

Museum owner reveals extension plans

*Rebecca Cain,
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AT a day to celebrate the life of a war heroine plans were revealed to extend a museum which celebrates her life. Rosemary Rigby owns and runs the Violette Szabo G.C. Memorial Museum in Wormelow in the south of the county.

Violette was born in 1921 to an English father and a French mother and served as a spy for the allied forces during the Second World War. She was captured by the Nazis and killed at Ravensbrook. Violette spent many holidays at the Old Kennels in Wormelow where her uncle and auntie lived, which is now Cartref House where Rosemary lives.



Every year Rosemary celebrates Violette's birthday by inviting special guests to the museum and she took the opportunity to announce she has received planning permission to build an extension to the museum which will be 15 square metres and give her the opportunity to display more of Violette's memorabilia. Rosemary said: "I have given myself three years to complete it. In 2021 it will be 100 years since her birth - that is the day I want to open. When people visit they say you need more room."

The day was also dedicated to the late Hortense Daman-Clewes. While living in Stoke-on-Trent Hortense had the honour of receiving the freedom of her city and also the City of London for her special bravery during the war, as when she was 14 and living in Belgium she saved the lives of 20 British airmen by taking food to them in their hiding places on her bike. By the time she was 16 she was in Ravensbrook, which is where she met Violette. Violette found out Hortense was sleeping on the floor.

Rosemary said: "Violette Szabo said 'I will go on the floor and you sleep on the top bunk'. It was life or death - one or the other. Violette Szabo gave her life - one was 16, one was 23. In those terrible conditions Violette was able to think about someone else. It was so overcrowded at the camp. It was a remarkable friendship but so fleeting."



As Hortense saved airmen and it is the RAF's centenary year, Rosemary invited Air Commodore V.L. Warrington OBE, who is retired from the RAF, as a guest speaker. There was also a parade from The Park, Wormelow which included RAF servicemen.

Rosemary is now going to fundraise to build the museum extension. If you can help call 01981 540477.