

The Shaftesbury & District Historical Society Founded 1946 Issue: December 2014

THE BYZANT



QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF
THE SHAFTESBURY & DISTRICT
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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The Shaftesbury & District Historical Society Registered Charity No. 1156237

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CHAIRMAN'S CHAT

Terry Atkins



Welcome to the new look Newsletter which the Trustees hope you will like. The perhaps spontaneous theme of this issue is the "Happy Museum". We are delighted to welcome Crystal Martin-Edwards, one of our valued volunteers, to the production team following the retirement of Gill Hutchings. We are greatly indebted to Gill for her expertise in putting the Newsletter together over a number of years. She leaves the editorial team with our very best wishes for the future.

Gold Hill Museum was represented at November's AGM of the Dorset Museums Association by three Trustees supporting our former Treasurer, David Silverside, who gave an excellent presentation on the lengthy and labyrinthine process of setting up the Charitable Incorporated Organisation. At the same meeting four volunteers from museums across Dorset received Volunteer of the Year awards. Two were from Shaftesbury and both were members of our Society. Keith Davies, our Membership Secretary, was honoured for his service over many years to Shaftesbury Abbey Museum and Ann Symons for her central role in transforming our Shaftesbury and the Great War exhibition into an ongoing Community Project. The exhibition closed at the end of the season but, as Claire Ryley reports, work on the Project continues and readers will be kept up to date on developments.

Congratulations are also due to Ian and Marjory Kellett who in November attended the presentation evening of the 2014 Shaftesbury in Bloom competition and were pleased to receive a certificate for Gold Hill Museum's second place in the Public Buildings category.

The winter season of lectures began with a tour de force from Sir William Mahon whose research into the role of Henry Percy in the Peninsular War and Waterloo was remarkable. But we have to ask whether there will be any lectures in the 2015-16 season! We urgently need a Lecture Co-ordinator to succeed Alan Carter who will be retiring after seven very successful years. He would be pleased to brief a successor as to what is involved and how to contact suitable speakers.

Although the Museum is officially closed for the winter, events and special openings

continue to take place: for the Shaftesbury Christmas Spectacular on 01 December, the Christmas Craft afternoon on 07 December, a private visit of museum enthusiasts from Bratton in Wiltshire on 08 December, and Shaftesbury Christmas Fair on 14 December. Our indispensable Museum volunteers are invited to a lunchtime social on 17 December. In February 2015 the Museum will again be open for the Snowdrop Festival.

On behalf of all the Trustees of The S & DHS, may I wish you a very happy Christmas.

THE HAPPY MUSEUM?

Elaine Barratt, steward coordinator

Another successful season closes although we're also opening three times in December, twice to coincide with the town's Christmas celebrations and once by special request, and for the Snowdrop Festival in February. A glance through the Visitors' Book will leave you in no doubt about the high esteem in which our stewards are held with so many of the comments referring in particular to their friendliness; what better reputation could any venue wish for?

I attended the Dorset Museums Association AGM, at which David Silverside gave a talk about the transition to CIO status, last month. He was one of several entertaining speakers one of whom, Alison Bevan who manages the Royal West of England Academy of Art in Bristol, gave a very upbeat talk entitled The Happy Museum.

She gave us a fascinating account of how she had taken on a very sad organisation, with an average staff turnover of one to two years, who had not only disassociated their Friends association but had replaced it with one of the same name causing much confusion to anyone attempting to join either. With funding from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, an innovative programme which supports museums seeking meaningful relationships with their communities, she turned the organisation around. Her starting point was to bring all parties together informally, encouraging them to talk over tea and cakes.

She listed the criteria necessary to a happy museum, all of which aid sustainability:

- Create conditions for well-being
- Pursue mutual relationships including key stakeholders
- Value the environment and be a steward of the future as well as the past
- Be an active citizen
- Learn for resilience
- Measure what matters

I think we can congratulate ourselves on having a happy workforce but perhaps there is much more that we could be doing to involve more of our existing volunteers, plus any society members who may wish to be included, in different aspects of the museum's organisation. Food for thought!

TREASURER'S REPORT

Marjory Kellett

We have welcomed into the museum during this season just under 20,000 visitors including almost 2,000 children. Shop takings at £8,200 are slightly down on last year, but donations made in Reception have increased by £2,000 to a magnificent £11,200. A few visitors have also made use of the recently acquired gift aid envelopes to increase the value to us of their donations. On average each visitor has contributed 41p in shop sales and 56p in donations. This income should enable us to get through to the start of next season comfortably, as long as there are no unforeseen major expenses.

The transfer of the Title Deeds of the Museum property from Legal Trustee Ltd to the Society has been completed on payment of the Land Registry Registration Fee of £540. The Land Registry Entry shows The Trustees of The Shaftesbury & District Historical Society as the registered proprietor of Sun & Moon Cottage, 1 Gold Hill, Shaftesbury (SP7 8JW).

I thought that it would be instructive to let members see how their membership subscriptions are used. Since 1st September subscriptions amounting to £1052 have been received, accompanied by members' donations of £179. Over a year I estimate that we would pay out £250 for production of newsletters, programme cards and letters to members; £200 for 2nd class stamps if we posted all of these; £300 for lecturers; £50 for hire of the Town Hall and £25 donation for each use of the Garden Room for lectures; £120 for the garden party and £30 for general stationery, making a total of £1100.

Of course we do not stamp all the envelopes (about two thirds are delivered by hand mainly by Trustees) and we do not hand over the donations for use of the Garden Room. But these figures show that very little, if any, of your subscriptions goes into the upkeep of the museum. Subscriptions would, if applied in total to our outgoings, cover only half of the annual rates or energy bills.

While it is our policy always to send out the September Newsletter by post, it would benefit the Society considerably if more of the other mailings could be sent electronically. If you would be happy to receive most of your communications from the Society by email, and don't already do so, please confirm this in an email to secretary@goldhillmuseum.org.uk. Don't worry: if you don't use email, you will still receive paper copies. I also would urge those of you who have not yet renewed your membership for this year to do so as soon as possible.

COLLECTION CARE

Sheena Commons

Members of the community continue to be very generous and we have had several new donations to the museum collection, a few of which are itemised below:

- *A selection of items from the Great War including several medals, some beautiful embroidered postcards, two memorial plaques more commonly known as 'Dead Men's Pennies' and a Princess Mary tobacco tin. These were given to the soldiers as Christmas presents.*
- *Two separate donations of items embroidered with Dorset Feather Stitch including a handbag and a little doll with embroidered clothes.*
- *A memorial plaque donated by the town Twinning Association given to them by their counterparts in Lindlar in Germany.*
- *A silver engraved pocket watch and Army issue bible belonging to Frank Hopkins of Enmore Green, the watch being given to him by the people of Shaftesbury for his gallantry in the Boer War. More of his story will be told elsewhere in the Newsletter.*

Some of the items that were lent to the museum for the Great War display, which many of you will have seen, have now been donated to the museum permanently and we are very pleased to accept them.

Our audit of the storeroom continues and so far we have managed to complete one of the bays which contains many of the larger items such as agricultural tools and horse harness.

During the winter we will also be refreshing some of the display cases and hope to put some of our new donations on display.

LECTURE PROGRAMME

Alan P. Carter

It was very pleasing to fill the Town Hall for the Teulon Porter Lecture given by Sir William Mahon. Rachael Caldwell remarked that it was the "talk of the town", much enjoyed by all.

I am always meeting people who mention that they have family in Australia as in my case with our son living in Sydney. Well, this Australian connection is going to be the subject for the December and February lectures. "The Donhead Hann Family Explorers" has been researched by our own Raymond and Christine Simpson, firstly for our Members' Tea and Talks and now for a full lecture. Make sure you come to give them your support for their hard work.

We all love a good historical novel and providing the true facts are not sacrificed in the fiction it is a good way to learn some history. Recently having been to Malta I bought the book "A Knight of St. John" by F.S.Brereton and while it's a bit Boys' Own stuff it did portray the siege of Malta and the way of life for the Knights of those times in a very graphic way. In March, Michael Wills, a present day author, will describe to us how he creates an historical novel. See you there.

ARE WE A GREEN MUSEUM?

John Parker

Just like old people, old things are best kept warm and so a museum can be quite a drain on heating costs and use of fossil fuels. Conventional wisdom suggests that ancient artefacts should be kept at a constant temperature and relative humidity so that means heating all the year round, 24 hours a day, whether or not the museum is open to visitors.

In our old building it was very difficult to achieve anything like a constant temperature as there was no coordinated central heating or controls and we relied on a collection of isolated electric radiators and storage heaters. Sometimes they all worked and their thermostats didn't jam, on or off. Worse still, the old building hardly had any insulated walls, cavities or damp courses. None of the windows was double-glazed and only a few of them could be called wind proof. Not surprisingly the electricity bills were ever increasing and we certainly couldn't call ourselves "green".

We are a good deal more fortunate now that our buildings have been so thoroughly renovated and modernised. Firstly, we have a proper central heating system, powered by a state of the art electric air source heat pump that extracts heat from the outside air to warm the circulating hot water. It works rather like an oversized refrigerator working in reverse and consists of two mini wardrobe sized units tucked away in the tiny courtyard at the back of the Museum. Depending on the outside temperature, the units produce about three times as much heat per kilowatt than we would get from conventional electric heaters. Also they will operate even when the weather is well below freezing. In a cold snap last year, they were automatically defrosting themselves but still extracting heat by cooling down the ice and snow that surrounded them!

The new extensions are extremely well insulated and double glazed, so much so that the library and office tend to get too warm rather than cold. Even the old building is now well wrapped up with internal insulation layers, so skilfully installed that they are hard to detect and do not detract from the character of the old rooms. In addition the draughty old windows are generally better fitting but have all got secondary glazing that, again, is hardly noticeable.

The Museum is now much better lit and when we first reopened there were over a hundred 30 watt spotlights, putting out a lot of heat as well as light. Fortunately, and thanks to a generous donation from Wessex Electrical, those spotlights are nearly all replaced by long life LED lamps using only 4 watts apiece. The net result of all this is that we have a much larger building, heated continually all the year round at a near constant temperature and our energy bills are well contained. Short of installing a wind turbine in the garden and solar panels on the roof, we can be proud of our green credentials.

EDUCATION AND EVENTS NEWS

Claire Ryley

The education team has been busy over the last few weeks. We held a very successful Dorset Crafts Day on October 30th, with a good flow of visitors of all ages trying their hand at a selection of crafts. Everyone did sterling work, and the event was made even better because many of the volunteers were in costume.

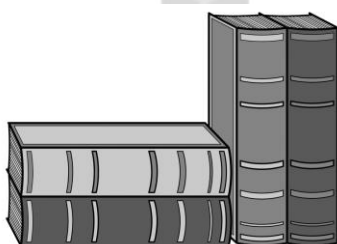
On Monday 10th November, Claire and Janet Swiss, both in costume, did a Roman afternoon at William Barnes School in Sturminster Newton. The children gave us a big thumbs-up at the end, so we think they enjoyed it! The teacher said she will be in touch next year, so this is a good new school link for the museum.

On December 7th in the afternoon, we will be repeating our Christmas craft and entertainment event, which we all enjoyed last year. We will put up the tree as before, and decorate it with the efforts of the afternoon. David Grierson will bring his handbells, and we will have stories and seasonal refreshments.

EXHIBITIONS

The Great War exhibition is now closed at the end of the 2014 season, and Ann Symons and I, with the very welcome help of Ian and Marjory Kellett, returned many of the loaned items during afternoon tea at the museum on Saturday 15th November. Some items have been generously donated, and we hope to be able to display a selection in 2015.

The Great War exhibition was very well received, and we would like to expand and share Shaftesbury's unique collection of stories over the next two years. To this end, we are applying for a Heritage Lottery Grant so we can involve local schools and other organisations in research and interviews, with the results shared on the museum website. They would also be available on a touch-screen terminal in the museum itself. If anyone has a story about their family's involvement in the Great War, we would very much like to hear from you.



DORSET CRAFTS AND ACTIVITY DAY

30TH OCTOBER 2014

During the October half-term, Claire Ryley and her enthusiastic education team transformed the Garden Room at Gold Hill Museum into a set of mini Dorset craft workshops.



Janet Swiss, who instructed Claire Ryley (*right*) in the intricacies of making a corn dolly, also volunteers regularly as a steward and said how rewarding it was to see young visitors bring their parents back to Gold Hill Museum on later occasions.



Elaine Barratt, usually the steward co-ordinator and shop manager, thoroughly enjoyed communicating the skills of Dorset button-making...



...while volunteer stewards Ray Humphries (*left*) and David Grierson were able to share the non-alcoholic products of the apple press with their young helpers.



Lots of young visitors were able to sample the skills of making gloves - or glove puppets, Dorset buttons, and corn dollies



They could also turn their hands to apple pressing, letter carving, and spinning and weaving.

*Photos by Ian Kellett and Claire Ryley
All photos taken with the consent of the subjects or responsible adults.*

ARCHIVE / LIBRARY REPORT

Ray Simpson



We continue to receive enquiries of the archive which mainly consist of help with family history and property enquiries, which Christine and myself enjoy looking out or even undertaking some research.

The small WW1 display outside the Library will be taken down during the closed period, and another-yet to be decided- will be in its place for next year's opening of the Museum.

New book additions are: William of Malmesbury's *Chronicles of the Kings of England*; Dugdale's *Monasticon Anglicanum*, Tanner's *Notitia Monastica*, which books are important to the history of our area, Wiltshire by Frank Read and *Rural Life in Wessex* by J.H. Bettey. All of these are digitized and placed on CD Rom.

Jo Rutter has donated to the Museum important archival material covering a wide variety of subjects of great interest for which we thank him.

As already mentioned elsewhere in this newsletter a pocket watch has been donated to the Museum with an interesting story behind it. Already in the Collection is a similar watch with the same story. These two watches were presentation gifts by the people of Shaftesbury to Privates Hopkins and Gatehouse upon their return from the South African War, more commonly known as the Boer War.

We hear much about the First World War but somewhat overlooked is the Boer War in which people from Shaftesbury and the surrounding villages, just 15 years or so previous took part, and their stories should be recorded and not forgotten and as time and opportunity allows their memories will be added to the files in our Museum. The following article is a joyous side to some of our local people who saw action in South Africa.



On June 8th 1901 the town of Shaftesbury turned out en fête and welcomed three of their kind upon their return from the South African War. Flags were flying, bells ringing, and the streets thronging with people. The three were privates: Frank Hopkins, Elijah Alford and Edward Gatehouse. They arrived at Semley Station on the 7.57 train.

A carriage containing the Mayor of Shaftesbury, the ex-Mayor, Mr. A.T. Carpenter, Major Matthews, the Commander of the local company of volunteers, and Lieutenant Walker met them, and in the meantime the local Volunteers had assembled with the Fire Brigade at Ivy Cross, to await their return.

After some time of anxious waiting the carriage drove up. A procession was immediately formed, headed by several mounted members of the Blackmore Vale Troop of Yeomanry and the Town Band.

Then followed the heroes of the occasion, mounted on the fire engine, which was decked with flags and evergreens, and following were the Volunteers, amongst whom were several members wearing their long service medals. The procession paraded the town, the streets being lined by a cheering crowd.

On reaching the Commons the Mayor appropriately welcomed the three men back to Shaftesbury, and after singing the National Anthem an adjournment was made to the Ship Hotel, where refreshments were partaken of and a convivial evening spent.

In December the three Shaftesbury men, in company with others of the Local Company of Volunteers under the command of Major Matthews, proceeded to Weymouth to receive their South African War Medals.

The following year, 1902, at another ceremony held outside the Town Hall inscribed pocket watches were presented to the Boer War volunteers.



Inside these watches is the following inscription appropriate to each recipient:-

Presented to Priv. Frank Hopkins

By Residents of
SHAFTESBURY
in recognition of service with the
Volunteer Service Company
of the Dorset Regiment in South Africa
During the Boer War
1898-1902

DORSET MUSEUMS ASSOCIATION
'VOLUNTEERS OF THE YEAR':
ANN SYMONS

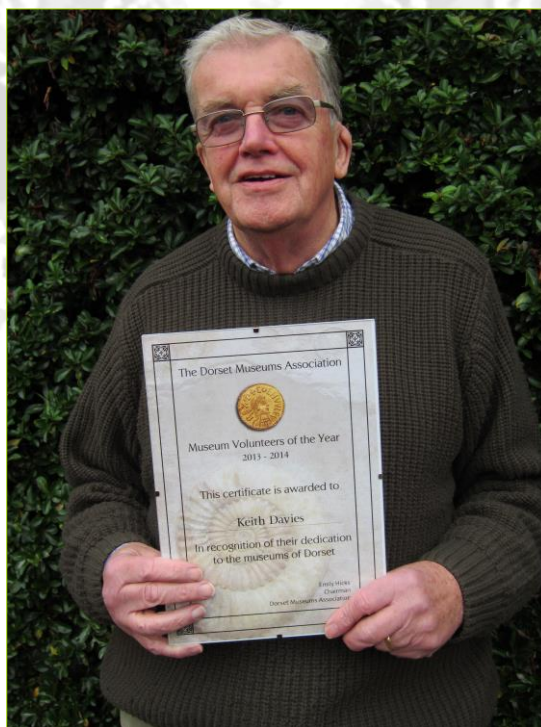


This is the text of the nomination submitted by the Secretary on behalf of Gold Hill Museum

A member of The S&DHS, Ann responded to an appeal to help with staging an exhibition on *Shaftesbury and the Great War*. It was largely Ann's idea to collect and record family stories from potential contributors to the exhibition. To publicise this exercise she organised three sessions at Shaftesbury Library and established and maintains a fruitful link with the local branch of the Royal British Legion.

There are now 62 contributors on Ann's list. Typically, she meets with the individual to make initial notes on the story and photograph any documents and artefacts. Her empathy has generated goodwill and persuaded contributors to lend unique objects. Most interviews are at Gold Hill Museum, but some will be elsewhere, if the contributor is frail. Ann then writes up the story and pursues any supporting research, before passing the account back for comment and final approval, after which she prints copies for both parties and creates a digital record. So far she has entered seven illustrated folders into the exhibition, as well as mounting related wall panels. Her husband estimates that, discounting holidays, she has spent 25 hours a week since January on these activities, a total in excess of 800 hours.

Ann freely acknowledges the help and support she has been given by Trustees and other volunteers at Gold Hill Museum. She has, however, been the indispensable catalyst for transforming an exhibition into an evidence-gathering community project, thus creating a permanent archive, and demonstrating a commitment far "beyond the call of duty".



Also honoured at the Dorset Museums Association AGM was S&DHS member and Membership Secretary Keith Davies, who was nominated by Shaftesbury Abbey Museum and Garden. Keith has worked at the Abbey as a volunteer steward since 1995, and undertaken lengthy stints as both Manager and Membership Secretary.

LOVE, WAR AND THE NEWS OF WATERLOO

The 2014 Teulon Porter Lecture, reviewed by Ian Kellett

Sir William Mahon launched the Society's season of winter lectures at the Town Hall on 07 October with a spectacular presentation on "Love, War and the News of Waterloo." A rapt audience of over 60 saw Sir William unveil the story of Captain the Honourable Henry Percy, who served in Wellington's army during the Peninsular War. Captured by the French in Portugal, Percy trudged over 800 miles into France, and during three years of fairly comfortable imprisonment formed a liaison with Marion Durand, the daughter of a wine-grower. The elder of their two illegitimate sons later became a prominent figure in the government of British India, and died in 1871 falling from an elephant. Percy was at the famous ball in Brussels on the eve of Waterloo, and unchanged in his dancing attire witnessed the Allied victory over Napoleon and then rushed Wellington's despatch, in a still-surviving purse given him by Marion, to the Prince Regent in London. After laying two captured French eagle standards at the feet of the Prince Regent, Percy was to discover a musket ball lodged in his own foot.

Sir William was congratulated on bringing to life so vividly a complex web of individuals and events, based on the rigorous pursuit of documents and artefacts. Alan Carter was thanked for his diligence over seven years in recruiting entertaining and informative speakers for the Society, and the question was posed: who will be Alan's successor in the role of Lecture Co-ordinator?

2015 IS ELECTION YEAR ...

Ian Kellett, Secretary

... But for The S. & D.H.S. so too is 2016, and every year after that. The constitution of the Charitable Incorporated Organisation requires that a third of the elected Trustees retire each year, though these individuals may offer themselves for re-election. The C.I.O. started with ten out of a theoretical maximum of twelve elected Trustees, of whom David Silverside has already retired and Alan Carter will retire next year. Others may also decide to step down, so it is a racing certainty that there will be vacancies in 2015.

So what exactly do the elected Trustees do? Put simply, they run the Society and its Museum, supported by a sterling cast of fellow volunteers. Each has a specific brief and reports on it to monthly Trustees' meetings. They share the common characteristic of being passionate about making the Society and Museum the best they can be. Being a Trustee is not a sinecure - it requires commitment and hard work.

How does a person put themselves forward to become a Trustee? The existing Trustees have given some thought to this question, and the text which follows is taken from a byelaw they have adopted, as permitted by the C.I.O. constitution.

Nominations for Trustees will be invited in the Spring Newsletter, which will list the names of existing and retiring Trustees and their responsibilities, the number of years of their service to the C.I.O., the number of attendances [theoretical and actual] at Trustee Committee Meetings in the previous calendar year, and the number and nature of vacancies. Candidates will be requested to apply for a specific vacancy, or to fill a new role identified by the Trustees as essential to the smooth running of the Society. Nomination forms will be circulated with the Spring Newsletter.

Candidates must be paid-up members of the Society and nominated and seconded in writing by paid-up members. They should confirm in writing, and submit a statement of no more than 250 words in support of, their candidacy. This should be typed or written legibly on the nomination form so that it may be photocopied and circulated to the membership. This personal statement should show how their qualifications, experience, expertise and interests would be of value to the Society. They must be prepared to be active in the management of the Society and of the Museum, able to attend monthly Trustee meetings, and easily contactable, especially by email.

The completed nomination form and statement should reach the Secretary no later than 31 May, in order that copies of it may be circulated to members with notification of the Annual General Meeting to be held in July. In the event of a candidate being found to have falsified parts of their statement, or to have withheld significant details knowing that these would be damaging to the reputation of the Society, the Trustees shall have the power to nullify that person's candidacy or election.

Election of duly nominated candidates shall take place by show of hands during the AGM. In the event of a contested election [i.e. where there are more candidates than there are vacancies] the Secretary shall prepare a ballot paper so that voting may be conducted in secret and tellers shall be appointed from the meeting.

Members should be aware at the time of an election that they are voting for a Trustee capable of fulfilling a particular role in the management of the Society, such as Chair, Secretary or Treasurer. It shall be the prerogative of the Trustees however, to allocate such roles and responsibilities as they consider in the best interests of the efficient conduct of the Society's affairs. The allocation and confirmation of offices by the Trustees shall normally be conducted at the first full meeting of the Trustees held after the AGM.

SHAFTESBURY & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

THE SALISBURY HOARD

A modern day Archaeology detective story concerning the unique hoard of Iron Age artefacts found near Salisbury.



By MARGARET MCKENZIE

2.30pm TUESDAY 6 JANUARY

THE GOLD HILL MUSEUM, SHAFTESBURY

ADMISSION: MEMBERS FREE

VISITORS £3.00

STUDENTS £1.00

CHARITY NO. 1156273

LOTTERY FUNDED