

## **History of New Milton 'A Seaside Home in the Country'**

The History Exhibition has been an overwhelming success. We had planned to open for a month; however due to public demand, we extended the Exhibition for another two weeks. By the time we closed on Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> August, 4000 visitors had attended. This number is simply amazing when you take into account that we were only open for 15 hours a week for three hour sessions.

We were absolutely delighted with the response from the public; our comments book makes interesting reading. It seems many of our visitors would like to see a permanent home, and I quote; 'for this fantastic Exhibition' in the Town. For so many it brought back happy memories - the children's displays were greatly appreciated, a visitor from Sweden was happy to learn so much about New Milton. Someone wanted to know if we were going to publish a book on the Exhibition, another offered to do a web site for free. Someone thought it very good, interactive and educational. Another commented that it was a great use of an empty shop. These were just a few of the hundreds of comments.

Our 'post it note' display was also very interesting; it turned out to be a talking shop amongst the residents of our Town. A snap shot of points raised were to rebuild the Memorial Hall, the need for a cinema and stop building flats.

Groups and all ages from near and far visited the Exhibition and a substantial amount of archive material has been gathered during the course of the Exhibition and the many events that were organised during the Exhibition. The New Milton Advertiser will be pleased to note that our records show that many of our visitors read about the Exhibition in their local paper.

Leading this Exhibition has been a great pleasure and I am truly grateful for the New Milton Town Partnership for taking up my idea and supporting me over the last two years. We thank Patricia Banks who had the vision to donate part of her money for good courses to the Exhibition. The expertise of the St Barbe Museum's curator, Steve Marshall, who joined our small History of New Milton committee two years ago was invaluable as was the amazing Sarah Newman, St Barbe's outreach coordinator, responsible for the displays.

We are indebted to the many volunteers who manned the Exhibition some we gathered as extra's on the way due to the amount of visitors exceeding all our expectations. They all told me how much they had enjoyed their duties and talking about New Milton's History.

Securing an empty shop in the centre of Town in which to hold our Exhibition was always going to be difficult and it is due to the overwhelming generosity of the Hancock family that we found the perfect location.

There is no doubt that this Exhibition has instilled a sense of pride in our residents for their Town and for that reason alone it has been worth every minute of my small dedicated committee's valuable time; I thank them and all who so valiantly helped in what ever capacity. I must say the Exhibition gave me the perfect opportunity to listen and interact with our electorate, a great opportunity to meet and greet our residents; I loved every minute of it.

Cllr Valya Schooling  
4<sup>th</sup> September 2009