

I am presenting a petition, launched by the Friends of Tolson & Ravensknowle, to secure the future of Tolson Museum. We are asking that you keep Tolson Museum as the Museum of Huddersfield. That you make sure that money is found to repair this fine listed building. It holds the heritage of Huddersfield, available to all.

The museum contains collections of the history, industry, diverse culture and environment of Huddersfield. Ravensknowle House and Park were given to Huddersfield Corporation in 1919 by Legh Tolson as a 'lasting memorial' to his two nephews killed in the First World War. The mansion house and dwelling house "shall be used as a local museum for Huddersfield".

The petition is an 'on line' petition and a 'hard copy' petition totalling over a thousand signatures.

The Friends of Tolson and Ravensknowle was formed in 2012, we now have about 120 members, including people from all parties. They regularly receive a newsletter. We have many more supporters. We have been successful in raising £102k for a Heritage Memorial Garden adjacent to Tolson Museum. We were awarded £97k for this from Heritage Lottery and raised a further £5k from Huddersfield Area Committee, local businesses and charities. The garden will be opened on 12th October.

We have also been successful in developing the Museum as a centre for the local community with regular monthly meetings on a Wednesday afternoon. We have organised other events such as the 'Classic Motorbike Rally', an exhibition over the summer of art by the local artist Ken Taylor, and we have an annual Christmas event. We plan a Great Tolson Bake off in March. Mikron Theatre came to present their play Troupers in the new garden recently. We have organised a series of lectures this autumn in conjunction with Huddersfield University. We are making the Museum a centre of the local community and one of our aims is to bring people together in this friendly and interesting environment.

In the 'on line' petition there have been many thoughtful and passionate words about the value of Tolson Museum and its contents and the need to keep it open and available to all.

As already stated it just under 100 years ago Ravensknowle House, Hall and parkland were given to Huddersfield Corporation in an act of huge generosity and there is massive support to honour and respect this.

The House was built as one of the 'Brass Castles' of Huddersfield and is architecturally a fine example of the 'palatial Italian style'.

The Museum is a valuable repository of Huddersfield's history. It contains information that continues to inform the underpinning philosophy on which the town is based. To lose this important repository of knowledge of the town through the ages would be a devastating blow to all people that have been born and lived in this diverse and fascinating area.

Besides being mainly, and most importantly a local history museum, the museum has some world class collections, these include the 'lithics' ( stones, Dr P Preston) collection and the entomology (insects) cabinets which are valued by specialists in these fields.

As a local museum, planned by the erudite Dr Woodhead, is was described as the 'best example of a really local museum.(1928) A museum such as this stimulates interest in local history and is undoubtedly one of the most valuable community assets that could be owned by a council. It has been described as one of the magical places of childhood.

It should be an essential part of a civilised and cultured town.

There is a duty to maintain Tolson Museum for future generations in order that they may understand how the town has grown and developed over time. Those who allow the museum to fall into disrepair would be guilty of depriving future generations of knowledge of their heritage. Having 'Pride in Huddersfield' is meaningless without the concrete evidence of the past upon which the modern Huddersfield is based.

All this demonstrates that Tolson Museum is a valued and very important asset to Huddersfield.

Next we, the 'Friends' will to put together a business plan for Tolson museum. To start we need an accurate, costed survey of the state of the building. This is your building, this is what you should do. There are lots of figures being banded around but they are meaningless.

And finally a very pertinent comment made on the 'on line' petition. The bequest to Huddersfield was made to honour two young men who gave their lives. It's valuing what is important, otherwise what did those young men lose their lives to keep!

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