

An August Afternoon at Hitchin Museum - by Barbara Bullen

14 August 2009

As I enter the Museum to begin my afternoon duty, standing in for a colleague who is on holiday, the morning's minor irritations and worries fall away, and once again I am absorbed into the magical world of being a Visitor Services Officer.

Tiny tots tumble in and run about, before being constrained by anxious mothers, grandmothers and other relatives, who fear for the coming night's nightmares. It is the Dr Who exhibition!

The strains of the theme tune come echoing across the hall and evoke smiles from superior granddads, uncles and aunts - their behind the sofa memories are rekindled.

Bored teenagers want to be elsewhere - but where? They turn the boxed Collectors' items over and seem to drift in and out of consciousness.

Visitors long to tell me where they have come from - Australia, California - we have a brief discussion of the bankrupted state - what will happen in the San Fernando valley now, where will the silicon industry go?

I remember old black and white cowboy films, with the sheriff galloping round and round the same starkly magnificent mountains - possibly in Utah? And we children all shouting "Head them off at the pass!".

Quiz sheets are completed (it is the holidays!)

Other features are explored, giving rise to

"Do I know? How does this work? Where is the library? It is just next door!

An ambulance screams by with flashing blue lights - on it's way to a very different scene. I silently say a prayer.

It is almost closing time - and time to lock up, switch off the lights and set alarms. And go home - but wait - the telephone rings, last minute checks from adults planning tomorrow's outings : Will you be open tomorrow? "Yes and give details". "No there is no charge", "We look forward to seeing you".

The weather forecast is rain - we shall be very busy again.

Barbara Bullen 4th August 2009

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