



STEEPLE ASTON VILLAGE ARCHIVE TRUST

Village History centre opens to historic welcome

Seen here unveiling the sign over the door of the new Village History Centre on Friday 6th September, the representatives of the five funding bodies were clearly delighted to see how their money had been spent. The photo shows Lynne Newin of Oxfordshire Rural Community Council, Sheila Wallington from Viridor Environmental Company, Barbara Brewer of the Village Hall Management Committee, Margaret Mason from the Parish Council, and Roger Mason of Dr. Radcliffes School Foundation.

On the following day, SAVA had invited supporters and other local people to visit. We were taken aback by the extraordinary level of interest shown by so many of the 80 - 90 people who came throughout the morning. Some came with small, but important, artefacts that they wished to donate to the archive, while others wanted to discuss future projects that they had in mind related to the history of the village. Still others spent time looking at the small display which we had put up, of samples of past exhibitions about village history. Most noticed the permanent dehumidifier in operation, which keeps the paper, photographic and other documents in the archive store at optimum environmental conditions - something we certainly did not have in the previous, now demolished, archive building.

There are very few purpose-built community archive buildings in the country, and we are proud to have created this one for our two villages. Its biggest asset is probably the Study Room, where visitors can inspect historic maps and old documents of various types brought from the archive store on request. We especially welcome village people who would like to find out more about family history, or take part in ongoing research about the history of the village. There are plans to carry out video interviews of those with recollections of the village and its people in times past, building up a library of memories.

Fund-raising for the Centre started in September 2012, and to many people's astonishment the Centre is open only one year later. Just short of £100,000 was needed (including VAT), and the generosity of the funders can not be underestimated. The good summer combined with a good building contractor provided ideal conditions for completion on time and to budget.



A separate grant has been obtained from Sanctuary Housing, which has enabled SAVA to start working on projects with Dr. Radcliffe's School. The first of these will bear fruit in November, when the children's contribution to the forthcoming exhibition and book on the village Inclosure Map will be evident.

Next year, SAVA will be working with the school on bringing up to date the 2005 exhibition about the history of education in the village, which will also be published as a book.

We hope that the Village History Centre, in such close proximity to the school, will gradually come to be seen as an indispensable educational resource supplementing the work of the school itself, as well as an essential part of village life.

Arrangements for regular opening have still to be finalised, relying as they do on the small group of volunteers that is SAVA. If you would like to play a part in this exciting new venture, please get in touch with us.

www.steepleastonarchive.org.uk