

Summer - 2019



THE BYZANT



**The Shaftesbury & District Historical Society
Gold Hill Museum, Gold Hill, Shaftesbury, SP7 8JW
Registered Charity No. 11562273**



ENJOY THE BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP



You are invited to renew your membership
for another season 2019-2020.

Enclosed with this newsletter is a separate
renewal form for those of you who are not
life members. Also with this newsletter is a
programme card listing the talks and
events to be given throughout the coming
winter season.

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CHAIRPERSON'S CHAT

As I write this, we have just received the sad news of Ken Baxter's passing; he had a long association with the society and was always happy to share his expertise in information technology. Our thoughts are with his widow, Margaret, also a long-term volunteer with a particular interest in and knowledge of textiles.

In my last chat I omitted to mention the passing last year of both Terry Atkins, a former chairman, and Dr Geoffrey Tapper, a former president of some years' standing who oversaw the refurbishment of the museum with a Heritage Lottery Fund grant; please accept my apologies for the oversight.

We are delighted to welcome Sir John Stuttard who agreed at the end of last year to fill the role of president; he is very involved already and his wide expertise in many areas, including the voluntary sector and public life, is proving invaluable.

As we welcome new trustee Paulette McManus, who brings a professional background in museology to the board, we are sad to have lost another, Claire Ryley. With a professional background in both museums and education, she has been a trustee on and off for ten years, however she assures us that she will still be involved in the education team which we share with Shaftesbury Abbey Museum.

At the AGM we discussed the issue of life membership which, compared with many organisations, is extremely good value. Several members had their say and it was agreed that increasing it would probably be counterproductive as the cost of annual membership is relatively low. Since the meeting one of our members has suggested simply abolishing it, a solution which appealed to the trustees, so while existing life membership will be honoured it will no longer be offered as an option.

At the beginning of June we were contacted by BBC South who wanted to interview yours truly about the impact that the Hovis advert has had on tourism; all became clear when we learned that the original advert had been digitally remastered and was being re-issued although there was a news embargo on this information until the day it happened when I did a live interview at the top of Gold Hill on *South Today*. To our certain knowledge

the publicity has brought in several tourists since and our July footfall was well up on last year's. Also, as a result of this, we have been allowed to keep the Hovis bike; at present it stands in Room 8 with a hastily prepared temporary information board which will be improved upon during the closed season. The Garden Room hosted seven Shaftesbury Fringe events during the first weekend in July. The weather was very kind to us which was just as well as at least two of the events were so well attended that they had to overflow into the garden. The room is being used much more frequently now, by various organisations including adult education classes, which is due in no small part to Keri Jones, a professional journalist and broadcaster, who has given freely of his services to various organisations in the town. Having learned of our intention to have a loop system for the hard of hearing installed he produced a podcast with the specific purpose of promoting the room and its facilities on his *ThisisAlfred* website and *Facebook* page. None of what we do would be possible without the stewards who keep the museum open. We're so grateful to them and I'm pleased to report that most steward shifts are covered at present although we always need more help, especially on the relief list, because retired people do tend to take frequent holidays. Our finances are in good order and, due to the generosity of so many of our visitors, income continues to exceed outgoings so that we can make improvements whilst slowly building our reserves. We do need more volunteers behind the scenes which is difficult to achieve when we're all volunteers with lives to fit in around the needs of the society, and training up new museum volunteers takes time and energy. I'm so pleased to be involved in this wonderful organisation with its lovely museum which is appreciated by so many visitors from all parts of the world and I thank you, its membership, for your support.

Elaine Barratt
September 2019

OUR VISITORS TELL US

One of the delights of being a steward in our Museum is the nuggets of information given to us by the general Public.

Here are two - An elderly man, on seeing our two mangles, said "My grandfather used to turn mangle rollers, and travelled from farm to farm with replacements for worn ones on the panniers of his bicycle."

Another elderly and local man carefully explained that workers in the fields, before waterproof coats or even sacking, used to make waterproof grass capes. They sowed roughly a square yard of grass seed thickly into a shallow layer of silt, laid over an impermeable layer, wood or stone. The seeds grew and made a shallow tangled mat of roots, and when the silt was washed out, the grass shed water and the roots acted as a warmer.

Janet Swiss

LECTURES & SPEAKERS 2019 – 2020

Our lecture season runs from October to April, with lectures being held in the Anna McDowell Garden_Room at Gold Hill Museum on the first Tuesday afternoon of each month at 2.30p.m. The exception is the Teulon Porter Memorial Lecture, which starts the season and is held in the evening at Shaftesbury Town Hall. Noel Teulon Porter was a notable Cambridge archaeologist and instrumental in founding The Shaftesbury & District Historical Society in 1946.

The 2019 Teulon Porter Lecturer is Professor Steven Gunn of Merton College, Oxford. He will be talking on 'Everyday Life and Accidental Death in Tudor Dorset and Wiltshire', at 7.30p.m. on Tuesday 24 September in Shaftesbury Town Hall.

Proposals for lectures to the Society on suitable historical subjects are welcome, and may also be made via enquiries@goldhillmuseum.org.uk

Programme

24th September 2019 7.30 p.m (Shaftesbury Town Hall)

Everyday Life and Accidental Death in Tudor Dorset and Wiltshire

5th November 2019 2.30 p.m.(Gold Hill Museum)

The Brilliant Burneys: Stars of the 18th century – Dr. Deborah Jones.

3rd December 2019 2.30 p.m.(Gold Hill Museum)

Stonehenge, Old Rocks and New Theories – and perhaps an update – Julian Richards.

7th January 2020 2.30 p.m.(Gold Hill Museum)

"Fancy liquors and sky-high kickers": Can-Can and the invention of Gay Paree, 1867-1914 – Dr. Jonathan Conlin.

4th February 2010 2.30 p.m.(Gold Hill Museum)

Thomas Hardy: the novels, the novelist and North Dorset.
- Alban O'Brien.

3rd March 2020 2.30 p.m.(Gold Hill Museum)

The Grotto Makers: Joseph and Josiah Lane of Tisbury – Christina Richard.

7th April 2020 2.30 p.m.(Gold Hill Museum)

Tea and Talks – Short presentations by Society members.

THE TEULON PORTER LECTURE – Steven Gunn

STEVEN GUNN is a Fellow and Tutor in History at Merton College, Oxford, and Professor of Early Modern History. His research interests are in the political, social, cultural and military history of England and its continental neighbours from the mid-fifteenth to the later sixteenth century. He has written books on *Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, c1484-1545* (1988), *Early Tudor Government, 1485-1558* (1995), *War, State and Society in England and the Netherlands, 1477-1559* (2007), and *Henry VII's*

New Men and the Making of Tudor England (2016), and edited *Cardinal Wolsey: Church, State and Art* (1991), *Authority and Consent in Tudor England* (2002), *The Court as a Stage: England and the Low Countries, 1270-1580* (2005) and *Arthur Tudor, Prince of Wales: Life, Death and Commemoration* (2009). In 2015 he delivered the James Ford lectures in British History and the resulting book, *The English People at War in the Age of Henry VIII*, was published in 2018.

Professor Gunn is co-director of the *Everyday Life and Fatal Hazard in Sixteenth Century England* Research Project. On Tuesday 24 September at 7.30p.m. in Shaftesbury Town Hall Professor Gunn will deliver the **Teulon Porter Memorial Lecture**, when he will focus on *Everyday Life and Accidental Death in Tudor Dorset and Wiltshire*. This talk is free to members while non-members may pay £5 at the door.

Shakespeare's cousin?

One of the Project's early finds, a 1569 coroner's report describes the death of one Jane Shaxspere, who drowned aged two-and-a-half while picking marigolds in Upton Warren, only 20 miles from Shakespeare's childhood home at Stratford-upon-Avon. Jane may well have been related to the playwright and it is tempting to speculate that her death inspired the fate of the author's character Ophelia.

Translation of the Latin Original

Worcestershire. Inquisition as indenture held at Droitwich in the aforesaid county the twenty-ninth day of June in the eleventh year of the reign of Elizabeth, by the grace of God queen of England, France and Ireland, Defender of the Faith etc, before Henry Feelld, gentleman, one of the coroners of the said lady queen in the aforesaid county, on the view of the body of Jane Shaxspere, of the age of two and a half years, lately found dead at Upton Warren in the aforesaid county; by the oath of Thomas Pooler, John Parker, Thomas Broke, William Laken, Richard Yate, Richard Norres, Richard Ireland, John Horton, William Wild, John

Saunders, Thomas Hancockes, Thomas Davies, Thomas Partridge, Edward Barret and John Baylies. Who say upon their oath that the aforesaid Jane, on the sixteenth day of June in the abovesaid year of the reign of the said lady queen, at Upton aforesaid in the county aforesaid – by reason of collecting and holding out certain flowers called 'yelowe boddles' growing on the bank of a certain small channel at Upton aforesaid called Upton myll pond – the same Jane Shaxspere the said sixteenth day of June about the eighth hour after noon of the same day suddenly and by misfortune fell into the same small channel and was drowned in the aforesaid small channel; and then and there she instantly died. And thus the aforesaid flowers were the cause of the death of the aforesaid Jane; and they are worth nothing. In testimony of which the aforesaid coroner and the aforesaid jurors have affixed their seals to this present inquisition. Given the day and year abovesaid. [Annotated] By misfortune.

MUSEUM COMPUTERS

The Society has replaced its ageing and slow computers which we have had since the opening of the revamped museum in 2011. The server for the current pc's was also deemed to be somewhat archaic and not wholly suitable for the Museum's Modes Collections software. It was decided that the library area only needed one replacement for the two existing computers. The office pair are replaced by the same number. A small Synogen unit with two back-up hard drives replacing the server. The new all in one computers have 24 inch screens. Thanks are given to Julian Hiscock who obtained and installed the new equipment.

SHAFTESBURY NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Readers may wish to read the town's proposed development blueprint. The Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan outlining the future of Shaftesbury is available to view at a pop-up shop in the High Street Opposite WH. Smith or online.

WHY GOSS – WHY POTS?



My early (unaware) association with heraldic china was as a child when gathering as a family each Boxing Day at Grandma and Grandad's house along with all the family.

This was the only time we were allowed into the 'front room', The Holy of Holies, a place of quiet and solitude. But what else? In the corner a rattan glass cabinet with an assortment of mementoes of visits to the seaside by Aunts, Uncles and other relations; lovingly dusted and cherished for ever! Among these items were, to my recollection, three little pots with Coats of Arms on them and a little device on the bottom – 'a bird'. I fell in love with these and always had to ask Grandma for permission to take them out of the cabinet and hold them. In a trite way – I WAS IN LOVE (with pots). I knew nothing about Goss or other makers – they were simply fascinating. The time was during World War 2 and I was not yet 8 years old.

Time went by and I was called to serve for Queen and Country and had to submit to National Service – in fact I thoroughly enjoyed it despite serving in the Korean Theatre of War. During this time both Grandad and Grandma passed away. When I came home I casually asked what had happened to the pots? They had been consigned to the dustbin by an Uncle who should have known better (well let's say he did not have the same regard for them as I did!). This event lingered with me for years to come.

Marriage, children and eventually time went by when, during a holiday in Dorset, (long before my move here) saw me rooting

around a small antique shop in Abbotsbury. There, in full display, was a cabinet of heraldic china. I took up pieces in my hands and that old feeling came back after so many years. They were so tactile and delicate. My wife saw my fascination and persuaded me to buy a piece as a memento of the visit. I bought a small pot (I can't remember now which one) for the princely sum of £1. William Henry Goss would have been proud that his product would still be fulfilling its function after all those years.

Downsizing four years ago has meant I cannot display all the collection but I still cherish that first memory and what it has led to so many years later.

Now I wonder if any Friend of Shaftesbury Abbey has noticed in one of the display cabinets in the Museum the addition of a small insignificant item; namely a model of a mug found near Corfe Castle during an excavation many years ago and copied for commercial purposes by a china manufacturer in the late 1890's. The epitaph on the mug is of the assassination of King Edward the Martyr at Corfe in A.D. 978. Equally members of The Shaftesbury & District Historical Society may have seen small examples of china wares with heraldic designs in the odd cabinet or so at Gold Hill Museum.

That manufacturer was, as previously stated, William Henry Goss who had the foresight to see, with the coming of the railways and the opening up of travel to the masses, that mementoes of visits to the seaside or other newly discovered tourist sites would yield a not insignificant profit to his business. This led to a fascinating hobby of collecting Goss or other makes of heraldic china as by the turn of the early 1900's other manufacturers had joined the bandwagon .

With a collection of over 350 pieces it is difficult to display it all except to give pride of place to Goss products. These were manufactured from the mid 1880's through to 1920 following which the business was sold and the patents obtained by Samuel Jones & Co. who continued to make and distribute 'late' Goss items until 1926 when production stopped. Thus in the narrow window of 35 years or so hundreds and thousands of different models of genuine 'Goss' items (many copied from Museums

exhibits) were made and sold, in most cases, by a single agent in any particular town or city.

Some models can command a not inconsiderable value despite their small insignificant appearance and individual collections can run into thousands of pounds. But for me it is the novelty of each piece and what it represents. It is history and education all rolled into one.

Each collector has his own area of collecting. Mine happens to be a limited to places of family interest. Whereas some go for shape, some for heraldic design, specific models or even mundane cups and saucers of the 'late' Goss production. There is plenty of room for personal choice and it becomes absorbing as time goes on. There is also a flourishing Goss Collectors Club with monthly auctions of relevant items.

So if you see a piece in a shop or bric-a-brac sale anywhere, don't dismiss it out of hand – it's a reminder of a time gone past when, maybe, Auntie brought a memento of her day at the seaside as a present for her Grandmother! They are easy to spot – look for the Gosshawk mark on the base.

Chris Stupples

THE NAME BYZANT

Quite a bit of history is actually fiction.

The fiction may not necessarily be false, but commentators and historians engage their imaginations, theorise and fantasise with varying degrees of credibility to explain, interpret, fill gaps in the available information, tie up loose ends and make up a convincing story.

The object carried in the Byzant procession has been described as like the May garland carried by milk sellers in London until the 19th Century which were decorated with valuables borrowed from local gentry⁽¹⁾ (sometimes the valuables were on loan from pawn brokers and shared in turn among the milk sellers' garlands⁽²⁾).

A similar description is given of a traditional May event in Wales in which silver items loaned from local people were used to adorn their May garland⁽³⁾ and so evidently the object carried in the

Shaftesbury ceremony was not unique in form and must be considered originally as essentially nothing more than a May garland.

Doubts have been cast on whether the May garland was originally in fact a besom ⁽⁴⁾ but the indenture of 1662 which changed the day for the ceremony is very specific and requires "a staffe or besome" to be carried in the procession and refers to it as "a prize besome".

This is not unreasonable; a Harry Potter broom stick makes a good base to push up with ribbons, feathers, flowers and few trinkets to make a fine May garland.

A gold coin (sometimes silver) minted in Constantinople for the Byzantine empire was named a Byzant and it was the only gold coin current for many centuries throughout Europe during the mediaeval period⁽⁵⁾. Highly regarded because of its high purity (24 carat) and reliability (re-minted whenever the coins passed back through the city treasury).

The origin of the name for the Shaftesbury ceremony is unknown so here was an opening for historians to dream up an explanation and 4 ideas have been offered.

1 The original payment for the right to take water was a bisant.⁽⁶⁾ This is not likely because payment in kind was a more common form of such payments in the mediaeval period.

2 The roundels on the rim of the crown of the object were bisants ⁽⁷⁾

Not likely because the word was used before the object was probably made (suggested 1771 ⁽⁸⁾)

3 It has been suggested that the word besom is a mispronunciation of byzant ⁽⁹⁾

At first sight, with the word's common present day pronunciation, this may seem unlikely but the present day spelling encourages a pronunciation which historically was never used.

In the good old days when spelling didn't matter, writers were free to spell words in their own way simply in the way they were pronounced and so, although the spelling of the word is very variable (byzant, bisant, besant, bizant, besand, besaunt, bessunt) These earlier spellings show that pronunciation of the words "besom" and "byzant" were in fact similar.

4 Besant was an Anglo-Norman word for a symbolic ceremonial gift or offering which replaced a former donation of significant value.⁽¹⁰⁾

Perhaps the calf's head, bread and wine offered during the Bizant ceremony were a relic of the time when more useful and welcome quantities of meat, bread and drink were given to the people of Enmore Green in return for the right to take water from their wells, in which case, it may be these offerings, reduced to a symbolic quantity became known as the 'Besant'. With the gloves being a gift to the Steward of the Lord of the manor

So in conclusion, it seems to me that a combination of two of these suggestions can provide a convincing explanation of the name.

Originally 'Besant' was in fact the name given to the donation of food and drink, and had nothing to do with the May garland. But in later years, because of the similar sounds, the word 'besant' replaced the word 'besom' which had been used for the garland, and so the whole ceremony became a combination of two separate ceremonies.

References

- 1 Dodsley,R - 'The Travels of Tom Thumb over England and Wales p 16 (1746)
- 2 Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette Aug 19 1790
- 3 EveryDay Book - p562 (1825)
- 4 Frampton G - Folklore vol 101:ii,(1990)
- 5 Clarke,W, 'The connexion of the Roman, Saxon and English coins deduced from observations on the Saxon weights and Money (1767)
- 6 Chambers - Chambers' Book of Days vol I p585
- 7 Baxter ,F.W. - Notes and Queries 11:3 p170 (1911)
- 8 Bowles,C - 'Shaftesbury, otherwise Shaston' p79 (1831)
- 9 Somerset & Dorset Notes and queries xxiv p298 (Dec 1893)
- 10 Bowles,C. Ibid p93.

Gordon Ewart-Dean

SNIPPETS FROM THE PAST

TISBURY COMMERCIAL SCHOOL, WILTS.

June 24, 1811

E.N. HEAL, truly grateful for favours in his profession during the last seven years, most respectfully informs his friends and the public, that he limits his SCHOOL to only Twenty-four Young GENTLEMEN, as yearly Boarders; being desirous to afford his pupils the greatest opportunity of improving themselves in every branch of useful learning and to render them, as nearly as circumstances will admit, all the advantages of a private education, advantages of no small importance to youth, both in their morals and studies, which importance, blended with the very moderate charges of the School, he hopes will meet approbation and support from a generous and discerning public.

TERMS

Under 7 years of age	}	{ £16.16}	
From 7 to 10 ditto	}	{ £17.17}	Entrance £1.1s
Ten and upwards	}	{ £18.18}	

Geography, with the use of the
Globes, Mensuration, Book-keeping
etc. each.....£2. 2

Tea, once a day, £1. 1s, twice ditto £2. 2

Washing, two changes per week £1. 1

N.B. Tisbury is a large and populous village, situated in a fruitful and pleasant vale, in a central situation between Fonthill Abbey and the Hindon Downs, on the north; Wardour Castle and the long range of plain west of Salisbury, leading to Shaftesbury, on the south. Has the advantage of the Gospel preached in the Establishment, and two different sects of Dissenters, each within 2 minutes walk of the School; all of which are attended by the pupils, with proper assistants, agreeably to the wish of their parents. Mr. H. with those that desire, regularly attending the Establishment.

Conveyances from Bath and its vicinity thrice every week. Any Gentleman or Lady who will be pleased to honour him with a pupil, or desirous of a plan of the School, terms etc. will be

pleased to address a line to Mr. Heal, which will immediately be attended to, with references of respectability, etc. etc. and the nearest and best conveyance to the School remarked to them – Several vacancies for the next half year, which will commence on Monday July 8th.

Mr. H. having observed the great avidity with which young people read Novels, (a species of reading too often destructive of morality) has established a School Library, consisting of 200 volumes, carefully selected, to which his pupils may always resort; where they will find sufficient to gratify that ardent curiosity so natural to youth.

SHAFTESBURY - 1818

On Wednesday last died, Mary Bennett, the much respected cook at the Red Lion, Shaftesbury, in which situation she faithfully served with great credit nearly 34 years, died of typhus. The typhus fever now so generally prevalent we are assured, prevented, or at all events rendered less malignant, by the free admission of fresh air. It is therefore strongly recommended that the windows of every bedroom, in this very unhealthy season, should be left open during the day; and that, in dry weather, the bed and bed clothes, as well as the wearing apparel should be carried into the open air, and exposed to its salubrious breezes during the day. Washing the floors and white-washing the ceilings are great antidotes to the contagion; and in any case of illness, the greatest cleanliness and the earliest application to medical aid, is the most probable mode of preventing protracted illness.

Sold by John Rutter of Shaftesbury - 1818

DALBY'S GENUINE CARMINATIVE is superior to all other remedies for the wind, purgings, convulsions, and those disorders in the stomach and bowels of infants, which prove fatal to so many under the age of two years. It is equally efficacious in fluxes, and other complaints in the intestines of grown persons. - This invaluable cordial Medicine invented by the late Mr. Joseph Dalby, Apothecary, is now preferred by his daughter, Mrs. Frances Geil, and her Sons, to whom alone he bequeathed this Property.

Ludwell - September 1898 Royal Visit by H.R.H. the Duke of Cambridge



THE DUKE OF CAMBRIDGE VISITED A FARMHOUSE. - On Saturday 3rd September 1898, during the manoeuvres here, the Duke of Cambridge was slightly overcome with the heat and called at the house of Mr. Charles Hare, Peckons Hill Farm, Ludwell, where His Royal Highness partook of some light refreshments. The Duke was accompanied by General Williams. At the same time the Duke of Connaught and Lord Wolseley, Commander-in-Chief, and several other distinguished officers were in the village.

1889 - A visit was made by Mr. Gladstone to-day to Shaftesbury and Gillingham. The right hon. Gentleman, who has been the guest of Lord Wolverton, (a very promising member of the Liberal party) drove from Iwerne to the former of the towns named. A platform had been erected in the Market Place, along the front being the words "Welcome to our Grand Old Leader," this appropriate motto being in white letters on a coloured ground, whilst at one side of the structure appeared "God speed Justice to Ireland." The back of the platform was elegantly embellished with flags, and a few yards off were the words "A noble leader in a righteous cause," this sentiment being displayed in white letters on a scarlet ground, and exhibited in a frame attached to a lamp-

post. The decorations on the whole were not profuse, there being a rumour that the agent of a lady whom is supposed to have great influence, had informed shopkeepers that if they decorated their establishments they would seriously offend her. Nor were the church bells rung, but there is an opinion that perhaps the gentleman who declined to let their merry peals be heard will not consent, should he be asked, to their being utilised in honour of a primrose fete which is, it seems, expected to take place in the town.

Secret Passage – July 1933

COUNCILLOR TO CONDUCT EXPLORATION

Shaftesbury has a legendary subterranean passage supposed to exist between the Abbey and a point 200 feet below the cliff on which the Abbey stood.

Permission has been sought from the Shaftesbury Town Council by Councillor W. J. Carpenter to take steps to ascertain if the passage exists, and the required permission to open the old stone ecclesiastical arched doorway at the foot of Gold Hill has been given.

The stone doorway referred to is at the lower end of Gold Hill, a steep, cobbled declivity one side of which is flanked by a massive stone wall, shored with gigantic buttresses retaining the cliff below the Abbey.

There seems no doubt that a passage led upward from this stone doorway to the Abbey precincts, and it is within the recollection of Mr. Alfred Imber, one of Shaftesbury's oldest inhabitants, that when he was a young man an attempt was made to explore it, beginning from the stone doorway. Some progress had been made when during the night the passage collapsed, burying wheelbarrows and tools, and the work was abandoned.

Legend has it that the passage ran from the Abbey to the stone doorway, thence under the road in St. James' parish to the residence of the King's Man" (the King's representative). To this day there exists King's Man-lane, in which is situated a garden, pointed out as being the garden of the residence of the King's

Man (where was the secret exit of the passage). And where it is said the excavated soil was used to form terraces, which still exist.

THE FIRST SHAFTESBURY MUSEUM

You can be forgiven for thinking that our museum was the first to exist in Shaftesbury but there was another museum one hundred and fifty eight years ago! In August 1861 the Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society held their Eighth Annual General Meeting in the Market House, Shaftesbury. The President of the Society, the Rt. Hon. Mr. Sotheron Estcourt, in his preamble, said he thought the Wiltshiremen ought to offer an apology to the men of Dorset for making a foray across the border into their county. It certainly would have been a most impudent act if they had not been told that their Dorset friends were still behind Wilts, and that they had no archaeological society of their own. The Wiltshire Society had visited Shaftesbury for the purpose of enlarging the sphere of their operations, and he trusted that their visit to Dorsetshire would lead to the establishment of a sister association in that county.

During their visit, the Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society set up a temporary museum at the Shaftesbury Literary Institution in the High Street. Mr William Batten of Barton Hill House was elected to be the curator. Not only had he investigated ancient ruins in Carthage, Corinth, Egypt and India, but he was also involved with the research into Shaftesbury abbey. He hoped that a permanent museum would be established in Shaftesbury.

Many people in and around Shaftesbury loaned items of historical interest to this museum, including the Marquis of Westminster who amongst other things gave a quern dug up at Hawker's Hill, Motcombe, a Flint Celt from Melbury, Rude sculpture of a knight on horseback, in low relief, from the old ruins at Shaftesbury Abbey, ornamented tiles from Alcazar, Seville, petrified wood, fossil bones and vertebrae, from Motcombe, fossil nautilus from Shaftesbury, and Ammonites from Tisbury and a model of Fonthill Abbey. In all some 44 people donated numerous items from their

collections.

One donor, Robert Squire, provided what he described as, the **original** Byzant (of gilded wood in the form of a palm tree about three feet in height). This is of interest because the Byzant which had last been used at the Byzant Ceremony (discontinued in 1830) was retained by the Marquis of Westminster and passed to his daughter, Lady Theodora. Upon the latter's death, in 1824, it was given to the Corporation by Lady Theodora's daughter Miss Augusta Guest.

Now, is Mr. Squire's Byzant a predecessor to this Byzant and if so what happened to it? Further to this, Mrs. Chitty donated two pairs of Byant gloves, the last presented by the Mayor of Shaftesbury to the Lord of the Manor of Motcombe.

The museum closed after three days and items were returned to their donors. If our present museum was to have the many items exhibited at this first museum, we would have a very fine collection indeed to complement what we have now although I think our Collections trustee, Sheena, might not welcome this as our store is at capacity level.

Ray Simpson



Notice affixed to Dorset bridges at Charmouth, Sturminster Newton, Benvill

AS I SEEM TO REMEMBER

The following two articles are taken from a series of talks given to our Society in the 1950's by Sir Leonard Woolley who was a member, and President, of The Shaftesbury & District Historical Society during this period.



Lawrence & Woolley 1911

"Many years ago T. E. Lawrence and myself were in Beirut, and we went to the American University there where they had a museum of antiquities collected in that part of the Lebanon and arranged for exhibition by the Professor of Latin in the University. We were going round, and suddenly Lawrence, looking at a desk-case, began to laugh. I looked at him, and he said 'Oh, do come and look at this!'

I went along. The desk-case was very neatly lined with red velvet, and in the middle of it was an object with a large label underneath, very carefully done, and the label said 'A bronze object with a reptilian body and a bull's head, found at such-and-such a village in the Lebanon, 'a votive object, probably Hittite'.

Then I began to laugh too; and at that moment the curator, the Professor of Latin, came and looked, and said, 'What is there to laugh at?'

I replied, 'Well, two or three things; in the first place though it looks like bronze it is not a bronze object at all. The description following that is all right, but it is not a votive object and it isn't Hittite!'

He said, ' You've got no business to say a thing like that.

We don't know for certain what it is, and I shouldn't be prepared to say, but you cannot deny that a thing is Hittite unless you can definitely assert what it is'. I answered, 'You're quite right, Professor, but I can definitely assert what it is'.

He demanded, 'What is it?'

I said, 'Well, it's English, and it's an ox-head tin-opener.....'

About two two years after that I was asked to re-arrange that museum, and full of interest I went along first of all to see that same spot, and there I saw the case with its nice red velvet, faded very much, but the mark where the object had lain and protected the velvet from the sun you could see. The tin opener was no longer there, but I found it in a drawer with its original label carefully preserved. I don't think the Professor believed for a moment what I had told him".



A tin opener

"Naturally, out East one was constantly being offered antiquities, but the buying of them might be a risky thing; sometimes amusingly so.

I was standing one day with T. E. Lawrence on what was going to be the platform of what was going to be a railway station, when the Germans were building the Bagdad railway. We knew that there was a construction train coming along and we meant to cadge a ride on it, when suddenly a native came up to Lawrence and, pulling him to one side, asked if he was interested in antiquities, Lawrence said 'Yes,' so the man produced a cylindrical seal. These small things about an inch long, cylinders,

with a hole in the middle, and sometimes beautifully engraved. They were used for rolling out on a clay tablet of one of the parties to a contract. In date they may be anything from 3000 to 1000 B.C.

Lawrence took this cylinder and examined it, and then began to laugh. I said, 'What is the matter?' He said, 'Oh, do look at this!'

I took it. It was made of haematite, and extremely hard stone and finely polished. The first thing I saw was a figure of a lion beautifully carved in intaglio, and I turned it round to see the next figure, then I too began to smile. There was a procession of animals carved all round the stone, which is quite a usual design, and the first figure I had seen was a lion, but the second was a giraffe. Now, it was extraordinary that an African animal like a giraffe should get on a stone carved somewhere in Turkey or Northern Syria, thousands of year ago.

I turned it again, and there was a Kangaroo!

Obviously a technically skilful forger, with the proverbially dangerous little learning, knowing that a procession of animals was the right thing for a cylinder seal, had taken a natural history book and copied the illustrations! People did all sorts of funny things like that".

GLEANINGS FROM THE SCHOOL REGISTERS OF HOLY TRINITY SCHOOL

1870 Nov 1

Boys allowed out at 2.30pm. On account of Agricultural Show in town.

1870 Dec. 19

Rather poor attendance. Many of the smaller children away with Scarlatina.

1871 Mar. 24

Fair School. Lessons said well. A few boys absent this week planting potatoes.

1872 July

School duties interrupted in last week by a cricket match, in which some clowns figured, attracted the children.

1874 Aug.

Arithmetic in first two Classes very carelessly done; several boys kept without dinner as did not do their work correctly.

1877 Sept. 21

Low attendance this week on account of the nutting season.

1878 Feb. 15

Number on Registers = 80

1878 June 17

Many away in the hayfields.

1889 Oct. 25

The Master intends to charge irregular attenders two pence a week instead of the usual penny.

1891 Aug. 31

Fees abolished in the school and the provision made by the Elementary Act adopted.

1893 April 21

William Love, a lad in Standard 5, died on Sunday last from the effects of a chill.

1894 Sept. 21

Attendance very irregular this week on account of nutting. A School Attendance Committee meeting was held on Tuesday evening. It is impossible to make satisfactory progress with the work of Standard 6, owing to their present irregularity.

1895 Oct 18

Pupil teachers receive lessons in evening from 5.45 to 6.45 from this date.

1901 Oct. 25

No less than 34 children have been excluded from school this week on account of Measles, by order of the School Sanitary Officer.

THE LOST VILLAGE OF IMBER

Imber village and its church, St Giles, have been closed to the public since December 1943. On a handful of days in the year the Ministry of Defence permits access. During the weekend of 17/18 August 2019 the charity Imberbus ferried visitors, including the writer, from Warminster station to Imber, a distance of about six miles, in a fleet of mainly vintage London Routemaster buses.

Imber is mentioned in Domesday Book and its church dates from the thirteenth century, with the usual Victorian remodelling. It is essentially a linear village built along the course of a winterbourne, known as the Imber Dock. The stream dried up in the summer and became overgrown.

Most of the inhabitants were employed in agriculture, with a local specialism in the making of dewponds. 'With three assistants a dewpond maker would take about four weeks to construct a pond 22 yards square which would support a flock of around 400 sheep ... A dewpond is a shallow man-made hollow, roughly eight feet deep, with an impervious bottom made from consolidated layers of clay and straw set hard with a layer of lime. It is found on chalk downland and other high places where there is no adequate supply of water. It is fed mainly by rainwater and thus misnamed.' (Sawyer, p59)

The population peaked at 440 in 1851. By 1901 it had fallen to 261 as a result of agricultural depression, cheap foreign food imports and mechanisation. Even before the Great War the government had begun to buy tracts of land on Salisbury Plain for military manoeuvres. The process accelerated in the late 1920's and most farmers and property holders became tenants of the War Department. In 1938 mud-walled cottages were demolished and new council houses built (by the W.D.), with inside baths but outside bucket loos.

Military activity further intensified during World War Two. A training disaster in April 1942 linked Imber Ranges with Shaftesbury when a Hurricane pilot inadvertently strafed spectators rather than the target convoy. Henry Crooks, a radiographer at Shaftesbury Military Hospital (at Guys Marsh), recalled "Of the sixty or so high-ranking officers brought to us many died or were dead on arrival. Doctors, sisters, nurses, V.A.D.s and all other ranks worked flat out for several days (and nights) tending to the wounded." (quoted in Sawyer, p95)

In November 1943 the 150 or so villagers were given notice to quit by 17 December. A surviving copy of the letter implies but

does not guarantee the right to return. 'The Department will refund the cost of removal to store and reasonable storage charges until you can find another house, or until the Imber area is again open for occupation, whichever is the earlier.' (Sawyer, p159)

Individuals returning with or without permission after 1945 were dismayed to find the extent of damage done to the village, some by the military but much by civilian opportunists and looters. A range warden reported: "We used to get chaps driving up with lorries and taking away baths and fittings out of the cottages and stripping lead from the roofs. I reckon civilian spivs did as much damage as any of those street fighting operations." (quoted in Sawyer, p109)

Despite challenges in 1961 and again in the seventies Imber has remained under MoD control. St Giles is surrounded by a stout fence and out of bounds to the military, but most of its fixtures and fittings have been removed for safekeeping. It was touching to see relatives seize the rare opportunity to clear family gravestones and lay flowers. Imber Court Manor House, rebuilt after a fire in 1920, has lost its top storey and is now defended by pill boxes. All other buildings are empty shells, many stark concrete boxes built by the MoD for infantry to practise urban warfare. Seagram's Farm, Nags Head Cottages, the Bell Inn and the council houses are recognisable as once having been homes.

Access to Imber is usually advertised by the MoD for a few days at Easter, Christmas and in August. Rex Sawyer's *Little Imber on the Down: Salisbury Plain's Ghost Village* (Hobnob Press) is highly recommended.

Ian Kellett

SHAFTESBURY
SWIMMING BATH

THIS BATH WILL BE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
FROM JUNE 1ST, TO SEPT. 30TH, 1905

On Weekdays at the undermentioned Times and Charges:-

6.30 to 8.30 a.m., 11 to 1 and 6 to 8 p.m., for 5/-
the term

6.30 to 8.30 a.m., and 6 to 8 p.m., for 2/6 the term.

6 to 8 p.m. For 1/- the term

For a Single Bath 0d.

Entrance – VICTORIA STREET

RULES and REGULATIONS:-

1. No person shall bathe without having paid the charges mentioned.
2. No person shall remain in the Bath more than half-an-hour.
3. No person shall bathe without wearing drawers.
4. No person shall use Soap in the Bath.
5. No person shall dress or undress except in the dressing-room provided for the purpose
6. Each bather to provide himself with Towels and Drawers.
7. Any person damaging the Bath or Premises, or wilfully interrupting, disturbing, or impeding any person in the use of the Bath, or being guilty of any indecent behaviour, or making use of any profane or obscene language, or committing any nuisance in the water or Dressing-room, or committing any breach of these Rules, shall be expelled by the Attendant, and thereby forfeit his ticket.
8. Admission by ticket only, which may be obtained at the TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE,
MR. J.K. RUTTER, 31 BELL STREET.

R.W. BORLEY,
Mayor

Shaftesbury, May 18th, 1905.

**The Shaftesbury & District Historical Society
Gold Hill Museum.**

The Society and Museum are run entirely by
volunteers

Museum Hours of Opening– 10.30 – 4.30 everyday
from 1 April to 31 October.

Free entry but donations welcome.

Telephone: 01747 852157

Email: enquiries@goldhillmuseum.org.uk
secretary@goldhillmuseum.org.uk
membership@goldhillmuseum.org.uk
library@goldhillmuseum.org.uk

Website: <https://www.goldhillmuseum>

President

Sir John Stuttard

Dorset Museums Adviser

Vicky De Wit

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