

2020—2021



THE BYZANT

The Shaftesbury & District
Historical Society

Gold Hill Museum, Gold Hill, Shaftesbury, Dorset SP7 8JW
Registered Charity No 11562273



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singular,



The Trustees of the Shaftesbury &
District Historical Society
wish the Membership a
Happy New Year



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Chairman's Chat

Who could have imagined, just a year ago, the situation in which we find ourselves? At least, as I write this, two vaccines have been developed and are, apparently, around 95% effective so the future is looking brighter.

This newsletter contains some interesting articles from five people who continue to work hard for the society and its museum as well as a little reminiscing, and an account of the visit by BBC South. Most of my contribution to the last must be on the cutting room floor, metaphorically in this digital age, but much of Ian's tour of the museum was included resulting in a spike in website visits and brilliant, free publicity for what we have to offer.

Incidentally if, like me, you are unable to view BBC South and you have BBC iPlayer, just go to the settings and you can change your location and be able to view it in real time on iPlayer. You may already know that but I didn't until one of my sons-in-law told me.

We managed to open the museum for a few days in August but the struggle to staff it became insuperable, so we had to admit defeat. I am enormously grateful to those stewards, many more than I had anticipated, who were willing to risk their health, and completely understand why many were not. However the huge amount of work involved in ensuring that we complied with the thirty-nine pages of Museums Association guidance as well as government regulations is now behind us and we should be able to open on 27 March next year, well-equipped for the new normal.

Sadly, one of our stewards will not be joining us. Ray Humphries MBE, who did so much to help the Society in practical ways as well as stewarding, succumbed to cancer a few weeks ago at the age of just seventy. He was a lovely man who earned his membership of the British Empire for services to Shaftesbury and will be sorely missed as demonstrated by the hundreds of people who lined the streets as his funeral cortege passed.

On 24 September several of you joined us on Zoom for an entirely different AGM about which I was rather anxious in case my fairly old tablet had a tantrum and ejected your Chair as it had done once before. All went well and, in addition to re-electing our Collections Care Officer and electing two previously co-opted trustees, we welcomed a new trustee, Sue Stamp, who has taken on Membership Secretary as well as this newsletter for which we thank her. The minutes have been included within this edition.

The previous editor, Ray Simpson, decided it was time to retire. He has served the society well for several years, nine on the committee as Secretary then Librarian/Archivist as well as Membership Secretary; we thank him and wish him well in his other research projects upon which he can now concentrate his energies.

Currently we have a team of nine enthusiastic volunteers, headed by Ann Symons, working on the books and archives, sorting and cataloguing. We are managing to socially distance as they spread out through the first-floor galleries, working through boxes and rather enjoying themselves.

The future is indeed looking bright!

Elaine Barratt

The Shaftesbury & District Historical Society

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held Thursday 24th September 2020

via Zoom at 11:00am.

Charitable Incorporated Organisation no: 1156273.

Present:

Sir John Stuttard, Elaine Barratt, Dave Hardiman, Ian Kellett, Sue Stamp, Linda Wilton, Cath Toogood (minutes). There were also seven society members linked in; Bridgette Browne, Gordon Ewart-Dean, Michael Pattison, David Silverside, Ken Steven, Tricia Steven, Chris Stupples.

Apologies:

Sheena Commons, Ros Marshall, Anna McDowell, Paulette McManus, Mark Smith, Jill Sumner.

Chairperson's Welcome: Elaine opened the virtual meeting welcoming everyone to the Zoom format (due to the Covid-19 restrictions and permissible under present Charity Commission rules). She was delighted to see so many members and confirmed that the meeting was quorate. Elaine gave thanks to Sir John Stuttard for hosting the meeting.

Minutes of the 2019 AGM 23/07/2019: the minutes were agreed as a true record. **Ian Kellett proposed they be accepted, Dave Hardiman seconded, all in agreement.** Elaine signed the minutes.

Election of Trustees: Sheena Commons currently responsible for Collection Care is seeking re-election. **Nominated by Margaret Baxter seconded by Elaine Barratt.**

Dave Hardiman and Mark Smith both co-opted in 2019 are seeking election. **Dave, currently Buildings, nominated by Linda Wilton, seconded by Elaine Barratt. Mark, currently Fund Raising, nominated by Ian Kellett, seconded Elaine Barratt. Sue Stamp** is seeking to become a Trustee, Sue is interested in becoming **Membership Secretary and production of Byzant Newsletter.** Sue was **nominated by Elaine Barratt, seconded by Sheena Commons.** Each candidate provided a short resume outlining their reasons for seeking election. These had been sent out to members with the notification of the AGM.

As there are four candidates for a possible eight posts there is no need for a contested election. **Proposed by Tricia Steven, seconded by Linda Wilton, all were elected as Trustees.**

Chairperson's Report: Elaine reported the year had been comparatively good for the society and Museum. Our wonderful stewards had welcomed 19,362 visitors, 600 up on the previous season, which came as a relief as there had been a downward trend. We had received a surprise donation of £125 from Ansvar, the insurance company, following a visit from an employee who was so impressed with our stewards that she nominated us.

Membership increased with many new members subscribing as a result of Ian's very good lecture programme including a couple of last-minute substitutes, but sadly brought to an abrupt end by the pandemic. She thanked members for their continued support and regretted that events and lectures planned for the coming year have had to be cancelled or postponed.

Gift Aid has started enhancing small anonymous donations thanks to Linda's determination with HMRC; she had also found a better deal with a new energy supplier, sorted out meter issues with the previous one and brought us into the twenty-first century with a new all singing, dancing, card reading system. She thanked Christine Coney who took responsibility for counting and paying into the bank all takings thus freeing up time for Linda to pursue the HMRC claims. Sheena had started teaching the necessary cataloguing and computing skills to others and Elaine stated that it is her firm intention to build teams in all areas to enable sustainability and aid succession planning about which she had expressed concern last year. She expressed committee regret that Ray, who had contributed so much to the society, decided not to stand for re-election but understood his reasons and thanked him for so many years' service.

Janet, whom she had persuaded to remain as a Trustee with responsibility for the garden, although she had completed her three years on temporary display, decided that she didn't really need to be a Trustee but continues to contribute help with ideas in many areas as well as the garden. Paulette who evidently has much to offer in governance expertise felt forced by personal tragedy to take a sabbatical but they looked forward to learning from her experience during the coming year.

She remarked that the two co-opted and now elected Trustees, Dave and Mark, are both proactive and have made their marks in building repairs and funding respectively.

She thanked our President, Sir John Stuttard, who attends most Trustees' meetings, contributing much from his extensive fund of knowledge, and is unfailingly supportive. Jill Sumner whom she mentioned last year received her Volunteer of the Year award at the DMA AGM. Our newly elected trustee, Sue, painted the garden mangle and Janet Swiss painted the porch mangle and the gate. The garden team put in regular hours to ensure the garden kept delighting visitors. Cath Toogood continues to produce minutes of our meetings and together with Chris Syzmanski had been sorting out the coin collection. Chris Stupples' contribution to the Great War Project is little short of stupendous; Ann Symons continues to oversee it and with Claire Ryley held very popular reminiscence sessions in the library. Claire's programme of education has been included in the Trustees Annual Report. Gordon Ewart-Dean has continued to help quietly in the background, magically restoring temperamental equipment and tenaciously dealing with a non-communicative local glass company in his determination to get a display panel replaced. Sadly Ken Baxter a long time supporter lost his battle with cancer and, she said, our thoughts are with Margaret who has been on the display team for many years.

The two temporary exhibitions attracted much interest: Matthew Tagney's *Sale of Shaftesbury 1919* brought many visitors with a specific interest; Janet's *Water and Wells*, although well received, did not accumulate the extra info for which she had been hoping.

Adult Learning classes continued to boost income from the Garden Room and the Shaftesbury Fringe events were successful and blessed with fine weather for those spilling into the garden.

She and Ian were interviewed by BBC South following the re-release of the Hovis advertisement; an unexpected bonus was that we were allowed officially to keep the Hovis bike and awarded copyright permission to use the Hovis advert and other related material.

She acknowledged Keri Jones' enthusiastic role in publicising society and Museum activities for which we are most grateful. Ian continues to keep the website updated and issues regular interesting blogs.

In compiling this report she had looked at last season's minutes: the last relevant meeting held on 9th March this year was full of planning for the coming season. Who, she said, could have foreseen that within a fortnight everything would come to a grinding halt and that life as we know it would change indefinitely? There were no questions.

Ian Kellett proposed the Chair's report be accepted, Dave Hardiman seconded. All were in agreement

Ian proposed a vote of thanks to Elaine for all the hard work and many hours she put in for the society and museum, especially the stewards rotas, and the time spent trying to work out opening the museum with social distancing. **Sir John Stuttard** added his thanks also.

Treasurer's Report: The year end bank account statements have been reconciled and the relevant accounts and documents been deposited at Andrews & Palmer Accountants, Gillingham for the annual audit for the Charities Commission. Overall we maintain a healthy bank balance. The Trustees decided the Stock Market was stable and Invested £15,000 into M&G Investments in July 2019. a good decision until Coronavirus struck and Markets crashed overnight, value at 31st March 2020 was £29,278 and April rose to £30,949; we can now only hold the investment until it increases in the future. Gift Aid claims covering three previous years and current year 2019/20 has gained us £4,071. There is still the GASDS amount to reclaim for 2019/20 of £1455. The amount to reclaim for future years when we are open will be approximately £1500 pa. Donations from the public were £11,892 an increase of 1.6%, net shop sales have increased by £974 as the cost of goods sold was lower on the previous year by 29.5%. Increased requests by visitors to pay by card for goods or to donate prompted the purchase of a new till system with card reader. It's very user friendly and produces relevant reports for the accounts. Three new computers have been purchased for the office and library.

Sir John Stuttard proposed the Treasurer's Report be accepted, seconded by Ken Steven. All in agreement.

Appointment of Accountants: We are more than happy with Andrews & Palmer of Gillingham and they have agreed to remain as the society Accountants. They are always very helpful and forthcoming but have yet to invoice us for last year; Linda is chasing it up. **Elaine Barratt proposed, seconded by Dave Hariman. All were in agreement with Andrews and Palmer being retained**

AOB: There was none.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 11:17am.

Mr E Coxell

We have heard with regret of the passing of Mr E. Coxell. The Garden Update of the Spring 2012 Newsletter noted: 'It was fascinating to hear Mr Coxell, on his first visit to the new Museum, describe how in his day the garden had been slipping down the slope; over a four-month period he and a colleague dug out tonnes of earth from the bottom corner, and redistributed it over the lawn. [Space now occupied by the Garden Room] At the same time the brick and slab staircase to the bottom patio was constructed.' We are grateful for Mr Coxell's contribution to the development of The S&DHS and Gold Hill Museum.

BBC SOUTH TODAY

BBC South's regional news programme at 6.30p.m. on Tuesday 13 October featured a report from Gold Hill Museum, as part of the BBC's "Culture in Quarantine" strand. The South Today team of producer/director Simon Marks, cameraman Trevor Adamson, and reporter Sarah Farmer deliberately chose a "smaller, quirkier museum" to illustrate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the role of museums in the community. Social Distancing was observed throughout.



Hand drawn Fire Pump used into the nineteenth century

Shaftesbury & District Historical Society Chairperson Elaine Barratt was quizzed about the financial impact of the lockdown and the organisational difficulties posed by reopening during a pandemic.

As Gold Hill Museum is run entirely by volunteers, there was no need to furlough any staff, but the requirement to find 9 stewards a day rather than the usual 6 eventually became an insuperable problem.

The Museum closed for the season on 29th August. For once the size of the Museum's business rates bill was advantageous, in terms of the government grant available. This will pay this year's utilities, insurance and maintenance bills, but in the long term the free-to-enter Museum, with its historic buildings and unpredictable repair costs, needs to open its doors for visitors to make vital donations and shop purchases.



The “quirky” aspect of Gold Hill Museum was illustrated in a whirlwind tour of the more striking exhibits led by S&DHS Secretary Ian Kellett. The 1744 Newsham Fire Pump was a perfect symbol for the metaphorical firefighting of recent months. There were stops at the Byzant, the Squint, and, inevitably, at the mummified Dorset cat, with a nod to the Hovis Bike and Ridley Scott's 1973 advert. Whether anything coherent was said about the role of museums in the community and their importance to society in general may hinge on the editing skills of the director!

**This report first appeared in the News Blog at
<https://goldhillmuseum.org.uk>**

SOME RECOLLECTIONS OF SHAFTESBURY

LIFE 1937-59

We are grateful to Mrs Beatrice King of Salisbury for providing these reminiscences. If you are able to add further details to her account, please email enquiries@goldhillmuseum.org.uk or write to Gold Hill Museum, and we will be pleased to forward them.

This is a collection of miscellaneous memories of Shaftesbury life as told to me by my mother, Rosemary. I have no way of verifying them, but some of them may spark a memory or two and I would be interested to hear from anyone who could correct or add to them.

Cann School

My grandmother, Rita Edwards, was appointed Head of Cann School in 1937 and remained there until her retirement in 1959 when she moved away to live nearer to her daughter, Rosemary, and her family who lived in London.

Rita was a highly regarded Head Teacher; so much so that parents would put their children's names down for that school almost on the day they were born, so there was always a waiting list. The other primary school in Shaftesbury was nowhere near as popular. She always saw the potential in a child and helped many a pupil to realise their full potential. It is a mark of this belief in them that anyone who was born and brought up in Shaftesbury and came through Cann School still remembers her, though she died in 1970. We found it very moving to discover that one such pupil undertook to maintain her grave for many years after her death, and we appreciate this care and attention. There were 59 children officially on the roll, divided into 2 classes. There was one other teacher who assisted Rita. I can only remember the name of one of them, a Miss Stuckey, but other names have been mentioned as well.

One of the books of old photos of Shaftesbury includes a class photo of the children, which MAY include Rita. Rita was married to Ted, a violinist (he had been Deputy Leader of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra in the 1920s when it was still a paid orchestra, under the baton of Sir Dan Godfrey). By the time they moved to Shaftesbury he was working for Poole Council and commuted there daily – unless Shaftesbury was cut off by bad weather. There was the famous occasion when he rang in to say he was cut off and unable to get to work – and the people in Poole would not believe him; after all, there was no snow in Poole!

The family

Rita, Ted, and their daughter, Rosemary, my mother, lived in Cann Cott, on the corner of Butts Knapp. The rent was £1 a week. For many years the house has been divided into 4 flats. I just remember it as a very damp house (damp seemingly being a characteristic of Shaftesbury) – I can still remember the smell of the little courtyard and I remember being told of marvellous growths of fungi on the cellar walls. Rosemary remembered, too, lying in bed during World War II listening to the incredibly noisy rattle and grind of tanks going by on their way to or from Blandford, as in those days the Blandford Road passed round the house itself. Now the roads have been completely reconfigured and it is hard to imagine how it used to be.

When the family moved to Shaftesbury, Rosemary attended Shaftesbury School. The Head Teacher was a Miss Raad, apparently a fierce woman. As the school uniform was bright red, including berets, the pupils were known locally as ‘Radishes’. Her love of Amateur Dramatics sprang from those days as she joined a play-reading group, which included Ina Llewellyn, one of the teachers. Her uncle was a Prebendary of Exeter Cathedral and she moved to Exeter to look after him in his latter years. My mother did mention other members of this group, but I do not remember their names.

Rosemary trained as a teacher at Salisbury Teacher Training College and afterwards taught at the Avenue School in Warminster then at Sixpenny Handley, to which she drove daily in her little Austin 7, all up over Zig Zag Hill whatever the weather. The Head Teacher at the time (early 1950s) was a Mr Wright. He and his wife became my godparents in time. In the few months between leaving teaching and getting married, Rosemary took a job working in the shop at Guy's Marsh, at the time run by the USAAF.

She loved this work, especially as they made a great fuss of her. At about this time, Noel Teulon-Porter was setting up the Shaftesbury Museum and he asked Rosemary to be the Curator, but as she was about to get married and move away from the area she had to decline.

Other Shaftesbury people

Ted and Rita had many friends in the town and took an active part in the town's social life. For example they were founder members of the Arts Centre. Rosemary attended the opening of the Centre as Rita and Ted were unable to be present. Rita's brother, Wilfred Potter, had previously run Swallowcliffe Garage on the A30 (the building in Art Deco style still stands on the left looking towards Salisbury). He then ran a Body Shop in premises in the High St, opposite Mustons Lane. On the corner almost opposite the Body Shop was Pearson's Gift Shop, the owner being another person prominent in Shaftesbury life. I knew his son, Harold, many years later.

Arthur Penrose was the Head of the Secondary Modern School, he and his wife Louie became close family friends – they gave me my Teddy Bear. Then there were the Mashams, all I remember about them was their huge house and beautifully terraced garden. I was told to be on my best behaviour when we visited as he was a very important man (I think he had an MBE). Then there was the Rev Algernon Langton (of the same family as Stephen Langton the Archbishop of Canterbury in the 13th century who was one of the prime movers in the signing of the Magna Carta) and his wife. They had 6 children but it was their youngest, Jane, who looked after them in their final years, while also working as a School Secretary, in which school I do not know, in Shaftesbury.

In due course she became the Royal Archivist at Windsor Castle – and my other godmother.

These are some fragmentary memories of Shaftesbury life as told me by my mother over the years. It seems entirely fitting that this daughter of Shaftesbury should find her final resting place with her parents in St Rumbold's churchyard, Cann, behind the present day Arts Centre of Shaftesbury School.

Beatrice King

June2020

Readers are invited to contribute articles or letters for inclusion in the next issue of The Byzant. These should be of an historical nature but need not be confined to the locality or based on original research. Please send submissions to Gold Hill Museum or email enquiries to: enquiries@goldhillmuseum.org.uk

Chris Stupples, the writer of over 1000 biographical entries on the Shaftesbury Remembers website.



Photo courtesy of ThisisAlfred

Having moved to Shaftesbury in June 2011 from my home town of Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire, and having an interest in genealogy both from a family point of view as well as helping other people with their family histories, I wanted to find out more about the people of Shaftesbury. Who were they, what occupied them and how did they live?

I have long used on-line records to seek information but without names and dates to start with, where do you begin? Strangely enough it is where everything ends – the cemetery. Or in my case initially, the War Memorial. I went out and photographed the Shaftesbury War Memorial in Park Walk and from there began to look into those names recorded.

I soon had a printable chart of some sixty eight names of local people whom I researched from cradle to grave and began to get a good idea of the Shastonian and his/her life and times.

It was at this point that I heard that Gold Hill Museum had, under the guidance of Claire Ryley and Ann Symons, undertaken to produce a history of life in Shaftesbury throughout World War 1 in order to coincide with the 100th anniversary of its occurrence. I went along to the inaugural meeting and was able to produce my chart of those who gave their lives in Shaftesbury – or so I thought!

I offered to pursue this so that the Museum's 'Shaftesbury Remembers' proposed website could have some researchable information to support the history of the town at that time. It appeared that Shaftesbury 'and District' is bigger than I had thought so set out to visit all 27 War Memorials in the catchment area (as suggested) and research the lives of those who appeared.

The task to date has taken nearly five years and, at the last count, 1082 names have been placed with suitable stories for each on the website and this has now had national and international coverage as well as usage by family historians and various descendants throughout the world. During all this time Ann Symons has been adding photographs and information gleaned from the interviews that were conducted throughout the project. Her work has enhanced value of the website immensely.

Names are now becoming more difficult to find so my part in the project is gradually slowing down. This does not mean I will stop looking as I seek embellishments to existing stories, information on names I have but with little or no records and names of those who have been missed and deserve remembering. One thing I have to do finally is TO FIND ROOM FOR THE MASS OF PAPER RECORDS CLUTTERING UP MY OFFICE!!

Chris Stupples

November 2020

CWS/111120/GHM/SR

A Blue Plaque to recognise one of Shaftesbury's Greatest Citizens

In 2003, the Shaftesbury & District Historical Society (S&DHS) commenced an initiative to create and place, on the wall of each of 11 buildings in Shaftesbury, a blue plaque describing its historical use. The initiative to highlight properties of historical interest was the brainchild of the Shaftesbury Town Council Tourism Sub-Committee and the S&DHS, who received a lottery grant from 'Awards for All' to cover the cost of the plaques. This community project was supported by the Shaftesbury Town Council, The Shaftesbury Civic Society, Blackmore Press, Swans Trust and Shaftesbury School.

Nine of the 11 plaques were placed on buildings which were Listed. The project was completed in late 2004. There was already one blue plaque in Swan's Yard, funded by Swans Trust. As part of the project, a display panel information board, including a painting of Gold Hill by Janet Swiss, was designed and fixed to the gate of the entrance to Gold Hill Museum.

In 2005, with the help of five students from Shaftesbury School (pictured below), who designed a leaflet, the S&DHS launched a 'Blue Plaque Trail' of 12 properties, including the Gold Hill wall.



Some 14 years later, I was pleased to be able to write, with the help of Ray Simpson, the Archivist of the S&DHS based at Gold Hill Museum, an account of the life of one of Shaftesbury's most supportive and eminent citizens, John Rutter (1796-1851). It was published under the title of *The Turbulent Quaker of Shaftesbury*.

Orphaned at the age of 10, John Rutter was born in Bristol and came to Shaftesbury in 1811, aged 11 years old, to be apprenticed to a linen draper. When he was 21 he came into a legacy from his father's will and bought a printing press. He established himself at premises in the High Street (now Number 2, The Commons) as a '*Stationer, Bookseller, Binder, Letter-press and Copper-plate Printer*'. A contemporary engraved sketch of the building is shown below



In 1818 John Rutter wrote, published and printed his first work, a booklet entitled *The History of Cranborn Chace (sic) and of the Dispute concerning its Boundaries*. But his Quaker beliefs and his desire for equality and fairness came to the fore when researching the plight of those less fortunate than himself and he wrote *A Brief Sketch of the State of the Poor in Shaftesbury*, which he published and printed in 1819. This was a shocking and revealing account of the appalling conditions in which some of Shaftesbury's residents lived. As an author he also wrote guides to Wardour Castle and villages in Somerset. His masterpiece, *Delineations of Fonthill and its Abbey*, stands out as one of the best examples of 19th century architectural publications. There is a copy in the Royal Collection. A passionate defender of the oppressed and the disadvantaged, he championed political reform. Between 1820 and 1835, he introduced candidates to fight in the General Elections in Shaftesbury, whose electorate was then in the pocket of the 2nd Earl Grosvenor (from 1831 the 1st Marquess of Westminster). He also fought against the corrupt and nepotistic practices of the Shaftesbury Borough Council, then a '*close corporation*', a self-perpetuating oligarchy. He was hounded, tried and fined by the establishment of which the Mayor was also the Chief Magistrate and Lord Grosvenor's agent.

was described '*The Turbulent Quaker of Shaftesbury*'.

John Rutter was a founder member of the Shaftesbury Union and the House of Industry, for the unemployed, homeless and the poor. He led anti-slavery campaigns and promoted total abstinence. He established the first subscription and public lending library in Shaftesbury. He championed education (founding many schools), Bible reading and the peace movement.

Rutter's actions in Shaftesbury contributed to the major reforms which took place in England in the 1830s – the Great Reform Act (1832), the Slavery Act (1833), the Poor Law Amendment Act (1834), the Municipal Corporations Act (1835) and the various Industry Acts. This was a time of great change in the country. Rutter challenged the status quo and helped bring about these changes. Once they had been achieved, he became a pillar of society.

From 1835, as a councillor of the newly reformed Shaftesbury Borough Council, he led campaigns, working with the 2nd Marquess of Westminster, to improve the environment and amenities in Shaftesbury. This resulted in a deep well on Barton Hill with a steam engine to pump free water to all parts of the town and a fine grain store in front of the pumping station. A market hall was constructed with a corn market at the High Street end of town and a produce market at the other end, in Bell Street. Rutter was also a prime mover in the formation of the Shaftesbury Gas Company which brought public and private lighting to the town. He championed plans by the London and South Western Railway Company to build a railway from Salisbury to Exeter and appeared before a Parliamentary Committee to plead their case. The resulting success was recognised by the inhabitants of Gillingham who presented him with a silver salver in 1848.

Despite the passing of the Slavery Act in 1835, intended to abolish slavery in the British Empire, indentured apprenticeships of bonded labour prevented complete emancipation in the West Indies. Rutter spoke frequently about this at public meetings and he drafted a petition to Parliament entitled *Negro Apprenticeship Slavery and Address to the Queen*, which was approved by the Shaftesbury Town Council at its meeting on 18th May 1838. He spoke passionately about peace in the world and attended two of the early International Peace Congresses, the very first, in July 1843 in London, and the third congress in August 1849 in Paris. At a meeting which he attended in Bristol in October 1850, together with a fugitive slave (Dr Pennington), he concluded his remarks by saying '*It was strange that it should be necessary in the present day to stand up and prove that war was a curse and peace a blessing*'.

In the final 15 years of his life he qualified and practised as a solicitor (*'so as to better represent the poor'*) and founded the firm of Rutter & Son which family name continues as solicitors in Shaftesbury, Gillingham, Sturminster Newton and Wincanton.

It is his contribution, in so many different ways, to the town of Shaftesbury and his championing of causes associated with equality and fairness that most merit his recognition as one of the town's greatest citizens.

After reading about the life of John Rutter, the trustees of the SDHS decided to sponsor and erect, subject to consents, a blue plaque to recognise John Rutter and his contribution to Shaftesbury. The plaque will be placed on the external wall of the building from which he operated his business (Number 2, The Commons, Shaftesbury, now the building in which HSBC has its bank branch).

Permission was obtained to erect the plaque from the freeholder of Number 2, The Commons, Ship and Sherry Limited and also from the current leaseholder, HSBC, with assistance from their property managing agents, CBRE, to whom the trustees of the S&DHS are grateful.



Number 2, now occupied by a lessee, the local branch of HSBC. The Freehold is owned by Ship and Sherry Ltd, Yeovil.

Support for the erection on the building of a blue plaque commemorating the life of John Rutter was obtained from the following local community associations:

Shaftesbury Civic Society
Shaftesbury Chamber of Commerce
Shaftesbury Tourist Information Centre
Shaftesbury Rotary
Gillingham, Mere & Shaftesbury Lions Club

Finally, because the building is listed, Listed Building Consent was sought and was granted in October 2020 by the Dorset Council for the erection of the blue plaque to honour the life and contribution of John Rutter. This application had the support of the Shaftesbury Town Council which has approved a grant of half the cost for the project up to £500. The S&DHS is grateful to the Council for this grant in recognition of John Rutter's place in the town's history.

Manufacture of the blue plaque has been commissioned and it is hoped that, when the COVID-19 restrictions are lifted, it will be possible to arrange for the blue plaque to be erected and unveiled at a ceremony attended by local dignitaries, probably in the spring or summer of 2021.

A plaque was erected in 2005 on the wall of a house in Victoria Street to recognise the life of Robert Newton (1905-1956), film and stage actor, best known for his role as Long John Silver in Disney's famous 1950 film *Treasure Island*.

Other benefactors have been mentioned in the blue plaques fixed to buildings in the town in 2005, when mentioning their origins. For example:

- Site of William Lush's Blue Coat school which gave free education, clothes and apprenticeships to poor boys from c. 1757 until 1870.
- Ox House (c. 1600), later enlarged, probably belonged to John Grove, a Shaftesbury benefactor. Featured as 'Old Grove Place' in Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*.
- On the front wall of the Town Hall,: Built on the market place in 1827 by Earl Grosvenor who owned most of Shaftesbury, it replaced the open-arched New Guild Hall. The Clock tower was added in 1879.

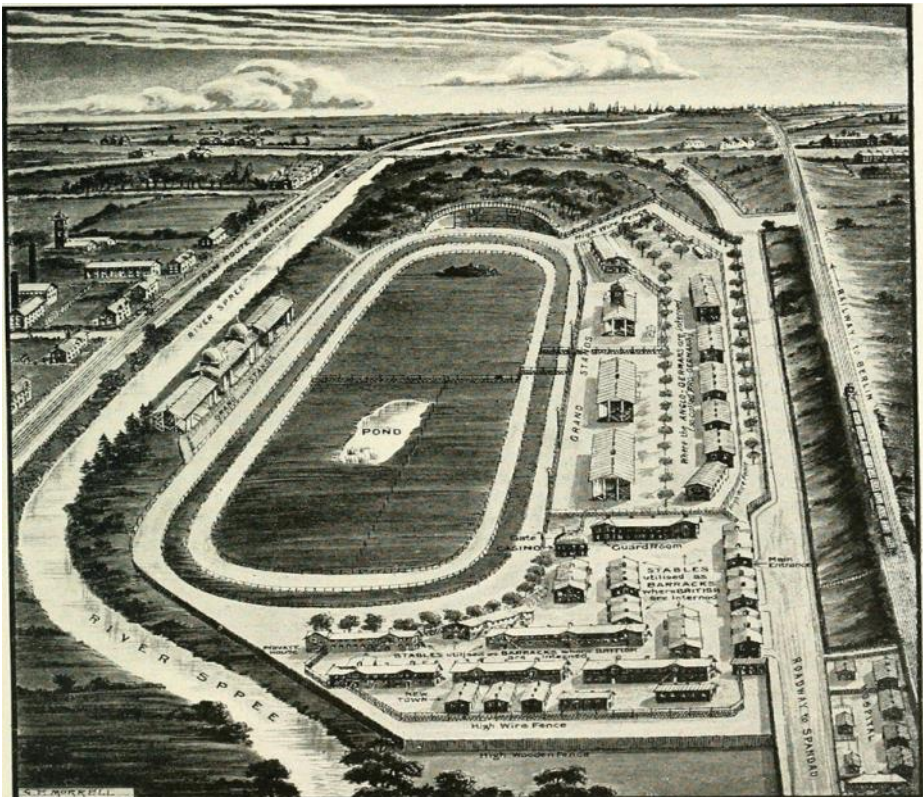
However, the recognition of John Rutter will be the first blue plaque to be erected in Shaftesbury to recognise the life and contribution of an individual. It is a first for Shaftesbury.

Sir John Stuttard, Honorary President

November 2020

In Ruhleben Camp

On 31 July 1914 Robert Bowditch sailed from Gloucester aboard the Bristol Steam Navigation Company's SS *Sappho*, bound for Hamburg with a cargo of sugar. Bob was an experienced seaman, a donkeyman responsible for the ship's auxiliary engine, with a wife Jane and five children at home in St Paul's, Bristol. By the time the ship docked in Hamburg, Britain and Germany were at war. The crew was held on the *Sappho* under police guard until transferred to prison hulk the *Siegfried*, where conditions were grim, though Bob was able to write a note of reassurance to his wife dated 06 October. (Note 1) On 06 November 1914, in retaliation for what the Kaiser's government claimed was provocative and harsh treatment of German expatriates in Britain, male British internees between the ages of 17 and 55 were rounded up and put on trains for detention camps like Ruhleben. Born in 1859, Bob was desperately unlucky.



Ruhleben was a former race course, primarily for harness racing, seven miles to the west of Berlin and near a munitions factory at Spandau. It sat between a bend in the River Spree and the main railway line to Berlin. Prisoners were to be accommodated in 11 stable blocks, still containing pungent reminders of their previous equine tenants. In each block six men occupied two tiers of bunks in each of 27 horse boxes, while the rest were sent up an outside stairway to the hayloft in the roof space. Here there was only straw for bedding, scarcely enough space to lie down, and the prospect of waking up covered in snow. Downstairs there were feeble electric lights in the corridors, two cold water standpipes, no heating and shared access to a separate, insanitary latrine block open to the elements. If the living conditions were squalid, the rations – dispensed from a Tea House in one of the adjacent grandstands, which doubled as a twelfth barrack – were even worse: ersatz ‘coffee’ made from ground acorns, black bread and Oliver Twist-style skilly. By the end of November 1914, 4000 internees were crammed into Ruhleben.

Not all these men were British. ‘Roughly twenty per cent had been born in Germany and some had never been to England and could not speak English.’ (Note 2). The existence of a PG or Pro-German minority created permanent tensions, exacerbated by news of events such as the sinking of the *Lusitania* in May 1915. Eventually the PGs were segregated in separate barracks, as were Jewish and black prisoners, reflecting the commonly-held prejudices of the time. “We were a motley crowd Men captured on their honeymoon, jockeys, professional golfers, music hall actors, seafarers, men on holiday, men on business in Germany, men with businesses of their own in Germany, and even men who did not know a word of English.” (Note 3). To this list could be added artists, academics, teachers, language students, journalists, composers, orchestral musicians, poets and professional footballers and coaches. (Note 4)

The most famous internee was one of the eight professional footballers, of whom five were internationals. Steve Bloomer was the Lionel Messi of his day. He didn’t look like an athlete, “pale, thin, ghost-like, almost ill-looking”, (Note 5) but he was quicksilver on the field, possessed a ferocious shot and for a man of average height won most headers. In 598 League appearances for Derby County and Middlesbrough he scored 352 goals; for England, 28 goals in 23 appearances. Since this was an era of mud-pie pitches and perhaps only two or three International Matches per season, these are phenomenal statistics. Contemporaries regarded him without reservation as the greatest player

of the Edwardian age. There is no surviving film footage of Steve Bloomer in action, but he would have been in every cigarette card collection.



By 1914 Bloomer was 40 and his professional playing days were behind him. He was, however, in demand as a coach. He had always believed in practising and developing ball skills, a view not shared by the Boards of Directors of many English League Clubs who favoured only fitness training. His lethal shooting, for example, was honed by hours of volleying the ball from different angles and distances at a bowler hat on a stick. (Brown, p.17) In July 1914 he arrived, without any knowledge of German, to take up a coaching role with FC Berlin Britannia. This lasted less than a month and the Club swiftly changed its name. Within 5 days of arriving at Ruhleben, Bloomer and his fellow pros organised an eleven-a-side Cup competition between 16 barracks teams, played in the confined space of the Stables Compound (see lower right of engraving) with a scrounged football and piles of coats for goals. On 25 November the ball was confiscated and football was banned.

The camp authorities, in the persons of Commandant Count Schwerin and his deputy Baron von Taube, were perhaps alarmed by the excited crowds at the games and keen to crush protests about the abysmal food. In the long term, however, they realised that a laissez-faire policy would be more productive.

There was so much talent, experience and initiative among the internees that they were capable of making rapid improvements to the camp, given some resources and a degree of autonomy. The guards in any case were mostly unfit reservists, quite without motivation though preferring Ruhleben to service on the Western or Eastern Fronts. Barrack Captains were appointed and eventually committees formed to oversee aspects of camp life.

By April 1915 the football enthusiasts had negotiated the lease of the central field, marked out two full-size pitches, and equipped two Divisions of 14 teams each with strips and boots. The sports gear was supplied by the British proprietors of a Berlin sports shop, the parents of internee Edwin Dutton, a German international. The Ruhleben Football Association was formally constituted with its regulations set out in a printed Handbook; trophies were bought and medals engraved. Possibly half the population of the camp watched some matches. The only concessions to circumstances were the absence of away fixtures and the reduced duration of matches from 90 to 60 minutes, making allowance for the undernourished condition of the players. Summer sports were organised – Bloomer also excelled at cricket and scored a double century.

In the summer of 1916, at the height of the Battle of the Somme, Count Schwerin was pleased to give an American visitor – the USA was still neutral – a guided tour. He pointed out new latrines and washhouses, heating in the barracks, a busy parcels office and prisoner-run shops and services. “You mustn’t suppose that the camp was always like this. When the men were first brought here, the place wasn’t fit to keep pigs in. All that you have admired in the camp they have themselves created.” (Quoted Snape, p34).

Copies of the *Ruhleben Camp Magazine* (renamed from *In Ruhleben Camp*) advertised the range of activities ‘organised by the school, the theatre, the musical society, the debating society, the YMCA, the chess club, the arts and science union, the horticultural society, the history circle, the nautical circle and more. The renamed magazine retained its stiff-upper-lip humour and remained extremely popular, selling several thousand copies of each edition, with some prisoners buying multiple copies ... to send home.’ (Brown p188)

Unfortunately some of the satire was taken seriously by British journalists who also failed to recognise that the magazine was implicitly censored. When the *Daily Mail* complained about “featherbed heroes” who according to the *Daily News* “sit in deck chairs and listen to concerts, attend the cinema and theatre” there was fury in Ruhleben. (Brown, *ibid.*) Apart from the physical privations, many of the prisoners, their hopes of early release dashed, suffered from “barbed wire disease”, a form of post-traumatic stress disorder. When Steve Bloomer heard of the death of one of his three daughters, he sank into a deep depression and lost all interest in playing sport. Eventually he was released in March 1918, on condition that he remained in the Netherlands.

As Ruth Hughes comments: ‘It’s important to challenge the later perception that Ruhleben was a holiday camp and that the men had an easier time of the war, protected from the trauma of combat. Many were prisoners for the entire duration of the war, and for some, the guilt of not fighting for their country triggered anxiety and depression.’ And what happened to Ruth’s great-grand-father, Robert Bowditch? On 13 November 1914, a week after arriving in Ruhleben, Bob wrote to Jane that he was “suffering a bad inflammation of the lungs.” This was his last letter home. On 22 November he was the first man to die at Ruhleben, probably of pneumonia, in the primitive hospital at the Emigrant Station. (Visible in the lower right-hand corner of the engraving.) He was buried in Of the British Community in Berlin, the Reverend H M Williams and attended by eight of his shipmates.

Spandau at a funeral conducted by the Chaplain of the British Community in Berlin, the Reverend HM Williams, and attended by eight of his shipmates.

Notes

1. I am grateful to Ruth Hughes of *The Beadster* for first drawing my attention to the existence of Ruhleben, and to Ann Symons for telling me where I could find the results of Ruth’s detailed research into her great-grandfather’s experiences. These are impeccably presented in Folder 5 of the *Shaftesbury Remembers the Great War* archive in Room 8 at Gold Hill Museum



2. The estimate given by David Snape on p33 of his article *In Ruhleben Camp: British Internees in Germany and their response to captivity* in the October 2020 edition of *Stand To!* the Journal of the Western Front Association

3. The recollections of Steve Bloomer, quoted by Paul Brown on p53 of his book *The Ruhleben Football Association* published by Goal Post in 2020

4. The Wikipedia entry for Ruhleben Internment Camp lists 39 Notable Detainees, many of whom are musicians and composers. There were lots of Gilbert and Sullivan productions in the camp. Also listed are physicist Sir James Chadwick, and John Cecil Masterman who ran the Double-cross network of secret agents during World War II

5. The opinion of Derby manager Harry Newbould, quoted on p16 of Brown

Ian Kellett November 2020

Shaftesbury Abbey Museum

Shaftesbury Abbey's SAVED project is nearing its completion, and a small team is managing to go in to paint, clean and set up displays once or twice a week. It's a bit chilly having all the doors open, but we are very aware that we need to keep each other safe.

We are very fortunate that we now have the Abbey Lodge so we can increase the museum facilities. The Lodge's new layout will include a large multi-functional room, a small library and research room, and additional storage for the collections. The current Abbey archaeological store is bursting at the seams!

We have recently had a rather dramatic collapse of part of the crypt wall in the Abbey gardens. The area has been cordoned off for all of 2020, but we did not expect it to fall quite yet. Fortunately we had already been talking with Historic England about repairing the wall, and they have very quickly granted us permission to deal with the problem. It does give Julian Richards an opportunity to do a small scale excavation which he is already organising.

Despite the restrictions this year we managed to open the gardens for several weekends over the summer, and were delighted with the response from visitors. We also sold a lot of ice-cream!

We are all looking forward to 2021, and hoping that both our museums will be able to open and offer all our visitors unique insights into our Saxon town and its history.

Claire Ryley

Shaftesbury Abbey Trustee i/c Collections

William Sims (1808-1852).

William was the second child of Hannah Sims, a loose woman of Cann in Shaftesbury. He was 'Base born' and baptised in St.Rumbold's Church on the 18th September, 1808.

His Mother was later described as a 'Strumpet' by the Rector of St.Rumbold's, and so his upbringing was bound to be influenced by her and therefore, he probably lacked a sense of moral decency and discipline. He probably never knew his Father, and how much influence his maternal Grandparents had, we will never know, because they were both dead by the time William reached the age of 16, which is when his life started to really go wrong and set him on a slippery slope to disaster.

On the 31st January, 1826, he was arrested and sent to Dorchester gaol for 'Leaving service' of his employer. He was described as a labourer, being 5'-3" tall, with black hair, dark hazel eyes and a sallow complexion. For this crime he was sentenced to 3 months hard labour. He was released on the 25th April, 1826.

Did he learn a lesson from this experience? – No!

On 29th January, 1828, he was arrested, charged with trespass and stealing a window frame and, once again, sent to Dorchester gaol to serve a sentence; this time two months hard labour. He was arrested with two accomplices, Abel Foot and Charles Stainer. Abel Foot was aged 17; William and Charles both aged 18.

William had grown a bit since his first incarceration; he was now almost 5'-7" tall, with dark brown hair, hazel eyes and a fair complexion. He was released on the 29th March, 1828. William might now be described as a hardened criminal. Certainly, he would have gained a criminal reputation in and around Shaftesbury.

Only 18 months later, the Dorset County Chronicle reported that the house of Mr James White of Bell Street, Shaftesbury was broken open and a quantity of wearing apparel and hats were stolen. It reported that

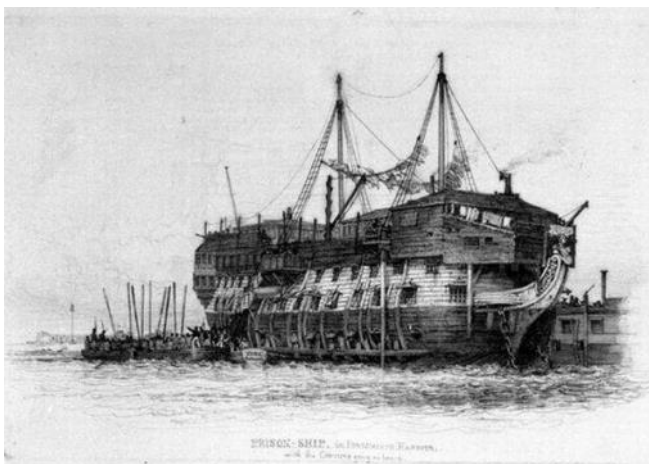
George Elkins, James Tanswell, and William Sims had been since apprehended, charged with the burglary. William's Mother, Hannah, was accused of receiving goods known to be stolen.

Now he was in big trouble.

On the 8th September, 1829, he, his Mother and the other two were committed to his favourite hotel, Dorchester gaol. According to the prison record, William was now almost 5'-9" tall, with black hair, hazel eyes and a sallow complexion.

After spending six months in Dorchester prison, they all came to trial on the 12th March, 1830. Hannah and George Elkins were both acquitted and released immediately, but 21-year-old William and James Tanswell, aged about 20, were both sentenced to **death**.

Lucky boys?! Their death sentences were commuted to transportation for life and on the 6th May, 1830, they were transferred and interned in a prison 'Hulk' ship named 'The Captivity' in Devonport harbour, where they were held for 2½ months and where conditions were probably awful. Hulks were known to be disease-ridden and up to a third of prisoners died on board.



A typical prison hulk ship

On the 22nd July, 1830, William and James Tanswell were transferred to a convict ship named 'Burrell' which, on the 27th July, departed for New South Wales, Australia. The ship took almost 5 months to arrive at Port Jackson in Sydney Harbour, arriving on the 18th December, 1830.



A convict barque probably similar to the Burrell.

The Burrell, was a 402 ton sailing barque, built in Newcastle in 1825. It made only two convict transport voyages to Australia; the second in 1832, transported 101 female convicts to Australia.

William and James Tanswell were on the first voyage and, at the outset, there were 192 convicts on the ship. They were confined for 13 hours each day and virtually all of the prisoners were affected by the symptoms of scurvy, which include nausea and diarrhoea and which would have made it almost unbearable below deck. Remarkably, thanks to the work of the surgeon and despite the awful conditions, only three died during the voyage.

The captain was John Metcalf, who had overseen its construction, and

a surgeon named William West oversaw the welfare of the convicts and others on board. To ensure the discipline and good behaviour of the convicts, there was also a guard of 30 soldiers from the 17th Regiment on board.

There was no Suez canal at that time and so the voyage route was via Brazil into the south Atlantic to Cape Town and then across the southern Indian Ocean to Australia.

When the ship reached Table Bay, South Africa, on the 1st November, it was reported that there had been a plot uncovered during the voyage. It was reported that the *'Hardened offenders during the voyage had concocted a diabolical conspiracy to murder the captain and crew, seize the vessel, and run her ashore on the coast of Brazil'*. The plot was discovered and the ringleaders secured. The outcome was that the all the prisoners found themselves confined for even longer each day.

On arrival, each convict was accounted for and assigned for work. William Sims was now 23 years-old and he is recorded as being 5'-7½" tall, with brown eyes, dark brown hair and a ruddy complexion. It was also stated that he had no education and his occupation in Dorset had been a ploughman, who could also milk cows and reap crops. He was therefore (obviously) assigned to work on road construction .

This would have meant a very hard life of toil, which would have taken a great toll on William's health. In fact, it appears that he eventually became too decrepit to work and was granted a *'Certificate of leave'*. After 21 years of hard labour in Australia, he died on the 24th February, 1852, aged only 44. A coroner's report recorded the cause of his death as *'Natural causes'*, although *'Worked to death'* would probably be a more apt description.

And all this for breaking into someone's house in Shaftesbury and stealing some clothes and a couple of hats. It is likely that William sometimes reflected on his life in New South Wales and wished that, back in Shaftesbury, he had made better life choices.

Transportation of convicts to Australia was ended in 1868, after 80 years, by which time some 162,000 convicted criminals had been sent there. These were the real **Prisoners of His Majesty** (Pohms) who in fact, through their hard labour, built, roads, bridges and public buildings, and laid the foundations of the Australia we know today.

Dave Hardiman
2020

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