

MUSEUM

news



NATIONAL HERITAGE MUSEUMS ACTION MOVEMENT

Spring 2016

Shock closure of Bede's World



The Bede's World Trust, which runs the site, has been wound up after a meeting, and South Tyneside Council has taken it over. It closed on February 12.

The attraction, which celebrates the life of the Venerable Bede, one of Europe's greatest scholars, includes an 11-acre replica Anglo-Saxon farm and a museum which was opened by the Queen in 2000. Nearly 30 staff are employed. Mike Smith, chairman of the trustees, said they had no choice but to open up discussions with insolvency practitioners. He added

the closure was down to funding. A South Tyneside Council spokesperson confirmed that Bede's World is "not currently financially viable" despite receiving "substantial funding" from the council. Ownership of the land and buildings reverts to the council under existing leases. "The council is currently looking at a range of options for the site, and most importantly, to find a more affordable way to keep the facility open in the long term," the spokesperson said.

Bede's World evolved from the

late 18th Century Jarrow Hall, which became the original Bede Monastery Museum in 1974 and now houses the site's café. In 2011 the Wearmouth-Jarrow twin monastery was a candidate world heritage site. In 2013 Bede's World was awarded a Heritage Lottery Fund grant of £311,700 to improve the visitor experience and in 2014 it staged a spectacular exhibition of treasures on loan from the British Museum.

Simon Tait

Steel mesh portraiture of the Venerable Bede © Visit South Tyneside

Fury over Bradford move

Civic leaders have reacted angrily to plans to change the focus of Bradford's National Media Museum.

The Science Museum Group, which runs the Bradford museum, wants to rename the former National Museum of Film and Photography as Science Museum North and shift its focus towards science and technology. The museum is also cancelling its support for the Bradford International Film Festival. The news follows a decision to move the museum's unique collection of more than 400,000 photographs and other objects to the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.

Bradford South MP Judith

Cummins said she was "flabbergasted" by this week's announcements. "Only last week the museum told me that they were focused on delivering a vibrant film festival programme. Now they are announcing that they are abandoning the hugely popular Bradford International Film Festival. It raises serious questions about the direction and focus of the National Media Museum", she added. "The economic and cultural ramifications of abandoning the Film Festival could be enormous for Bradford. How can we seriously have an International Film festival and honour our status as the world's first UNESCO City of Film

without the National Media Museum at its centre. It just doesn't make any sense." Cllr Susan Hinchcliffe, Bradford council member for culture, said that if there was investment going into the V and A to hold the photography collection, why should it not go to Bradford? Cllr Simon Cooke, leader of the Conservative group on the council, said that decision showed the Science Museum "cared not one jot for the heritage and history of the city".

A NMM spokesman said: "We are looking at the best ways to reflect and promote our new focus on science and technology and this includes reviewing the name of the museum".

London's turning

The creation of a new £150m Museum of London at West Smithfield in Clerkenwell takes a serious step forward with the competition to find an architect to transform the main part of the old meat market - the General Market, Fish Market, the Red House and the Engine House. Newsnight presenter Evan Davies will chair

the judges.

It will also mean a complete re-imagining of how to display the six million objects in the collection. "I cannot wait to see schemes for West Smithfield from designers working in all four corners of the globe" says Sharon Ament, the museum's director. "The challenge of sympathetically

reinventing a series of fascinating and wonderful buildings and reimagining them as a museum is big, a bit scary and terribly exciting, much like London itself".

The winning practice will be announced in the summer with a view to completion in 2021.

Dunkirk Little Ship destroyed

The Vere, one on the Dunkirk Little Ships was a victim of the fire which devastated David Heritage Racing Yachts storage building at Medina Village in Cowes, Isle of Wight in January.

The Vere, built in 1905 was an admiral's steam barge and was

requisitioned in August 1939. In May 1940 she joined the fleet to save the stranded army in Dunkirk. Thirty-one other boats were also burnt in the fire, but thankfully no-one was hurt

Museum News is published by National Heritage - Museums Action Movement. It is edited by Simon Tait and designed by Liz Moore.

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Wordsworth birthday present



The Heritage Lottery Fund has committed £4.75m to revamp the Lake District village where William Wordsworth lived and worked, to be completed in time to celebrate his 250th birthday in 2020.

The Wordsworth Museum's collection, based on his home at Dove Cottage, is to be expanded and existing buildings nearby converted into a central visitor centre.

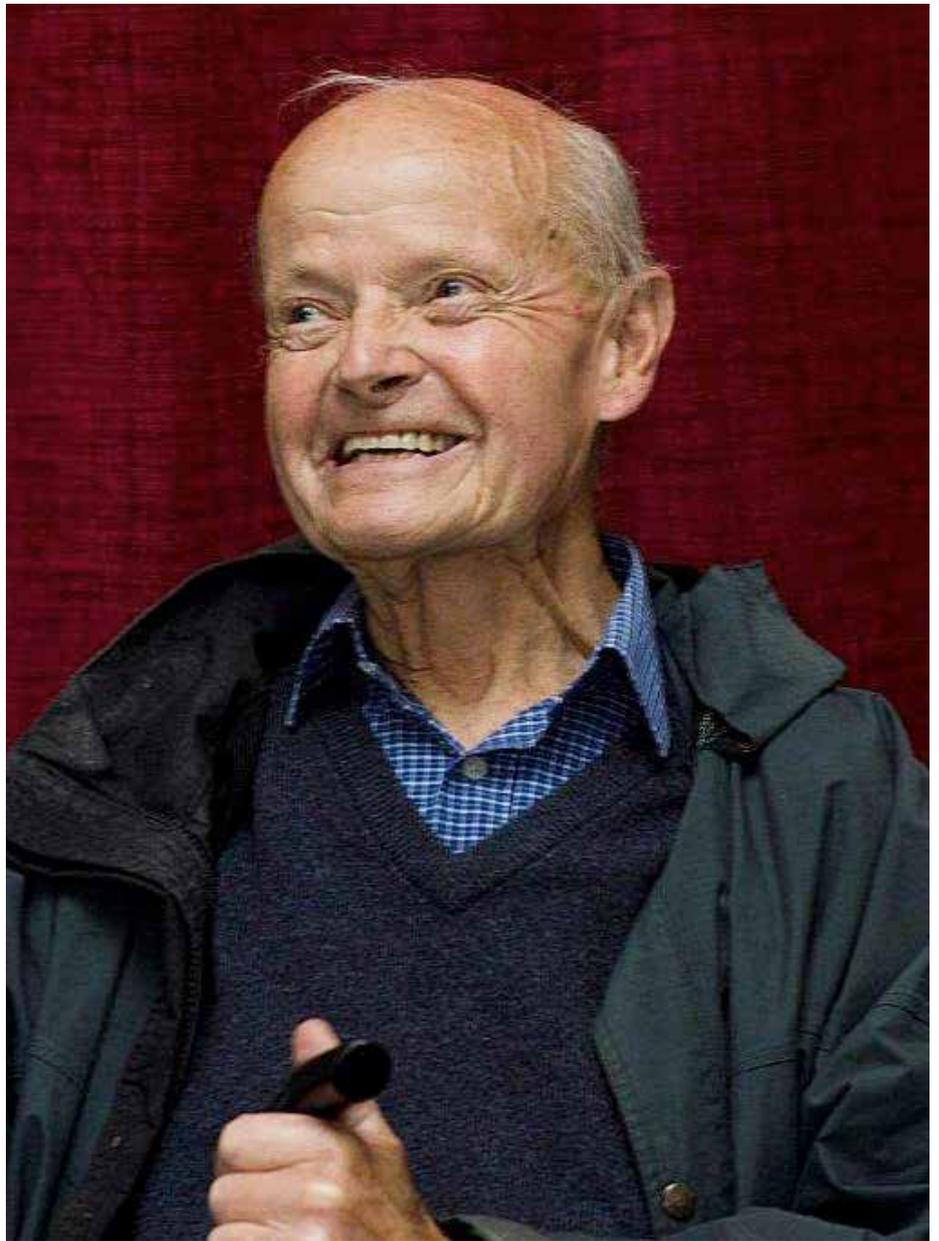
National Heritage Volunteer Management Training

Following the successful launch of Volunteer Management Training workshop last September, another is planned for Autumn 2016 with a further one in Spring 2017. More information will be published shortly.

“No visit to the Lake District is complete without a visit to Grasmere, to experience inspirational poetry in, as Wordsworth wrote, ‘the loveliest spot that man hath ever found’” said the Wordsworth Trust director, Michael McGregor. “Thanks to the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund, over the next four years we can ‘reimagine’ Wordsworth, bringing his life and

work to an even wider audience. The Wordsworth Trust is 125 years old this year - I can't think of a better birthday present!”





Philip Taverner 1929-2016

Simon Tait

Philip Taverner, the exhibition planner and designer who died on February 6 aged 86 after a long battle with cancer, was a stalwart of National Heritage for more than two decades, and was closely involved until just before his death.

Having been a judge for the NH Museum of the Year Award he joined the executive committee, and when the charity became a trustee body he remained as a valuable adviser whose sage considerations were always a

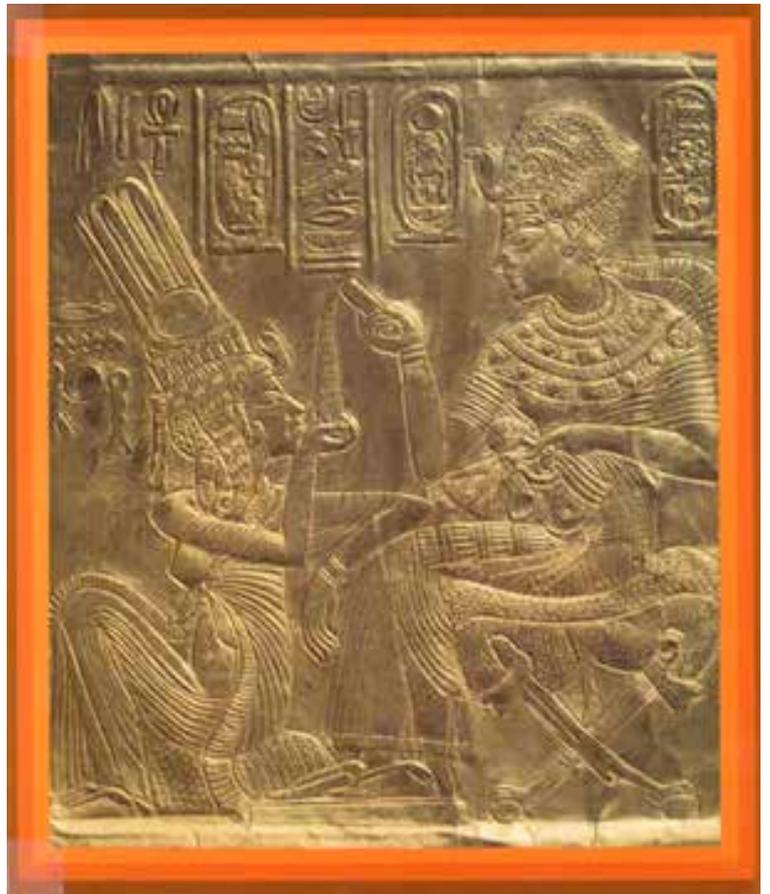
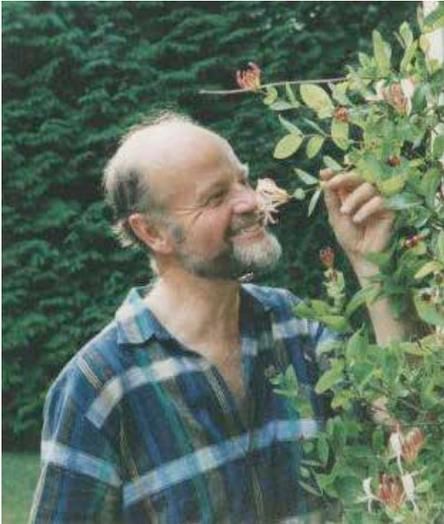
propos and just.

Born in Chelmsford in 1929 the son of a Bank of England executive, at the age of seven Philip took command of his father's large garden sealing what was to be a life-long passion. Two bouts of childhood rheumatic fever meant him spending long hours alone with encyclopaedias giving him an early layer to his education before he went to Bryanston School in Dorset - spending his holidays working as a farm labourer.

After national service Philip

went to University College, Oxford, to read politics, philosophy and economics, and also took to acting with enthusiasm in the Oxford University Dramatic Society, even touring with Dame Maggie Smith.

After Oxford Philip went into industry as a sales manager and then into public relations, before becoming marketing director of Times Newspapers. One day he was called into a meeting with the paper's chairman and the Egyptian ambassador who wanted him to organise an exhibition of



Tutankhamun's treasures at the British Museum. It was to be the first of the blockbuster exhibitions, running for eight months in 1972 bringing almost 1.7 million visitors.

It changed his life, being followed by a Chinese exhibition at the Royal Academy, and with a colleague he set up his own exhibitions company, Carlton Cleeve. More blockbusters were to follow, including *Pompeii, 1776*, *The Gold of Eldorado*, *The Horses of San Marco*, and the Burlington International Fine Art Fair. An exhibition could cost more than £1m to mount, but they were all organised from a modest office near Marble Arch Station.

But exhibitions were by then seen as major parts of museums' operations and their mounting was taken in-house. Philip left the business and set up his own garden centre in Hampshire, but before long he was invited to become director of the new British

Empire and Commonwealth Museum – the inspiration of John Letts who had also founded National Heritage – at Bristol's Temple Meads Station which opened in 2002. It was after he retired and had withdrawn as a trustee that the museum began to founder, and finally closed in 2008.

But Philip remained a staunch supporter of National Heritage, and when in 2003 the award was taken over by a separate trust and the executive committee considered winding the charity up, he was at the forefront of proponents for maintaining it, insisting that museum visitors still needed a champion and that as such National Heritage stood alone. It was with his enthusiastic approval last year that the trustees decided to concentrate resources on the training of volunteers.

He leaves his wife, Zan, and their three sons Rupert, Jonathan and Crispin.



Opposite page and above left: Philip, courtesy of Zan Taverner; top right and above: covers of the catalogues for the exhibitions of Tutankhamun at the British Museum and the Genius of China at the Royal Academy.

York museum closed by floods



Photo courtesy The Jorvik Centre

York's Viking museum attraction could be closed for up to a year because of flood damage.

The 30-year-old Jorvik Viking Centre was under half a metre of water as the River Foss breached the city's flood barriers in January. Damage is estimated to run into millions of pounds.

Staff worked to ensure that the

museum's historic artefacts were saved and have been taken to other buildings. Sarah Maltby, director of attractions for York Archaeological Trust which owns the Jorvik site, said that it could be many months before the attraction was re-opened.

The Jorvik is located in a basement below a shopping centre

and includes a world-famous ride around a recreation of the Viking-age street of Coppergate. Other attractions owned and managed by the Jorvik Group remain open to the public and plans are still underway for the 32nd Viking Festival in February.

Petition launched to protest and Lancashire museum closures



Photo courtesy: <http://www.blogpreston.co.uk/2015/12/museum-of-lancashire-closure-petition-urges-prestonians-to-take-action-to-save-heritage/>

A petition against the closure of the Museum of Lancashire in Preston has been launched and so far has gained more than 1850 signatures. The petition stresses that such closures tend to be permanent with re-opening unlikely.

Four other museums are also marked for closure: Queen Street Mill, Helmshore, Judges' Lodgings and Fleetwood Museum. This is all part of Lancashire County Council's plans for cuts over the next two years, but the museums will close almost immediately.

You can sign the petition on <https://www.change.org/p/lancashire-county-council-save-the-museum-of-lancashire>