wish you all a very Merry Christmas and Happy and Prosperous 2017.



JOIN US AT TOM BROWN'S
SCHOOL MUSEUM
FOR MINCE PIES
AND
A GLASS OF MULLED WINE

Friday 9th December
any time between 6 - 9 pm

We would like to thank everyone who has helped the museum in the past year and welcome newcomers. Come and meet our new Curator, Karen and hear our plans for the next exhibition. Everyone welcome
Children welcome - juice and sweets available too.

MERRY CHRISTMAS
HAPPY AND PROSPEROUS 2017



Brownie Visitors!

At the beginning of November we welcomed the Uffington Brownies to the museum to work towards their culture badge. They spent time looking at the interactive presentations on the computer with Verity and a number of them recognised the houses they now live in from the old photographs we hold. They all received a goody bag and Scarlet Prince and Tegan Pounds were the winners of the quiz answering questions on the displays around the museum. Brown Owl was particularly impressed with the two minutes silence they practised ahead of the Remembrance Service the following Sunday!

Did you know?.....

The museum holds over 8,000 items made up of objects, photographs, books and articles. Everything is logged on our museum computer using a programme called MODES which allows visitors to search for an item and know where it is displayed or stored. If you want to research your ancestors or simply find out what was happening in Uffington in years gone by then MODES is your starting point in the museum.

John Bingham School Master 1900 to 1922

At the beginning of October we welcomed the Webb family who were researching their great uncle. They very kindly produced the following article and would love to hear from anyone who has any stories to share about their ancestor:

My name is Jenny Webb, I live in Chichester, many miles away from Uffington. My family originates from London, and the story of most of my predecessors is lost to time. So how did I find my way to Uffington and the story of my great great uncle, John Arthur Bingham? This is how it happened.....

The Family Tree - *When he entered secondary school, my son David was asked to produce a family tree. We worked on it together, helped by a search that a cousin had commissioned some years previously. Eventually the large sheet of orange sugar paper was put away and forgotten.*

Many years later my husband Bill and I were planning a trip to see the White Horse of Uffington. Bill said: "Don't you have an uncle who came from Uffington?" The 29 year old family tree was duly excavated, and we discovered that, yes, next to the name of John Arthur Bingham was written the word Uffington.

Tom Brown's School Museum - *The museum was shut. What a disappointment! But there were signs of life within. Cautiously we pushed open the door to find two volunteers busy working on the collection. I introduced myself: "I believe my great great uncle was the headmaster of the school here" I said. "Bingham!" responded one of the ladies. Yes, my maiden name was Bingham.*

A few weeks ago Bill and I returned to Uffington, this time taking with us my son David, his wife Tawa and daughter Nakiso. Bill had contacted the museum in advance and the curator Karen had worked hard to produce a folder of all the material related to John Bingham. There were the school photos, taken between 1900 and 1918. The older girls are dressed in clean white smocks and boys in scratchy-looking grey jackets and shirts with stiff white collars. Their arms are folded, but many of them are smiling. The younger children sit more untidily and many of them look bewildered by the procedure. John Bingham is there in all the photos – bearded, suited, with a watch and chain, looking intently at the camera, but with a child on his knee, or his hands placed kindly round the shoulders of one or two pupils. His wife, Priscilla, another teacher, is with him in some of the photos. The 1918 photo shows children in fancy dress for a Victory Day Celebration. Among the costumes are a policeman, a sailor, king, queen, Winston Churchill and, inexplicably, a clown.

Aunt Lily - *In the years between our two visits to Uffington, Bill and I had moved from Essex to Sussex and I had been able to visit my cousin Jo who, at the age of 91, is the only remaining member of her generation of the family. I told her about Tom Brown's School Museum, but, to my amazement, the connection to Uffington came as no surprise to her. She told me that her mother, my Auntie Lillie, had stayed there as a girl.*

When I knew Auntie Lily she was a tiny, elderly, blind lady, often with a long cigarette holder hanging from her mouth. But her spirit still shone. She played the piano vigorously (self-taught), sang and recited tear-jerking monologues, some of which she wrote herself.

Jo said that, as a girl, Lily had from time to time gone to stay with her Uncle John to help out at the school, especially with her piano playing. Uncle John had offered to take her on permanently, to train her as a teacher, but Lily's father had refused permission. He used to take Lily round to the working men's clubs of South London to perform. Perhaps he needed her at home as a source of income.

My father, Geoffrey William Bingham - *My father and his two siblings were, it seems, badly neglected as children. Eventually they were taken from the care of their parents. I knew that my father had spent most of his childhood in an orphanage, often hungry and sick. But this was not the whole story. At Tom Brown's museum, Karen got out the school register for us to examine. And there I was astonished to see my father's name, together with that of his older brother. The boys had stayed there for several months in the year of 1913, when my father was five years old. Probably, this was at the time when he was taken from his parents, the extended family were trying to work out what to do with the boys.*

John Arthur Bingham - *John Arthur Bingham was born in 1857 in Chelsea. The 1881 census shows him as then an unmarried schoolmaster, living in Chelsea with five relatives, a lodger and a servant. He married Priscilla Symes, a teacher, in 1883. Priscilla had been born in 1858 in Kensington.*

John was the brother of Charles William Bingham, who was my grandfather. Their parents were Thomas Bingham, a stonemason, born in Westminster around 1829 and Eliza Bingham (nee Chuter). (In the family Thomas and Eliza were always known as Ma and Pa.) Thomas' father, another Thomas Bingham, was born in Sheffield, around 1806 and, like his son, was described as a mason. However, he employed a number of people, and according to my cousin Jo, he was a 'gentleman', owning a number of properties in Chelsea. Jo was unable to explain what happened to all this wealth! But according to Wikitree, Thomas senior disappeared after his second marriage, making no provision for his children. Cont.



From Karen's research we discovered that John Bingham and his wife Priscilla moved to Uffington from Chelsea before 1901. They first lived in School House, Broad Street, with a 17 year old servant, Chrissy Wheeler. But in 1908 Priscilla died, and in the 1911 census, John is shown as living alone in Long Thatch, High Street, Uffington. In the museum there are two photos of him apart from the school children. In one, dated 1907, he sits alone on a bridge over the Wilts and Berks canal. In others, dated 1920, he poses with a group of three young women teachers but all with the same intense, rather thoughtful gaze. He retired in 1922 and died in 1942 in Wantage. He and Priscilla had no children

Uffington To be in the landscape of Uffington, with its folded green contours, and its iconic White Horse, is a profoundly moving experience and Tom Brown's School Museum, perched on a street corner of the village of Uffington, is a rare jewel. Thank you so much to Karen Pilcher and the earlier volunteers, who showed such kindness and enthusiasm, and enabled me to uncover this little corner of my family history.

For much of my adult life, I have cherished a fantasy of one day living in a country cottage with a front path lined with lavender bushes. After our first visit to Tom Brown's School Museum, Bill and I walked round the corner to Long Thatch, John Bingham's second home in the village. Outside the cottage was quite a high hedge, so I was unable to see much of the house or garden until we reached the front gate. Then I stood there speechless. There was the lovely thatched cottage, and the garden path edged with lavender shrubs, in full bloom. I felt as if, in some deep part of me, I had come home.

And finally ... if you can tell me any more about John or Priscilla Bingham, I would love to hear from you.

Jenny Webb 19.10.2016

Update on the school building

In the September newsletter we gave an update on the museum building which is owned by the Parish Council. I'm delighted to advise that a quote has been accepted to repair the chalkstone walls and the Grade II listed building consent was granted by the Vale Planning Committee last week. Grant applications are now being submitted to provide funding and we are hopeful that the work can start at the end of January.



A successful grant application for £1,225 has already been approved by AIM (Association of Independent Museums) and this will cover the cost of the Architects' external report, an Internal Conservation Report and the purchase of a humidity sensor as mentioned in the previous newsletter. We are extremely grateful to AIM who awarded the full grant as part of the AIM Conservation Scheme.



Do you shop on-line over Christmas?

A free and easy way to donate to the museum

EasyFundraising costs you nothing. The firms you order from pay a percentage of your purchase to the charity of your choice. The site is easy to use, just sign up, name your good cause (Tom Brown's School Museum) then click on the company you wish to shop with.

All the favourite retailers are there, M&S, John Lewis, Amazon, Waterstones, there are literally hundreds of well known and trusted High Street companies involved in the scheme.

To date we have raised over **£950** by Friends of TBSM donating in this way.





***To All Our Friends and Supporters
Happy Christmas and New Year 2017***

Reminder

There are always a number of ongoing jobs to be done in the museum so if you can spare an hour or two on a Tuesday morning between 10 to 12 let us know - we can always do with more help! Alternatively if you are not currently a Friend of the museum why not join for £10 per household per year or a life membership of £100?

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