



## D M A Newsletter

September 2016

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### DMA- Committee News & Updates

Vicky de Wit & Emily Hicks

#### DMA grants.....DMA Conference....DMA Projects....SW News & Training

Welcome to our first committee editorial. There's a lot going on, so we thought it would be a good idea to keep you up to speed with all the latest projects and opportunities. We hope you find it useful.

#### **DMA Grants 2016/17**

A reminder that the DMA small grants scheme for 2016/17 is currently open for applications and open to all DMA museum members.

Grants of up to £500 are available for projects within the following priority areas:

- (a) Enabling a museum to be fully accredited with ACE
- (b) Enhancement of the physical conditions in which collections are kept
- (c) Conservation of key exhibits
- (d) Improvements in documentation of collections
- (e) Improvements in public access and engagement with collections
- (f) Improvements in marketing and income generation

The committee will prioritise projects where DMA support will make a tangible difference to the efficient and successful operation of the applicant museum.

Full guidance is available from the County Museums Advisor - [v.j.dewit@dorsetcc.gov.uk](mailto:v.j.dewit@dorsetcc.gov.uk) and all requests should be submitted to her by **Friday 30th September 2016** and the committee is scheduled to make a decision on awards by the **31st October 2016**

## **DMA AGM & Conference 2016 – Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> November – Priests House Museum, Wimborne**

Make sure you save the date for what promises to be a great get together for museums across Dorset. This year's theme is ***Get Creative with your Collections.***

Collections are the lifeblood of all museums. Looking after them effectively is a fundamental part of every museum's core purpose, but they also provide a perfect platform for public programming and community engagement.

This year's conference is focused on the potential and power of collections. Especially when you apply creativity and commitment. We will have some great local case studies and our Kathy Callow speaker will be Dr John Beckerson, a leading social history collections manager.

### **DMA Projects**

The DMA is keen to play an active role in supporting and promoting partnership projects. Our key project this autumn is the ***North Dorset Cabinet of Curiosities***, a collaborative project which will see five museums coming together to:

- develop a focal and visually rich display linked to a Dorset Cabinet of Curiosities theme, featuring iconic item/s from the individual museums' collections, linked to an overarching North Dorset storyline. The displays will share a distinctive graphic approach and will be collectively branded through a printed trail and map.
- Produce a digital campaign delivered in partnership with Visit Dorset. A suite of potential coverage has been negotiated with them, including full page entries, banner adverts, a homepage gallery promotion and e-newsletter advertising. This type and range of promotion has never previously been undertaken by any of the museums and will be timed to coincide with the collective offer described above.
- Evaluate the impact of the combined programming and promotion to determine the success of the initiative and inform a fuller marketing strategy.

We'll make sure we share the evaluation to help others with marketing and publicity decisions.

### **DMA Website**

We now have a contract with a we design company to make updates to our website – so if you have any changes you'd like to make to your museum's entry, please contact Vicky de Wit with the details – [v.j.dewit@dorsetcc.gov.uk](mailto:v.j.dewit@dorsetcc.gov.uk)

### **Training Opportunities**

A MODES course is being run on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> September and there are just two places left – please contact Vicky de Wit if you have a need for this training.

There's lots of other training available at <http://www.southwestmuseums.org.uk/training/museum-skills/>

In particular, a **documentation session** at Dorchester History Centre on **Monday 14<sup>th</sup> November** and an **effective succession planning session** at the same location on **Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> December**. Book on line to reserve a place.

### **Fit to Borrow Scheme – Grants from £15k - £50k**

Lyme Regis and Poole Museums have already benefitted from this great scheme. Will you be next?

This is a really exciting fund that enables museums to undertake capital projects at their museums to improve their collections care and security standards so they can undertake loans from national museums and collections. With grants available from £15K to £50K this is a real opportunity for museums to make a big difference to their exhibition spaces and programming. The fund is open to Accredited museums and there will be an Expression of Interest round, with successful applicants invited to make a full application.

On the dedicated [web page](#) you will also be able to see examples of successful applications. **Please contact Vicky de Wit if you are interested – deadline is likely to be 14<sup>th</sup> October 2016. You must be able to complete before the end of February 2018.**

# Beaminster Museum

## Brian Earl, Curator

### Customer Service

We at Beaminster Museum like to think, with all due modesty of course, that we're rather good at customer service. It isn't one of those deliberate corporate initiatives where we ask folk to fill in an evaluation form or anything like that. We don't train our stewards on what good customer service entails. Indeed, we call our visitors 'visitors' and we never use the word 'service' either. Welcoming people is somehow in the blood. Our visitors book is riddled with glowing references to the 'staff', who, like those in many small museums, are all volunteers.

Some of our customers never set foot inside the museum, but that doesn't stop us making them feel welcome or going the extra mile to meet whatever requirements they might have. There are various ways of contacting us online, although the most common is still email. We endeavour to respond to emails almost immediately, although there's inevitably some delay if they arrive in the middle of the night from distant continents. We don't quite run to a 24x7 shift system!

Although we don't seek any reward for our approach, reward there often is. I don't mean cash. It would be lovely, of course, to stumble by accident across a multi-millionaire who might decide to express his gratitude with a donation that could ensure our survival for a generation, but it hasn't happened yet and it isn't part of our rolling



forward plan. We gain satisfaction from being helpful, we form new friendships, and we very frequently add to our own knowledgebase as a result of customer interactions.

One such instance occurred recently, and is ongoing. It began when a gentleman visited us from London on family history business. The stewards were unable to answer his main question immediately, but they did exactly the right thing by taking down his details and forwarding the query. We could answer the actual question quite quickly, but it revealed a huge gap in our own understanding of one particular aspect of Beaminster's history. In short, there had been two strands of a very interesting family living in two separate houses in the town

*Some members of the interesting Beaminster family, including: a disgraceful, but never disgraced, MP; a very tolerant daughter of a former Lord Chancellor; and (bottom right) Bertram Vaughan Johnson*

about whom we had previously known virtually nothing. Replying to our visitor led, as it often does, to an email correspondence. The email exchanges led in turn to real artefacts being put in the post. The discussion which had originated in southern England soon spread to Australia and another descendant of the family: more emails; more postage; new and exciting information for all parties at almost every step.

I attempted to consolidate and then flesh out all the Beaminster-related data into a single document about one of the houses in question (the history of the other house had already been recorded, but we were able to add a few more details). This brought the current owners of the property into a much closer relationship with the museum and proved to be of interest to others too, especially those who had lived there when it was a boarding house for girls at the local grammar school.



*The 'blank' grave of Bertram Vaughan Johnson*

Another interesting spin-off was the search for a grave in the local cemetery, known to be the last resting place of our new Australian friend's grandfather. In theory this should have been straightforward. We have access to the 'burials book' and were able to find the relevant record. The entry itself was slightly unusual, and row numbers in our local cemetery are largely unmarked, but there should still have been no major problem. But I couldn't find it. To cut a long story short, I eventually located it during my third search, when a shaft of sunlight just happened to catch the front of a headstone, one I'd previously assumed to have weathered to complete obscurity, to reveal very faint lettering. By standing at just the right angle at just the right time of day, I was gradually able to decipher or derive the lettering and report my discovery to Australia. The upshot was that I was able to arrange for a local stonemason to visit, who is now working on a new stone with clearer writing.

That was a few weeks ago now. Since then I've written for our Support Collection a further paper on a subject of which I was previously entirely ignorant, triggered by another element in the inter-continental correspondence. We have added two important new artefacts to our collection. And we have a friend for life in Australia, whether or not she ever manages to get across to see us in person.

This is just one of many such stories. You almost certainly have tales to tell from your own museum which could put this one in the shade. The moral for me, however, is that all our customers deserve the best possible service we can give them, and the more instinctive it is, the better. Sometimes – quite often in fact – the outcomes can be wonderfully productive.

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## **Blandford Fashion Museum**

### **Elaine Williamson**

In July we enjoyed a lecture by Heather Toomer on Lace and its embroidery titled Baby Wore White. She took us through the 19th. century showing us how Christening Gowns developed and changed in design throughout that period. For example in 1807 when George III. was on the throne Empire Gowns were worn and baby clothes followed adult clothes in design. These Christening Robes were mainly made from white muslin. Heather took us through the important years of development in changes in the century, from the 1810s. showing how machine net was used, in order that larger amounts could be made. In 1820 more decoration was used, shoulders were added and intricate embroidery was used in the decoration. In the late 20s sleeves were developed in the Van Dyke style as copied from adults fashion to the 1840s when the sleeves were made of frills, and the 1850 s. when the triangle was used in the Baroque style to decorate the sleeve. This led to more simple design and from 1850 to 1870 there was pulled thread work and the waist made an appearance. In the 1860s banded decoration with loose sleeves appeared. From the 1870s, until 1890s complex designs were made including the princess line and the train was introduced. together with shorter skirts, looser full sleeves, higher neck lines, all leading to the 20th century robes. Heather's talk was delightful and the audience appreciative.

There was a Festival of Words from the 13th. to the 19th of June at venues around Blandford and the Blandford Fashion Museum were host to the winners of the Fashion Museum wordsearch that demonstrated it had attracted entries from across a wide area.

Five winners received Vouchers for a free cream tea at the tearoom of the Museum.

The winners are:

M. Stokes of Croydon, Mrs D Nation of Poole, & Sue Hepburn of Hazelbury Bryan. We are assured that there was no cheating involved, the other two being Helen Cooper, one of the Festival of Words organizers and Linda Scott-Giles. Blandford town clerk.



*Tea Room*

The Museum is making a start on 2017 with new exhibits to be displayed in next February. These exhibits will concentrate on Ladies of Dorset from changes in three of the rooms.

Reminder the Museum will be closed December to mid-February.

**Blandford Fashion Museum.**

[theblandfordfashionmuseum.co.uk](http://theblandfordfashionmuseum.co.uk)

Lime Tree House, The Plocks, Blandford Forum. Dorset .  
DT11 7AA

tel: 01258 453006

New Opening times - Museum, Tearoom and Shop. .

Monday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday Winter 10 am. -  
4 pm. Summer 10 am. - 5 pm.

Winter October 1st - March 31st.

Summer April 1st -September 30th.

Closed December-mid February.

## **Bridport Museum Trust**

### **Nichola Blackmore, Assistant Curator**

#### **Hibernating ‘til Spring 2017!**

Bridport Museum will be closing early this season. The Museum will close the doors to the public on Friday September 2<sup>nd</sup> 2016 so that, in spring 2017, it can reopen with a brand new offering for everyone to enjoy. For the team September will be where the real work begins! We will be working with Collections Consultants and specialist Conservators to decant the Museum in September – ready for the contractors to move in and for work on the fabric of the building to start later this year.

The team are also planning to keep a diary of redevelopment developments on the Bridport Museum Trust Facebook page and across social media. We are already working hard so that, from spring 2017, there will be fabulous new galleries for visitors to explore – and Bridport Museum will become a hub for the whole community. One of the first entries came when Gabrielle, one of our Collections Consultants and Object Conservator by trade, started to work with our popular stuffed tiger – the start of some much needed tender loving care.



This winter, from September to spring 2017, Bridport Local History Centre will also have reduced opening hours so that Bridport Museum Trust can focus whole-

heartedly on the redevelopment of Bridport Museum. The Local History Centre will still be open to the public on Wednesdays, from 10am to 1pm and 2pm to 4pm, when members of the public will be able to research local and family history. It will return to normal opening hours when Bridport Museum reopens in Spring 2017.

Emily Hicks, Curator of Bridport Museum, is excited about the work ahead: ‘Now the redevelopment is finally starting to feel real. September is going to be a really busy month for us as we empty the Museum, carefully packing away all the things currently on display. One of the most exciting bits will be the dismantling of the Ackerman



netting loom -- it's going to take 3 days to do, as there are thousands of pieces. It will be going off to Wales for professional conservation, restored to working order and brought back in the Spring, so we will finally be able to show it working.'

Before we sign off and get to work on the busy time ahead of us, please have a sneak peek at the creation of some of the artwork that will go in the newly redeveloped Bridport Museum. Darrell Wakelam worked with children during our family activities days *Nature Rocks* to create dioramas of the local rope and net industry!

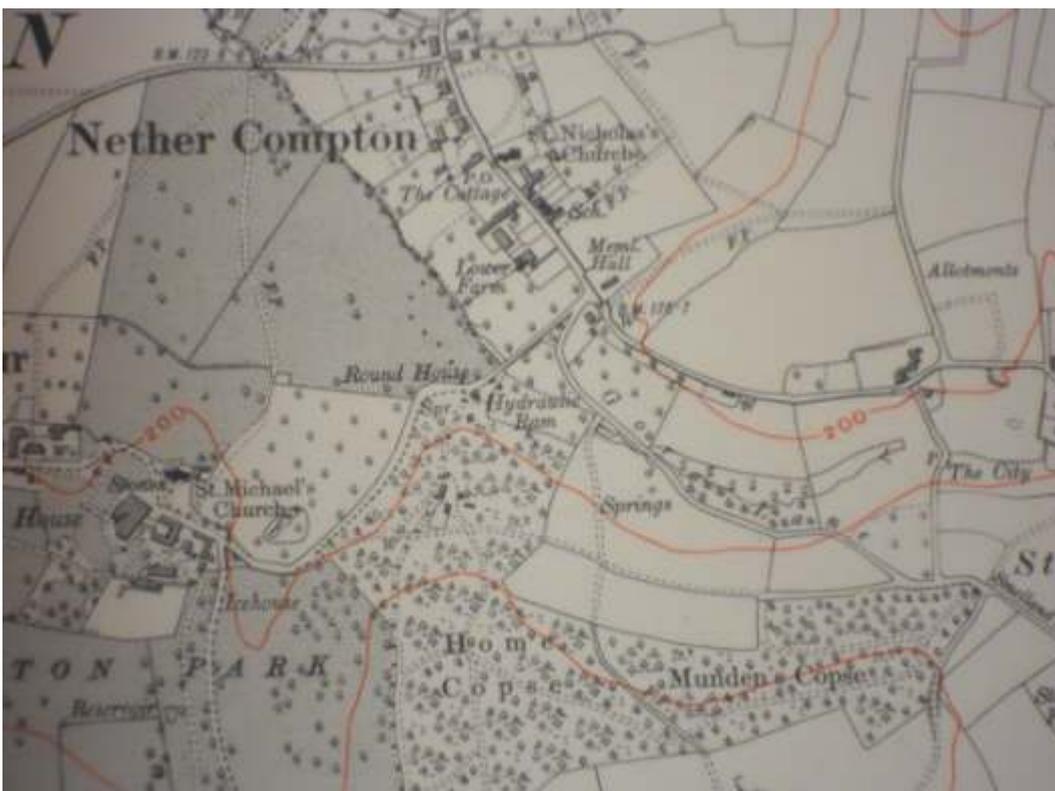
## **South Somerset Community Heritage Access Centre** **Joseph Lewis, Heritage Information Assistant**

### **CHAC On The Map**

We have enjoyed a busy time at South Somerset District Council's Community Heritage Access Centre, near Yeovil. (01935) 462886. Our current exhibition on 'Crime and Punishment' is in Yeovil Town House, 19 Union Street, Yeovil, Somerset BA20 1PQ (01935) 382424 with a selection of notable objects and images of policing in Yeovil's days gone by.

We also assisted with an illustrated talk at Abbey Manor Community Centre on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> August 2016. The subject was the latest Archaeological excavations at Lufton Roman Villa and we loaned our model of the Lufton Roman Villa buildings with octagonal plunge bath for the evening. This made an intriguing contrast to the latest finds including a pot and Roman coins.

We are also helping with the 'Know Your Place' mapping project which shows a location in 'Then' and 'Now' Images. The chosen sites from CHAC are Yeovil Town Station and Wyndham Hill.



Also, literally 'just in' are 11 maps formerly from Yeovil School dating from 1911 to 1980, with the majority in 1930. One of these highlights Nether Compton and closer inspection shows 'hydraulic ram.' We would be grateful if anyone can shed light on this!

We are also aiming to have our Celebrating Yeovil Calendar in a few outlets including Yeovil Tourist Information Centre and The Emporium, 39 Princess Street, Yeovil, (01935) 579482 from September 2016.

## Portland Museum David Carter

In June our Chairman, Mike Osmond, went to the University of Manchester to attend the first ever International Symposium dedicated to our founder and first curator Doctor Marie Stopes at which he made several good contacts which has helped to expand our understanding of this amazing woman known throughout the world for

her ground breaking birth control and family planning activities but also as a highly regarded scientist, botanist and palaeontologist as well as being the first female academic in the faculty of the University of Manchester. His visit has allowed us to further expand the presentation that we give about Marie Stopes and the origins of Portland Museum. He was also able to meet Mary Stopes-Ro, the 89 year old daughter-in-law of Marie Stopes and daughter of the engineer Sir Barnes Wallis, famous for his World War II 'bouncing bombs' that he initially tested in the Fleet Lagoon behind Chesil Beach.



As our main season got into its stride in

July we were helped for the second year running by the history students of Budmouth College, coming on their Outreach Day to run the museum on a day we were not scheduled to open. Under the supervision of their college lecturer and members of the trust they swept and vacuumed before opening the doors and while some ran the shop and greeted visitors others mowed the lawns, undertook suitable maintenance tasks, prepared craft materials for 'DinoDay' and very were pleased to find out that they had taken more money during the day than last year. Hopefully they will become our volunteers of the future.



Our annual 'DinoDay' in August, is for our younger visitors, at which everything 'dinosaur' engulfs the museum and was considered the best ever by the 178 children and 130 parents who came and enjoyed the many activities including

seeing 'Rusty' the 6 metre long plesiosaur on loan from the Jurassic project, signing individual scales to stick on 'Sidney' our three-horned, razor-backed, scaly-saurus and making a 'veggiesaurus' from vegetables donated by our local Tesco store.

When the Trust took on Portland Museum 8 years ago we also became responsible for the maintenance of our, Grade II Listed museum buildings for the following 25 years. Last year we had to





take funds from our reserves to re-thatch one side of Avice's Cottage built in 1640 which persistently leaked and as we were faced with re-thatching both sides of Marie Stopes' Cottage this winter we launched a local public appeal for £15,000. The response has been very encouraging and has now passed £10,000 with 3 months to go before work is scheduled to start. We are also running a number of additional events over and above the usual ones that help to offset the museum running costs which have included talks, a poetry evening, a weekly stall at Portland Market and a stall on Weymouth's Esplanade. On 31<sup>st</sup> August we will be selling Cream Teas at Portland's Upper Light-

house, once the home of Marie Stopes, now the home of one of our trustees, followed by an event in the museum on 15<sup>th</sup> October to celebrate Marie Stopes' 136<sup>th</sup> birthday. Like all museums we get a steady trickle of donations for our collection but as we are on the coast this is enhanced by some intriguing finds from the sea brought in by divers. Recently we had reports of a potential 'Roman anchor' which no doubt will be very difficult to date but also a glazed terracotta jug which has been provisionally identified as being made in Germany in the 16<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> century. There were no further artefacts or indications of a wreck site so how it came to be in our waters is one of those mysteries that makes museum volunteering so interesting and rewarding.



## Sherborne Museum Elisabeth Bletsoe, Curator

### Messy Museum

It was that time of year again! School holidays now mean "Messy Museum Mondays". We created a haven for children (and parents) on Monday mornings - when we are normally closed - throughout August (including Bank Holiday) to allow indulgence in messy play and engagement with our collections through a series of quizzes, word and counting games. We offered a sandpit with "dinosaur bones" and real fossils for archaeological exploration, dressing up opportunities, floor jigsaw puzzles, finger puppets, paints and crayons and various coloured sticky and gummy things. Themed activities included icing a favourite object or portrait onto a biscuit, creating an undersea frieze, coil pot making and mark making with home made coloured and textured play-do. We must be doing something right as last year we had 835 children in total through the doors which was a 132% increase on an average of the five previous years. By the end of June last year we had 245 young visitors, while this year, for the same period, we have had 525 so we are hopefully set to do even better in 2016. We have aimed to cast aside the stuffy old-fashioned image from which Sherborne Museum seemed to suffer, and while it is hard work, it's really worth it. Even though the carpets are still covered in glitter!



# The Priest's House Museum & Garden, Wimborne

## James Webb, Assistant Curator

### The Great Witchampton Cheese Robbery

Delving into the Priest's House Museum's ephemera collection we come across a Victorian reward poster that tells the tale of the 'Great Witchampton Cheese Robbery'.

This poster offers a £20 reward relating to six to eight uncoloured rammel cheeses 'feloniously stolen' from the Dairy House, Witchampton, on the night of 11-12 October 1845. The reward was for information that would 'lead to the apprehension and conviction of the Offender or Offenders'. It was offered by Mr William Burt, owner of the cheeses, and Mr H Rowden, Solicitor and Treasurer of the Wimborne St Giles Association.



Rammel cheese has been called 'the best cheese made in Dorsetshire', although the recipe appears to have been lost. The name rammel comes from 'rammilk', a dialect word for the raw or whole milk.

These cheeses must have been highly valued for such a large reward to be offered. The average wage of a Dorset farm labourer in the 1840s was six shillings a week, so a £20 reward would have been the equivalent of more than one year's pay.

We do not know whether Mr Burt recovered his cheeses. It is unlikely that the thieves were ever caught because there was no professional police force to investigate the crime, as the Dorset Constabulary was not established until 1855.



### Crummy Curators

The museum and Wimborne Library worked with pupils from Queen Elizabeth's School as part of the Wimborne History Festival (supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund). The end result is an exhibition about the Romans, produced by the pupils.

The project began with a visit by the museum to the school on 8 July. After a morning of hands on activities the pupils had chosen the themes for their exhibition and the objects they wanted to display.

Two weeks later the school visited the museum, where they completed four different activities:

- 1) Creative writing with Sara Hurley at the library, focusing on their creative response to the chosen objects. The text for the four pop up banners is drawn from some of their work.
- 2) Illustration with Martin Brown, discovering the art of the illustrator. Each group presented Martin with a brief for their pop up banner.
- 3) Graphic design with Richard Broadway, exploring how a designer turns content into great design. Each group presented Richard with a brief for their pop up banner.
- 4) Exhibition display with the museum. Each group planned the layout for their display.

The result of their work is absolutely fantastic. The exhibition is currently at the museum and will be going on tour later in the year.

## **Exhibitions and events**

Somme

1 Jul-11 Nov (closed Sundays)

Marking the centenary of the First World War's Battle of the Somme, this new exhibition has been developed by Martin Barry.

Normal admission charge

Dress to Impress

25 Mar-23 Dec (closed Sundays)

Costume exhibition exploring outfits for special occasions.

Normal admission charge

Open Weekend

Saturday 10 and Sunday 11 September 10am-4.30pm

Free opening of the house, museum and garden. Part of Dorset Architectural Heritage Week.

FREE entry

Lace in Dorset - its history, manufacture and use

Tuesday 18 October 7.30pm

Liz Pass, who has been making lace for nearly 40 years, gives an illustrated talk on the history of lace in Europe, its manufacture in Dorset towns and its use on furnishings and clothing.

Tickets £6 available from Wimborne Tourist Information Centre or on 01202 886116

Sally's Holiday Activities

22-29 Oct (closed Sundays)

Self directed craft activities.

Normal admission charge

Family Explorers

Thursday 27 October 10am-3pm

Fun art and craft activities for all the family.

£2.50

The Story of the Victorian Villa

Thursday 10 November 7.30pm

An illustrated talk on the history and contents of Sir Merton and Lady Russell-Cotes' cliff top Victorian villa.

Tickets £6 available from Wimborne Tourist Information Centre or on 01202 886116

Cnut the Great: King, Emperor, Viking, Christian - A Dorset Perspective

Thursday 8 December 7.30pm

W.B. Bartlett, author of *King Cnut & the Viking Conquest of England 1016*, explores the significance of Cnut's life and his impact on Dorset and the surrounding region.

Tickets £6 available from Wimborne Tourist Information Centre or on 01202 886116

The Great Pudding Stir

Saturday 10 December 10am-4pm

Stir a bowl of Mrs Beeton's Christmas pudding mix, make a wish and taste the finished product. The house will be festively decorated.

Adult £1.50, Child £1

Food for Thought

12-23 Dec (closed Sundays)

Exhibition exploring the history of food in East Dorset.

Normal admission charge

Priest's House Museum & Garden

01202 882533

[www.priest-house.co.uk](http://www.priest-house.co.uk)

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## **Weymouth Museum** **David M Riches**

The last few months have been an exciting but, at times, demanding period for both trustees and volunteers as we have both been negotiating with the building owners and borough council the future accommodation and financial provisions for the museum during and after the redevelopment of Brewers Quay, and finalising and submitting our accreditation submission.

The museum is housed at present on the first floor of Brewers Quay, the former Devenish and Groves brewery in Hope Square, Weymouth. The owners of the complex have planning consent, conditional on a section 106 agreement, to redevelop the buildings with a mix of residential, retail and catering units and, of course, Weymouth Museum. During redevelopment they plan to provide temporary accommodation within the complex for museum storage and office facilities and there is a new lease for the museum for this. By early July the new Museum Development Agreement and the Phase 1 Lease had been agreed and were duly signed by the developer (building owner), the borough council and Weymouth Museum Trust. Sadly things have now ground to a halt again as the Section 106 agreement has still not been completed. It seems the building owners and the borough council planning department have still to agree on some of the conditions.

We also finalised our submission for accreditation about the end of May and, with help from Vicky-de-Wit, submitted it. More recently we have been answering the assessor's questions and hosted her visit last week. We have a few actions still to complete but are hopeful that we will be successful and should hear the outcome in October.

The museum has been open to the public this year since the March half-term and, as I noted last time, for four rather than three days a week. Even allowing for the extra day the signs are that our attendance has increased this year and our shop sales are definitely better now we have relocated the new stock to the museum foyer. We have also promoted sales of copies of the photographs we have on display and this is helping to boost our income.

Weymouth Museum is open from Wednesday to Saturday every week until October 29th.