

SEMFed Study Day and AGM – Mill Green Museum

By Jo Gillam

On Monday 1st July, I and **12** other SEMFed members arrived at a red brick, Georgian watermill complex which is now Mill Green Museum in Hatfield.

Curator, Emily Shepperson, welcomed everyone and conducted the AGM in her capacity as the new SEMFed president. As a new member, it was interesting to hear that there are currently 66 paid members and 24 affiliate member museums. The 2018/19 Study Visits, both day and residential, were recalled by participants with pleasure, then suggestions for the coming year were discussed. The wealth of high calibre museums in Cardiff (since the meeting, St Fagan's Museum has been awarded Museum of the Year 2019 by the Art Fund), meant that participants supported the suggestion to make it the destination for the Study Trip in January. Emily warmly encouraged members to join the SEMFed committee. She then gave a resume of recent changes at Mill Green Museum and its sister site, Welwyn Roman Baths.

Lunch took place under open canvas next to the Mill's pretty rose and knot gardens. Tasty sandwiches and 'cream tea' scones were served. These were made using organic, wholemeal flour ground at the mill. During the lunchbreak, the group could see the mill working and find out about it from a Miller Mike Ward. We also had a chance to have a look around the museum displays. These included the colourful, temporary exhibition 'Cresta Couture: Designing Fashion Inspired by Heritage' which celebrates the iconic designs of a former, local, textile company.

In the afternoon, we literally tasted some of the activities included in the museum's new, cross-curricula school sessions. We tried our hand at making and eating butter and flat bread, grinding flour using different historic methods, and later, at making bread rolls from yeasted dough. Linda Dobbs (Museums Manager) and Sharon Wood (Front of House Guide) were pleased to explain the different types of session offered, plus the improvements that are going to be made to the site and service. These include converting the Pump House into a learning centre, expanding the number of education sessions, and developing the catering offer by employing a dedicated staff member.

While our cottage buns baked, Emily gave a presentation about the Cresta exhibition which she put together in partnership with the University of Hertfordshire. Emily was candid about the challenges and complexities of working with students, shared what she had learnt from the project, and proudly explained how successful it was proving to be. This ranged from a very well-attended launch to helping to secure the loan of two artworks from the Tate next year.

The aroma of freshly baked buns ready for participants to take home, signalled the end of a friendly, varied Study Day. Thank you to our hosts and to the SEMFed committee who arranged it.

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