

DECEMBER 2011

TOM BROWN'S *School Museum*

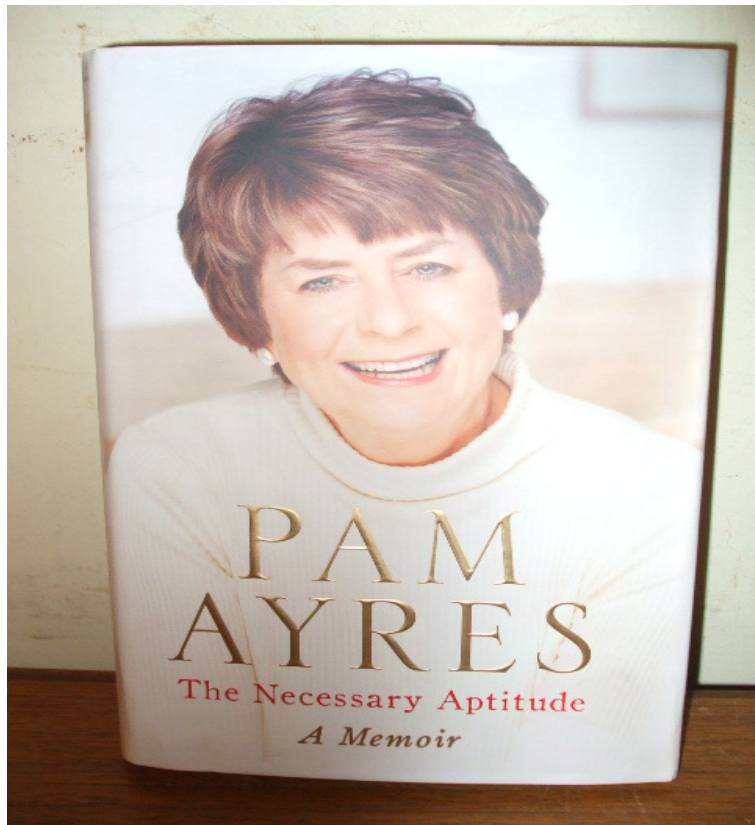
The Friends Newsletter



The Necessary Aptitude .

A Memoir by Pam Ayres.

Recently bought by the Friends for the museum



These memoirs cover the period of Pam's life from when she was born in Stanford in the Vale in 1947 until she won the popular TV series –Opportunity Knocks in 1975.

The first part of the book gives a vivid and perceptive account of her life growing up as the youngest child in a family of six children, four boys and two girls. Before she was born the family lived in a thatched cottage with a communal wash house and a well. The cottage was so overcrowded that the family moved to a council house, with three bedrooms, two downstairs rooms and an outside toilet. The tin baths were also kept outside.

WINTER 2011

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**Thank you to
Friends**

AGM 2012

Pam attended the village primary school and roamed the fields with her brothers, who tried to avoid taking her. They regularly visited their grandparents in Uffington and tried cycling up White Horse Hill. Shortage of money meant outings and treats were rare but local fairs were much enjoyed. Her mother was supportive of her children although exhausted from the task of bringing up a large family. Her father was authoritarian and given to shouting.

The second part of the book tells of Pam's struggle to break from her limited rural background into the exciting world she felt was waiting for her. Her failure to pass the eleven plus exam left her at Faringdon Comprehensive already feeling a failure. She felt encouraged by an inspirational English teacher to try writing some verse but she always felt too nervous to perform in school productions.

The world of work caused her problems as after passing the Civil Service exam she found she did not have the "necessary aptitude" for jobs she found dull and boring. To get away to a more exciting life she joined the Women's Royal Airforce but although she had two exciting years in Singapore she returned to this country to find herself frustrated by her lack of skills for working in a drawing office.

During this time she was slowly making headway through folk clubs and theatre groups with her talent for writing and declaiming her poems. As her confidence grew so did the demand for her performances until she could earn more from these than from her routine jobs. This all culminated in her friends encouraging her to enter the TV programme Opportunity Knocks. To her amazement she found she had won and the doors to the world for which she craved suddenly opened.

This book is easy to read and not only gives an enthralling account of village family life after the second world war but is also an account of one person's perseverance to find the life for which she felt she had a talent. Events since 1975 have proved how lucky we all are that she had this vision and determination.

Accreditation

The new Accreditation Standard has been published and it is expected that our Museum will be amongst one of the first tranches to go through the Standard, we will be given 6 months to re-apply so we will have a busy time up until early summer. The good news is that we will not have to do a complete re-application. The form will be on the internet and will already be populated with all the relevant information from the last return so that should make the whole thing less of a chore. There will be guidance, information and advice available on line and a number of templates for various things and also for each section. There will also be information to indicate what the assessors will be looking for. The new Standard says it will take into account the size and status of museum and not just use the 'one size fits all' criteria which was a huge problem last time – although it was great to know that we had achieved accreditation status ahead of the British Museum!

Roof repairs

The Parish Council have arranged for more work to be carried out to our roof – last year we had the slates cleaned and this year we have had the inside of the roof void 'torched'. This means filling in the gaps between the slates with lime mortar.

Report on last years' exhibition

It is good to see the number of visitors to the museum this year reached 1212. Increased numbers of visitors on Sundays may be due to the Church Teas being offered in the Church. We have also had a number of groups visiting the museum – several WI visits have been arranged to include our WI giving them teas at the village hall. We had a very enjoyable visit from The Oxford branch of the Betjeman Society in September and we were able to use the facilities at the Church to give them teas. Candida Lycett Green joined us for the occasion and also, Archie and Jumbo – Betjeman's friends! This was part of the Wantage Betjeman Festival which we hope to become more involved with in the future.



Friends Network

The Museum is part of the Oxfordshire Museums Council and at a recent meeting the following proposal was put forward by the Curator of Champs Chapel in East Hendred:

We all know the importance of income to our small museums and a 'Friends Group' is often a very good and lucrative source of funds, as well as volunteers. The opportunities for the reciprocal benefit of our 'Friends Groups' for their annual subscription is often a huge burden for small museums to organise; especially if like us you have a small committee. I am proposing a production of a 'Friends Network' throughout all the museums within Oxfordshire Museums Council (OMC). As a group we could offer joint events or open events we have organised to other museums for their friends to enjoy – this could potentially add so many more events, talks, exhibitions and lectures for our 'Friends Groups' to enjoy and would hopefully encourage more members who would pay those vital subscriptions. Even larger museums can benefit as the number of people they can contact will increase substantially at little or no cost (if e-mails are used).

For example:

Several museums could work together to put on a large lecture, including a tea or supper – obviously at a cost to those attending – but the organisation, selling tickets & publicity could be shared.

If a museum has an event planned they could circulate details within the Friends Network so that their event is publicised to a much wider audience and therefore increase the possibilities for income generation.

Members join individual museums Friends Groups – paying a subscription

Each Museum joins the Friends Network

Events are planned or publicised through the Friends Network so that members from each museum get the opportunity to attend

This gives members 'more for their money' and likely to encourage more members

More people attending events makes them more alive and vibrant and in some cases makes them financially viable or even financially rewarding

The proposal was given whole hearted support by the OMC meeting and we await developments!

Thank you to all our Friends

Now the Museum is shut for the winter we can reflect on the past year which as you will read elsewhere has been another good year. We are greatly indebted to all our Friends for this achievement. Without your support we would not exist so I do hope you all feel proud of our success. The feed back we get from visitors is very positive, they like the building and displays and say how fortunate we are to have such a home for our village museum. I know our visitors are not spread evenly, some of you are very busy and others find time passes slowly. Everyone is most welcome to explore the museum archives as there are lots of interesting documents and photos. The computer is a good way to access these.

Next year

Our exhibition next year will be on 'Sporting Connections' to tie in with the general Olympic theme! We have already had a number of suggestions of what to include but if you have any ideas – please get in touch!

The Museum address is Broad Street,
Uffington, Faringdon, SN7 7RA

The Friend's web site

is :www.uffington.net/museum, email: museum@uffington.net

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO EVERYONE

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE FRIENDS IS:-

TUESDAY 14 FEBRUARY 2012 at 7.30pm in the Museum.

Committee Members:

Jane Cooper (Chair) 820207 Sharon Smith (Curator) 820259

John Davies (Treasurer) 820318 Brian Short (Secretary) 820347

John Henville (IT) 820411 Lucy Dilistone (Rota) 820498

Pamela Preene (Newsletter) Anthony Parsons (Archivist)