

12,000 people visit Herbert Gallery for 'Collecting Coventry' exhibition

IN the first two months since opening, around 12,000 people have already attended a major exhibition at the Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, highlighting the incredible range of collections gathered by the museum during the last 75 years.

The 'Collecting Coventry' exhibition features a variety of items from the city's social and economic history, as well as items of art, archaeology and natural history.

"Explore what we have in store through this fascinating exhibition packed full of objects and curiosities, from a 4.5-billion-year-old meteorite to a Covid testing kit," says the museum. "Visit old favourites like LS Lowry's superb painting of Ebbw Vale and discover new items being shown for the first time."



Image: Herbert Art Gallery & Museum

One unique object featured in the exhibition is the Ogham Stone, a rare and ancient rock found in a Coventry garden in 2020. The Herbert explains: "Whilst the country was in lockdown in May 2020, Coventry local Graham Senior was passing the time by gardening, when he came upon an unusual looking rock.

"The rock, at around 11cm in length, appeared to have several horizontal incisions along the side. Mr Senior shared his discovery with the Portable Antiquities Scheme, also known as finds.co.uk, who confirmed that the stone was inscribed with ogham, an Early Irish language dating back over 1,600 years."

Mr Senior said: "It caught my eye as I was clearing an overgrown part of the garden. At first, I thought it was some kind of calendar. Finding out later it was an ogham stone and over 1,600 years old was incredible."

Ogham was an alphabet used in the Early Medieval period primarily for writing in the early Irish language. Before the people of Ireland began using manuscripts made from vellum, they used the ogham writing system to inscribe on materials such as stone. Ogham is highly unusual among world writing systems, consisting solely of parallel lines in groups of 1-5. The stones provide insight into the Irish language before the use of the Latin insular script.

Visitors can see the Ogham Stone, along with many other items of interest - especially the amazing collection of art - in the 'Collecting Coventry' exhibition, which continues until April 2025. □

Summer break

THE history group takes its usual summer break during August and September. We plan to return to Stoke Library in October.

THE former Empire concert venue in Far Gosford Street has finally been sold. But uncertainty still surrounds the long-term future of the site.

According to local press reports, the former cinema was sold in early July for an undisclosed sum. Auctioneer Sally Smith told *Coventry Live* that the new owner, who has not been named, plans to breathe new life into the run-down venue, which has stood empty for four years.



Photograph: John Marshall

As previously reported in *Jabet's Ash*, developers submitted plans in 2021 to demolish the building and replace it with student accommodation. But no construction took place and the site remains unused and unoccupied.

The original cinema here was The Crown, which opened in 1912. It closed for modernisation in 1957 and was renamed the Paris Luxury Continental Cinema when it reopened in 1958, later shorted to the Paris. The grand frontage of the original building has long been lost and the old cinema lay derelict for a number of years after its closure in 1981. It reopened in 1999 as Riley's American Pool & Snooker Club, before being revived again as the hugely successful Empire concert venue, which moved four years ago to its current home in Hertford Street. □

Bull Yard – then and now



Photographs: John Marshall



WE know that Bull Yard will soon be demolished - along with Shelton Square, City Arcade and Market Way - to make way for the long-awaited City Centre South development. But do you remember Bull Yard as it was, around twenty years ago? It was then dominated by The Dome, a popular newsagent shop, designed in 1965 by city architect Arthur Ling. The photograph of Bull Yard with the Dome (below left) was taken in 1994 and the more recent picture in 2021.

Weaver's House open days

ANYONE who missed our group visit to the Weaver's House in June might like to know that an Open Day will take place at the house on Saturday August 10th. The house will also be open on the weekend of September 14th and 15th during Heritage Open Days. Admission to the house is free (donations welcome) and the opening times are 10am to 4pm.