

The Shaftesbury & District Historical Society Founded 1946 Issue: April 2015

THE BYZANT



QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF
THE SHAFTESBURY & DISTRICT
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Shaftesbury & District Historical Society Registered Charity No. 1156273

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(V I C E) C H A I R M A N ' S C H A T

Ian Kellett



I have had to step into the breach as Terry is still recovering from an illness which recently saw him hospitalised for ten days. He has, however, penned a piece about his starring role in *Put Your Money Where Your Mouth Is*, which we weren't allowed to publicise prior to broadcast on 06 March. Faced with the unblinking eye of the camera, Terry represented the Society very effectively,

and generously, and we hope that he and Anita will soon be back at the Museum.

Also in March we welcomed Claire Ryley to the committee of Trustees. In some respects this means no change, because Claire has managed our very popular joint education programme with the Abbey for some years. But she is also about to take charge of an exciting Great War Project financed by a small grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. We can at last report this terrific news, and you can read our HLF-approved Press release elsewhere in this Newsletter.

And still in March we were sad to say goodbye as a Trustee to Barbara Ambrose, who first stepped back for health reasons and then decided to step down. Barbara helped to raise funds for the Museum's redevelopment, before taking on responsibility for managing our stewards' rota and then public relations. She brought a transatlantic "get up and go" to committee meetings and we are pleased that her support will still be

available to the Society.

We already knew that Alan Carter would be retiring as a Trustee at this year's AGM, and as his swan-song he flags up the prospect of a pretty exclusive summer outing. How do we begin to replace these stalwarts? Please read the Secretary's article and consider if you could help the Society by offering to fill one of the Trustee vacancies identified there. An Application Form is enclosed with this Newsletter.

As you would expect in spring, the theme of many of the reports in this issue is making preparations for the new season. Our amazing volunteers continue to go the extra mile. The quality of our two new temporary Exhibitions reflects the many hours put into their mounting. But when two long-serving volunteer stewards like the Dennings finally call it a day, they are extremely hard to replace.

Both Elaine Barratt and Claire Ryley are looking for additions to their respective teams. Interest can be expressed via phone [852157, with out-of-hours answerphone], the Day Book at Museum Reception, or email to enquiries@goldhillmuseum.org.uk

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May I draw members' attention to the Friends of Shaftesbury Abbey Museum Spring Lecture on Wednesday 22 April 7.30p.m. at Shaftesbury Arts Centre. I met the lecturer, Professor Marilyn Palmer, on an Historical Association Tour led by her many years ago, and her enthusiasm for her subject matter was infectious. Her topic is "Comfort and Convenience in the Country House" and tickets [£9.50; £8 FoSA and students] are available from SAC Box Office and Shaftesbury TIC.

S I G N S O F S P R I N G

Ian and Marjory Kellett

In the late autumn we added another bucketful of King Alfred daffodils, in artful clusters so Ian likes to believe, in the central and far beds. King Alfred produces large single trumpets and seems appropriately named, but is prone to collapse after high winds or heavy rain.

Opening in February means that there should be something of interest for

visitors to see in the garden, if they are bold enough to venture outside. To justify the Museum's being on the Snowdrop Trail, there should at least be snowdrops visible from the gate. We are therefore trying to create a Winter Corner behind and to the right of the honeysuckle obelisk, a shady patch at the best of times. Among the yellow and red dogwoods and behind the sarcococca [Christmas Box] we have planted helleborus orientalis, and clumps of snowdrops kindly donated by Elaine Barratt and Janet Swiss. If any members have a surfeit of snowdrops, we would be delighted to receive and plant some "in the green."



Marjory has done an excellent job weeding the flagged and gravel paths, and attacking the comfrey which threatens to take over the gravel steps. In its place we have planted a variegated golden green grass, acorus gramineus Ogon, chosen mainly because it was remaindered at the garden centre and looked suitable for splitting. No doubt the comfrey will be back. Down the hedge line on the right I have added lonicera nitida Baggesen's Gold, also remaindered but colourful, perennial and capable of filling the gaps in our very woody escallonia. As usual, any plants we have bought have been donated to the garden.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Marjory Kellett

As we approach the end of our accounting period, I am pleased to say that our finances are healthy. Though we are officially in the closed season, the opening of the Museum for nine days during the Snowdrop Festival in February and some pre-arranged privilege visits have resulted in £750 in donations and £250 in sales. The workshops run by Claire Ryley and her team in February were very successful and produced a surplus of £80.

The rent that we receive from the Beadster is an important source of

revenue especially at this time of year when we still have utility bills and insurance to pay. Fortunately the Museum itself has not required any significant repairs this winter but we have had to replace the storage heater in the Beadster.

I have recently returned to the Valuation Office Agency a form giving details of the Society's property and business. This is required for the publication of the updated rateable values of all businesses throughout the country in October 2016. The local council will then calculate our rates bill based on these values from April 2017. I am also currently pursuing HMRC about claiming the tax paid on Gift Aided donations to the old Society and to the CIO.

Because of the healthy state of our finances we have been able to purchase at the cost of £1360 two new display cases. You will be able to admire them when you visit the temporary exhibition mounted for the centenary of the W.I. The Trustees feel that it is important for the Society to use its funds for the development of the Museum. They are also discussing putting some of the reserves into an investment fund which will produce capital growth and/or a better rate of interest than the bank account.

COLLECTION CARE

Sheena Commons

Work on the Collection has been limited this year by the more pressing need to complete the museum's application for Reaccreditation which took up a considerable amount of time. It was made more complicated and difficult than necessary by various changes to the system, the form and the information required. However, we persisted with gritted teeth and the completed form was finally forwarded, with a huge sigh of relief, on 7th January this year. We have received an acknowledgement that the form has been received and must now wait for the result as patiently as we can.

Although the audit of the storeroom had to be put on hold, basic and necessary work with the collection continued and replies to queries and other research requests have continued to be dealt with.

We received a large number and variety of donated items in 2014, many of them related to the Great War, and these have been accessioned,

acknowledged and added to the database. Some, we hope, will add to and enhance our permanent displays. We hope to be able to continue with the audit of the items in the Storeroom in the coming months and to continue with updating Cardbox, the museum's cataloguing system.

The Collections team is currently working on an exhibition to celebrate the Centenary of the Women's Institute and a second exhibition about weights and measures from their origins to the present day is being developed by other museum volunteers. Both displays promise to be very interesting and informative and we hope will be enjoyed by all our visitors.

A N N U A L O U T I N G

TUESDAY 16TH JUNE

Alan P. Carter

A year ago we enjoyed a memorable lecture, "Politician, Philosopher and Philanthropist; the 1st, 3rd and 7th Earls of Shaftesbury" given by Sidney Blackmore. We were graced by the presence of the Earl of Shaftesbury and his wife... Afterwards I asked them whether we could visit their House which they have been renovating. A House now lived in after 50 years with their young family. He said Yes but not too many! Thus our Annual Outing on Tuesday 16 June will be to Wimborne St Giles, a village which is a designated conservation area. Besides St. Giles House, of interest there are the Church and Alms-houses and the stocks! The Church is filled with beautiful memorials and high Church decorations. Nearby, the Sir Anthony Ashley's Almshouses were built in 1624. Sidney Blackmore will be our Guide. Details will be circulated in May.

GOLD HILL MUSEUM STEWARDS AND SHOP

Elaine Barratt

I am pleased to report that my stated goal at the end of the 2013-14 season, to open every day from April to October with two stewards on a two hour shift basis, was met. The museum was also open for late night Christmas shopping and for the town's December Fair as well as for the Snowdrop Festival during the February half-term. A huge thank you must be extended to our stewards for enabling this as well as hearty congratulations for attracting so many appreciative comments in the Visitors' Book.

The shop continued to do well although sales were slightly down on last season while donations were up; it appears to be a swings and roundabouts situation. The introduction of second hand books has boosted income and, of course, donations are pure profit while sales must be set against the cost of our products; on this basis, increased donations at the expense of sales can only be welcomed.

My recruitment drive last season was very successful, proving that no amount of local press or poster advertising beats the personal touch. Friends and acquaintances may have been crossing the road to avoid me but my determination to attract more "locals" paid off and their enthusiasm for the role has had a knock-on effect. The availability of application forms in reception has also made a difference and, all-in-all, numbers are looking healthier.

Steward turnover is low but, sadly, we must say goodbye to Tony and Mary Denning both of whom have suffered mobility problems and feel unable to carry on. I would like to take this opportunity to thank them both for their decades of service to the museum.

As ever we can always accommodate extra stewards. If you don't want to commit to a regular shift, we can never have too many on the relief list so, as the new season begins, don't be shy!

EDUCATION AND EVENTS NEWS

Claire Ryley

The Education team met in January to discuss the events programme for 2015, and we now have a calendar of sessions from February to December. We took part in the Snowdrop Festival in February, running three craft sessions in the Garden Room.

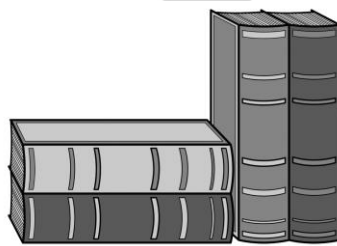
The two pottery sessions were sold out, and we had to turn people away, so we are offering an extra one in the October half-term.

Our next event is on Good Friday at the Abbey, with volunteers in medieval costume, and participants making a pilgrimage around the town, collecting items to decorate their pilgrim staff. It coincides with the churches' walk of witness in the town, and I think it is very appropriate that we remember the Abbey's past spiritual role on this day.

We are joining in the Food and Arts Festival on May 31st, with music and a teddy bear picnic in the Abbey grounds. David Grierson has offered to run a music workshop at Gold Hill Museum with a performance in the Abbey grounds, after his successful and very enjoyable workshop last year.

Port Regis has booked a repeat of the Great War workshop and town tour which Ann Symons and I led last year, and we hope to broaden this out to other schools in the town and nearby area. Annabel at the Abbey has kindly updated the schools' leaflet, which she has sent to local schools.

We have a good, but small (!) team of active volunteers for these events, and would very much welcome some more offers of help. We cannot expand our programme at present, despite demand, so if you have some time, and enjoy working with children, please join us. The commitment is only for a few hours a year, and a couple of meetings, where biscuits or buns are always available!



SHEDDING NEW LIGHT ON OLD SUBJECTS

In February 2015 the Museum took delivery of two new showcases, funded partly by a Town Council Community Grant and mainly by donations from members and last season's 20,000 visitors.



*John Parker
supervises the unloading of the counter cabinet*

The helpful delivery drivers negotiate the upright case out of the lift



Volunteer sherpas - Claire and Peter Ryley, John Parker and Elaine Barratt, under the watchful eye of Marjory Kellett - trek across the landing



Once John Parker has fitted the 5amp plug, the counter case catches the eye on approaching the Small Exhibition Room

Both illuminated cases brighten up the Small Exhibition Room as the WI Centenary Exhibition takes shape



Ian Kellett safeguarded his suspect back by taking the photographs

ARCHIVE / LIBRARY REPORT

Ray Simpson



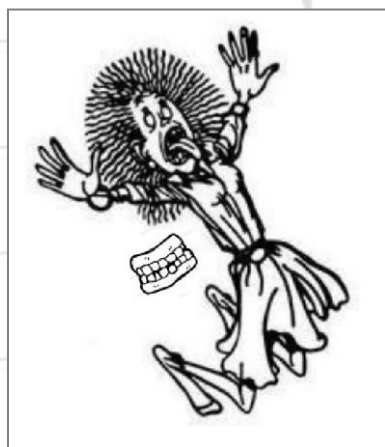
Only one new publication has been added to the library since the last newsletter – Notes & Queries for Somerset and Dorset Vol. XXXVII- March 2015.

As ever, family history enquiries continue to arrive and in nearly all cases the Society has been able to help. We do not charge for any research we undertake which is rare for an institution in our field, however goodwill and reputation are rewards in themselves.

A small display outside the library will be put up shortly about Shaftesbury cinemas and trade advertisements.

The following report is a Shaftesbury incident in 1923. It pre-dates the use of Fixodent!

A robbery which is surrounded by many elements of mystery is alleged to have occurred at Shaftesbury on Saturday night. It is stated that just before closing time Mrs. Amelia Phillips, wife of Mr. Harry Phillips, licensee of the Knowles Arms Inn, in Salisbury Street, was going through a dark passage to the back of the house to light a candle on a table. As she was about to light it, someone whom she was unable to see because of the darkness, caught hold of her, pushed her out of the back door, and struck her a blow in the face, knocking out her false teeth, which fell on to the ground.



Screams and cries of "He's killing me" brought customers and Mrs. Phillips' son-in-law and daughter to the scene, and they found Mrs. Phillips apparently dazed and hysterical. There was no sign of her assailant, but beside her false teeth on the floor was a cash-box, unopened.

Mrs Phillips was under the impression that the person who attacked her had come down the stairs, and a search was made in the upper rooms. The drawers in one room had been ransacked, and in a drawer from which the unopened cash-box had been taken there was another cash-box, from which, it is

alleged, a sum of £25 in notes or thereabouts had been taken. In this box also were a gold watch and gold ring, a sovereign, an Excise and other licenses, but these had not been disturbed.

The police were informed of the occurrence, and they conducted an exhaustive search for the alleged assailant, but without success. The back door of the house was usually kept locked, customers who were at the front door were confident that no-one passed them, and no footmarks were found in the mud at the back of the house to suggest that the alleged miscreant escaped that way. Mrs Phillips was unable to give a description of the person by whom she was attacked, and the whole occurrence remains a mystery.

N O W I T C A N B E T O L D

Terry Atkins



Chairman Terry Atkins recalls the autumn afternoon when James Braxton and the film crew of BBC1's Put Your Money Where Your Mouth Is arrived at Gold Hill Museum. Two antiques wheeler-dealers compete in the show to make the greater profit for charity. The programme was broadcast on 06 March 2015:

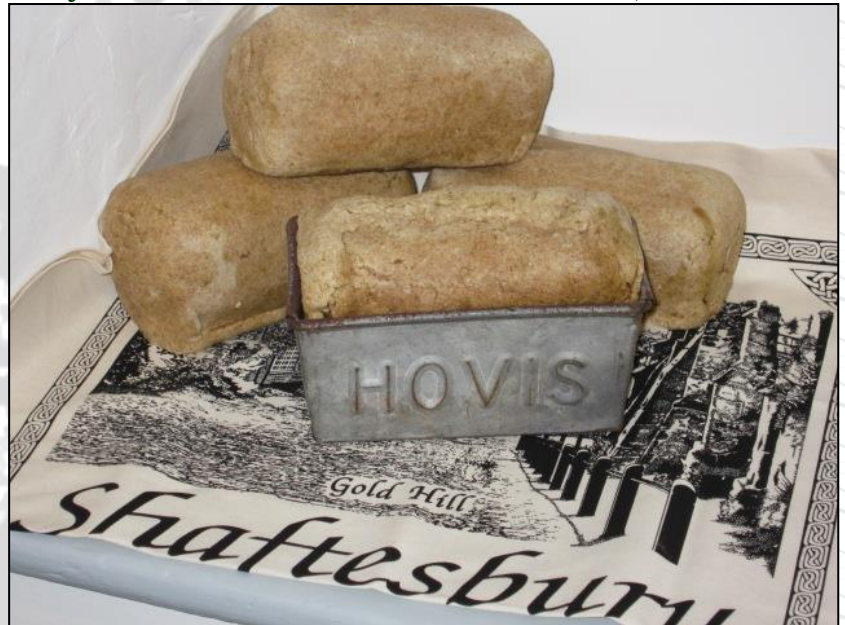
James had paid over the odds at auction for 14 baking tins, though we didn't know how much. A stack of a rather tarnished eleven, he claimed, were Hovis tins – given the fame of the Ridley Scott advert, would the Museum like to buy them? The

short answer to that was “No”, but I was prepared to pay for the publicity for the Museum out of my own pocket and hope that other sponsors for the tins would emerge. [They did, and we are grateful to them.]

The light was fading after the inevitable shot of James pushing a bike up the cobbles. Negotiations in the Museum garden were cheerful, with the opportunity to talk about the popularity of Gold Hill, the success of the

Museum, and its splendid volunteers. Finally we agreed a price and James, grinning like the Cheshire Cat and expressing eternal friendship, departed with his henchmen.

Once the stack of tins had been prised apart, we were disappointed to discover that only nine were actually embossed with “Hovis”. Caveat emptor. Five have been bought by the Tourist Information Centre, and the remainder are being used in small displays in the Museum, enhanced by the addition of fake loaves created by Janet Swiss. They can now be labelled “As seen on TV.”



We are grateful to members John and Lavender Buckland for the loan of the framed history of Hovis.



HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND AWARDS



£6,700 to Gold Hill Museum to develop Shaftesbury and the Great War Project

The Trustees of The Shaftesbury & District Historical Society have been delighted to hear that they have just received a grant of £6,700 from the Heritage Lottery Fund [HLF] to develop their “Shaftesbury and the Great War” project.

The project will create a permanent display to commemorate the impact of the conflict on the lives of the people of Shaftesbury.

Awarded through HLF’s **First World War: then and now** programme, the grant will enable the education team to build on the success of last year’s temporary exhibition at Gold Hill Museum, when over 60 local people contributed family stories, photographs, documents, and artefacts illustrative of their relatives’ involvement in the First World War. The

grant will enable a full digital record to be stored and shared with a potential worldwide audience, through expansion of the Museum's website. Visitors to Gold Hill Museum will be able to access the First World War archive through a touch-screen terminal.

Educationists Claire Ryley and Ann Symons intend to roll out the project with open days, and visits to schools and interested organisations in the local community. They hope to attract further contributions to the archive and train new volunteers in the skills of collecting and recording information. "It is", said Claire, "a magnificent opportunity to share and preserve our community's experience of the First World War for future generations. We are very grateful to the HLF for enabling this to happen."

VACANCIES FOR NEW TRUSTEES

Ian Kellett, Secretary

As of 20 March, 2015 there are nine Trustees active in the management of The Shaftesbury & District Historical Society. In addition there are two *ex officio* Trustees, the President, Dr Tapper, and the Dorset Museums Adviser, Vicky de Wit. Thirteen full committee meetings have been held since the registration of the Charitable Incorporated Organisation in March 2014. The responsibilities and attendance records of the nine active Trustees are as follows:

Terry Atkins	Chairman	9
Elaine Barratt.....	Stewards, Shop	13
Alan Carter	Lectures, Members' Visits	6
Sheena Commons...	Collection Care	12
Ian Kellett	Secretary, Vice Chair, Garden...	13
Marjory Kellett	Treasurer	13
John Parker	Buildings	8
Claire Ryley	Education [co-opted 11/03/15] ...	n/a
Ray Simpson	Archive, Library	13

Listed as the first Charity Trustees of the CIO were all of the above except Claire Ryley and Marjory Kellett, who was co-opted as Treasurer in March 2014. Also listed were David Silverside, who retired as a Trustee in July 2014, and Barbara Ambrose who formally resigned on 03 March 2015. In addition Alan Carter has given notice of his intention to retire in 2015. This means that a third of the original Trustees will have retired by

the time of the Annual General Meeting in July 2015, as required by the CIO constitution.

Co-opted Trustees must also retire at the AGM next following their appointment. Marjory Kellett is willing to continue as Treasurer and intends to stand for election as a Trustee. Likewise Claire Ryley, who directs our educational activities including an exciting new Great War project, is prepared to be a candidate for election in July.

There exist the following **vacancies for new Trustee appointments**:

Lecture Co-ordinator - To succeed Alan, who will be happy to guide the new person in planning the programme of winter lectures and summer visit. Several speakers have already been booked for the 2015/16 season.

Publicity and Fundraising - These roles could be separated. The profiles of the Society and Museum need to be maintained in the local media, while another regular task is to generate and place posters for exhibitions and lectures. South West Federation of Museums' training and mentoring may be available for someone willing to take on the role of fundraiser.

Information Technology Manager - Our computers, digital devices and website all probably need updating, and fellow Trustees would benefit from training in their use.

If you think that you can offer an interest and expertise in one of these areas, or are prepared to learn on the job, please complete the **Application Form** enclosed with this Newsletter. It should be forwarded to the Secretary at Gold Hill Museum, Shaftesbury, Dorset SP7 8JW by no later than **29 May 2015**.

Checklist of essentials:

A candidate for Trustee must be

- a paid-up member of The S&DHS
- nominated by two paid-up members
- contactable by email
- available for monthly committee meetings
- willing to be active in the management of the Society and Museum
- willing to sum up their candidature in no more than 250 words

PREPARATIONS FOR THE NEW SEASON

On March 19 Ray Humphries returned perhaps the most important piece of furniture in Gold Hill Museum, the Donations Box.

Ray had noticed that emptying the box often became a wrestling match with an inert object, as coins refused to be dislodged from the ledges of the Perspex top into the bucket below. After the second of the stewards' pre-season lunch briefings, Ray volunteered to take the box home to his workshop for vital modifications.

He credits his son Mark with the idea of fitting four pieces of beading so that coins have to fall into the centre of the collecting area. A clever cloth skirt guarantees that on emptying coins never miss the bucket.

From 28 March, when Gold Hill Museum opens to the public for the new season, fellow volunteer stewards will have reason to be grateful for the Humphries' ingenuity.



Visitors will be able to see two new impressive temporary exhibitions. The centenary of the foundation of the WI is celebrated by the Collection Team in a colourful presentation making excellent use of the Museum's two new illuminated display cases. Next door visitors can explore "The Rule of Thumb: a history of English measurement" by engaging in a variety of weighing and measuring activities devised by Janet Swiss and Ken Howe.

NEW EXHIBITIONS

PROVE A HIT

An email to the Secretary from our Treasurer Emeritus:

Ian

As a follow-up to yesterday's Stewardship, I must congratulate those who put together the two new exhibitions. I did a recce after the splendid Member's Meeting on Tuesday so that I could assess comments from the visitors yesterday. The two exhibitions went down extremely well with visitors, the Rule of Thumb with all and the WI100 was really appreciated by the ladies. I am not sure that I have heard such praise on our exhibitions in my time as steward!

Please pass this on as you please

David

Subject: New Season's Exhibitions

Gold Hill Museum opens for the new season on Saturday 28 March. Our splendid volunteers have been working hard behind the scenes to improve the public face of the Museum in a variety of ways. And this spring we have two new temporary exhibitions:

The Centenary of the Women's Institute. This is in the Small Exhibition Room but spills out onto the landing and makes wonderful use of our two new illuminated display cases.

The rule of thumb - a history of English measurement. This is in the Large Exhibition Room and invites hands-on weighing and measuring, as it explores the origins of rods, poles, perches and a host of other pre-metric standards. Guaranteed to be nostalgic for viewers of a certain age, and intriguing for the metricated.

Shaftesbury Camera Club

Photographic Exhibition



Saturday 2nd to Monday 4th May

10.30 am - 4.30 pm

The Garden Room, Gold Hill Museum, Shaftesbury



Entry is via the museum and is free

shaftesburycameraclub.org.uk