

# Three new buildings rise from the ground!

From the very beginning of this year there has been considerable construction activity on the Museum site as buildings from the 18th/19th centuries join our historic building exhibits.

Down by the millpond, the roof of the Eastwick Park Dairy was thatched in early January after being raised before Christmas, and the tiling of the Newdigate Bakehouse was completed following structural work on the walls and roof in November and December. Both buildings are originally from Surrey and their re-erection was made possible by a DCMS/Wolfson Museums & Galleries Improvement Fund grant.

At the other end of the site, near Bayleaf farmhouse, the frame of the 18th century May Day Farm barn was raised, led by the Museum's Carpenter-in-Residence, Joe Thompson. The barn, and its associated stable building, were offered to the Museum owing to a road widening scheme between Tonbridge and Pembury, Kent, by Balfour Beatty, which is funding their re-erection.

All this activity has provided great chances for our visitors to see the construction and conservation work at close quarters and hear short presentations by Museum staff and volunteers. As work continues, so of course do the conversations – each historic structure throws up many questions from the day it comes down through the reconstruction and repair process to the days which see it grow on a new site at the Museum.

Do assumptions about the way to approach particular elements of the conservation and reconstruction based on the initial research still hold true? Will new materials sourced to cover a shortfall in existing materials be appropriate for the building? How will the internal spaces be laid out to explain their uses as well as changes over time? What demonstrations and special activities do these structures inspire?

All these challenges are approached with care to ensure the integrity of our interpretation of the buildings and that we stay true to the Museum's ethos, while at



Work underway during the winter on the Eastwick Park Dairy, the Newdigate Bakehouse and May Day Farm barn.

the same time providing exciting new experiences for our visitors. The opportunity to produce bread, and butter and cheese within our new food production buildings is tantalising, and we will be busy over the coming months developing a range of activities within them.

In the meantime visitors will enjoy seeing

the new exhibits as they rise from the ground and appear from behind scaffolding. Catch up with developments through the Museum's website and social media as we share the most up-to-date images of the projects and regular updates.

*(See also page 9 for another article on the Dairy.)*