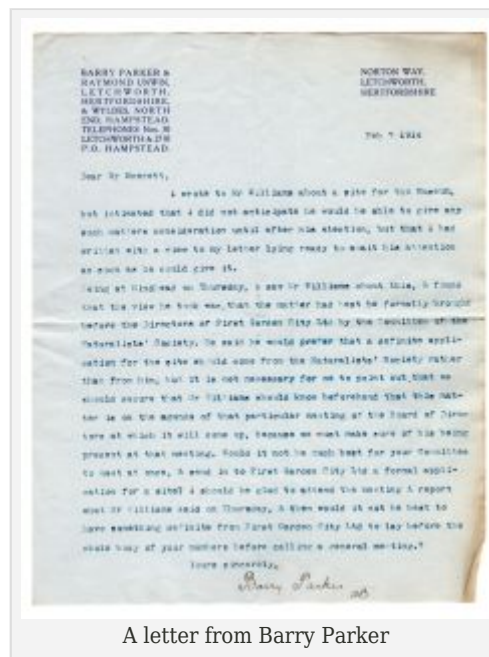


North Herts Museum update: one hundred years ago today...

One hundred years ago today, Barry Parker, one of the architects of Letchworth Garden City, wrote a letter giving a fascinating insight into the beginnings of Letchworth Museum and the people involved in setting it up.

The letter is about finding a site for a museum. Barry Parker had already written about this to Aneurin Williams, Chairman of First Garden City Ltd, and had also met him to discuss the matter further. The general agreement seems to be that the committee of the Naturalists' Society should make a formal application to the directors of First Garden City Ltd, and once First Garden City Ltd have responded, the matter can be further discussed by the wider membership of the Naturalists Society.



A letter from Barry Parker

A W Brunt gives a good summary of the setting up and early years of the museum in his book "Pageant of Letchworth". He wrote this while he held the Chair of the Naturalists' Society, a post he had taken up in 1923 and continued to hold into the 1940s, so he would have experienced it all first hand.

There had been talk about having a museum as part of the new Garden City for several years. In 1906 the Letchworth Citizen mentioned that part of the original plan for Howard Hall had included a museum to show the archaeology that had been uncovered on the Garden City Estate. When the Garden City Naturalists' Society was set up in 1908, it included amongst its aims 'the formation of a museum'. Other members of the Naturalists' Society included Barry Parker and W P Westell (who was to become the first museum curator), and the Secretary in 1914 was Rev E Everett, to whom this letter is addressed. Though he had written to Mr Williams, Barry Parker notes that he "did not anticipate he would be able to give any such matters consideration until after his election". In January of that year, Aneurin Williams was elected as the Liberal candidate for North West Durham. A month later, Barry Parker had managed to meet him to discuss the museum matter further, and so plans had been put in place at this point to progress the project.

North Herts Museum update: one hundred years ago today...

Though 100 years seems a long time ago, the letters and newspapers from this time reveal familiar stories. Just as these men spent many years discussing and working towards the building of the Letchworth Museum, so the museum service and people of North Hertfordshire have long been talking about the plans for our new museum. It will be interesting to follow the progress of the plans from 100 years ago in future blogs, and note at the same time the progress being made in our own project as both move towards realisation.

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