



D M A Newsletter

June 2014

Editorial

David M Riches

Welcome to the June 2014 Newsletter. Thanks to our contributors I think we have another interesting newsletter that I hope you will find informative and enjoy reading. I'm always amazed at the variety of activities the museums in Dorset are engaged in. One of the beauties of visiting museums is that no two are the same, nor even similar.

As some of you may already know, one of my other interests is vintage and antique scientific instruments, which I personally collect. I belong to an organisation called the Scientific Instrument Society and each year they hold two study tours, an overseas one in the spring and a shorter one, usually in Britain, in the autumn. By the time you read this I will probably be in Switzerland on the first of these this year visiting a variety of museums and CERN.

However, the autumn tour this year will be to Dorset. I am organising it and over the three days from 17th to 19th October they will be visiting the Dorset Clock & Cider Museum, the BNSS, The Royal Signals Museum and the Water Museum at Sutton Poyntz, before finishing at Weymouth Museum where there will be a viewing and handling session of part of my collection. Sadly, I had also planned a visit to the Museum of Electricity which is now closed, as this had a good collection of electrical instruments amongst its impressive collection of electrical equipment and machinery.

Hopefully this tour will encourage some of the members to visit Dorset and its museums again.

The next Newsletter will be the September one and, as always, your articles will be most welcome.

David

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Beaminster Museum

Michael Dower

Exhibition of “Rubbish !”

Many special exhibitions in British museums are focused on finds made by road-builders or archaeologists or metal detectors, such as the Crosby Garrett helmet. This summer, Beaminster Museum has an exhibit of items unearthed by badgers !

These inveterate diggers have made their home at Peasehill, well within the boundary of Beaminster, on land which from 1921 to 1938 was used as the town dump, where residents could bring their refuse. In those days Beaminster Parish Council employed a man half a day each week to burn some of the rubbish and periodically to cover the layers of refuse with soil. When the District Council started collecting refuse from a wider area in 1938, the Peasehill site was closed and covered with soil. It was invaded by nettles and brambles and elder trees ... and in more recent times by badgers. As their numbers grow, and they need to enlarge their setts, these underground dwellers throw out more and more soil ... and with the soil come bottles, jars, broken ceramic, leatherware, old horseshoes, military buttons, and other detritus from the 1920s and 1930s.

These we have gathered up, and selected the most interesting items for display in the museum. Since badgers do not use scientific sampling, we cannot draw any numerical conclusions from this horde. We know the provenance, and so we know that the people of Beaminster used Oxo, Bovril, Shippam's paste, Heinz varieties, Scrubbs Fluid and other household-name items of the period. We can display also items of very local origin - a fragment of stoneware wine-flask sold by George Squire of Beaminster, a jar of lotion from Beach and Barnicott of Bridport.

The Museum's display team made a fine octagonal case, 8 feet high with three tiers of shelves, to show off the badgers' finds from Peasehill including indeed a badger's skull. We advertised for residents to lend us items of refuse found in gardens in Beaminster and the surrounding villages. This has enriched the exhibition with fine items - a cast-iron kettle, a Schweppes Aerated Water bottle, a collection of hand-made nails, hexagonal ink bottles and much else. At our request, the children of Broadwindsor primary school produced delightful artwork, focused on rubbish and the badgers, now on show in the exhibition. I wrote a 48-page book, entitled 'Rubbish !', based upon research (mainly using parish records at the Dorset History Centre) into the local history of refuse : it is now on sale at the Museum.

A note about the exhibition in the local newspaper attracted the attention of BBC Southwest, who sent a reporter to interview us in the Museum and beside the badger sett. "I like a quirky story", he said, "It makes a change from badgers and TB !" So we had 90 seconds of fame on Spotlight.



Rubbish outside a badger sett



Michael Dower with Simon Clemison (BBC)

Bournemouth Natural Science Society

Ray Chapman



The BNSS has successfully applied for Eligibility for Accreditation from Arts Council England and now has the status 'Working towards Accreditation'. Considerable work has to be done to continue with the cataloguing and accessioning of collections that started in 1906. The SPECTRUM procedures have to be validated and their implementation ensured and the other documentation required for full accreditation has to be completed. We are hoping to go forward with the formal application by the end of the year. It should be a load of fun!

Our monthly Saturday morning sessions for young people called 'Young Explorers' has proved to be a great success with over 50 young people registered on our books. Each morning runs for two one hour sessions divided by a break for refreshments. We started in February this year with Rocks and Fossils, March was Astronomy and May Pond Dipping and Microscopes. April was an Open Day and many of the youngsters and their parents attended. This June's topic is Insects followed by Marine Life, the programme is already in place for next year. This is hard work for the organisers but very rewarding to watch the audience learning while enjoying themselves.

The 'Bournemouth Naturally' project is approaching its conclusion. The project was funded for two years by an HLF grant which enabled the employment of a Project Manager, equipment and publicity material. The object of the project was to involve the local community in its 'Green Spaces' by means of study and identifications groups, field trips with flora and fauna counts being taken. Experts were brought in from outside but the majority of the work was carried out by our own members expert in entomology, botany, zoology, ornithology and so on. It is hoped that when the project is no longer funded that its heritage will continue with our regular field trips, lectures and study groups. The many members of the public that have been involved and the local interest groups will provide the focus for this.



A group at a recent amphibian identification workshop

Fully packed programme

As always, we continue to offer an extensive programme of free-to-attend events (though all donations are welcome!). The full list of open days, talks, field trips and special events can be found on our website www.bnss.org.uk.

BRIDPORT'S FIRST ROPEWALK FAIR

Emily Hicks, Curator Bridport Museum

Last week Bridport celebrated its rope and netting industry with the first ever Ropewalk Fair. Many people in the town had long felt that since Bridport has so many wonderful festivals and celebrations, it seemed natural that there should be one celebrating its 800 year old, still-thriving industry.

The fair was designed to increase awareness of the industry in the local community, show what 'goes on behind closed doors' and also to raise funds for the planned redevelopments at Bridport Museum and Literary and Scientific Institute.

Leading the organisation of the event were Crystal Johnson, Project Coordinator for the LSI redevelopment, and Museum Curator Emily Hicks. They were supported by Bridport Town Council and a group of local volunteers.

There were lots of different events over the weekend, great for all ages. In the week preceding the main event, lots of Bridport shops were given bags of colourful rope and net to creatively decorate their windows. Entrants were all judged by the organising committee, with the winners for best creative display going to Julia's House for their marvellous under the sea and treasure theme, and the winner of best historical display awarded to the RSPCA shop. The organising committee would like to extend their thanks to all the shops who took part, helping to promote the fair.

On Friday 9th May Amsafe and Huck Nets opened their doors to give rare opportunities for the public to see behind the scenes. One visitor said "it was fascinating to see behind the scenes in the traditional buildings and how the products had progressed into the 21st century. It was interesting to see wooden spinning machines that were about 50 years old still working well today, but extremely noisy!"

On Saturday, local historian Richard Sims led guided tours around Bridport, exploring many of the key features in the industrial landscape. One of the people who went on the tour said "We thought we knew Bridport fairly well, but Richard Sims' guided walk took us to some corners of the town which were completely new to us. We saw the old ropewalks south of East Street and explored the industrial buildings in the South-west Quadrant. Richard's knowledgeable commentary helped us to understand how the rope, twine and netmaking trades have shaped Bridport over the years - it was a really fascinating historical tour of the town."

There was also a heritage exhibition in the Town Hall which included lots of detail about the history of many of the companies, as well as industry in the villages surrounding the town. This was very well attended and received. On Saturday evening Bonny Sartin of *The Yetties* fame gave a fascinating talk about the ship the Grace Hawar

Sunday saw the main event on the Millennium Green- and the weather held- just! 100s of people attended the fair, where they were greeted by lots to see and do. The Heritage Marquee housed Huck Nets who demonstrated rope-winding, and Amsafe showing how large cargo nets are made. There was also, of course, the infamous hangman's noose, the Bridport Dagger! Dee Fenton demonstrated her dexterity at net-making by hand, and there were samples of flax and hemp for visitors to touch and smell.

Outside the marquee were Coastal Nets making dog leads, and Edwards Sports Nets with a tennis game. Lots of community groups came with stalls and games to add to the fete-like atmosphere. There were cakes with 'knots' on top, a 'splat the (rat) knot' game and lots of delicious food stalls.

Everyone was entertained throughout the day with some brilliant music, often with a 'ropey' theme by Tinker's Cuss, Mor or Less, the Y'strels Band and Beaminster Pop Club who wowed the audience with some great tunes.

There were 3 events in the main 'arena' spread throughout the day. At midday there was a 'mass skipping' event. Competitors bought brightly coloured Bridport skipping ropes and join in - in the end there were only about 30 people brave enough to try it! Later on we were entertained by Thorner's School who performed some lovely maypole dances. Finally, the big Bridport tug of war competition: teams from the Jurassic Coast Raptors American Football team went up against The Round Table and the Young Farmers. After several very competitive heats, the

Raptors came out victorious! There was also time for a women's and a children's round. Bridport Museum Curator, Emily, suffered with sore arms for two days afterwards!

The Ropewalk Fair was only made possible by some financial support by West Dorset District Council and sponsorship by many local businesses:

Huck Nets, Amsafe, Sicor International, Coastal Nets, Edwards Sports Nets, A.P. Chant building supplies, John Bright fencing, Highlands End Holiday Park, Creeds design and print and Kal Marquees.

The organising team would like to extend their thanks to the many people who made the day possible- lots of volunteers provided delicious cream teas, sold raffle tickets and acted as stewards. Everyone gave very generously of their time, and the team are about to start planning next year's fair straight away!

Anyone who is interested in helping in any way with next year's event should contact Emily, 01308 458703 or email curator@bridportmuseum.co.uk.



*Rope winding demonstration
by Huck Nets*



*Amsafe demonstrate cargo net
making*



Skipping on the Millenium Green



The tug-of-war



A shop window display

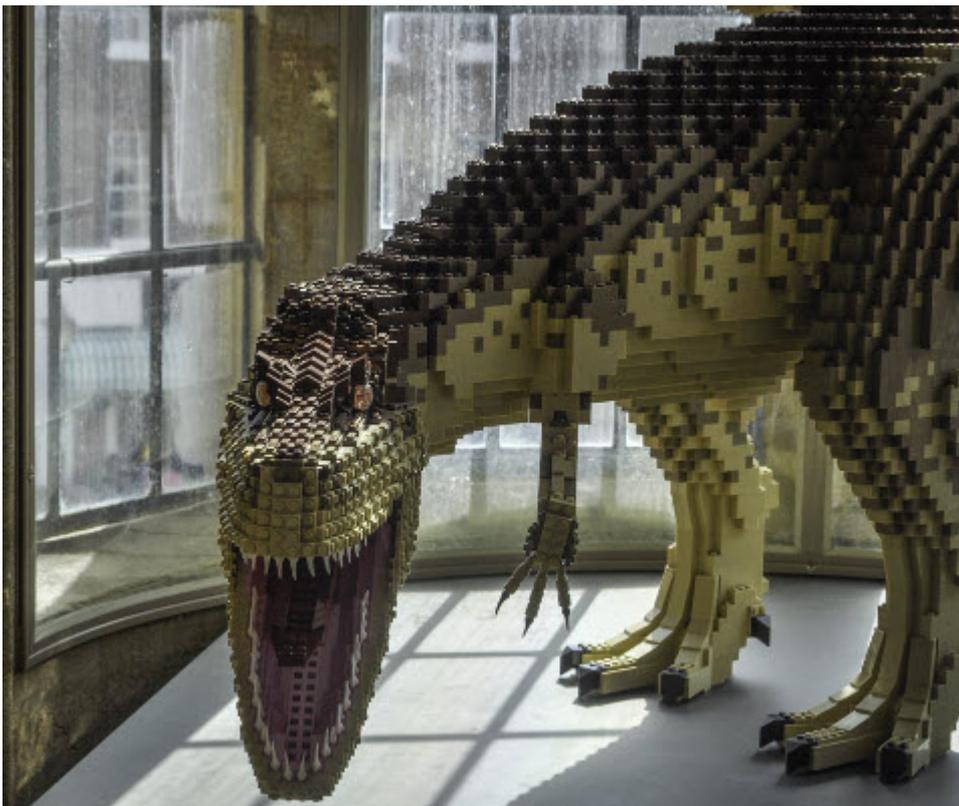
Jurassic Coast project at Dorset County Museum

Rachel Cole, Marketing Manager

The Jurassic Coast is England's only Natural World Heritage site, covering the 95-mile length of coastline from Exmouth to Studland. It incorporates well-known coastal towns such as Lyme Regis and Bridport and also Gateway towns like Dorchester, set back from the coastline itself. This summer a new project called the Jurassic Coast Museums Partnership teams up nine museums along the Jurassic Coast and, with funding from The Arts Council, brings a host of dinosaur-related events and exhibitions to Dorset.

One highly visible part of the project is already in place. A large model of a Megalosaurus, built entirely out of LEGO®, now stands in the turret window of Dorset County Museum's Jurassic Coast Gallery. These dinosaurs lived in Dorset in the late Jurassic period around 166 million years ago and grew up to 9m long. Although no one can know exactly what they looked like, as a whole skeleton has never been found, you can get a pretty good idea from the new model now on display. The model was built by Ed Diment of Bright Bricks out of hundreds of LEGO bricks. Bright Bricks have previously built a life-size model of a woolly mammoth and a working jet engine out of LEGO so they certainly know what they are doing!

In August, Ed will be helping the Museum run two events based on a new LEGO model of a Megalosaurus. In addition, a brand new display will soon be built in the Museum's Jurassic Coast Gallery incorporating a huge slab of limestone found in a quarry near Swanage. The 4m by 3m display shows the footprints of a number of dinosaurs including those believed to be of a Megalosaurus. Visitors will learn all about this massive beast and can try to match the dinosaur's stride using lifesized footprints fixed onto the floor.



The LEGO® Megalosaurus at Dorset County Museum

Called after the Greek for 'Big Lizard', Megalosaurus was the first type of dinosaur to be given its own name. A large meat eating dinosaur, it lived in Southern England during the Middle Jurassic period, around 166 million years ago.

In 1842, scientist Richard Owen partly based his Dinosauria on the Megalosaurus, and he had a model made for a Dinosaur display at the Crystal Palace – the event that kick-started public interest in prehistoric reptiles.

The Museum of Design in Plastics

Louise Dennis, Assistant Curator



Polymorphia

The Museum of Design in Plastics, at the Arts University Bournemouth, has a new exhibition inspired by the frequently heard statements made by visitors to the museum, 'that's not plastic... it's Bakelite!', 'is Nylon plastic?', 'what plastics can be recycled?'.

The ubiquitous nature of plastics means that they are often taken for granted. Very different plastics are lumped together in the one generic term with their special properties and capabilities often being overlooked by the consumer.

Plastics truly are polymorphic. They are an extensive family of materials which take many forms, and for many decades have been the group of materials that are most widely used globally. They have a broad range of properties and many typical characteristics which set them apart from each other and make them particularly suitable for an inexhaustible list of applications. They range from semi-synthetic plastics, first developed over 150 years ago, to the fully synthesised techno-polymers designed and engineered for very specific uses today. With the growing realisation that fossil fuel resources are not sustainable, there is a renewed interest in the development of bio plastics derived from an increasing variety of sustainable biomass resources.

Polymorphia looks at some of the plastics we commonly encounter in our everyday lives. It examines their history and development, explains what sets them apart from each other and shows the more typical applications, some of which have become icons of design, made possible only because of the type of plastic used. The materials featured include the 60 year old polypropylene represented by a Robin Day Series E Polyprop chair, and the perennial favourite, phenol formaldehyde whose display includes the Ekco A22 radio.

The exhibition will be open until 26th September 2014, to find out more about MoDiP, *Polymorphia*, and how you can visit have a look at the website www.modip.ac.uk.



Originally designed in 1971, the Robin Day E Series polypropylene chair is still popular today.



Ekco type A22 radio manufactured by E K Cole in 1945 with a phenol formaldehyde case

Sturminster Museum and Mill

John Pidgeon

Sturminster Newton Mill

It was National Mills weekend on Saturday 10th & Sunday 11th May and there was lots of activity at Sturminster Newton mill. Not only were we milling our white, wholemeal flour but we had a baking demonstration (using our flour) by Oxfords bakery and the Blackmore Vale Amateur Radio Society were on-site contacting other mills around the UK and Europe and chatting to people as far away as Mexico, Israel and Russia. We are having milling weekends on the 2nd weekend of each month to the end of September and we sell our flour in the mill, museum and at a shop in town. Other events coming up at the mill are part of the town's Boogie-Woogie Festival outside the mill on Saturday 5th July from around 10.30 - 12.00am, a cake tasting on Saturday 12th July from 2 - 4pm and we shall be serving cream teas on Saturday 9th August from 2 - 4pm.

Funding - Good News and Bad

We have also had good news from the Southern Co-operative in that they have selected our society to benefit from their Community Support Card scheme which could mean that we stand to receive up to £10,000 at around the end of each year. We thank them for this and encourage everyone to get a card from the Co-op and show it each time they shop in the store. We have said that the money will be used to repair and replace furniture/fittings in the Mill that were damaged by the severe winter floods, to install interactive displays in the Museum and to develop educational facilities. But we have also had bad news that the Heritage Lottery Fund has turned down our application for the funding of an extension to the museum where we could set up a whole series of education events involving local schools and the community. We are currently considering how we proceed from here but if anyone has any great ideas where else we can approach for funding we should be very grateful.



Bread making at the mill

*Blackmore Vale Amateur
Radio Society*



At the Museum

The curatorial team have spent the last few months documenting, labelling, cataloguing and storing the large numbers of photographs that were added to our collection by the gifts of John Grinnell (son of Fred Grinnell, one time head of William Barnes School) and Mark Rogers (son of Ray Rogers, co-founder of the Museum Society). We have to thank Steve Case for scanning all the photographs either owned by the Society or made available to us for copying, on to a computer database. The number of images thus stored is now greater than 10,000 and later in the year we hope to make it easier for visitors to access this photographic library by means of a touch screen computer. Our census records, also, will be made similarly available.

Some 19th century dress from the Museum's collection may go on display at the County Museum in 2016 - they are planning a display of dress worn in rural communities, including "best" dresses, in the 1800s and have asked to borrow some items from us. A new small display cabinet has been placed opposite the entrance in the front hall to display new acquisitions (mainly small items). We have shown a mixed bag so far: a Sturminster Newton crested china shoe, some bars of sunlight soap (donated by shepherds), spent gun cartridges from a shop formerly at Market Cross and a WW1 Dead Man's Penny from Gail Arkins in Australia. The Dead Man's Penny is now an exhibit in a display in the Museum to commemorate the centenary of the start of the Great War. This very interesting and comprehensive display was researched and set up by Pat Ager and will remain in place for most of the year.

Other Events

In April we had an unusual but very interesting talk by Jonathan McGowan where he spoke and showed us his approach to Taxidermy. He has been interested in this art since he was a small lad and he uses a different method from many other taxidermists. Others often use animal shaped formers and stretch the skin over them but he creates a skeleton in wire and then fills it out with cotton wool. He used photographs to demonstrate his technique and showed examples of creatures he had preserved ranging from animals, birds, fish right down to insects. Archaeologist and Dorset Council's Finds Liaison Officer, Ciostaidh Trevarthen (Kirsty) visited the Museum during the Easter school holiday and identified items found in gardens and fields and will return during the summer for another finds day. In May, Allan Peters gave us a talk on Royal Family protection. He gave the inside story of how he became personal protection officer to HRM Princess of Wales and Princess Diana during the 1980s. He included amusing anecdotes of how he was trained, the real facts of accompanying the couple on tours in both the UK and overseas, and how he dealt with unexpected difficulties and incidents. Our next talk and the last until September is on Wednesday 4th June by Mike Crankshaw when he will describe his canoe ride down the River Stour from source to Christchurch.



World War I display

Sherborne Museum **Elisabeth Bletsoe, Curator**

Sherborne Museum had a very positive start to 2014 with several projects that had been on the back burner for some considerable time, suddenly coming to fruition. Following on from the refurbishment of last year, in January the curator's office was remodelled thanks to a private donation, with a redundant sink being removed, lots of extra shelving and storage space put in along with a new desk, two swivel chairs and a new carpet. Painted a cheerful yellow, the space is now more efficient and appropriate for storing documents and artefacts in transit while being accessioned and a much more pleasant place in which to greet visitors. Then, with grants gratefully received from WDDC we purchased a new computer compatible with MODES software, enabling us to transfer all our data from Catalyst and streamline the end result of the accessions process, and also a 4-camera CCTV system, the installation of which has made our collections more secure and the front-of-house team more confident. We also acquired a baby-changing shelf for our accessible WC and designed a welcome sign in 14 different languages with which to greet our overseas visitors.

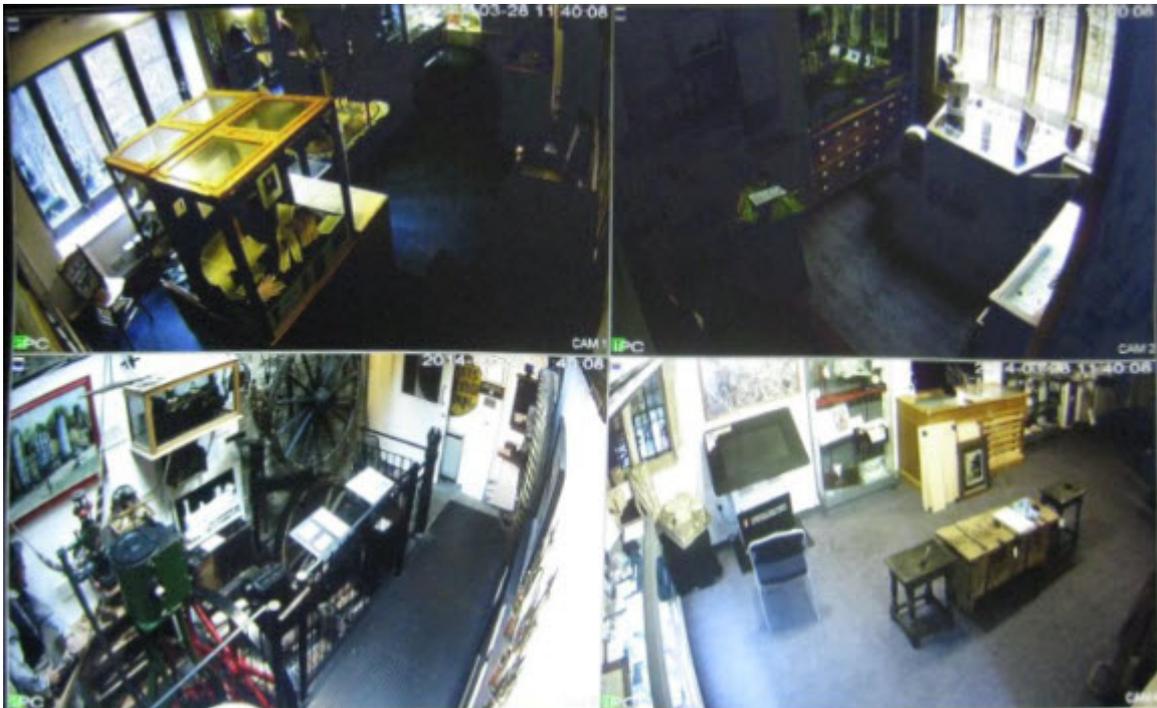
This year's biggest project is to replace our outmoded halogen lighting with LED throughout the whole Museum and install strip lights within the cases. Continuous improvements to LED have made it appropriate for museum use; not only is it more energy-efficient, thus reducing the carbon footprint, but it emits little infra red light and no UV so it can cause less damage to collections, particularly when fitted with dimmers to reduce the amount of light overall when dealing with sensitive artefacts. LED lighting produces no glare, is low-profile and discreet so enhances gallery aesthetics as well as the visitor experience as it reduces negative health effects produced by traditional lighting (such as flicker, hum and burnout) which can aggravate eyestrain, epilepsy, headaches and ADD. You can probably tell I learned far more than I cared to about LED lighting while researching the subject in preparation for bidding for grant aid! We were delighted to receive £2000 from Arts Council England's Small Grant: Big Improvement scheme and the same amount from WDDC's 106 Fund. The project starts on May 19th and will carry on for approximately 7 weeks on a Monday when the Museum is closed to visitors. Thanks to a recommendation by Jon Murden, we are using the firm GW Electrics, who have proved most obliging in fitting their work around the Museum's daily schedule and are very sensitive to the needs of the collection. We hope to provide you with before and after photos in the next newsletter!



The newly refurbished curator's office



The new welcome sign



The new CCTV system

Community Heritage Access Centre - Yeovil

Clare Robinson

Edible Masterpieces

Staff from South Somerset District Council's Heritage Team based at the Community Heritage Access Centre joined in the Art Fund's national fundraising campaign, Edible Masterpieces. The aim of the campaign was to copy famous art pieces in food and then sell to raise money.

£60.80 was raised through selling off art pieces to other members of staff, for example Alan Measles (Grayson Perry's teddy bear), Water Lilies by Monet, Damien Hirst inspired Jelly Babies in Jelly and several Jackson Pollock inspired cakes.

The staff all enjoyed making the masterpieces and buyers of the cakes were equally impressed by the creativity expressed.



Edible masterpiece

Another edible masterpiece



Photo Day

A special 'Photo Day' was held Friday 4th April 2014 between 2pm and 4pm as part of English Tourism Week.

The Centre has a growing collection of 4500 photographs of Yeovil and South Somerset and the 'Photo Day' was designed to cultivate an interest in old photographs of Yeovil. A selection of photographs was made under the four themes of 'Street Scenes'; 'Leisure'; 'Western Gazette' and 'Events' and these were placed in four boxes. This selection was supported by the Walk Books showing 'walks around Yeovil in the 1960s' from photographs taken by T. Cave.

The afternoon proved to be very successful with a combination of long-time Yeovil residents often comparing and contrasting photographs from different boxes and others happy to see how Yeovil has changed in recent years. The level of discussion and genuine excitement created by the images was fascinating to see and a significant way of using the centre's resources.

Suggestions were received for future photographic themes and enquiries taken to see more of the photographic collection. The aim is to repeat the event alongside existing tours.



Photo day

Important Donation

We are thrilled to have been gifted a rare 1835 medallion integral to Yeovil. The Yeovil Guardian Friendly Society medallion, 1835, was amongst a donation of other important items concerning the history of Yeovil. These included medallions awarded to the Mayor of Yeovil to commemorate Royal events including the wedding and later the Coronation of King George V and Queen Mary and their silver jubilee medals.

The medallion is the only one we know of in existence. The Yeovil Guardian Friendly Society also issued tokens and these are considered very rare, in fact there was no known examples of them until 2 came to light in the 1990's. One token was gifted to the Community Heritage Access Centre from a museum in Wakefield, Yorkshire.

We are very grateful to Mr D Stuckey for donating the items to us; Mr Stuckey is a descendant of Albert Henry Gould, a former mayor of Yeovil.

The Yeovil Guardian Friendly Society was founded in 1835 and had its headquarters at the Mermaid hotel in the town. By 1863 it had a membership of over 300 and often paraded at local events with their banner including the opening of the Railway in Yeovil in 1853.



Yeovil Friendly Society medallion

Portland Museum

Pam Boyce

If you are a fan of “Countryfile” on BBC 1 on a Sunday evening, you will have hopefully enjoyed the edition on 23rd February, which featured the Isle of Portland. The Museum was lucky enough to be invited to take part in the filming, which concentrated in no small part on Dr Marie Stopes, the Museum’s founder and first honorary curator, who had a holiday home at the Old Higher Lighthouse at Portland Bill from the 1920s. The lady who currently lives in at the Higher Light had a very amusing conversation with presenter, Matt Baker, about Marie Stopes and her somewhat radical lifestyle, which included sunbathing on the rocks at the Bill, with very little to cover her modesty! She attracted a host of celebrated people of the times, including George Bernard Shaw and Margot Fonteyn, who visited her on Portland. Thomas Hardy was a friend and a regular visitor, and of course, both of these great characters of the 20th century come together in Portland Museum; she as the founder, and Hardy the novelist, who identified one of the 17th century museum cottages to be the home of his heroine in “The Wellbeloved”, Avice Caro. The cottage is still referred to as “Avice’s Cottage” today.

Our very own David Carter was interviewed about the fossils we have in the Museum, and David was able to show Matt Baker the original Accession Register, with the first entries written in Marie Stopes’ own hand, for two of the fossils being featured in the programme; a cycad, and the toe bone of a megalosaurus, preserved in the original stone.

The programme also covered the quarrying of Portland Stone, Portland Harbour, and the diverse and unique wildlife and habitat on the Island, giving viewers who don’t know this special place, an interesting insight into our part of the world. I would, however, take issue with “Countryfile’s” description of Portland as being “off the Dorset coast”. When I last looked, it was well and truly attached to the mainland, but perhaps the programme makers anticipated that Chesil Beach would be swept away in the recent storms!

Like most of you, I suspect, we are eagerly preparing for another season of visitors, and our exhibitions and displays have been refreshed and replaced on quite a major scale this year. We are lucky to have so many aspects of Portland history to choose from and it is very gratifying to see some of the stored objects come out of their packaging and back on display again.

Portland Museum has been invited to contribute to a special events programme to commemorate the two World Wars, during the Veterans' Week organised by Weymouth & Portland Borough Council in June this year. A bid has been submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund by the Council to fund extra activities and events to mark the centenary of the start of World War One. The Museum hopes to put on a special exhibition called "Portland at War" during Veterans' Week, and hopefully attract locals as well as visitors to see how Portland contributed to the war effort and how it was changed by it. Portland Harbour played a major role in the embarkation of American troops to the D-Day Beaches in 1944, and HMS Hood, was sunk in one of the Harbour entrances, acting as a block ship against torpedo attack before the start of World War I. Sadly, one inevitable and lasting association Portland has with both World Wars is the manufacture of hundreds of thousands of headstones for war graves, and a special quarry almost opposite the museum was opened to extract stone for the Cenotaph in London. Whilst the choice of Portland Stone recognises the uniqueness of this local material, and the skill of Portland craftsmen who fashioned it and carved the names of the dead, it is a permanent reminder of the tragedy of war and the monumental loss of life over the two conflicts.

Weymouth Museum

David Riches

Since Weymouth Museum reopened on April 2nd we have continued to work on the displays in the second gallery. Models of HMS Weymouth and HMS Hood are on display with notes on their history and specifications. HMS Weymouth was a light cruiser that saw action in the First World War, whilst HMS Hood (the second) was an early battleship scuttled in the South entrance to Portland harbour to block submarines from attacking the fleet at anchor. It is still there. There are also models of two Weymouth lifeboats on display, the William and Clara Ryland and the Tony Vandervell. Other displays include Weymouth bottles, a selection of the borough weights and measures, World War I memorabilia, and coopers tools from the brewery.



The model of the RNLB William & Clara Ryland

The museum has a large art collection, most of which has never been on display before and so we have taken the opportunity to display a few of the pictures of Weymouth. These include horse racing on Lodmoor, a sailing ship being towed out of Weymouth Harbour by a paddle tug, a view of the first town bridge, and a very detailed architects watercolour of the old market house.



Ship leaving Weymouth harbour

The market house



Horse racing on Lodmoor

The Priest's House Museum & Garden, Wimborne

James Webb

Lost Tracks – Remembering East Dorset's Railways

'Lost Tracks – Remembering East Dorset's Railways' is a new exhibition developed by the museum and the East Dorset Heritage Trust, and runs from the 1 April to 30 June. It marks the 50th anniversary of the withdrawal of passenger train services from the area.

This exhibition remembers the railways that served East Dorset until the mid 1960s. It looks at why the railways came to the area; who promoted, paid for and built the lines; who used the local stations, from passengers to traders; and who worked on the railways.

The exhibition is spread over two venues in Wimborne. The story begins at Allendale House in the 1830s and continues through to the second world war. Charles Castleman promoted a line from Southampton to Dorchester via Wimborne in 1844. Eventually bricks, pottery, watercress, milk and cheese, and horticultural products were transported by rail, along with passengers. Discover the mystery of Wimborne's goods shed and the part played by the railway during wartime.

The museum takes up the story in 1945 and continues through to the closure for passengers of the Salisbury & Dorset line in May 1964 and the Somerset & Dorset line in March 1966. Visitors can discover the people who worked at the local stations, from the station master to booking clerk and crossing keeper. Passengers arriving and departing from these stations included school children, commuters to work and holidaymakers. Examples of railway memorabilia on show include station signs, signal box apparatus, railway staff equipment and advertising fliers. The museum is grateful to the local collectors who have kindly loaned material for the exhibition.

A booking office has also been skilfully recreated by the museum's volunteer technician, Mike Carter, complete with ticket machine, luggage label rack and railway clock.

The exhibition has been developed with guidance from Professor Colin Dival, University of York, and Peter Russell, Somerset & Dorset Railway Heritage Trust.



Allendale House is open Monday to Friday, 9 to 5 (closed Bank Holidays). Admission is free but donations are welcome.

The museum is open Monday to Saturday, 10 to 4.30. There is an admission charge to see this part of the exhibition.

Forthcoming events

Archaeological Finds Surgery

Sat 12 Jul, 10 to 3

Have your archaeological finds identified by the county's Finds Liaison Officer. Part of the Festival of British Archaeology.

Admission FREE if you bring a find for identification

Earth Detectives

Sat 19 Jul, 10 to 4.30

Delve into our archaeological past with a dig and family activities. Part of the Festival of British Archaeology.

Admission £2 (YAC members FREE)

Sally's Summer Sun Activities

23 Jul to 30 Aug, Mon to Sat 10 to 4.30

Self directed craft activities.

Admission charge

President's Summer Fete

Sat 2 Aug, 10 to 4

Adults 50p, Children FREE

First World War Stories

4 Aug to 11 Nov, Mon to Sat 10 to 4.30

An exhibition commemorating 100 years since the outbreak of the First World War and its effects on East Dorset.

Admission charge

The Smuggler and the Singer

Fri 15 Aug, 7.30pm

Storyteller Tim Laycock will perform local yarns, rollicking folk songs and curious tales from Wimborne and beyond. Part of the Sting in the Tale Festival.

Tickets: Adult £6, Child £4, Family (2 adults and 2 children) £18 (booking essential)

Toyland

Thu 21 Aug, 10 to 4 (last entry 3pm)

Fun art and craft activities for all the family.

Admission £2

Tours of the Stores

Sat 13 and Sun 14 Sep, 10 to 4.30

Free opening of the house, museum and garden. Talk and tour of the museum stores (booking essential). Part of Dorset Architectural Heritage Week.

Admission FREE

www.priest-house.co.uk

01202 882533