BHG News August 2025

Borden Heritage Group members visited The Criterion Heritage Centre in Blue Town Sheerness this month.
The present Heritage Centre is on the site of 2 earlier establishments. Originally the "New Inn" in 1868 the site became "The Royal Oxford Music Hall". The following year the building became The Criterion public house, with a music hall called 'The Palace of Varieties' situated immediately to its rear.

This offered "rational amusement for all classes" including in April 1876, a one armed juggler! In 1879 the earlier building was replaced with a brick built one.

The heritage centre itself is jam packed with items, memorabilia and artefacts that the island is famous for including a replica of Lord Nelsons cabin on HMS Victory, a war time kitchen and school room; we also had the opportunity to track down the amazing colony of scorpions which arrived on Sheppey 200 hundred years ago and are still living within the dockyard wall.

The main space at the centre is the Music Hall. After being damaged and falling into disrepair, following a German bombing raid in WW1, the room has now been lovingly restored over the past few years to its new found glory and continues its main purpose of entertaining the public once again with a wide variety of entertainments.

We recommend that you take a look at www.thecriterionbluetown.co.uk for further information on the current programme. There is no charge for entrance to the museum.

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