

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

THE BYZANT



QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF
THE SHAFTESBURY & DISTRICT
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Shaftesbury & District Historical Society Registered Charity No. 1156273

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C H A I R M A N ' S C H A T

Change and Continuity by Ian Kellett (Acting Chairman)

At their August meeting the Trustees welcomed three new members elected at the July AGM: Lavender Buckland, Marjory Kellett and Claire Ryley. More continuity than change, as Claire has served on the committee of the Society before, and Marjory has been an efficient Treasurer since April 2014. All three provide written reports in this Newsletter. Lavender manages to combine change and continuity in the same piece by performing a double act with her predecessor, Alan Carter, who writes: "A good lecture should inform, inspire and entertain." This principle was certainly put into practice over the eight years of Alan's tenure and we are immensely grateful to him.



In late July Dr Geoffrey Tapper tendered his resignation as President of the Society. The re-invention of Gold Hill Museum took place on his watch as Chairman, and the many committee meetings held in Dr and Mrs Tapper's front room were memorable not only for their hospitality but also the historical curios unveiled each month. Would it be possible to find a new President with the same depth of knowledge of, and passion for, local history?

The Trustees are confident that they have their man in Jo Rutter, who has kindly accepted their offer of the Presidency. As you can read in the first instalment of his memoir 'As I seem to remember', Jo was involved as a very youthful Secretary in the early days of the Society and the beginnings of what is now Gold Hill Museum. Change and continuity.

Jo refers to Noel Teulon Porter being an inspiration to us all. A few months ago we were sad to hear of the death of Leonore Schafarik, niece of Noel Teulon Porter. A

refugee from Nazi Europe, Leonore came as a young girl to live with her uncle. She was always a strong supporter of The S&DHS and performed the official opening ceremony of the redeveloped Gold Hill Museum in 2011. We are pleased and grateful that she chose to remember the Society in her will, as reported by the Treasurer. There are plans, supported by Leonore's friends, to install a distinctive bench in the Museum garden, which she also liked. The Teulon Porter Memorial Lecture starts our winter season in the Town Hall at 7.30p.m. on 06 October and is anticipated elsewhere in these pages.

As many of you will be aware, our Chairman, Terry Atkins, has been dogged by ill-health this year. At the time of writing he is in a nursing home in Gillingham. Terry likes to write that the Society and Museum are going from strength to strength and I am pleased to repeat that assertion, noting that over the three days of the August Bank Holiday weekend 599 adults and 55 children visited Gold Hill Museum. They would receive a warm welcome from our well-trained stewards. The contents of this Newsletter reflect the unstinting efforts of a broad range of our incomparable volunteers – could you be one of them?

AS I SEEM TO REMEMBER

By our new President Jo (Joseph) Rutter

My interest in history was, I think, in my psyche, but it was while I was still at school that I was introduced to archaeology. One of my friends was a fanatic caver and being in the Mendips there were plenty of opportunities for exploring. I only once went underground and did not find it to my liking I was too scared. Instead I was encouraged to excavate a small rock shelter on a north-facing slope of Wavering Down, which overlooked the Severn estuary. It proved to be a wolf den, and was full of animal bones from the Pleistocene age. I found parts of a wolf skull which I carefully reconstructed and which is now in the Wells museum.

When I had completed my training to be an accountant I returned to Shaftesbury the place of my birth and set up practice. I became involved in the activities of the Shaftesbury Historical Society, and to my surprise was asked to be its secretary at the tender age of 23. This proved to be an exciting experience for a greenhorn like me, but it was rewarding. The principal activity at that time was the establishment of the museum which started life in the Town Hall, then moved to the old billiard hall next to the Quaker meeting-house in Gold Hill. The two curators, Miss Priest Shaw and Mrs Thorsander, were under the supervision of Sir Leonard Woolley our then president, and ably supported by Noel Teulon Porter who was an inspiration to us all. I replaced Mr E. Jervoise as secretary as he was leaving Shaftesbury. He was the author of our publication number one 'The Streets and Lanes of Shaftesbury'.

In those early days the secretary's job was to do everything except the museum. I had to organise the lecture programme, and the summer outings as well as the usual secretarial duties. Sir Leonard gave a series of talks entitled 'As I Seem to Remember' and I had to arrange to record them. They were eventually published in aid of the museum funds. I recall the projector, operated by Mr Foote a local optician, who with his equipment was able to project from the back of the lecture room and could accommodate all sorts of projectors and plugs that lecturers brought.

The museum collection continued to grow and soon had too much for our room in Gold Hill, so we started to look for somewhere to go. A local property dealer owned the old Sun & Moon Inn, then a private house which was occupied by an old lady and her daughter. Behind the house there was an old building which used to be a dosshouse for tramps and drovers, and it was this building that it was felt could be turned into a museum. I was instructed to negotiate with the owner and he agreed to accept our offer of £800. He suggested that we buy the house as well, but as we had insufficient funds we could not do this. As the tenants were protected and we would not be able to use the house, it did not seem to be a good proposition.

However I arranged an option to buy it for £500 and if the appeal were successful we could exercise it. The appeal was successful, and we did buy the cottage, and after a short while the old tenant died and her daughter moved out. Certain building works were carried out and the museum moved in. Things were going well. Our band of volunteers were busy arranging the displays of our collections. The cottage was let to a new curator, Miss Budgett, who improved the property considerably and when she died she left us a legacy. The property was now vacant and in due course became an investment property which was to provide us with a much needed regular income. The next chapter was about to be written.

(to be continued in a later newsletter)

TREASURER'S REPORT

Marjory Kellett

During the period April to August we have had slightly fewer visitors to the museum than in the same period last year and consequently our income from shop sales and visitor donations is about £800 less. In addition to the normal costs of running the museum, i.e. rates, utilities, insurance and service contracts, we have spent over £1200 on the development of the new website. However I am pleased to say that over the five months our income has comfortably exceeded our expenditure. The exterior paintwork of the south-facing windows needs attention. This work will be carried out later in the year at a cost of around £1300.

At the AGM in July it was agreed to increase the annual membership subscription to £15 (single) and £25 (family) and to increase a single life membership subscription to £75. The annual subscription for a student member would remain at £3. About 50% of the total subscriptions should cover the costs of running the lectures and of producing and distributing newsletters and other information with the remainder going to the running costs of the museum.

We are grateful for the legacy of £10,000 left to the Society by the late Miss Leonore Schafarik for use in the maintenance and upkeep of the fabric of the buildings in the Society's ownership.

WOMEN'S INSTITUTE EXHIBITION



Mary Pennell cutting the ribbon to open Gold Hill Museum's 2015 temporary exhibition marking the centenary of the Women's Institute. Mary has belonged to the WI for over 50 years, is still an active member of both Shaftesbury morning and evening WI and has served as President of both.

COFFEE MORNING/ GREAT WAR PROJECT

At recent coffee mornings held in the Anna McDowell Garden Room, Claire Ryley and Ann Symons continued the process of recruiting volunteers and collecting information for the HLF funded Great War Project.





EDUCATION AND EVENTS NEWS

Claire Ryley

We had two visits from Port Regis in June, incorporating town trails, and our new Great War schools' workshop. It has been a quiet year on the schools front, partly due to tight school budgets and timetabling, and partly to Mr Gove's changes to the history National Curriculum, which have affected many museums who are no longer able to rely on Victorian sessions as their main draw.

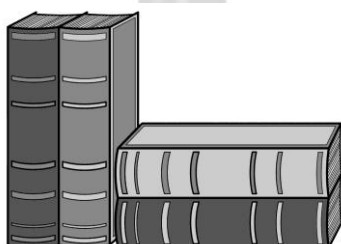
However we are planning a very interesting enterprise as part of the Great War, involving Shaftesbury School, and local primary schools. Ann Symons was the librarian at Shaftesbury School, and with her contacts and our joint wish to involve schools, we are making good progress.

G R E A T W A R H L F P R O J E C T

We have had two enjoyable meetings with volunteers and are now planning and booking training sessions with the support of the Dorset History Centre, two of our experienced volunteer researchers, and Rob Frost our website designer. There will be four main areas for training: local history, oral history, family history and data processing.

We will soon be looking for information about life at the time of World War One in Shaftesbury and the surrounding villages, including any magazines, photos, diaries, cards, even bills and advertisements etc., so if you can help us we would be very glad to hear from you. We can scan and return all documents, and any donations of material may be used in the new permanent display we hope to put together by the end of 2016.

If any member would like to take part in research and training, please contact me, either by leaving a message at the museum, or by emailing - education@goldhillmuseum.org.uk



SUMMER OUTING WELCOMED BY THE EARL OF SHAFTESBURY

On a sunny June afternoon, 32 members of the Shaftesbury & District Historical Society assembled in the shade of Wimborne St Giles church (*below*) to hear expert guide Sidney Blackmore describe the remodelling by Sir Ninian Comper after the disastrous fire of 1908. One of the alms houses, built in 1624 by Sir Anthony Ashley of St Giles House, was converted into the church vestry and the party was able to appreciate the compactness of the ten original dwellings.

Sidney pointed out the memorials in the church to the first, third and seventh Earls of Shaftesbury, all significant figures in English history. The largest tomb, however, belongs to Sir Anthony Ashley who is credited with growing the first cabbages in England.



At St Giles House Nick Ashley-Cooper, the twelfth Earl of Shaftesbury, was able to show members the great strides he and his wife have made since 2010 in rescuing the house and grounds from many decades of dereliction. In the Library (*below*) he was able to point to saved books collected by the first, third and seventh Earls.



In the grounds he led the way to the restored eighteenth century grotto, decorated with thousands of delicate shells

On the edge of the sunken garden, with its copy of the Shaftesbury Memorial in Piccadilly Circus made from the original mould, he was able to show 'before and after' photographs of key restoration works





Members were uniformly enthusiastic about what they had seen. Retiring lecture and outings co-ordinator, Alan Carter, had gone out at the top with a spectacular success.

ARCHIVE / LIBRARY REPORT

Ray Simpson



A busy period since the last newsletter with an increase in the number of enquiries from the public, which in the main we were able to satisfy.

Some new books have been donated to the Library including a very large volume of tithe terriers covering Shaftesbury and some of the surrounding parishes. This was given by Jo Rutter for which we thank him for a very useful research aid. Also, a substantial number of old deeds have been donated, the earliest of which is dated the sixth year of the reign of Elizabeth I (1564). The keen student of our area will recognise many of the names contained within these deeds. Another deed is the Borough's return to the House of Commons of the election of Edward des Bouverie as M.P. It is particularly useful as most of the principal inhabitants of Shaftesbury have appended their signatures and is almost a mini census. At present I am compiling a searchable index for all of the Museum's collection of its hundreds of old deeds.

A collection of file cards which have been gathering dust in our archive for a number of years have been somewhat of a mystery. They clearly refer to properties bought and sold about the Shaftesbury area mainly 17th - 19th centuries, but where are the documents themselves? Dialogue with the County Archive has now revealed that they refer to deeds given to the County Museum, before the Dorset History Centre came

about, by the executors of Lord Stalbridge. It seems that the Dorset History Centre, now housing the documents, have some of the index cards, which should accompany the documents, whilst Gold Hill Museum have the remainder. How this came about poses another mystery. The content on the card is very informative and Dorset History Centre has placed many online. I have copied our cards into digital form which will now be added to Dorchester's collection and will form a large online database.

The following is an account of an incident in our series of lawless Shaftesbury reports:

SUMMARY JUSTICE

Being a pleasant account of one Joseph Reader, who was tried at Dorchester in 1712 before Mr. Baron Bury, for hanging a highwayman he had taken on the spot without carrying him to justice.

The want of discretion in a lower rank of men has been remarkable in all ages, but never more than in the present case, as you will hear recorded at Shaftesbury (a town which gave title to a famed politician in his days)

One Nathaniel Seager, a maltster, did on Saturday, the 2nd February last take horse in order to go to Blandford Market about 12 miles off, designing to buy corn as usual, but got no further than the Plain, about 2 miles from home, before he was attacked by a highwayman, and a pistol clapped to his breast, with the word of command, "Goddamn it you old dog, alight and deliver": at which Mr. Seager becoming very much terrified, got off, and threw the highwayman £3 in silver, with which not being contented, he rapped out his former oath with a volley more, saying, that it was not all, and drawing his broad sword, cut Mr. Seager in the left shoulder; upon which fumbling in his fob, he pulled out 24 guineas more, which he threw to him, with which the rogue rode off contented, leaving the unfortunate Mr. Seager bleeding upon the ground.



In a little time after came up Joseph Reader the miller on horseback, whistling as he used to do, and seeing Mr. Seager in that condition, asked what was the matter, surprised at seeing his friend lying there covered in blood the whole whereof the maltster told him in short. Joseph Reader then asked the maltster to loan him his horse as it is better than his own and he would ride after the highwayman. "He is not long gone" said the maltster. "He is wearing a blue coat and riding a sorrel horse." Away rode the miller with the words. "That he would take him if the Devil did not."

It was not long before the miller came upon the highwayman who, upon seeing the miller fired off a shot narrowly missing him but going through the lappets of his coat. The highwayman fired again but missed. The miller, by far larger than the highwayman, seized him and struck him with an oak cudgel he was carrying before dragging him from his horse. Seager, the maltster, now caught up with them to see them struggling on the ground before the maltster got the better of the highwayman. Reader the miller said to his friend. "Is this the rogue who robbed you – search his pockets and take back the money he took from you" Reader then instructed the maltster to return to Shaftesbury with haste and get his wounds dressed and return with assistance so that the highwayman be taken before the Justices.

When alone with highwayman Reader said to himself. "What if he should overpower me I would lose the forty pounds due for taking a highwayman?" He now resolved to hang him and so he did taking the highwayman's belt and put it around his neck before dragging him to a tree and hanging him from it until he was dead.

When Seager, the maltster, arrived with a posse from Shaftesbury and asked as to where the highwayman was. "I have him as safe as a thief in a mill look behind that tree" replied the miller who now baulked for instead of forty pounds, which he expected as a reward, Reader was carried away to Dorchester Jail and appeared before Justice Coker who was not sympathetic with Reader taking summary justice upon himself and he was charged with murder and committed to Dorchester Jail. At his trial, he had a largely sympathetic jury and Seager appeared for him. There was great deal of diversion during the hearing at which there was an abundance of gentry. Reader was acquitted and given at least thirty pounds from those attending the hearing by way of encouragement.

COLLECTION CARE

Sheena Commons

As well as dealing with new donations, conservation and all the documentation generated by this, quite often we are called upon to research information for visitors to the museum. Recently I had email correspondence with a lady from Gretna Green who has three generations of Taylors in her family tree who had all lived, worked and died in Ashmore and while she had been on holiday in this area, she had been able to find some gravestones in the churchyard. She detailed them as Virtue Taylor (1808-1886) who had four sons one of whom, John, was her great, great, grandfather, George, David and Jesse. David had a daughter Sarah who married and inherited the shop previously run by her grandmother Virtue.

During her holiday she came into Gold Hill museum and was astonished to see Sarah's wedding dress on display and also a sampler that Sarah had sewn when she was ten years old. She was delighted to see these items and asked for more information about them which we were able to supply.

These coincidences and connections are fascinating and it is even better when we can help. Sometimes we are not able to and we were not so successful in tracking down a copy of the 'Blacksmith's Lament' which was apparently with a blacksmithing display in the old museum and which we were asked for a copy of. It may come to light yet.

We continue to be given some really interesting items for our collection and hope to use some of them to update our displays for next year along with new temporary exhibitions which are now in the planning stage.

RETAIL AND RETIREMENT

Elaine Barratt

This season has seen the introduction of Kate Scott's herbal products to the shop including the Shaston Salve which has been created especially for the museum and adds to the list of exclusive products on sale. Kate, a well-qualified medical herbalist who is directly descended from a long line of Shaftesbury herbalists, has been running herb walks/workshops from the museum. They take place on the third Friday monthly and have been moderately well attended. At £20 per session including lunch they represent really good value. By the time this newsletter is published you may well have missed the boat for this season but, hopefully, she'll be back in the Spring.

The variety of greetings cards supplied by an increasing list of local artists is impressive and our stewards continue to come up with ideas for new products, some of which I shall be researching during the closed season if I can find the time – what made me think that retirement is about taking it easy?

The sale of second hand books continues and is appreciated, judging by the turnover. Don't forget us if you're having a clear-out; all books are welcome, from fiction and biographies through sport, history (of course!), travel, reference etc to miscellaneous (those books you get for Christmas because you already have everything else). We do have a surfeit of cookery books, some of them rather ancient and extremely well used, probably because most people look online for recipes these days. Incidentally, stewards are invited to treat these books as a library – a rather good perk if you need any encouragement to volunteer!



The struggle to find enough volunteers to keep the museum open to the public continues. Sadly, having ended last season more or less fully staffed, we have lost several stewards to the onset of old age and its attendant incapacities this season. My thanks must go to all stewards but especially to those who volunteer for extra shifts on a regular basis, enabling us to open as advertised throughout the season (and increasingly for town festivities, privilege visits etc).

FRIENDS OF SHAFTESBURY ABBEY MUSEUM AUTUMN LECTURE 2015

The acting Chairman writes: May I draw members' attention to the Friends of Shaftesbury Abbey Museum Autumn Lecture by Kate Adie on Wednesday 28 October at 7.30 at Shaftesbury Arts Centre. In preparing the Great War Poster Gallery for our 2014 Great War Exhibition, I went to see Kate's lecture in Dorchester and read her book "Fighting on the Home Front: The Legacy of Women in World War One." Both are excellent.

**World War One Women'
Miss Kate Adie
Wednesday 28th October
Shaftesbury Arts Centre
7.30pm**

(Bar open for drinks from 6.30pm)

Shaftesbury Abbey Museum is delighted to welcome former BBC Chief News Correspondent, Kate Adie, to give an illustrated talk on 'World War One Women'.

Based on her bestselling book, 'Fighting on the Home Front: The Legacy of Women in WWI' she will chart the vivid and compelling account of the women who helped win the war, as well as a revealing assessment of their legacy today.

When war broke out and a generation of men went off to fight, Kate Adie shows how women emerged from the shadows of their domestic lives and began to take up essential roles in public life as a recognised part of the war machine.

Kate Adie's research, with specific reference to Dorset women such as Mabel Stobart, illustrates the momentous achievements of these pioneering women.

Tickets are £15 (£12.50 FoSA & students) and are available from SAC Box office 01747 854321 and Shaftesbury TIC 01747 853514

LECTURE PROGRAMME

Alan P. Carter; Lavender Buckland

Alan writes:

A good lecture should inform, inspire and entertain. Looking back over the past 8 years I believe our Lectures have done just that, and been given by people who have researched the subject so that we feel the passion of their labours. If I had to choose one favourite it would be “Wellington: The Peninsular War to Waterloo - the human side to history” given by Sir William Mahon in January 2009 when 70 of us packed out the Mayor’s Chamber in the Town Hall. I was delighted to be able to bring him back for the Waterloo lecture last year.

History is a bottomless pit for knowledge! We try to fathom out why did that happen? And why did they do that? We cast our minds back to try and understand the prevailing circumstances. A different angle and we can see more of the picture. We shall never be able to grasp it all. To this day I cannot understand why Cranmer did not save Cromwell; after all he had the King’s ear. I cannot understand why Richard the Lionheart was held hostage for such a long time during the Age of Chivalry. He was the anointed King of a powerful country with alliances, had the Pope’s blessing for his Crusade, and yet was not given safe passage home through a Christian country.

I wish Lavender all the best for setting up the new programme.

Lavender writes:

I am fortunate in taking over from Alan, as the Lecture Co-ordinator. He has established a very high standard for The Shaftesbury & District Historical Society, and as a result we are able to attract excellent Speakers.

Looking ahead, the Autumn Programme has much to interest our Members, starting with the Teulon Porter Memorial Lecture in the Town Hall on 6th October given by Professor Peter Clarke on ‘Sin in Salisbury Diocese: the records of the Papal Penitentiary 1410-1503’.

In November, Peter Knight is speaking about the Cerne Abbas Giant; while in December we are invited to bring examples, for dating, of Dorset Clay Pipes to Robert Lancaster’s Talk.

The Teulon Porter Lecture is held in the Shaftesbury Town Hall. All other Talks are held monthly, in the Garden Room, at the Museum, at 2.30 on the first Tuesday of the month. Guests are very welcome and we hope you will invite friends to join us.

THE SHAFTESBURY & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

**TEULON PORTER
MEMORIAL LECTURE**

TUESDAY, 6 OCTOBER ~ TOWN HALL 7.30



**“Sin in Salisbury Diocese:
records of the Papal
Penitentiary 1410-1503”**

Professor Peter Clarke

Professor of Ecclesiastical History at Southampton University

TICKETS ON THE DOOR £5:00 ~ MEMBERS FREE

Registered Charity 1156273

Further information: <http://goldhillmuseum.org.uk>