

## HERITAGE THOUGHTS FOR THE MONTH OF OCTOBER + NOVEMBER 2021.

**As a long-time supporter and chronicler of the *Harpenden & Wheathampstead Gang Show*** I had the pleasure of being invited to the opening and to tour the spanking new *Eric Morecambe Centre (EMC)*. Since 1949 the Show has been held at the Harpenden Public Hall. This venue has also staged a number of other regular Scouting events including the annual County Conferences then known as (The Harpenden Conference) and giving this venue the status of housing the longest continually running Gang Show in the UK and always to packed houses. This venue has now been closed and is due for demolition.

A former sports hall, located in Leyton Road, Rotham, Harpenden has been considerably extended and converted into a state of the art multi-purpose conference hall, activity centre and meeting rooms. The venue is a credit to the designers and engineers.

During the tour our guide made several comparisons to the Alban Arena in St Albans and the Public Hall including that neither of these venues had lifts. At this new venue, balcony and raked seating together with the stalls were all of the same quality and are rated as a 3-hour sit time. The seating in the stalls can easily be removed to allow for exhibitions. One possible minus mark was that the musicians were to be located at the same floor level as the stalls instead of being in an Orchestra Pit. Lighting control was also in the auditorium and may also cause distraction but this feature is not uncommon in many modern theatres.

We were given an extensive tour. The first room visited included a small display by the *Harpenden & District Local History Society*. I had met several of their committee previously and they explained that due to an inheritance it had been possible to agree a 25 year lease for two large rooms. One for a permanent display and the other as a storage facility.

The first production to be staged is *Aladdin* (11-30 December) and members of the cast were available to promote this production. I was pleased to confirm that *The Harpenden Gang Show 2022* was starting rehearsals. I am already in receipt of my tickets for January and look forward to the Show.

**An extensive article featuring Bear Grylls that included several mentions of Scouting** was included on the front cover and inside pages in the Saturday supplement of a leading national newspaper during the month. The article included several photos and details of his varied dietary choices. The purpose was to promote his newest book, *Never Give Up*. I have ordered a copy to go with another book, *Mud, Sweat and Tears* that I was given by his mother **Sally**.

**Bear** is a prolific Author having now written over ninety books, selling in excess of nineteen million copies worldwide. His most recent *Never Give Up*, contains three chapters about his work in Scouting and one detailing his early life on the Isle of Wight where he was brought up as a child. (His Mother chose for him to be born in London). **Bear** also featured on BBC Breakfast to promote the book.

During a recent TV edition of *The Antiques Roadshow* covering East Herts and Essex, the programme visited **Scout HQ at Gilwell Park**. The National Scout Historian **Caroline Pantling** was located in **the Gidney Cabin**. **Caroline** hosted antiques expert **Natasha Raskin Sharp** and her guest **Danny Dyer** to discuss a number of artefacts not generally on show to visitors. These included **B-Ps** original hand-written draft documents for the handbook, *Scouting for Boys*.

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County Commissioner: **Liz Walker** County President: **Robert Voss CBE** County Chairman: **Michael Shurety**  
Charity No: 302606 Scottish Charity No: 39650 VAT registration No: 761 4558 19

The funeral of **MP Sir David Amess** was held in St Mary's Church Prittlewell Essex. His coffin was borne through an Honour Guard of local Sea Scouts to which he always gave substantial support.

**Please continue to save** any items of historical interest from Groups.

**Frank Brittain**

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