

## SOLE THOUGHTS ON EXHIBITIONS

Village Exhibitions are rather like spinning tops - give them a whip-up to get them going and before you know where you are they are gyrating at such a pace that everyone is left breathless.

This was certainly the case at the two Village Exhibitions encouraged by the Leics. Local History Council in recent months, one at Walton by Kimcote and one at Waltham on the Wolds. I think I can truly say that no one was so surprised as the organisers at the response, not only from the visitors, but from the village exhibitors. Treasures rolled in from every side.

My own experience of Village Exhibitions began a long time ago, before they became the fashion - in 1949 I believe - in Desford. I had become interested in my village's history and was a keen Wren's Institute Record keeper. I was fortunate to have a colleague who was Desford born and bred and who knew everyone and could tell me just the people to ask for old photographs, pictures and bygones. In no time at all, but with, of course, a good deal of hard groundwork, we had a Hall full of exhibits and a fascinated audience. Since then we have put on two or three more Exhibitions at intervals of a few years, each bigger and better than the last. Our material has increased as the number of scrap books, photographs and other treasures multiply as the years go by. A large notice at our first attempt said "These exhibits have been lent or given to Desford Village Record. You may have similar things at home. Please let us borrow them or keep them for you in our Village Record." Many things were, in fact, given to us and we are hard put to it to house our Village Record and this is a problem to be faced one day.

However, the point I wish to make is that for the first Exhibition we made a careful list of exhibits and where they came from, so that we could be sure that each treasure was safely returned. This list, luckily, we KEPT, and so for future occasions we know exactly where to go to borrow again. It also enables us to keep an eye on things. If an old person dies and it is known that there is someone who would like those old photographs which no one else wants - well, sometimes they come our way, though the utmost tact is needed in approaching the bereaved family, of course!

I do feel that it is very important that a Village Exhibition, stuffed with things of local interest, should not be allowed to end there and I would urge all organisers to try to make a simple Inventory of things borrowed with name and address of lenders and any information that comes to light as a result of the "Try Questions" session, which has so successfully followed the Local History Council's two exhibitions. This is not an easy task, of course, as everything happens at a great speed towards the end of the preparations and a constant watch must be kept on exhibits, but if it could be done I am sure that the very great deal of hard work done by the organisers would be so much more worth while and lasting.

We hope to encourage many more exhibitions in the future - in fact we have quite a queue of interested villages anxious to have a go - and if these could produce at the end, either to keep in the village or to deposit in some central place, a Record of the Exhibits, we should then be doing a really worth while piece of Local History.

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