

Hi All,

This is the final issue of the Newsletter for our current year. Our next meeting is our Annual General Meeting (AGM) in April where we decide the direction of the Society with our members, and we begin our new year. This will be an important meeting for the Society as we will require decisions from the members to ensure that we can continue into the future.

This meeting was on March 14th, with an excellent presentation 'Parcels & Newspapers by Bus - Midland Red Parcels Express' by Alan Godfrey, the Chairman of Alcester History Society.

We had 45 members and visitors to the meeting. 34 members and 11 visitors, with 3 apologies from members who were unable to attend. This was a good result and certainly something to build on.

The article in the Standard had impact, as one visitor who came up to speak to the presenter had the article cut out of the physical version of the Standard. This also shows that widening our talk beyond Redditch 'local history' is worthwhile and is having results.

We will be having our Executive Committee meeting shortly, so that we are ready for the AGM in April.

On the remaining pages of the Newsletter, we have:

- Page two has information on the April 11th AGM, which is very important for the Society and is the first time that we have managed to have it on the correct date in April since April; 2019. We also have an update on the latest exhibition at Forge Mill Needle Museum and a request from a supporter in the USA concerning a contact which she has with someone from the Society or the RLHM.
- Pages three and four is a report on the March presentation 'Parcels & Newspapers by Bus - Midland Red Parcels Express' by Alan Godfrey, the Chairman of Alcester History Society.
- Pages five and six summarises a booklet produced by 'The Unicorn Hotel' on Unicorn Hill in about 1900. I find these documents really interesting and give an insight of the town at the time. I hope that you find my comments interesting.
- Pages seven and eight has been provided by Derek Coombes and concerns the grants he has obtained from the Heritage Lottery Fund and Arts Fund. The work required is significant and he is looking for volunteers to support it.

Next Meeting...

Our next meeting is on the 11th April. This is our Annual General Meeting, where we elect officers and decide our future.

The AGM is not the most exciting meeting of the year, but it should only take about 15 minutes. Following the AGM there will be an interesting film concerning the history of the region.

The meeting will begin at 2.00 pm and will be, as always at the Oasis Christian Centre, Plymouth Road.

We have now reintroduced the refreshment break but, obviously, there is no obligation to remain after the presentation.

Although restrictions have now been lifted, we will continue to conduct our meeting with the safety of members and visitors as our main concern. The seating in the Oasis Church will continue to be socially distanced and we encourage attendees to wear face-masks, when moving around, and to use the hand sanitisers.

Please continue to support the Society so that we can continue into future years.

Take care and stay safe

Anthony Green, Society Secretary

E-mail: [e-mail secretary@redditchhistorysociety.org.uk](mailto:secretary@redditchhistorysociety.org.uk) Tel: 01527 61434

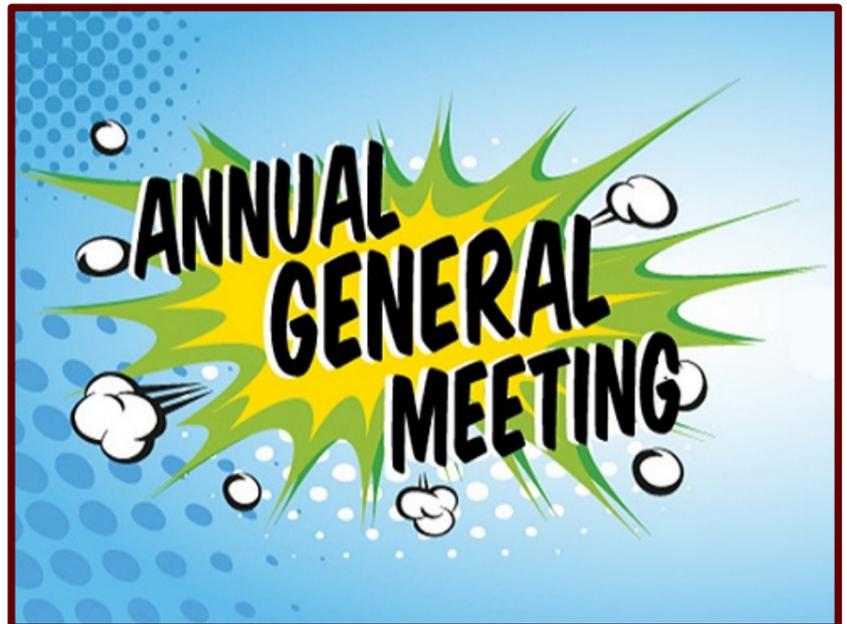
Coming up.....

April 11th is our Annual General Meeting

The annual general meeting, which is probably the least interesting of our meetings for many members is, in many ways, the most important.

It is here where we elect our Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, and members of the executive committee, we decide our programme of events for the next year, and, obviously, without these actions the Society could not exist.

So, the format for the meeting is that the current Chairman (Don Vincent), Secretary (Anthony Green) and Treasurer (Graham Smith) give their annual reports and this is followed by the election of officers for the current year.



Our current officers have agreed to continue in their posts. With regard to elected members of the management committee, Elizabeth Simpson, Sue Tatlow and David Spyer are prepared to continue in their roles.

Our Accounts Examiner, Gil Barlow, is also happy to continue in the role.

Of course, if anyone is interested in being involved in the management of the Society we are pleased to welcome them. There is no limit to the size of the Management Committee, so we can add more members, and if anyone wishes to put their toe in the water we can create deputies for all the roles, Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, Social Media, Website Manager, Newsletter Editor, Speakers Programme. You name it - we have it!

The Annual General Meeting will be followed by a film related to the local region and its history.

We will continue to ensure the well being of our members by requesting face-masks be worn and the Oasis Church will have social distanced seating.

Forge Mill Needle Museum Update

The latest exhibition at Forge Mill Needle Museum is 'OUR HALF' an exhibition by the Gone to Pieces Quilt Group.

This exhibition of quilts is a result of a collaboration between the Gone to Pieces Group in Buckinghamshire and the Lippetal Quilters in Germany. What started as a simple fabric exchange blossomed into friendships and a bigger project.

The Museum and coffee bar are open every day from 1st April and the Tuesday guided tours of the Museum begin on 5th April. If you are not particular you will find that the guide on the 5th April at 11h30 is yours truly. So be warned!



Contact Request

Rebeca Smith, who lives in Florida and is one of my many cousins, had an email from one of our members who found her on Ancestry.

The contact was going through boxes and found some of the items Becky had donated to the society, including the letter from her grandfather to her great grandfather, Charles Henry Crow, asking for her grandmother's (Doris Crow) hand in marriage.

Unfortunately, Becky cannot find her information. She would like to contact her and hopefully meet her when she visits the UK in September.

I suspect that this will be a volunteer at the Redditch Local History Museum. If she could contact me, I will pass her details on to Becky.

Report on March Presentation by Alan Godfrey

Parcels and Newspapers by Bus: Midland Red Parcels Service

In his presentation Alan described the fascinating development of the express delivery service of the Birmingham & Midland Motor Omnibus Company, known as the Midland "Red".

This aspect of the bus service has been largely overlooked but formed an important part of the business from 1915 until it ceased in 1980.

Letters, parcels and bundles of newspapers were carried by bus and delivered across the midlands, using the network of 500 parcels agents, to be found on most Midland Red bus routes.

The Birmingham & Midland Motor Omnibus Company (BMMO) was formed in November 1904 to operate motor bus services in Birmingham.

However due to financial difficulties, British Electric Traction (BET) acquired control of the company, and in 1905 transferred its local horse bus operations to it.

BET also ran Tramways in Birmingham. BMMO started operations under its own name in July 1905.

The BET trams in Birmingham and the Black Country carried parcels and the parcels offices were then used by the Omnibuses and the service began expanding.

The company experienced problems with its motor buses, and in 1907 reverted all its motor bus services to horse bus operation.

However, in 1912 the company purchased some Tilling-Stevens petrol-electric buses. These were, in effect, what we now know as hybrid vehicles, and were well advanced for their time.

Further motor buses followed, and by June 1913 only seventeen horse buses remained, and the company adopted for its motor buses a red livery and the buses carried the name "Midland".

They soon acquired the nickname Midland Red.

By 1912 the Birmingham Corporation Tramways had used its statutory powers to acquire the city's tramways which it did not already own and wanted to consolidate the operation of bus and tram operations in the city.

BMMO reached agreement with the corporation to operate services from outside Birmingham into the city and transfer its services within the city to the corporation.

So BMMO expanded outside Birmingham and moved its headquarters to Bearwood in Smethwick.

During WW1, many buses were sent to France, but the BMMO petrol/electric hybrids were considered too complex and were not used.

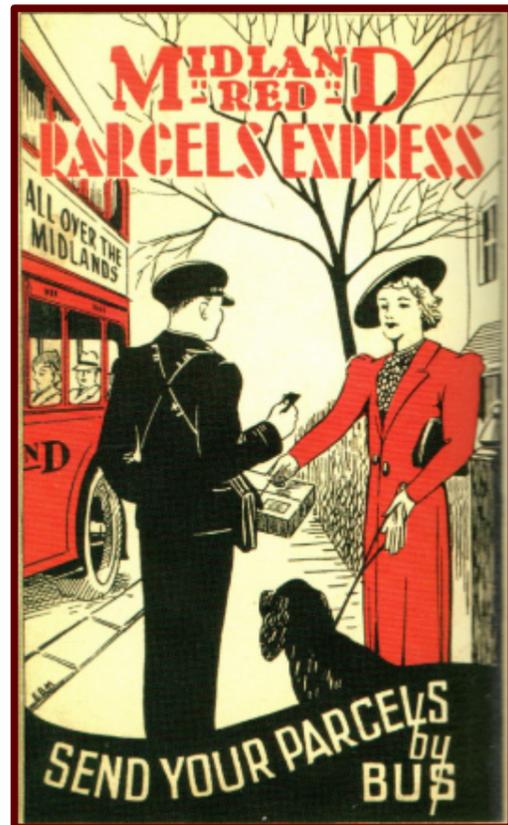
This allowed BMMO to continue expanding their service.

By 1926 'Midland Red' had spread across the Midlands and the parcels service expanded.

Parcels were received by agents within the area and, by 1947, for example, there were five parcel agents in our local area.

One in Redditch town centre, one at Batty's in Hewell Road, and one each in Headless Cross, Crabbs Cross and Astwood Bank.

At this time, which was probably the peak of the service, there were six hundred parcel agents in the Midlands.



March Presentation report Cont.....

In the 1930's the service had expanded significantly and the company introduced special vans to carry parcels.

These could be personalised for large companies and stock could be kept in the special offices which could be called off as and when necessary.

However, by 1934, this had expanded so much that it was sold off the Pickfords, and the 'Midland Red' concentrated on their bus-based parcels service.

The service was more expensive than the Post Office but offered a same day delivery service for parcels.

It was therefore of vital importance to Newspapers, as copy could be sent to the office and printed papers could be distributed to vendors with great rapidity.

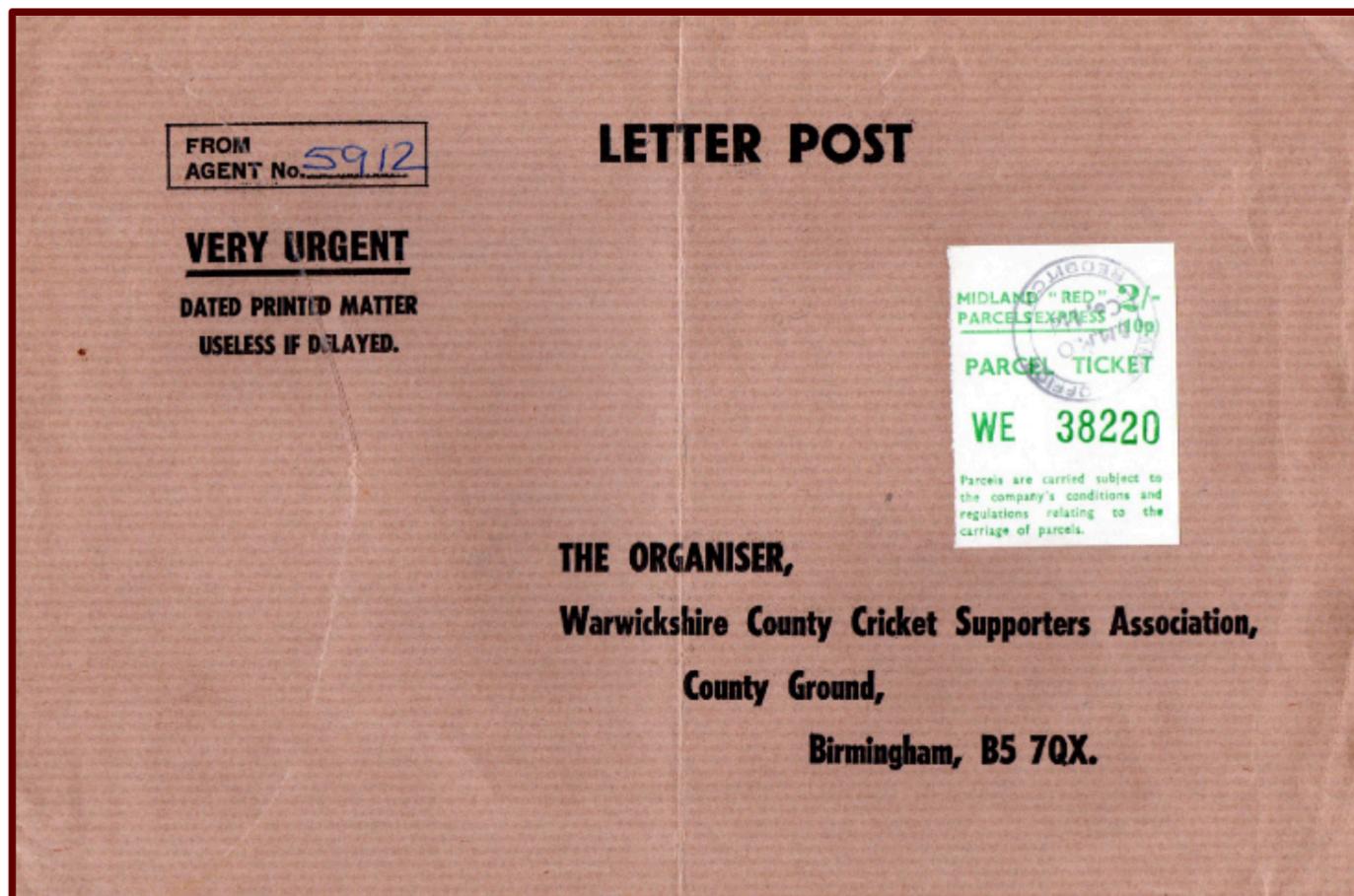
There was a special stamp for use by newspapers.

A severe problem occurred in 1972 when VAT was introduced.

This had a rate of 10% which applied to the bus parcel service, but not to the Post Office, making the Midland Red parcel service even less competitive.

By 1980 the Midland Red had moved to driver only services and so there was no conductor to accept parcels and the service became uncompetitive.

Finally on the 5th of May 1980 the parcel service was discontinued.



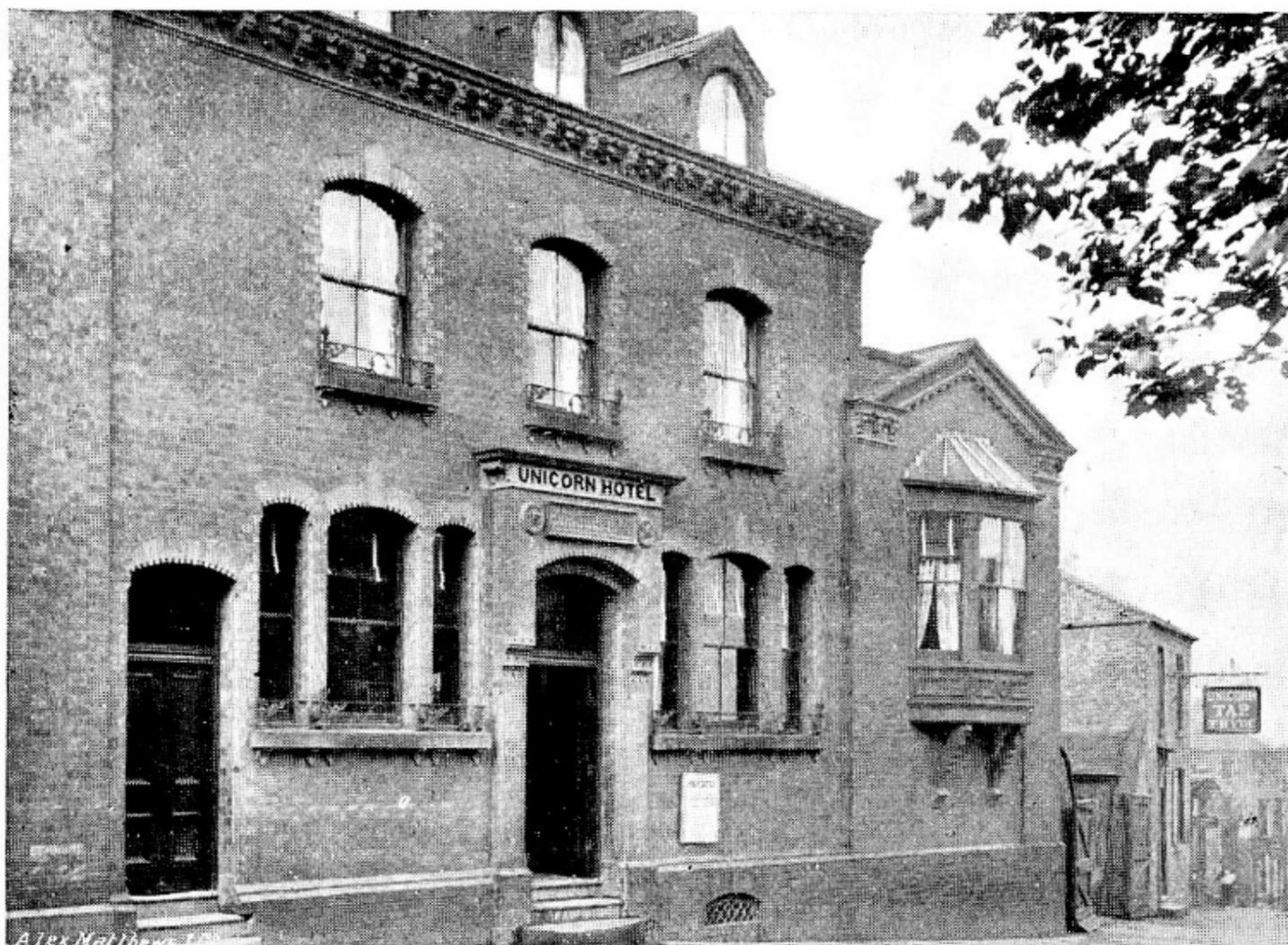
This is a very brief summary of the information given by Alan as it is difficult to listen and take notes at the same time. Such are the trials of a Secretary!

The presentation was warmly received by the audience and there were numerous questions which followed.

The Unicorn Hotel - Redditch

Extracts from an early 20th Century Brochure.

I am interested in the town which I remember, and I can just remember the 'old' Unicorn Hotel, before it was rebuilt in the 1950s. The text below is from the brochure which I have scanned and converted to Word to improve the clarity. Thomas Hyde, mentioned as the proprietor in the leaflet overleaf, was the Landlord from 1891 to 1917. The 'new' building was demolished in 1998.



*Unicorn
Hotel,
Redditch.*

Photo by Lewis Bros., Redditch.

This well-known Hotel, which is in close proximity to the Railway Station, is the chief and best known Hotel in Redditch.

It contains a large number of single and double bedded rooms, handsomely furnished, and arranged to afford visitors, travelling on business or pleasure, every home comfort.

There is a spacious Coffee Room for Ladies and Gentlemen, also Private Sitting Rooms, Dining and Writing Rooms, together with a splendid Billiard Room. The Unicorn Hotel has achieved a reputation for its good management and home comfort; the supervision of the culinary arrangements is in thoroughly experienced hands, and every endeavour is made to sustain the reputation already gained.

The Wines and Spirits supplied may be relied upon as being of the finest quality only, and the prices charged are reasonable.

There is a splendid Bowling Green, which will always be found in first-class condition, and Bowling is a favourite recreation with the numerous visitors to the Unicorn Hotel.

To the tourist and holiday visitor also the Hotel offers a comfortable "home from home," where his needs are closely studied and his wants anticipated.

The notes in this book are not intended to do more than give a skeleton-like description of the Unicorn Hotel and Redditch.

Unicorn Hotel Brochure continued...



*The
Bowling
Green,
Unicorn
Hotel.*

Photo by Lewis Bros., Redditch.



Hotel Tariff.

Bedroom and Attendance	- - - -	from 3/6
Double Bedroom and Attendance	- -	„ 5/-
Sitting Rooms	- - - -	„ 4/-
Fires in Bedroom, per day	- - -	1/6
„ „ Evening	- - -	1/-
Sponge or Hip Bath, in room	- -	6d.
Hot or Cold, in Bath Room	- - -	1/-

BREAKFAST.

Plain, with Marmalade or Jam	- - -	1/6
With Egg or Cold Meat	- - -	2/-
Fish, Chops, etc.	- - -	2/6

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LUNCHEONS.

Table d'Hôte	- - - - -	2/6
Basin of Soup	- - - - -	1/-
Cold Meat, with potatoes	- - - - -	2/-
Chops or Steak, with vegetable	- - - - -	2/6

TEAS.

Cup of Tea or Coffee	- - - -	6d.
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DINNERS.

A la Carte, or to order.

Inclusive terms if required.

Public Rooms.

Dining, Drawing, Billiard, Smoke Room.

Livery and Bait Stables.

Posting of every description.

Choice Selection of Wines, Spirits and Cigars.

PROPRIETOR, T. HYDE.

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It is interesting to look at the Tariff at this time. Even after WW1, in 1925, according to Hansard, the average weekly wage for a worker was about 25 shillings a week, so 3/6 a day, so roughly about the cost of a room in 1900. However from 1900 to 1925, inflation had doubled (Bank of England inflation calculator). So, stopping in an hotel of this type was well above a normal workers wages. So, going to the Unicorn for a meal would really have been a exceptional treat.

The Redditch Local History Museum has now been open for four months and continues to develop and expand its operation.

As well as maintaining and welcoming visitors to our exhibition gallery we are building an archive facility funded by the HLF grant and we now have an outreach programme of events funded by a grant from the Arts Fund.

Outreach activities planned include:

- Collecting, recording and presenting local history memories from residents.
- Creating an on-line, social media presence to reach areas of the community not normally involved with local history
- Community engagement with ethnic and minority groups so as to reach areas of the community not normally involved with local history.
- Community engagement by seeking out ways to take local history into the community rather than expecting the community to visit the museum. This will include both attending and organising local history events such as heritage Open Days, working with other groups and organisations such as Redditch BID, RBC. and other voluntary groups. Such activities will include holding and promoting history walks, creating better signage of local history and sharing volunteering and work experience opportunities.
- Community engagement with younger generations through activities supporting Schools, Scouts, DoE schemes and Princes Trust activities

To continue this ambitious development programme, we are seeking volunteers across all areas of our activities. If you are interested in local history, and would like to help, we have a wide range of opportunities to suit all.

Volunteering opportunities include:

Visitor Experience - Meeting, greeting and supporting visitors including collection of entrance fees, retail sales and dealing with visitor enquiries.

Artefact Management – Supporting the creation of the Redditch Historic Archives by recording, cataloguing, and interpreting historic artefacts.

Museum Management – Supporting the business activities to keep the museum running including financial management, health & safety, regulatory requirements and record keeping & reporting.

Fundraising – Activities aimed at gaining the necessary income to operate the museum such as seeking donations and sponsorship's, running fundraising activities such as events and special activities and seeking appropriate grant funding.



Outreach Opportunities at RLHS cont.....

Promotion – Activities which both raise the profile of the museum and encourage visitors, volunteers and financial supporters to the museum.

Exhibits and Displays – Roles which involve using both museum artefacts, research and artistic/technical skills to create window displays and museum exhibits.

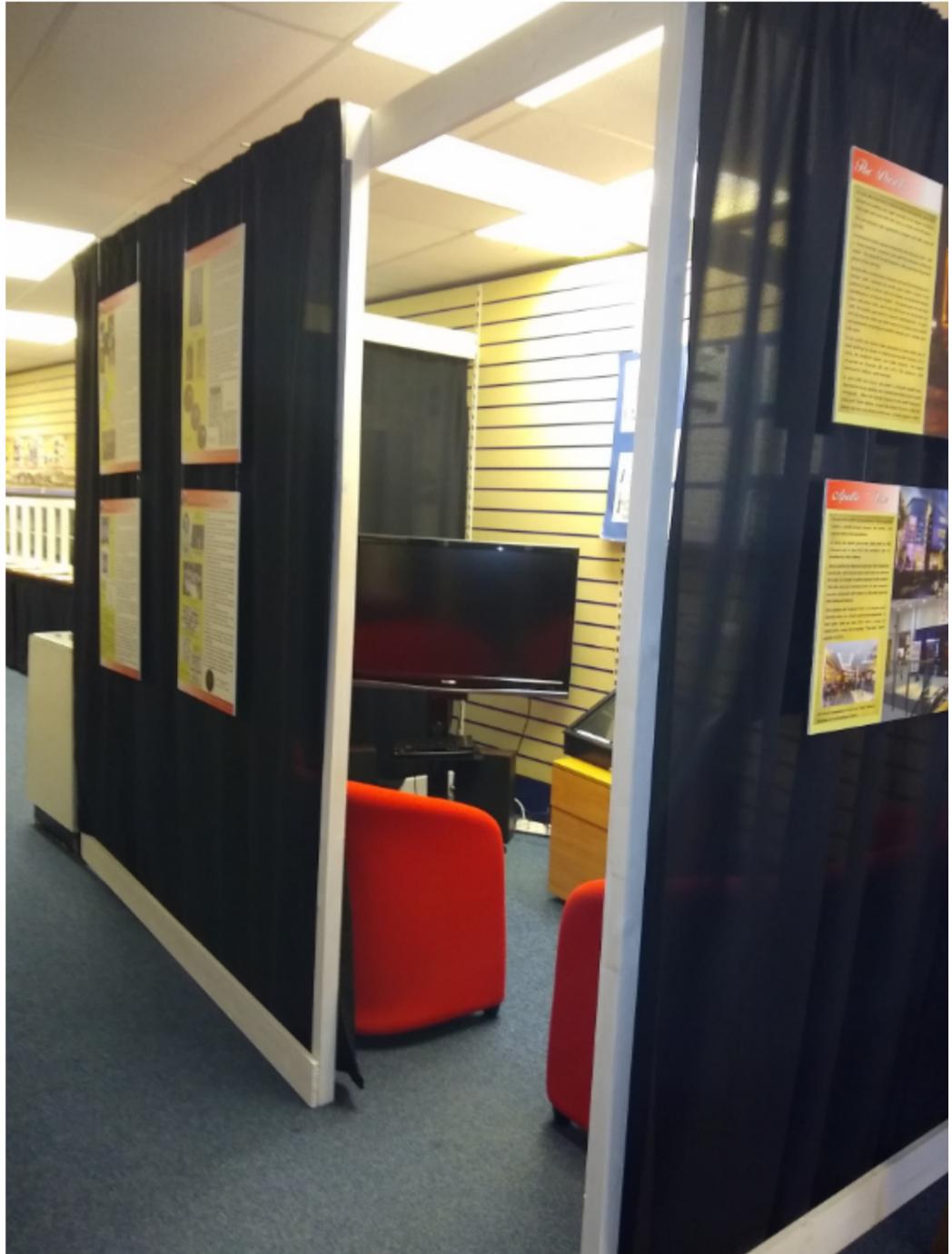
Outreach - Activities which forward the aims of the museum to save, record and promote Redditch local history. Outreach activities will specifically be aimed at activities which take local history into the community.

Cross Role Support

We are also seeking volunteers who have specialist skills which will provide cross-role support.

This includes:

- Computing skills such as:
 - Desk Top Publishing
 - Image creation (Scanning, photography etc.) and post processing.
 - Web Authoring (Wordpress)
 - Networking and PC set up
 - Copy writing and proof reading
 - Data input and analysis
- Media Skills such as:
 - Social media posting
 - Video Blogging
 - Video production including voice overs



If you are interested in local history, and would like to help, we have a wide range of opportunities to suit all.

To have an informal chat about this opportunity:

Call: 01527 390745 or 07486 882181

Email: volunteer@rlhm.online.

Or drop in to:

5 Market Place, Church Green, Redditch, B98 8AA

between 10:00am and 4:00pm Thursdays, Fridays or Saturdays.

