



## D M A Newsletter

December 2013

### Editorial

David M Riches

Welcome to the December 2013 Newsletter. Firstly a big thank you to all our contributors for such a good variety of interesting articles. I just love seeing what the other museums in Dorset are doing and I hope our readers do too. I particularly commend to you Vicky de Wit's Museum Development News for highlighting all the opportunities for grants, help and training.

This time we have another bumper issue and, as Weymouth Museum is about to reopen, I have taken the opportunity to include photographs of some of the new display, all of which have been prepared on a shoestring budget by our willing band of volunteers. However, we haven't finished yet as we have a second gallery to prepare, populate with new displays, and open, keeping my fingers crossed, next year.

The DMA AGM in Scaplen's Court, Poole was a good experience. The business side was short and there were some very good talks. Several 'Volunteer of the Year' awards were presented and I was both surprised and pleased to be awarded one of them.

The next newsletter will be the March one, so please send me your articles, letters, pictures, programmes, etc by the end of February.

Best wishes for Christmas and the New Year to you all.

*David*

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# Horn Hill Tunnel & Beaminster Museum

## Duncan Harris

Recent events with the landslip and its tragic consequences have caused renewed interest in the tunnel. The history of the tunnel has featured in Beaminster Museum since the early 1990s when the museum opened. One of the earliest publications in 1994, by the then curator Marie Eedle, was about the tunnel, the last one remaining from the pre-railway era still open to traffic. The other two were Charmouth and Reigate: Reigate is now for pedestrians only and Charmouth is a rifle range.

When the tunnel was completed in 1832 it was noted about the site: "... the Hill unexpectedly consisting of very wet and running sand". It took about 180 years for that to occur again with the consequent tragedy.

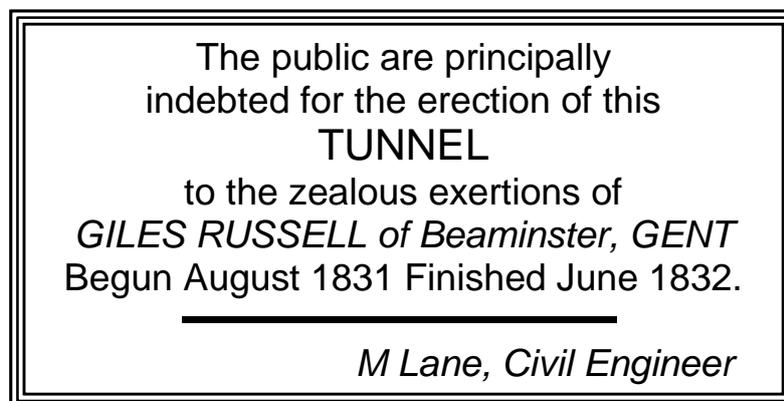
The reason for building the tunnel was to reduce the incline on the toll road up Horn Hill. Horse drawn traffic was taking alternative routes to avoid the hill to the detriment of Beaminster at that time, still in the heyday of the sailcloth industry. Local businesses and individuals raised £11 000 to enable the project to take place with Giles Russell, a Beaminster solicitor, as patron. The chief engineer was Michael Lane who also built Charmouth Tunnel after previous experience with the Brunels on the Rotherhithe Tunnel. He later went on to be chief engineer of the Great Western Railway. There was one tragic death during the construction, and a small stone painted with a white cross in memory of that Beaminster workman is still visible near to the South portal.

The opening for the tunnel was a grand event. There were reported to be over 9000 spectators. The procession had banners, two bands, 60 carriages with people in their finery, followed by 400 men walking in pairs: the tradesmen with their tools, and the labourers with their picks and shovels.

The then Princess Victoria, with her mother the Duchess of Kent, especially diverted her route from Melbury Park to Lyme Regis in order to travel through the tunnel in August 1833. Cannons were fired, the church bells rung and music played by a band.

The tolls were eventually removed in 1881. Families who looked after the lighting in the tunnel occupied the old tollhouse to the north of the tunnel. In 1910 the Rendells moved in. One of our current volunteers is a descendant from the family and was born there. His grandmother, Mrs Clara Rendell, lit the lamps for about 20 years. She would take a ladder and top up each lamp with paraffin, trim the wick and light the lamp. Meanwhile two of her children would stop the traffic at each end of the tunnel. The tollhouse was eventually demolished in 1963.

Above each portal was a stone plaque:



When the landslip occurred the stone plaque on the North portal was shattered as it fell. The pieces that could be salvaged are on loan to the museum and have been assembled in our garden. There is a new replica on the repaired North portal.

The hill surrounding the tunnel has now been stabilised using nearly 1000 12-metre (38ft) pins holding netting in place and is expected to hold for another 100 years. The lighting in the tunnel is now automatic and electric so there is no need to halt today's much larger articulated lorries whilst the lamps are lit!

The new interest in the tunnel has prompted us to rethink our exhibition. On the stairs of the museum is a very deep window with a surround roughly like the tunnel entrance. The tunnel will be reproduced using the window as a basis and the exhibition mounted inside and around the window.

The tunnel has always been one of the jewels in Beaminster's crown but its closure, because of the tragedy, was almost certainly a significant factor in our reduced visitor numbers earlier this summer. The good news is that we've recovered since it re-opened.



*Mrs Clara Rendell with her ladder*



*The tollhouse – passengers stretch their legs while the engine cools down*

*The plaque jigsaw puzzle at Beaminster Museum*



## Bridport Museum- A Life of Dr. Roberts

### Emily Hicks, Curator

A few months ago we secured at auction an incredible 19th Century biography of Dr. Roberts, an 18<sup>th</sup> Century Bridport physician. Thank you very much to our Friends organisation, who contributed £300 to securing it and giving us the chance to deepen our understanding of one of Bridport's most important figures.

The book has added to our already substantial collection relating to Dr. Roberts. We think that Dr. Roberts is under-recognised for his importance in the field of medicine and science more generally. The popularity of the 'Poor Man's Friend' was second only to Thomas Holloway's, and it was still available in 1950 when it was sold in three sizes of small white jars. Pots were distributed all over the world and have been found all around Britain as well as Ireland, America, Canada and South Africa.

A clever man, Roberts had wide-ranging interests including medical botany, and by the age of thirteen he had developed some early medicines. He also undertook experiments in electricity and magnetism. In 1788 he set up a chemists business in Bridport. It was popular and successful, with his fame spreading over the county borders. He later trained in London to become an 'apothecary, surgeon and physician.' His fame and practice spread, and in 1797 he was awarded an Honorary MD from the Royal College and University of Aberdeen in Scotland. Word spread throughout the area of his abilities, and of the patent medicines. Some of the more famous patients were very ready to sing his praises, and so his fame spread far and wide. By the early 1800s Roberts had developed his two famous medicines for skin disorders, 'Pilulae Antiscrophule' and the 'Poor Man's Friend' ointment. In 1807 Roberts was appointed Medical Attendant to the poor in Bridport, campaigned for better hygiene and during a cholera epidemic distributed a tract on healthy living funded by his own pocket.

Dr. Roberts even built his own museum of natural and artificial curiosities. On February 9<sup>th</sup> 1822 the Weymouth Gazette listed some of its contents: a musical clock on top of which a blackbird warbled to the tune, a large glass cases of natural history including a penguin, an African crane, a Great Diver, and other smaller rare birds; flying fish brought back on a Bridport ship, a scorpion, viper and insects preserved in spirits; cases of geology, mineralogy and chronology; a large picture of Henrietta, Consort of Charles 1, a boy's head by Joshua Reynolds, a portrait of Dr Roberts by Carter Galpin, a collection of engravings from Italian and Flemish masters; philosophical apparatus, microscopes, electric machines in every stage of improvement, including one for exhibiting the Aurora Borealis invented by the doctor; collections of models, medals and coins, specimens of lion, tiger, fox and other large mammals, many of which Dr. Roberts cured and stuffed himself, several skins, several human skulls of New Zealand chiefs ; a large whale or mammoth bone which had been found in Burton Bradstock cliffs in 1828 which the doctor paid 10 guineas for.

He apparently paid exorbitant prices for things and the collection had cost him several thousand of pounds. When the collection was sold, after his death, it raised only a few hundred pounds. A visitor's book was kept and recorded many thousands of visitors from a wide area. About two years before his death, in 1834, Princess Victoria and her mother, the Duchess of Kent, passed through Bridport and stayed at the Bull Hotel. Dr. Roberts sent them his card and invited them to visit his museum of curiosities, which they declined!

Dr. Roberts undoubtedly deserves to be more appreciated in the history books than he is. There was obviously great trust generally in his techniques, as in a 19<sup>th</sup> Century biography he was regarded as *'the best physician...not who talks best, or who writes best, but who performs the most cures'*.



## Thomas Hardy Archive & Collection

### Rachel Cole, Dorset County Museum

In July 2013 The Thomas Hardy Archive and Collection held at Dorset County Museum was added to the UNESCO Member of the World Register alongside such artefacts as the Domesday Book and the papers of Sir Winston Churchill.

The register exists to record documentary heritage which holds material of exceptional cultural significance to the UK and is of outstanding value in terms of time, place and people.

In total eleven items were selected from the UK's libraries, archives and museums to represent the outstanding heritage of the United Kingdom. From the Domesday Book to Hitchcock's Silent Films, these priceless items span nearly 900 years, come from across the country and embody pivotal moments in the history of their communities and the UK as a whole.

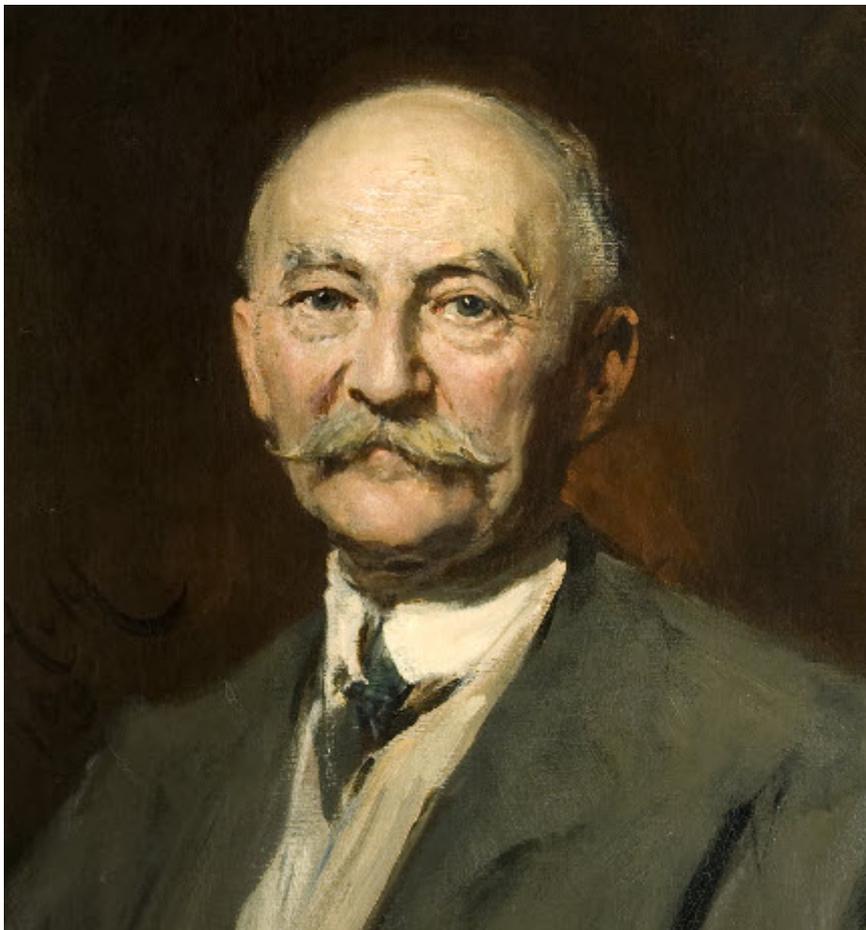
#### Thomas Hardy Archive & Collection

Thomas Hardy is a literary figure of international importance, both seminal and transitional, chronicling the traditions and culture of the rural community of Dorset, the impact of new ideas, scientific discoveries, social mobility, in an age on the cusp of change. The universality of his themes, power of his story-telling, and range of his poetry, makes Hardy's work relevant to all generations and nationalities, and an inspiration to artists in all media.

The Hardy Collection is unique and unmatched anywhere in the world, comprising over 7,000 items, with many manuscripts, including *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, two other novels and two volumes of poetry.

The items on display in the Hardy section of the Writer's Dorset Gallery are all included as part of this award.

Access to the archive is by appointment - please email [hardy@dorsetcountymuseum.org](mailto:hardy@dorsetcountymuseum.org) or [secretary@dorsetcountymuseum.org](mailto:secretary@dorsetcountymuseum.org) or telephone 01305 262735 for further information.



*Hardy  
by  
Herkomer*

## **Sturminster Newton Museum & Mill Society News**

### **John Pigeon, Chairman**

We held a successful and enjoyable coach to Portsmouth Historic Dockyard on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> October for members and supporters of the society. Since then we have had interesting talks on 'Steam Trains Through the Ages' with pictures and the sounds of trains roaring through the Exchange and on problems that face a speaker.

We have now finalised a programme of talks though to next year; they are all held at The Exchange starting at 7.30pm and include:

Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> December - Brian Bates on 'When the Germans Invaded Dorchester'

Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> February - Rev. Stuart Timbell on 'Clerical Errors - Bricks Dropped over 40 Years by the Ministry'.

Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> March - Patrick Pead on 'Benjamin Jesty, Dorset's Vaccination Pioneer'

Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> April - Johnathan McGowan on 'Taxidermy - My Way'.

We are also holding another of our quiz nights with ploughman's supper on Friday 17<sup>th</sup> January at the Exchange - tickets for teams of 4 - 6 in advance available from the museum.

Our museum will remain open on Mondays, Thursdays and Friday 10am - 3pm and on Saturday 10am - 12.30pm until Christmas with our shop selling Christmas cards, gifts and stocking fillers.

We have a brilliant new display upstairs, with fascinating photographs and stories, about former shops and trades in Sturminster Newton. It has been assembled by Jo Trowbridge with some help from Pat Ager.

Gail Arkins who lives in Melbourne, Australia, has given us a WW1 "Dead Man's Penny", a commemorative bronze plaque given to the families of those killed in active service after the war. The name on the plaque is Wallace John Lydford and by further research Gail found that he was a postman in Sturminster Newton before his death in 1916. Along with many other museums, next year we will be commemorating 1914 and the beginning of WW1. We would dearly like to borrow or copy photographs of the men written on the WW1 Roll of Honour (including Wallace Lydford) in St Mary's church. Similarly, we would like to hear any family stories about that period and would be interested in any remaining artefacts that we might borrow.

We are now putting together an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund to support the building of an extension to the museum that will act as a new display area but will also provide us with a room for educational and other activities for children and families.

Following our re-starting commercial milling at Sturminster mill in May there has been a tremendous demand for our flour throughout the summer. We have only just managed to keep up with demand by having more milling days in each month that we had planned. Flour is still on sale at the museum and in some of the shops in Stur.



*HMS Victory*

**SOME OF THE OLD BUSINESSES  
AND TRADES OF STURMINSTER**



One of the earliest known photographs of the Market Cross area, which dates from the mid-1850s. At this time Market House - the building in the centre of the picture, was owned by Thomas Carter Peacock, a local business Peacock & Co who were Linen & Woollen Drapers. Market House was built on the site of the old Market House that was partially destroyed by fire in 1725. It was well and shown remnants of a 17th century stone building. The upper part of Market House was used as a Ware House until its demolition was a Quaker Druggist.



**Important Announcement!**  
HUGE SUMMER SALE  
of All Superior Quality Goods.  
MONDAY JULY 11th  
MORNING 10 O'CLOCK & EVENING  
6 O'CLOCK  
W. J. HENDER  
STURMINSTER NEWTON.

Charles Stephen Gander, (who can be seen on the right), ran the Coburns business out of Market House since 1901 to 1922. The 1901 census lists as FVW an member originally came from South in Cornwall and that he lived at Market House with his wife and son. At the time he employed two Milliners and four servants, two of which were also a Drapery Assistant and a Drapery Apprentice.



**STURMINSTER NEWTON POST OFFICE (YEAR UNKNOWN)**  
The old Post Office in the town centre closed in August 1954. It moved to 'The Post' in Dorset Place where it is today. Does anyone know any of the people in the photograph?



**STURMINSTER NEWTON POST OFFICE IN 1895**  
The Sturminster Newton Post Office was moved situated in the building in the left of Lynde Park from 1826 to 1834. John Moxley was a watch and clock maker, jeweller and the vice warden. The first news was later taken over by the son David Leonard Moxley. In 1891 the news and post was carried to Bournemouth, calling at Milborne Sturminster and Sturminster in the morning, picking up and delivering and making a return journey in the afternoon. There were three deliveries of milk a day.



Frederick G. Woods was also a Draper and Confectioner during most of the 1920s.



Alex. J. Moxley was the last Draper in this priority from the late 1920s until the mid 1950s.



This the front of Market House that is now occupied by 'Robt and Wm'. This picture was taken in 1920 when Mr. Tom Robt the butcher, (brother of above), opened out his business there. On the left is Mr. Charles Crow and on the right is Mr. John Crow. (The photo is in the collection of Mr. J. H. Crow).



This is one of Sturminster's postmen, Mr George Pope carrying out deliveries on his bicycle since 1920.



*New display*

*Dead Man's Penny*



## Gillingham Museum David Lloyd, Chairman

### Community Hero Awards

We were pleased to learn that two of our volunteers, Sam Woodcock and Lyn Light, were among recipients of the town's first Community Hero awards. The Mayor of Gillingham, Cllr.Val Potheary, presented an award to Lyn for her 15 years as Museum curator and to Sam for his work as Chairman and President of the Local History Society.



*Lyn Light and Sam Woodcock  
with their Community Awards  
– photo by Peter Booton*

### It's a Small World

During the summer, Chairman David Lloyd had chance encounters with visitors to the town from Western Australia. In July, Rod Read visited the Museum – he was researching his family history and his ancestor George READ emigrated from Gillingham to Western Australia in 1829 on board the ship *Rockingham*. In September, a lady spoke to David outside the then closed Museum. It transpired she was also on the family history trail and her ancestor Samuel MARTIN emigrated to Western Australia with the Read family. What a coincidence! In October, David found a book in the reference section of Gillingham Library called 'Rockingham, Rock-bottom, Rock-solid'. This was the story of John and Ann PARSONS who also emigrated on the same ship. The Parsons and family, like many of the passengers, lost everything when the *Rockingham* was shipwrecked off the coast of Western Australia. It was a rough start and life remained tough as they battled to make a living once it became obvious that the Peel and Levy Scheme, which had brought them out to Australia, could not deliver its promises. They lived in 'rock bottom' poverty. However the children managed to establish themselves and became 'rock-solid' citizens in many parts of Australia. The town which was eventually settled near to the emigrants' arrival point was named Rockingham.



*The Rockingham – from a painting  
by R H Shardlow*

The passenger list of the *Rockingham* does not record the towns and villages where the emigrants came from. If any Dorset Museum is aware of other passengers who emigrated on the *Rockingham* then David Lloyd will be pleased to receive any information.



*Rod Read from Mandurah, WA,  
and David Lloyd in Gillingham  
Museum*

### **Diamond Anniversary**

Society and Museum volunteers met at the Museum recently to celebrate 60 years of the Local History Society. Chairman, David Lloyd welcomed volunteers and special guests, including the Town Mayor, and took the opportunity to thank Peter Crocker for his past 30 years' service. President, Sam Woodcock, thanked all volunteers for their contribution to the Society and presented Peter with the door plaque to the new storage area, suitably named The Peter Crocker Room. Sam then invited Mayor Val Potheary to cut the ribbon and she duly obliged.



*Mayor Val Potheary and Peter Crocker cut the ribbon*

## **New exhibition coming to Dorset County Museum**

**Free Time: 15 February to 17 May 201**

Free Time is a brand new exhibition showcasing the results of a current project studying the changing nature of our leisure time over the last 60 years.

The project is being funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and aims to capture and preserve the memories and stories of local people who used to, or still do, pursue hobbies that aren't around so much nowadays. The new archive will be housed at the Dorset History Centre in Dorchester for future generations to study.

Joe Stevens, project leader, said; "When you look at old black & white photos or films it can look like a completely different age, but what we are hearing is that life today is not that different from times past." Joe added; "We are not just looking for people's memories from long ago, but also the recent past. We are hoping to capture a range of stories from 1945, right up to the present day." Working with Dorset County Museum and the Dorset History Centre, the project is enabling young people to collaborate and share with the older population in a range of activities leading up to the exhibition. As well as the archive, there will also be a website and an app for a 'Walking Museum' around Dorchester. Volunteers who take part will gain skills in oral history recording and will also learn about archive creation and curation.

Volunteers are now out in the community capturing local people's leisure time memories in Bridport, Dorchester, Weymouth & Portland, and Sherborne. If you are interested in your story being added to this archive, or you would like to find out more about this project, please get in touch with Joe Stevens on 07784 874112, email [joe@freetimeourstories.org.uk](mailto:joe@freetimeourstories.org.uk). or visit [freetimeourstories.org.uk](http://freetimeourstories.org.uk).

The Free Time exhibition will run at Dorset County Museum from 15 February to 17 May 2014.

This Free Time community oral history project has been initiated by arts and educational charity digital:works and funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. It sees a range of organisations join together, including Thomas Hardy school, AgeUK, POPP, U3A, Dorset History Centre and Dorset County Museum to create a new archive of what we got up to in our everyday leisure-time. Elements of our research will go into an exhibition at Dorset County Museum in March 2014 and the release of a free to download app.

Digital:works is an arts and educational charity that works with communities, providing training and creative assistance to produce arts and media projects. They offer a breadth of experience and expertise, providing training and creative support in a wide range of media, from web development, video and stop-frame animation, to textile and oral history projects.

For further information please contact:

Rachel Cole

Dorset County Museum

Tel: 01305 262735 or email [rachel@dorsetcountymuseum.org](mailto:rachel@dorsetcountymuseum.org)

Dorset County Museum High West Street Dorchester Dorset DT1 1XA

Tel: 01305 262735. [www.dorsetcountymuseum.org](http://www.dorsetcountymuseum.org)

## SHERBORNE MUSEUM AT THE MEMORY CAFE

**Elisabeth Bletsoe, Curator**

Several psychological studies have shown that reminiscence can be effective in improving the cognition and mood of those suffering with dementia, more particularly in mild to moderate cases. During this type of therapy, the past is discussed generally with the use of stimuli such as music or pictures or it can be used with an individual to help them reconstruct their life-biography. Cognitive functions have been found to increase, while depressive symptoms decrease and there may also be a reduction in strain between the sufferers and their carers.

The Alzheimer's Society is very much in favour of this kind of activity and highlights empowerment, raised self-esteem, improved communication, stimulation, fun and enhanced mood as some of the benefits.

The Museum recently became involved with South and East Somerset Branch of the Alzheimer's Society, which holds Memory Cafes in Yeovil and Sherborne for people with dementia and their carers. This allows them the opportunity to meet in the company of others in a friendly and informal environment. Once a month, the Curator and a colleague take a box of handling artefacts or photos from the Museum on a theme of the Society volunteers' choice in the hope it will promote conversation, stimulate memories and assist with reorientation. Themes explored so far include holidays, toys and games, Christmas, royalty and the Second World War as well as old skills like thatching and willow-weaving. Reminiscence time allows individuals to talk about their life experiences, work, hobbies, personal belongings and the like and often triggers discussion within the group. The experience is extremely rewarding for the Museum staff and feedback from the Society's volunteers and staff indicates there are enormous benefits to be gained by all. Listening closely to a person shows them that they have value and offers insights into their needs and aspirations, while also helping to challenge ageist stereotypes. Participants enjoy handling the items, their mood is lifted and they very much look forward to each visit. In 2012, members of the Cafe descended the Museum to celebrate Dementia Awareness week, which included a guided tour and a cream tea provided by the Museum's volunteers. Unsurprisingly, another visit has been requested again on the feedback forms! We are hoping to extend our activities to local care homes and hospitals in the future.



*Staff and volunteers at Sherborne Memory Cafe*

## Portland Museum Pam Boyce

Portland Museum Trust had its Annual General Meeting last week, and presented an annual report which included a review of the season just finished, as well as progress on targets set the year before, and the “to do” list for 2014. It was reassuring to note that visitor numbers had improved from the dip caused by the Olympics last year, and consequently income was up as well. In fact, 2013 was the best year commercially since the Trust took over the Museum from Weymouth & Portland Borough Council in 2008. The targets we set ourselves were either met or are ongoing, and it is a good discipline to set new targets for 2014 to energise ourselves over the winter for the happy Spring day we open up for the first time in the new operating year.

It is always interesting to see how visitor numbers fluctuate from year to year (and try to guess why!), but a new influence, in the form of “Trip Advisor” has played an important part in helping us see immediately what people think of their experience as visitors to the Museum, and what can be improved. These comments can, of course, be instantly shared with people all over the world, so anybody with access to the internet while they are on holiday, can read a good review and decide the next day to visit Portland, and the Museum, where before they may not have considered it because they didn’t know about it. We all know from some of the terrible hotel and restaurant reviews that this website is something of a double-edged sword, but we were over the moon to read that Portland Museum was declared to be the “# 1 Portland Attraction” on the website’s home page. There was a huge number of varied comments, virtually all positive, but the thing that came through over and over again, was the warmth of the welcome by the stewards, and their knowledge about the Museum. Here are just a few of the comments (with apologies for the trumpet-blowing!)

*“This is a great little museum with lots to see and knowledgeable staff more than willing to guide you round. Snippets of history from a wide range of times, all local to Portland. Great quiz to keep the kids occupied and interested too. Don't miss this little treasure!”*

*“What a great little museum. It deserves to be visited and the displays are informative and interesting - don't miss it!”*

*“Quite small but if you are interested in Portland then it is packed to the rafters with interesting facts and articles. Small charge of £3.00 but worth every penny, this place is run for love not money”.*

*“A chance to indulge my passion for small museums, and this is one of the best. Very good on pre history with lots of fossils and iron age objects. One room dedicated to Portland Stone”.*

*“Very interesting, well displayed, well lighted exhibits pertaining to the history and prehistory of Portland and the area. The staff was exceptionally friendly and very well informed”.*

*“Very informative and great friendly staff”.*

*“The museum is small and simple with no frills. It has a section for each of the island's major historical themes and some very interesting storyboards and exhibits. It was £8 for a family of 4. Worth a visit.”*

Looking ahead to 2014, probably like many of the Dorset Museums, we are planning how we can commemorate the centenary of the start of World War I in a way that links it with Portland and its people. Portland Stone, the material used for the headstones on war graves, is the obvious connection, but it would be interesting to trace the history of some of the Portland men who went to war and how their wartime experiences affected their families on this close-knit Island. 2015 sees the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of a railway

to, and on Portland, so we are thinking well ahead to plan a major exhibition to mark this defining moment in Portland’s industrial history, firmly establishing transport links that arguably lessened the Island’s isolation from the ‘mainland’. Some must have thought then – and it might even be true today – that this was not necessarily a good thing! Finally, we have been lucky to secure a piece of submarine detection equipment developed on Portland at HMS Osprey on eBay, so thanks to some individual donations, this will take its place in the Maritime Room next year, along with a porthole complete with deadlight from HMS Hood, sunk in the Portland Harbour entrance to protect the Fleet from torpedo attack by German submarines in 1915.

A very happy Christmas to all involved in our wonderful Dorset museums, from all at Portland Museum. I’m sure you will appreciate the sentiment about the Museum being “run for love not money”. That’s why we enjoy what we do. You probably feel the same.

# Bournemouth, Dorset & Poole Museum Development News

## Vicky de Wit

### Funding Update

Congratulations to those of you who secured places on the *Digital Engagement* and *Rapid Retail* schemes this year. To those of you who were unable to submit an application this time around, there will another opportunity in the Spring, so do start thinking about whether you would like to apply. Here's a summary of what's on offer:

#### **What are Rapid Retail Assessments from South West Museum Development?**

This is a light touch business development project which can be tailored to meet the needs of individual museums. The Rapid Retail Assessments offer specialist support to help individual museums review their retail operations and improve them, through some of the following activities:

- *Tailored and focused mentoring from an independent consultant for you in your retail operations*
- *An assessment report, with recommendations for improvements in your retail operations*
- *Tailored support from independent consultants to help you implement changes to how your museum's retail operations are carried out*

#### **What is the Digital Engagement Scheme?**

- Would you like a professional audit of your website?
- Do you want to do more with your social media but don't know how to?
- Could you do with help to plan for more effective use of your online presence?

This scheme would offer you the opportunity to work with digital marketing consultants Claire Sully and John Brunsdon of Tickbox Marketing to audit your online activity and set the foundations of a strategy and action plan to increase impact, in short how to improve your museum's digital engagement with its target audiences.

The **AIM Sustainability Grant scheme** is currently open for applications up to 15<sup>th</sup> January 2014. It is intended to help medium and smaller members improve their medium and long-term viability. Sustainability projects that have been supported by grants include:

- Income generation through shop or cafe
- Business planning
- Review of governance or organisation
- Audience development
- Hardware purchase, e.g. audio tour equipment

For further details see: <http://www.aim-museums.co.uk>

The **Small Grant, Big Improvement Grant Scheme** will go live again in **January 2014**, so do get in touch with me with any concepts/proposals you may have. Projects can link to any one of Arts Council's five goals for museums, so proposals can be very wide ranging. Priests House, Portland, Beaminster, Red House, Poole, Shaftesbury Abbey and Sherborne are just some of the Dorset museums that have already benefitted. What about you?

### Forthcoming Training Opportunities

These training sessions are FREE to everyone who works in museums, galleries and National Trust properties across the South West region. In 2013-14 the skills programme is made possible through funding from Arts Council England distributed by the South West Museum Development Partnership.

**Getting to Grips with Retail- making a success of small and medium museum shops**

**Monday 13 January 2014, 10.30- 16.30**

**Dorset History Centre, Bridport Road, Dorchester DT1 1RP**

This workshop will tackle the issues and challenges faced by small museum shops. From buying through to display we will explore the best way to run a financially successful operation, whilst providing great stock for your visitors.

Book at <http://www.eventbrite.co.uk>

### **Working with Community Archives**

**Monday 3 February 2014, 10.30-16.30**

**The Education Centre, Exeter Cathedral, Exeter, Devon, EX1 1HS**

Many museums are increasingly in possession of archival material, documents and ephemera. This one day workshop and skills sharing session will focus on how to care for, catalogue, access and use community archives as part of museum collections with the aim of promoting and demonstrating how valuable these archives are.

Book at <http://www.eventbrite.co.uk>

### **Museum Sustainability Scheme to be piloted in Dorset**

This pilot programme will enable museums to understand, explore and implement ideas and practices around sustainability and resilience. It's based on four stages:

**Stage one, self-assessment:** a comprehensive review of how the museum operates in the current climate.

**Stage two, peer review:** a light touch review by a fellow museum professional.

**Stage three, improvement plan:** Stages 1 and 2 will result in the creation of a plan which focuses on how the museum will achieve sustainable outcomes.

**Stage four, delivery of the improvement plan:** There will be enhanced access to the small grants programme to help deliver key improvements.

Priests House Museum and Portland Museum will be taking part in the pilot and if it's successful, the scheme will be open to further applications next financial year.

### **Fossils fast-forward to the 21st century**

The ACE funded Jurassic Coast partnership project is progressing well supported by the Museum Development Service.

One of the key features of the project is the creation of an online database to showcase the amazing fossils held by museums along the Jurassic Coast. Each entry will include a photograph of the fossil, key information, and fascinating facts to appeal to children and adults alike. Some of the entries will also include an exciting 3D image of the fossil.

The database, which will be hosted on the Jurassic Coast website, is being designed to appeal to everyone, not just specialists. It will include some 1,500 fossils, largely from Dorset County Museum, Lyme Regis Museum and Bridport Museum. But there will also be items from the smaller museums along the Dorset and East Devon coast, including Portland, Beaminster, Sidmouth and Budleigh Salterton.

The project team includes geologists, curators and volunteers from the museums, as well as Richard Edmonds, Jurassic Coast Earth Science Manager. The site will go live in April 2014.

Photo credit: These photos were taken as test shots at Lyme Regis Museum by photographer Dave Penman, Moonfleet Photography.

**If you have a specific museum development or Accreditation enquiry, please do get in touch: Vicky de Wit, Museums Advisor for Bournemouth, Dorset & Poole, Tel: 07876 790641**

**Email: [v.j.dewit@dorsetcc.gov.uk](mailto:v.j.dewit@dorsetcc.gov.uk)**

# Weymouth Museum

## David Riches

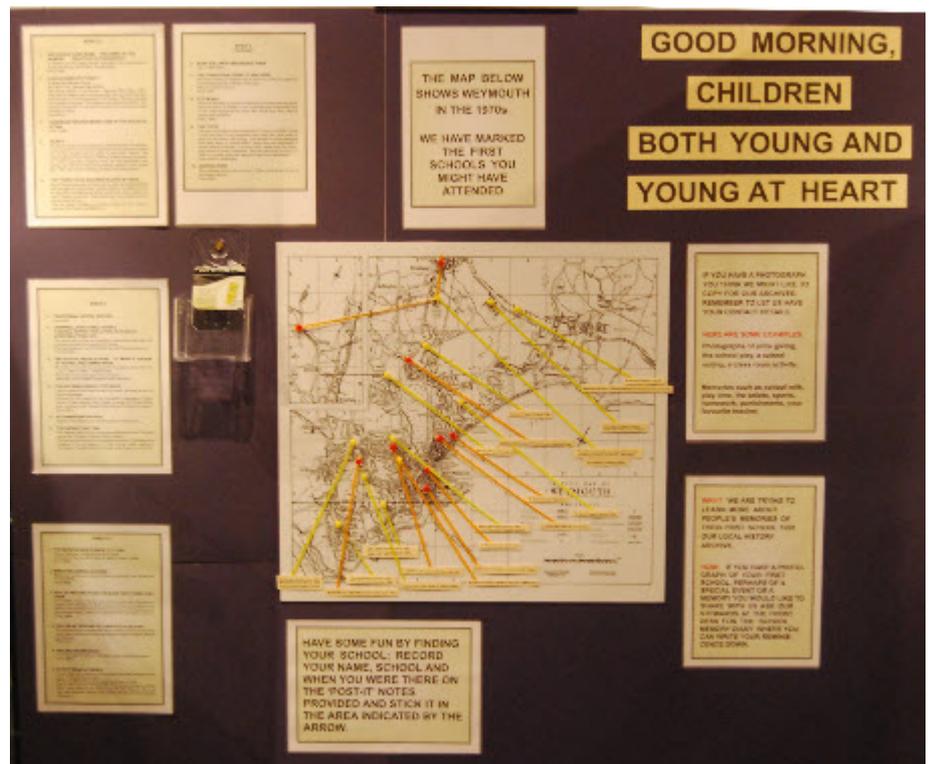
**Weymouth Museum is reopening.** We have a reopening party with invited guests on 6th November, coinciding with Victorian Night in Weymouth, and then we open to the public on Wednesday December 11th. Weymouth Museum will then be open on Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays from 10.30 am to 4.0 pm until January 11th 2014 except for the period from Christmas day to New Year's day. It will reopen again on April 2nd 2014.

The reopening follows six months of hard work by a dedicated team of volunteers. The lighting and wall boards in the galleries had to be reinstated and decorated, the computer network set back up, the displays designed and then prepared and erected. Most of the displays are new. The following photographs illustrate some of these.



*Weymouth Harbour. This display includes photographs and a poster as well as models of the SS St Julian and PS Contractor. There are also some of the museum's Weymouth guide books showing harbour scenes and a diorama portraying the harbour tramway.*

*Can you find your school? The map shows the locations of many of Weymouth's schools, both past and present, and invites the young and young at heart to find their school on it.*





*“A History of Hits” - Children’s Corner. This is a first for Weymouth Museum; Children are invited to try on a range of hats and match them to the picture on the wall.*

*Weymouth Transport “Through the Ages”. The three columns of pictures show Road, Rail ,and Sea transport from Victorian times up to the 1090s.*

*To the left is a Timeline in which the different modes of transport are picked out in different colours.*





**Wyke Regis Woman - Who was She?** Displaying a skeleton is another first for Weymouth. It is believed she is Romano-British, dating from the 3rd century AD, and that she was discovered by workmen digging near Camp Road in 1937.



**Weymouth Fisherwoman.** The text on the wall tells the story of these women. This model was first displayed in the Pop-up display in the nearby Ivy Coffee House, organised by the Friends of Weymouth Museum. Other panels on these walls show the accompanying views of Weymouth Harbour “From the Town Bridge to the Sea”

# **The Priest's House Museum & Garden, Wimborne**

## **James Webb**

### **Priest's House Museum Trust to take over Wimborne's tourist information centre**

From the beginning of December, the Priest's House Museum Trust will be taking over the management and operation of Wimborne's tourist information centre (TIC) from East Dorset District Council. This fabulous resource for the town and district has been developed over many years by the TIC's committed team. The council will continue to provide a supervisor for three years and she will recruit and train a dedicated team of volunteers to serve the needs of the local community and visitors to the area.

### **Secret Stories from the Museum – drama workshops for disabled people at Wimborne museum**

A new Wimborne-based cultural project, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, will bring together two local theatre companies, State of Play and Persuasion Arts, in partnership with the museum, early in the New Year.

'Secret Stories from the Museum' offers disabled people over 18 the chance to join a series of creative drama workshops at the museum, guided by disabled and non-disabled theatre professionals.

"Participants will have the chance to explore some of the fascinating objects in the museum's collection" promised Tam Gilbert, of Persuasion Arts "and create new stories about them through drama, mime, movement and music."

Tony Horitz, Director of State of Play, explained that this was only the beginning of the project: "We'll then use the stories people have created as part of a new show celebrating the lives of disabled people in East Dorset", adding that "The performances will be at the Priest's House Museum's Open Learning Centre later in 2014."

As well as making the show, the organizers plan to document the creative process in a blog and to create a book and/or DVD to be housed at the museum for the future, as a legacy of the project, helping to make Dorset a more inclusive place to live.

Emma Ayling said: "This project is a wonderful opportunity to involve groups in the local community, who have previously found it difficult to make use of the museum, collecting their stories and helping them to access and benefit from the collections that the museum holds."

The drama workshop dates are Saturdays 4, 11 and 18 January 2014, from 10am to 12pm. Places are limited and must be booked by the 9 December.

### **Gathering Family Memories of World War One**

The museum has organised two drop-in events with Wimborne Community Theatre entitled 'Gathering Family Memories of World War One'. Local people have brought in personal objects and recounted stories of those affected by the war. This research will form the basis of a number of projects taking place next year to commemorate the centenary of the First World War.

### **Forthcoming events at the Priest's House**

#### **Christmas Emporium**

13 Nov to 24 Dec, Mon to Sat 10.30 to 3.30 (closing 2pm Christmas Eve)

Take a trip down memory lane and discover the toys of your childhood and much more. Shoppers will discover an 'Aladdin's Cave' of unusual presents and stocking fillers. Christmas stamps can be purchased, some of the money from which goes towards the work of the museum.

#### **Little Christmas Explorers**

Tuesdays 3 Dec, 10 Dec and 17 Dec, 2 to 3

Join the Little Christmas Explorers and discover our festive and fun museum. The sessions include art and craft activities, and stories based on a different topic every week. Suitable for children from 2 years of age and upwards. Numbers are limited so it is first come first served. Organised in partnership with Wimborne Children's Centre.

Children £2, accompanying adults FREE (annual pass not valid for this event)

### **Free opening**

Sat 7 to Sat 21 Dec (excluding 14 Dec), Mon to Sat 10.30 to 3.30

Celebrate the Christmas period by visiting the museum. The house and garden tearoom will be festively decorated.

Admission FREE

### **The Great Pudding Stir**

Sat 14 Dec, 10.30 to 4

The Victorian kitchen will be brimming with the smells of Christmas Pudding. Visitors will get a chance to stir a huge bowl of the dry mix and make a Christmas wish, before sampling the final product heated on our coal-fired range.

Adults £ 1.50, Children £ 1 (annual pass not valid for this event)

Follow the Priest's House Museum & Garden on Twitter <http://twitter.com/priestshouse> and Facebook <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Priests-House-Museum-Garden/367342006646069>



*The "Tourist Information" sign over the entrance door.*

## South Somerset Community Heritage Access Centre Joseph Lewis

### “Wallie” World War One Donation.

South Somerset District Council’s Community Heritage Access Centre near Yeovil has just received a significant donation of World War One related items. The photographs, documents and medals tell the story of Walter Horace Adams and were donated to the Centre by a friend of the family.

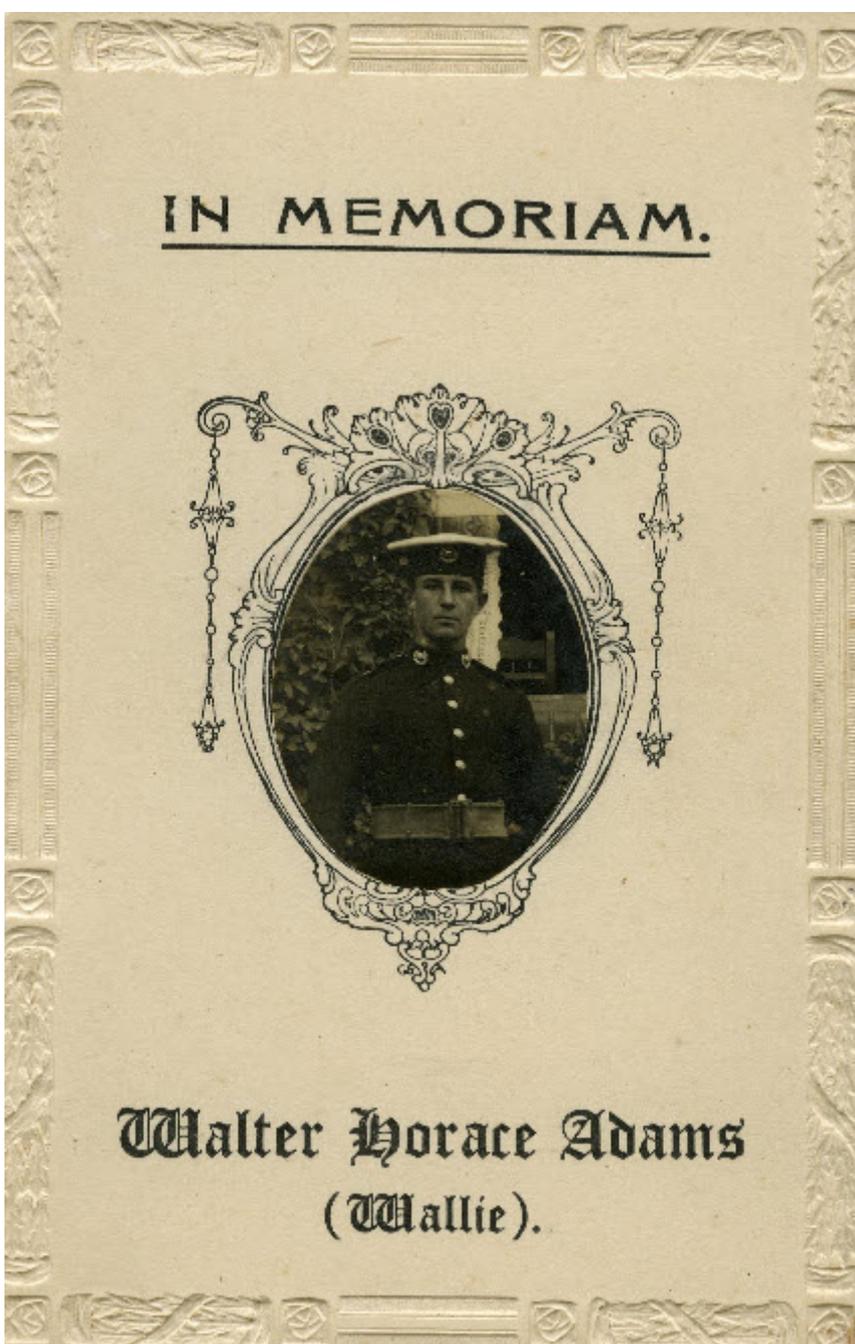
Walter, known as “Wallie” worked for the Western Gazette newspaper in Yeovil and joined the Royal Marine Light Infantry. He was one of many casualties lost on H.M.S. “Hampshire” with Lord Kitchener on 5, June 1916; aged just 17.

Walter is remembered on Yeovil War Memorial. Several other ‘Remembrance Cards’ in the donation detail local men lost in the “war to end all wars.”

Staff at the Centre aim to display the items as part of their First World War Commemorations in 2014.

To view the items or see other aspects of the collection, contact (01935) 462855 – answerphone.

[heritage.services@southsomerset.gov.uk](mailto:heritage.services@southsomerset.gov.uk) [www.southsomersetheritage.org.uk](http://www.southsomersetheritage.org.uk)



*“In Memoriam” Walter Horace Adams from Yeovil, part of a significant donation to South Somerset District Council’s Community Heritage Access Centre*