

2022-2023



THE BYZANT

The Shaftesbury & District
Historical Society

Gold Hill Museum, Gold Hill, Shaftesbury, Dorset SP7 8JW

Registered charity number 1156273.

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

Tea and Talks, Anyone?

At August 2022's AGM, former Lecture Co-ordinator Alan Carter lamented the absence of 'Tea and Talks' from recent programmes. These sessions were intended to provide members with an opportunity to give short presentations of about 20 minutes in length on historical topics, while in a relaxed and informal setting. Recent experience, however, had been of a dearth of volunteer speakers from the membership, and the last two 'Tea and Talks' had been rescued by former Librarian Ray Simpson. There is now no-one among the Trustees willing to step in and deliver a 'pop-up' lecture at short notice, and it has been less problematic to book an additional outside speaker.

At the time of writing there could be a vacant slot after January 2024 for a revived Tea and Talks, provided that at least two members will commit to giving a presentation of 10 to 15 minutes each. Please contact Ian Kellett at Gold Hill Museum **no later than 31 January 2023** with your proposal if you are willing to take part.

**Produced by Dave Hardiman and edited by Ian Kellett, Trustees of
Gold Hill Museum.**

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Chairman's Chat.

Welcome to another issue of The Byzant at the end of a year which has seen more upheaval, this time of the economic variety, triggered by the invasion of Ukraine and exacerbated in this country by political instability, about which I make no comment, except to say that I have fond memories of a much quieter life to which I hope we may all return sooner rather than later.

Life at Gold Hill Museum has returned to relative normality although this has been the most difficult season I have ever experienced to keep the museum open as advertised. This is down to what I call the Covid effect, i.e., stewards no longer wanting to commit to a regular shift in order to have more flexibility for outings and taking extra holidays after the restrictions of lockdown, creating more gaps in the rota than I have ever known. However, this is not intended as criticism and, although it was touch and go at times, there were no closures as there was always someone willing to do an extra shift.

So, my heartfelt thanks go to our wonderful stewards who keep the museum open with the sort of welcome that prompts glowing comments in the Visitors' Book.

We always need more stewards but work also goes on behind the scenes: the archive team is thriving, but we need to build collection care, display and education teams. We also need at least two more trustees to share the load; let us know if you'd like to join our merry band, in whatever capacity.

Liz Hack was elected Honorary Treasurer at the AGM and is proving a worthy successor to Linda Wilton who, in turn, has decided to take on the office administrator role for which I, particularly, am most grateful.

This year saw the passing of a former trustee, Brenda Innes, a fascinating and challenging character of whom I was very fond. I'm grateful to John Parker who contributed the main part of her obituary.

This issue contains some diverse articles, from little known facts about and fond memories of local establishments, through construction, deconstruction and reconstruction, to reflections on the life of a 15th century king. The articles have been contributed by our president and a couple of trustees; it would be great to receive an article or two from our members for future editions.

We'd also like to revive Tea & Talks which was an informal afternoon with tea/coffee and cake giving members the opportunity to talk about something they'd been researching or had a keen interest in. Do get in touch if you would like to be involved and could contribute a short talk.

In the museum, *Fonthill Fever* has been a very popular temporary exhibition, with many visitors having travelled fair distances to view it. We are most grateful to Sidney Blackmore and David Wiltshire for mounting it; there may be an opportunity to view it again next season but, as I write this, that decision has yet to be made.

Four hundred years of Dorset Buttons has also attracted a great deal of interest and we're grateful to Anna McDowell for the loan of many delightful exhibits. Although we have very few Thomas Hardy artefacts to display, being part of the Wessex Museum Trust's *Hardy's Wessex* has brought in several visitors.

Do you ever visit our website <https://goldhillmuseum.org.uk/news-blog/>? Ian writes some really interesting and relevant stuff, well worth reading.

This winter we're intending to replace at least two of our display cabinets. The nature of our very old building with its uneven floors is not ideal and the locks warp, making them very difficult to unlock to adjust or to change the contents. We've been advised that the design

of two of the larger ones with heavy glass doors that pull out before sliding exacerbates this; we're hoping that a change of cabinets will make a change of displays more achievable.

We may also need to spend some money on roof repair: the kitchen ceiling leak continues in certain weather conditions and water poured down the walls of the front porch during a particularly heavy downpour in October. However, it's pointless attempting to effect repairs if the sources of the ingress have not been identified. Do you know any good roofers?

The very small garden team continues to keep the garden looking delightful and this year we were presented with a Certificate of Excellence by Britain in Bloom, South/Southeast Region. One of the garden volunteers accompanied me to the awards ceremony in October.

My thanks go to Dave for taking over the editorship of this newsletter following Sue's resignation, on medical grounds, as trustee. Although she was willing to continue as editor, she was most grateful to Dave for stepping up.

All in all, it's been a good year and I look forward to next season as the museum goes from strength to strength in providing a valuable community resource. I thank you, our members, for your continuing support.

I wish you all a very happy Christmas and a healthy new year.

Elaine Barratt

December 2022

The Shaftesbury & District Historical Society.

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Tuesday 23rd August 2022 at 2.30pm.

(Charitable Incorporated Organisation no: 11562273).

Present: Elaine Barratt, Ian Kellett, Linda Wilton, Dave Hardiman, Mark Smith, Rupert Tapper, Liz Hack. There were twenty-three (23) members in attendance. Cath Toogood (minutes).

Apologies were received from: Sir John Stuttard, Sheena Commons, Tony Martin, Ann Symons, David Silverside, John and Gill Hunt, Philippa Tapper, Tony Durie, Vicki de Witt, Edred and Ida Bowman.

Chairperson's Welcome: Elaine opened the meeting, welcoming them all and thanking them for their attendance.

Minutes of the seventh AGM held on 24th August 2021: the minutes were agreed as a true representation of the meeting. **Ken Steven proposed they be accepted, and Paulette McManus seconded. All in agreement.** Elaine signed them.

Election of Trustees: Clause 13 of the CIO constitution requires that a third of the Trustees retire annually, they may put themselves forward again for election. There are currently eight Trustees, three are standing for election. Sheena and Ian are seeking re-election, Liz Hack is putting herself forward to take over The Treasurer position as Linda is standing down. Each candidate provided a short statement of no more than two hundred and fifty words. The election will not be contested as there are three candidates for seven vacancies. The candidates were asked to leave the room while the election took place. It was decided to elect *en masse*; **Sue Minshaw proposed they be accepted, Dave Hardiman seconded. All were in agreement.** The candidates re-joined the meeting.

Chairperson's Report, to include consideration of Trustees Annual Report 2021-22. Elaine told the meeting the Museum opened on 31st May 2021 with some COVID restrictions still in place. The one-way system and face coverings remained in place and hand sanitizer was provided for all. A good season followed with our wonderful stewards welcoming 12,707 visitors who were quite generous with donations. A dozen new stewards were recruited but some existing stewards no longer wanted to commit to a regular duty. Before the Museum opened The Salt Cellar Cafe made use of the garden as they were unable to serve indoors due to the COVID restrictions. It proved mutually beneficial, with the proprietor giving us a very generous donation.

Janet Swiss, our garden team leader, suffered a stroke in March, Janet has more or less recovered physically but tires easily and won't be back this season. We wish Janet well and look forward to seeing her. The garden team is dwindling and needs new helpers. Our thanks go out to them for all their hard work.

Sir John Stuttard, our president, steered a project to install a blue plaque commemorating the life of John Rutter, the 19th century reformer. Sir John put in a great deal of work to achieve this with the culmination of the unveiling of the plaque on 7th August 2021 by the Lord Lieutenant of Dorset followed by a reception for local dignitaries and Rutter family members. We are grateful to Simon Rutter who loaned some Rutter artefacts allowing us to stage a temporary exhibition.

We were able to run for a second season a Hovis exhibition with items loaned by Caron Dunkley. The childhood exhibition was augmented although the handling of items was restricted.

The winter lecture programme was successful although the December and January lectures were cancelled due to the Omicron variant of COVID.

The Garden Room continues to be used well with BCP Council running language classes, the Fringe made use of it, a couple of workshops and exhibitions also hired it.

Our thanks must go to Keri Jones, the local radio producer, who publicises the museum at every opportunity, Rob Frost our web designer, who reconstructed the Gold Hill Museum website and the Shaftesbury Remembers website after they crashed, free of charge, Andy Hargreaves who sorts out our IT problems, also without charge. Chris Stupples continues to add entries to the Shaftesbury Remembers website. Brilliant work Chris.

The artwork on the new Lidl store was produced with research from the museum. The boundary wall between the museum and The Mitre has been a cause for concern with Young's Brewery unwilling to cooperate in making it safe only clearing the ivy growing from their side. We have taken the decision to repoint a section of the wall to make it safe. We will fund the work. Strong weedkiller has been applied. It is uncertain who owns the wall.

Ann Symons received Dorset Museums Association Volunteer of the year award.

Jeanette Hardiman has been inputting key words in the library catalogue in preparation for embedding into the website.

Elaine gave thanks to Cath Toogood for minute taking, Chris Coney who counts, balances and banks the takings twice weekly. Thank you to Linda who has been an amazing treasurer. Last year's AGM welcomed two new trustees: Rupert Tapper who is working with Ann and also taking responsibility for the archive enquiries and Tony Martin who is sorting out the storeroom with Sheena as she hands over the collection care to him. Sheena will now be able to concentrate on displays with Jill Clasby, thanks go to Jill.

Dave continues to be our enthusiastic buildings manager who gets things done yesterday. Mark who really does think outside the box and brings a new perspective. Ian organises a brilliant lecture programme, updates the website and creates blogs. No longer a trustee, Claire Ryley assists Ann at the Town Library with the reminiscence sessions. To all of you, your help is invaluable, thank you. Sue Stamp resigned her trusteeship however Sue had produced an acclaimed 75th anniversary Byzant.

In September the tenants of the shop, feeling the aftermath of COVID, gave notice of their intention to close with a year left to run on the lease. Luckily Mark knew a trader looking for another premises who was willing to take on the lease. We only lost a month's rent.

In January sadly Brenda Innes, a former trustee, passed away.

We rely on around 55 volunteers and are grateful to them all and to our president Sir John Stuttard who offers unfailing support.

Deborah Jones proposed the Chairpersons report be accepted. Christine Mitchell seconded. All in agreement.

Treasurer's Report: there was a copy of the report handed out on arrival to the AGM.

John Arnold commented the accounts looked healthy. He also commented that the accounting costs looked high. Linda advised it was because Andrews & Palmer omitted to send an invoice that year, so it was double. Alan Carter asked if the membership covers the lecture's costs as its charges had not changed much since he was organising them. Discussion followed. Would a rise to £75 - £100 be better? Ian replied he tries to keep costs to around £50 to £60. He finds many speakers who are willing to come for that and in some cases are willing to waive their fees.

Ian reported that to make the summer outing to Beckford's Tower and Museum in Bath viable he needed ten participants, only seven came, however the three who could not come generously donated their contributions. Deborah Jones felt the amount of steps may have put some off. Alan Carter said he found the outing needed to be fairly local as people will not travel. Paulette McManus said two outings in Mere were cancelled due to lack of take up as people would not pay for a coach fare. Deborah Jones suggested visiting museums nearer to us may be interesting to some. Alan Carter asked if the tea and talks would resume at some date. Elaine said she would like to think so but it was difficult to get members to speak. Deborah Jones suggested following Salisbury's idea of getting an archaeologist in to talk about things on display or finds. Zilla Whittingham said she always enjoyed them.

Roy Mitchell asked if the gift aid envelopes need to be signed by the donor, **yes, they do.**

Linda reported she had been unable to sort out the BT problem; they have agreed we have no service from them, and they owe us money, but they seem unable to finalise it. Linda will still steward and help out in the office with admin. Ian gave a vote of thanks to Linda and presented her with a bunch of flowers.

Rupert Tapper proposed the accounts be accepted. Roy Mitchell seconded. All agreed.

Membership fees: membership fees will remain the same. No need to change.

Lectures and events: Ian reported that this year's Teulon Porter lecture will take place a week earlier due to the speaker being unavailable on the usual date.

Appointment of accountants: Andrews & Palmer were considered to serve us well. **Tricia Steven proposed we retain them. Ian Kellett seconded.**

AOB: John Arnold asked if there were any plans to expand the collection and to set money aside to do so, and if it would be possible then to view items at local auctions and invest in them for the displays. Elaine said it was a good idea although, in view of the building's age, we had to be mindful of building reserves. Ian commented there was still a leak in the kitchen roof which could not be located. We also need to look at buying two new display cabinets.

Ken Steven gave a vote of thanks to Elaine for all the hard work she puts into the running of the museum. A round of applause followed.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 15:12pm.

The members were invited to the garden for tea.

Guy's Marsh Military Hospital.

Here's a story of the local military hospital at Guy's Marsh, that many people will be unaware of. The story is based on an article by Michael Handy, that was published in the Dorset Life magazine in 2011.



Shaftesbury Military Hospital, Guy's Marsh, in the 1940's.

Once a borstal, then a Young Offenders Institution, it is now Guy's Marsh category C prison but, did you know that some 80 years ago, around the time of the 2nd world war, it was a place of world-leading medical innovation. It was where the first non-trial use of penicillin in the UK took place and was amongst the first places to use the then new 'wonder drug' Streptomycin, which was given to returning soldiers with TB who had been Japanese prisoners-of-war. Above all else, though, it's where a brilliant, though somewhat unorthodox, orthopaedic surgeon called John Charnley, carried out some astonishing work on soldiers who had been severely injured in action. As senior orthopaedic surgeon for the whole of the Salisbury Plain area, Charnley had access to plenty of cases for treatment, and one of his greatest success stories was a young soldier named Brian Guy, on whose recollections the following story is based.

In 1944, Brian left a reserved occupation as an engineer and joined the Royal Engineers assault company, attached to the 3rd Infantry Division – known as Monty’s Ironsides. He came ashore at D-Day’s Sword beach, beat the paratroopers to Pegasus bridge and was involved in all the major campaigns across France, Belgium, and Holland. He was wounded by a mine, which killed a good friend who was standing in front of him and, although it left him with a bit of a ball bearing in his head, he was ‘patched up’ and sent back into the line.

On arriving at Nijmegen bridge, during Operation Market Garden, he volunteered as a dispatch rider. On one ride, he was travelling along a road and was blown off his motorbike, which continued onwards down the road on its own for some distance.

A passing lorry stopped shortly afterwards and, as Brian recalled, *‘Someone put a lit cigarette in my mouth and an officer said, as he unwrapped my intertwined legs, “This is going to hurt”. I bit so hard on the cigarette that the hot end fell down my shirt, which added to my woes.’* His injuries were horrific; practically every bone in his back was cracked and his left leg was shattered. He was laid on a stretcher, which he was on for so long that the blood he had lost actually stuck him to it. He was taken to Eindhoven, flown to Croydon Airport, and immediately transferred to the hospital there. When he woke up, he was in a full body cast. To his knowledge, he had received no painkillers to that point. The lower broken vertebrae had fortunately not severed his spinal cord, but he was not immediately told about the full extent of his injuries. He received penicillin injections every six hours, night, and day, for six weeks. He was then transferred to Warwick, where the full body cast was taken off. Then he was transferred to Poole Hospital, where a cast was put on his left leg; then to Bovington and, finally, to Guy’s Marsh military hospital.

Quoting Brian, he said that it was, *‘entirely run by military personnel – nurses, doctors, surgeons, and medical staff – this Hospital was run in a relaxed and pleasant manner and had an overriding sense of purpose, that inspired one to think that the best would be done, whatever one’s injuries, and with the benefit of dedicated staff.’*

Ward one was a privilege ward for the severely wounded and had extra benefits such as a pint of free beer each day, brown ale or light ale, and the company of very pretty girls, who brought round chocolates and other goodies that were in very short supply outside. It was a truly wonderful place that inspired confidence, I have much for which to thank that hospital.'



**Major John Charnley,
father of the hip
replacement, looking
incredibly youthful in
his RAMC uniform in
1940.**

The greatest debt was owed to Major John Charnley, an orthopaedic surgeon of great skill, who is today recognised as the founder of modern hip replacement. Quoting Brian again, he recalled that: *'Even in those far off days Major Charnley was looked upon as a genius. He was held in great esteem by all the staff and patients. When I was first taken into his consulting area, I thought that this very young-looking, fair-haired man of small stature, could not possibly be the surgeon; he looked like a youth, that is, apart from the major's pip on his shoulder.'*

I must admit to being taken aback by his appearance, but he was clearly not a man who would stand fools gladly. Pointing to my leg plaster, his first words to me were: "Who put this monstrosity on you?". "Poole Hospital, sir", I replied. "Useless, absolutely useless," he continued, pointing to the area where there was an obvious gap between leg and plaster. He had the plaster removed completely and although the leg bones had not joined, and the leg could be bent about in the middle, it was not painful; the tiny pieces of bone were dead. They left the leg like that for some time while they made me ready for an operation'.

He went on; 'About this time, back home, my half-brother was dying in a very unpleasant way. Anxious to help, I asked the Major if he could get me home, so he promptly fixed me up with a calliper that transferred the weight from my feet to my groin, so that I was able to walk with a broken leg.'

Finally, on the 8th, May, 1945 – VE Day, the time came for Brian's operation. He recalled that 'I was taken off early to the operating theatre, Major Charnley removed all the dead bone from my leg, then took out the top of my left hip – that is the bit of hip you hang your trousers on – and grafted that into my leg! It was all screwed together with a steel plate, which was stamped with a war office arrow and with W.D. for War Dept. Prior to trying out the procedure on Brian, to ensure that it would theoretically work, Charnley had experimentally carried out the same procedure, on a goat, '. Sadly, Charnley could not obtain enough bone from Brian's hips to rebuild the leg to its original length, so one leg was left shorter than the other. The other drawback from the operation was losing his hips and either having to wear braces, or having his trousers fall down.

As well as the ground-breaking procedures, Guy's Marsh Hospital was different in other ways. Quoting Brian again, he recalled that; 'At the end of our ward there was a partly glazed double door that looked out on to a large area of well-mown grass and, about a hundred yards away, was a wooden hut, all by itself. Just a wooden hut. But, inside this hut was a bar, just like a small clubhouse, with tables, chairs, and a dartboard. Major Charnley had set this up. Now, when you could make your own way to this hut, you could go and have a drink with your pals. So, it was everyone's ambition to get to the hut. I saw young men pass out trying.

The golden rule about the hut was that you had to make it entirely on your own, with no assistance at all. Your pals could cheer you on, but they were not allowed to help. Came the day. Yours truly was going to have a go at the hut and my mates gathered round to cheer me on, "Come on Brian, you can do it," they shouted, as I struggled with my heavy plaster and crutches.

The long period in hospital had reduced my weight and muscle tone considerably. It took me ages but, with lots of encouragement from my pals, I got there – only to discover that they did not sell beer, just scrumpy cider. Two pints of scrumpy and my crutches failed to go where I put them. How I got back to the ward I do not know, but I woke up the next morning in my own bed. To my dying day I will remember the nursing Sister, first thing in the morning, coming through the double doors clutching a collection of false arms, legs, and crutches, all wet with dew from being discarded outdoors the night before, exclaiming: "Come on now, who do these belong to?"

Brian's engineering background linked with Charnley's never-ending ability to think up contraptions to help those in his charge, led to Brian helping Charnley to make up these inventions for other soldiers. Ultimately, Brian went off to Lake House in the Woodford valley near Salisbury, to recuperate. Meanwhile, John Charnley developed a hip replacement procedure which was, according to contemporary accounts, '*as much a feat of carpentry as the surgeon's skill.*'

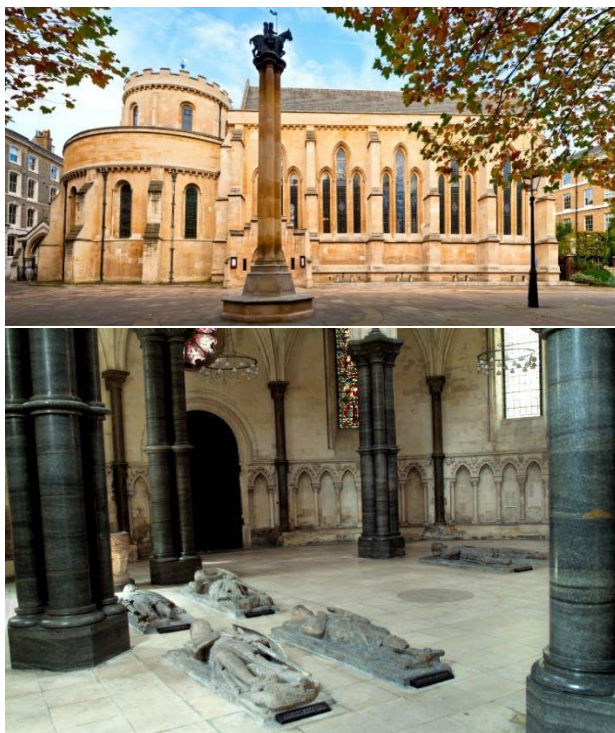
Major John Charnley was later knighted and would go on to be one of the world's most respected orthopaedic surgeons, and the founder of a specialist hip-replacement unit at Wrightington hospital in Lancashire. He died in 1982.

Brian Guy went on to work as an engineer at Winfrith and lived in Swanage until he too passed away in 2019, aged 94.

London and Dorset – A shared history in construction **by Sir John Stuttard.**

London and Dorset have more in common than you might imagine, not least in the field of construction. Next year, I shall be giving a talk on this subject at Gold Hill Museum and, in advance, the Editor of *Byzant* magazine thought you might be interested to read a taster.

For almost 2,000 years, stone from the Isle of Purbeck has found its way to London, shipped from the South Dorset coast and carried up the Thames. The Romans used Purbeck stone for sarcophagi and for monumental inscriptions, while the harder Purbeck Marble was used to create mosaics in paving the floors of their villas. In the 12th century the Knights Templar build a round church south of the present Fleet Street. Much of the interior decoration of the Temple Church, including its effigies of knights, was made of Purbeck marble.

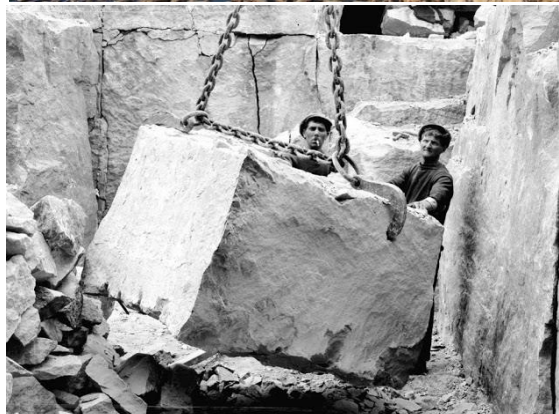


Purbeck Stone was also used in building the Tower of London and in the first London Bridge to be made from stone, completed circa 1209. During the Middle Ages Purbeck Stone and Purbeck Marble were used in the building of England's great cathedrals. In 1615 Inigo Jones was appointed Chief Architect and Surveyor-General by King James I and surveyed the Crown Lands on the Isle of Portland. He realised the potential of Portland Stone for creating neoclassical buildings that were designed in an English Palladian style. He used Portland Stone to build the Queen's House at Greenwich and the Banqueting House in Whitehall (shown below) and in the restoration of the old St Paul's Cathedral.



Then the trade between Swanage and London increased after the Great Fire of 1666 when stone from Purbeck, and from Portland, some 30 miles to the west, was a material favoured by Wren and used to rebuild the capital city. St Paul's Cathedral, Wren's masterpiece, is built of Portland Stone.

Purbeck Stone has been quarried for at least 2,000 years. The quarries were both inland and on the edges of the cliffs jutting out into the sea; some of the more well-known ones have wonderful names: Tilly Whim, Winspit and Dancing Ledge (below). Portland Stone was formed on the Isle of Portland, as well as on the Isle of Purbeck, and is sufficiently well cemented naturally to allow it to resist most weathering but not so hard that it cannot be cut and carved by stone masons. It is thus ideal for facing buildings which require ornamentation.



The connection between Dorset and London took on a different dimension in the 19th century when Swanage born John Mowlem (1788-1868), who trained as a mason, followed the example of Dick Whittington in search of opportunity and fortune. In 1822, Mowlem started a business at Paddington Wharf as a paving contractor and stone merchant. The firm's first major work of national importance was the paving of the surface of Blackfriars Bridge in 1839-40 with narrow cubes; Mowlem was the first builder to use this technique and it is the method adopted to this day when laying granite setts. As the business grew, so he persuaded his nephew, George Burt, to join him from Swanage. George Burt led the firm into some major projects: paving Queen Victoria Street, repaving Fleet Street, the reconstruction of Billingsgate Market as well as the construction of the City of London School, the Smithfield Fruit Market, and the extension in both directions of the City & South London Railway, later renamed the Northern Line.

George Burt's son, Sir John Mowlem Burt and then his grandson, Sir George Mowlem Burt KBE, continued to lead the Mowlem business with more major construction contracts in London: New Scotland Yard, Admiralty Arch, refronting Buckingham Palace, the Mulberry Harbours, the post war reconstruction work at the Houses of Parliament, the reconstruction of 10 Downing Street and the Millbank Tower.

But the connection between Dorset and London took on an even stranger dimension when, from the 1860s, George Burt (senior) began saving or buying architectural salvage connected with the firm's projects in London and transporting the spoils to Swanage. Such heavy objects could be used as ballast in ships returning to Dorset having deposited their cargo of Purbeck Stone in London. As a result, Swanage is adorned – some might say littered – with building works and other artefacts that once graced the streets of London. There are bollards from the City of London, gargoyles, and capitals from elsewhere in London. Two of the relics of the country's capital now in Swanage are shown below.



There are some even more interesting objects which were brought, as ballast and architectural salvage, from London to Swanage and can be seen there today. These will be revealed during the talk at 2.30pm on Tuesday 7th March 2023 at Gold Hill Museum.

The Finest in Motion Picture Entertainment at the Savoy Cinema.

By Dave Hardiman and Ian Kellett



Gold Hill Museum was delighted in the summer of 2022 to receive from Mrs P.A. Gigg of Gillingham the donation of a Savoy Cinema promotional leaflet dated April 1958. The 382 seat Savoy showed its last film in 1984, and the only trace of its existence is the preservation of the name in the apartment block now occupying the site in Bimport. (Seen from Holy Trinity Churchyard, below). Printed ephemera like this leaflet tends not to survive once its purpose has been served, and we are very grateful for Mrs Gigg's help in conserving this small but important piece of evidence. Sight of the leaflet caused something of a stir among Museum volunteers.



Local historian and Hilltop History broadcaster Dave Hardiman recalled youthful trips to the Savoy:

The cinema was demolished back in the 80's, but I well remember going to see many films there. Probably my earliest was when my Mum & Dad took me to see Elvis' first film 'Love Me Tender' in about 1960. I also recall my dad taking me to see the first Bond film 'Dr No' and also going with Mum & Dad to see 'South Pacific' and 'The Swiss Family Robinson'. There were many more.

I particularly remember, in 1967 I think, queueing to see the film 'Far from the Madding Crowd', which was an adaptation of the Thomas Hardy novel and included a couple of scenes that featured Gold Hill. The queue was long, and the cinema was jam-packed, and there were cheers when Gold Hill appeared on the big screen. It still is a great film.

There was a time in about 1970, when it became popular for many of us younger ones, to go to the 'Flicks' on a Sunday evening and watch a couple of films, one of which was usually a Hammer horror film. A lot of peanut or other such missile throwing went on and the Manager,

Mr Wolfe, or 'Wolfie', as we called him, would usually be kept busy seeking out the culprits with his torch, and telling some to behave themselves or be thrown out; some were ejected. I could go on.



Savoy Cinema Bimport just prior to demolition.

After a version of this article appeared as a News Blog on the Gold Hill Museum Facebook page, local resident Nigel House commented: *As a pupil at Shaftesbury Primary opposite to the Savoy I remember that when they filmed 'Far from the Madding Crowd' they used the Savoy car park as their HQ. Full of trailers, lorries, horses and of course actors.* The actors would have included Alan Bates, who had to trudge up Gold Hill looking for work as shepherd Gabriel Oak at a hiring fair. The horses featured in a scene where a troop of yeomanry cavalry, led by Terence Stamp's Sergeant Troy, delicately negotiated the cobbles on the way down.

Dave's research provided this press report of **the opening of the Savoy in July 1933:**

The Savoy Theatre, Shaftesbury, opens for the first time on Wednesday next with a special invitation matinee at three pm., when the Mayor and Corporation of the borough of Shaftesbury will give this new house of entertainment a civic opening. The opening for the general public is at 8pm., when a full programme of films will be presented, including the British international success 'Maid of the Mountains'. The haunting melodies which have been hummed all over the world are brought once more to your ears as an accompaniment to one of the most thrilling and romantic stories the screen has yet offered.



Director Lupino Lane in the Exhibitors Herald Jan 1922

'Maid of the Mountains' was based on a hit stage musical from the dark days of World War One. The director, Lupino Lane, was an accomplished performer in his own right, and achieved world-wide fame later in the 1930's in the stage show and film 'Me and My Girl'. As Cockney Bill Snibson he inherits a country estate, to which he invites his Lambeth pals. The 'Lambeth Walk' song and dance routine became internationally popular.

Prices of admission, including tax, will be 1s-6d, 1s-3d & 9d and all seats are bookable in advance. Adjoining the theatre is a car and cycle park, where patrons may leave their cars free of charge during performances.

Not everyone was enamoured of the external appearance of the new cinema, located opposite Holy Trinity Church. While the Mayor, Mr. F.R. Matthews, and the Town Clerk, Mr. W. Farley Rutter, both congratulated the owner, Percy Carter of Blandford, on his enterprise in providing Shaftesbury with a great asset, the Town Clerk hinted at some disquiet.

Referring to the appearance of the theatre Mr. Rutter said it might seem strange (to critics), but it was all a question of adapting the building to the requirements of the cinema. If they looked at it in that way they would in a few years regard it as an old friend. (Applause)

Percy Carter had owned the Palace Cinema in the High Street, prior to engaging the leading cinema architect in the region to design the Savoy. The arrival of Talkies in the early 1930's inspired a surge of cinema construction. Bournemouth-based architect Edward G. De Wilde Holding designed 12 cinemas / theatres in the Southwest, many with Art Deco features. Ten have been closed or converted (the Cerdic in Chard is a pub, and the Plaza in Wincanton was a church) or simply demolished, like the Savoy and the Regal in Gillingham. Two survive as cinemas, the Tivoli in Wimborne and The Wellesley in Wellington.



Wincanton Plaza Cinema, later used as a church.

The proscenium of De Wilde Holding's Savoy was 24ft wide, and the 20ft deep stage plus three dressing rooms allowed for the presentation of variety acts, pantomimes and theatrical performances. In October 1949 the newly-formed Shaftesbury & District Arts Club mounted their first production *Music from Grand Opera* at the Savoy. By August 1952 the Arts Club had bought the Upper Market Hall in Bell Street for £750 and embarked on developing the current Arts Centre. At the Savoy, wide screen CinemaScope was installed in the mid-1950's, but the advent of television led to dwindling cinema audiences. To compete, later owners went down-market, and one unfortunate manager, Ivan Osborne, was dismissed from his £40 per week job in October 1978 because he refused to show sex films. He declared that he was only prepared to show films suitable for his wife and young children. Two years before its demise, the Savoy hosted its most popular film, Steven Spielberg's 'ET'. In 1984 the last ever to be shown was 'Champions', starring John Hurt, Edward Woodward, and Grand National winner Aldaniti.

Henry VI – England's Worst King?

by Ian Kellett

On 21 May 1471 the last of the Lancastrian kings, Henry VI, was murdered in the Tower of London. He lends his name to three of Shakespeare's ten 'history plays', written more than a century after his death. Yet his is only a fleeting presence in the drama, a bloody soap opera with much more strongly drawn characters. If Henry were not the worst, he must have been the unluckiest of English kings. On his watch England lost the Hundred Years' War with France and was convulsed in the Wars of the Roses. Henry managed to lose two crowns, one of them twice.

He was the only son of Henry V, victor at Agincourt in 1415. The charismatic father embodied the virtues of the medieval warrior-king. The insipid son was the only king of medieval England who did not lead an army in war against a foreign enemy and showed no interest in martial pursuits. This cut no ice with the English nobility, who ran private armies and practised for war when they were not actually waging it.

Henry was born at Windsor on 06 December 1421. He was only nine months old when his father died of dysentery campaigning in France. The quarrelsome nobles of the Royal Council sank their differences and governed on the boy's behalf, maintaining stability in England, where he was crowned king in 1429, and retaining most of the English territory in France, where he was crowned king in December 1431. This followed the defeat and capture of Joan of Arc, her condemnation as a heretic, and burning at the stake in May 1431. (Note 1) The real problems started in 1436 when Henry began to exercise power in his own right.

Medieval kings were besieged by petitioners. With 'benevolent vagueness' (Helen Castor) Henry never seems to have refused a request. This led to the wholesale granting of titles, lands, offices, rents, and pardons which completely undermined the royal finances.

While some of this was cronyism, Henry seems to have been naïve, impractical, and excessively generous. As James Ross writes: 'Carelessness, lack of attention to detail and sheer incompetence were the hallmarks of the king's involvement in government'. (Note 2) He would perhaps have been better suited to the religious life, as medieval apologists suggested.

Some of his achievements in education were not recognised at the time and are not generally associated with his name now. In 1440 he set up Eton College as a charity school for 70 poor boys who would then go on to King's College, Cambridge, founded in 1441. Henry intended the nave of Eton College Chapel to be the longest in Europe, with 17 or 18 bays; even at today's eight, it is mightily impressive. He laid the foundation stone of King's College Chapel in 1446, though the building was not completed for another century.



King's College Chapel, Cambridge. The 'King' is Henry VI. (Photo by Dmitry Tonkonog)

In 1442 Henry lobbied the Pope unsuccessfully to have King Alfred, whom he admired as an educational reformer, canonised as a saint, and in 1445 he provided 30 oak trees from the royal forests for a new library at Salisbury Cathedral. The building stone came courtesy of the Abbess of Shaftesbury from quarries at Chilmark.

While these worthy foundations were viewed by many contemporaries as expensive vanity projects, Henry's failure to defend English territory in France was far more culpable. In 1445 Maine was ceded to Rene of Anjou, Henry's new father-in-law, without consultation or compensation of English stakeholders. This contributed massively to the loss of Normandy in 1450 and Jack Cade's Rebellion in Kent; in 1453 Gascony, which had been English for four centuries, was re-taken by the French.

News of the disastrous English defeat at Castillon in the summer of 1453 probably helped to trigger Henry's sudden and total mental collapse while at Clarendon, a royal hunting lodge near Salisbury. Henry was in a catatonic state, unable to respond or even move, until Christmas 1454. Even after his apparent recovery – for which Henry ordered thanks be given to St Edward (probably “the Confessor”, though Henry would have been familiar with Shaftesbury Abbey's St Edward “the Martyr”) – the king was now little more than a puppet. His French queen Margaret of Anjou did her best to defend the interests of her husband and their son, born during Henry's mental paralysis, (and also called Edward). Misogyny and francophobia meant that she would never be acceptable as a regent, and the struggle for power between Margaret's Lancastrian supporters and their Yorkist rivals was finally resolved in favour of the Yorkist Edward IV after one of the bloodiest battles ever on English soil at Towton, fought in a snowstorm in March 1461.

Henry evaded capture until 1465 while his wife and son made their way to France. The sources are vague about Henry's movements on the run, but there is a strong local legend in Cumbria that Henry was sheltered at Muncaster Castle, near Ravenglass (below, photo by Paul Hudson) As a token of gratitude Henry is said to have given owner Sir John Pennington a decorated glass drinking bowl, known henceforth as the ‘Luck of Muncaster’. The luck seems to have held as the castle is still in the Pennington family.



In 1470 a split in the Yorkist ranks saw the captive Henry released from the Tower and restored as king. “A stuffed woolsack lifted by his ears, a shadow on the wall, bandied about as in a game of blind-man’s buff, submissive and mute ... like a crowned calf” according to a Burgundian chronicler. Margaret returned from France via Weymouth with Prince Edward, only to be captured on 04 May 1471 at the Battle of Tewkesbury where her son was killed. There was now no incentive for Edward IV to keep Henry alive. Previously his murder would have created a martyr, with a much more capable heir to replace him.

In death Henry became the subject of a cult. Pilgrimages were made to his Windsor burial place and 368 miracles were claimed on his behalf. Wearing his red velvet hat, kept by his tomb, was a sure-fire cure for migraines. The Tudor kings Henry VII and Henry VIII had a vested interest in playing up the saintliness of their otherwise feckless kinsman. The consolation of canonisation was, however, denied Henry VI by the intervention of the English Reformation in the 1530s, when Thomas Cromwell would have confiscated the hat as a superstitious relic. While Henry was largely forgotten, Joan of Arc became a French national hero and a saint in 1920.

Note 1: Helen Jouahri will talk about *The Surprising Joan of Arc* at 2.30p.m. on Tuesday 07 February 2023 at Gold Hill Museum

Note 2: James Ross: *Henry VI – A Good, Simple and Innocent Man* p.34 (Penguin Monarchs Series)

James is Reader in Late Medieval History at the University of Winchester, FRHistS, FHEA, and an Honorary Fellow of the Historical Association. He will deliver his verdict on Henry VI at 2.30p.m. on Tuesday 10 January 2023 at Gold Hill Museum

Teulon Porter Memorial Lectures 2022 & 2023.

Dr Amy Frost's erudition and enthusiasm shone through an outstanding talk on *William Beckford after Fonthill – Building and Collecting in Bath*. An audience at the Town Hall of over 60, of whom 24 were non-members, heard how Amy has spent three years in the Bodleian Library trawling through Beckford's later correspondence, linking sketches and descriptions with surviving artefacts and paintings of interiors at Beckford's Tower, to show his meticulous planning and positioning of furniture and objets d'art.



This 1845 painting of objects in Beckford's collection was one of several commissioned by his daughter after his death. The higgledy-piggledy arrangement would have been anathema to her father. Amy has also identified artworks purchased in the late 1830s with the proceeds of Beckford's £12,803 compensation payments from the British taxpayer, for 660 slaves owned on Jamaican sugar plantations. As Amy said, you have to add three noughts to this figure to translate it into current values.

I am delighted to report that Amy has agreed to return in January 2024 to share the information that she said would fill another lecture. She will also be able to report on the progress of the Beckford's Tower Redevelopment Project, the result of a successful Heritage Lottery Fund Bid, which officially she couldn't divulge to us. Members of the S&DHS have contributed to the associated Beckford's Tower Appeal Fund by supporting the 2022 Summer Outing, and via a donation made to reflect Sidney Blackmore's expenses in staging his superb *Fonthill Fever* exhibition at Gold Hill Museum. Items from Beckford's Tower and Museum, such as Michael Bishop's magnificent scale model of Fonthill Abbey (below) were loaned courtesy of Curator Amy.



The 2023 Teulon Porter Memorial Lecture will be given at Shaftesbury Town Hall at 7.30p.m. on Tuesday 03 October by Professor James G. Clark of Exeter University. Professor Clark is the author of *The Dissolution of the Monasteries – A New History* published in 2021, described by reviewers as “a landmark book ... exceptional ... a stunning achievement ... establishes Professor Clark as the leading authority on Tudor monasticism and the experience of its end.” Shaftesbury Abbey features eleven times in the index and will doubtless be central to Professor Clark’s talk.

Articles elsewhere in this issue of the *Byzant* relate to forthcoming Tuesday afternoon lectures on 10 January, 07 February and 07 March 2023. Each will be previewed during the preceding month at <https://goldhillmuseum.org.uk/news-blog/>

Brenda Vervaine Innes – died on 20th January 2022 **aged 89 years.**

Although Brenda was an incomer to Shaftesbury, she probably knew more than anyone else about the history of our town. She grew up in Kent on the fringes of London, but when, in 1984, she and her late husband retired to their house on Gold Hill, she quickly fell in love with the surroundings. She meticulously researched the ancient development of the settlement, and this led to her publishing ‘*Shaftesbury, An Illustrated History*’ (The Dovecote Press: ISBN 1874336059) in 1992 that is still the most comprehensive reference work on the origins and growth of our settlement.

Brenda and her husband both became dedicated supporters of the Town Museum (as it was called then), constantly collecting and researching artefacts and documents, working both in the museum and in their own home. So much of their life was tied up in these endeavours that their home became a sort of unofficial annex to the museum with objects and documents passing between the two and often causing some confusion for the other volunteers.

Brenda also had a great interest in local current affairs and particularly the conservation of the town and the countryside. She was an active member of the local Civic Society, spending many hours assessing planning applications and formulating objections to inappropriate developments. She also worked closely with the Swans Trust in publishing the *'Exploring Shaftesbury'*, walks and information leaflets, in 2004, and was a popular leader of guided town walks.

After the death of her husband, she would often wander into the museum to chat to both stewards and visitors and was always willing to step in at the last minute if a steward was ill.

More recently, as her health declined, she gradually retired from public life and became somewhat of a recluse. None the less her passing is a sad loss, as a person who did so much for the community in which we live.

With thanks to John Parker



Brenda's legacy, apart from her writings on Shaftesbury's history, includes this elegant bench opposite the front door of her cottage on Gold Hill, a memorial to her husband Tony.

Shaftesbury in the news 100 years ago in 1922.

Mayor's treat to the Workhouse inmates.

At Xmas time, the town had rallied to support the unfortunate inmates of the workhouse and many contributions were made, which included Rabbits from Lady Stalbridge, mince pies from Mr Coaker, coloured paper from Mr Pearson and holly from Mr Davidge.

The Mayor, Mr C.J.Stretch, and the Mayoress, organised a tea party and afterwards entertainment was provided by Mr Coaker's glee party. Tobacco and chocolates were distributed by the Mayoress & old-fashioned songs were sung, which were greatly appreciated by the old folks. A Devonshire reading was one of Mr Coaker's best items, which was rendered so well by a blind musician, that the old folks laughed till they could laugh no longer.

The mayor expressed his pleasure at seeing the old folks so happy. He said that, in going over the workhouse, he had been pleased to find everything in a good clean condition, adding his compliments to the master & matron.

Moving on to a report headed 'War Trophies'.

The council's General Purposes committee recommended that, if Dr Harris would consent, both the old Russian gun and the German gun should be placed on Castle Hill.



THE PARK WALK, SHAFTESBURY

30379

Lectures & events in 2023.

Tuesday 10th January at 2.30pm at Gold Hill Museum.

Henry VI – England's worst King?

Dr James Ross, FRHistS, FHEA. Reader in late medieval history at the university of Winchester. Author of the volume on Henry VI in the Penguin Monarchs series, James was awarded an Honorary Fellowship by the Historical Association in 2021 in recognition of his commitment to public lectures.

Tuesday 7th February at 2.30pm at Gold Hill Museum.

The surprising Joan of Arc.

Helen Jouahri, former head of modern languages at South Wilts Grammar School in Salisbury, and long time exponent of French language and history. Her talk on Joan of Arc, contemporary to Henry VI, aims to examine some of the surprises in this French saint's life.

Tuesday 7th March at 2.30pm at Gold Hill Museum.

London and Dorset: A shared History in Construction.

Sir John Stuttard, former Lord Mayor of the City of London, and current President of the Shaftesbury & District Historical Society.

Tuesday 4th April at 2.30pm at Gold Hill Museum.

Escape or Die–The flight of Charles II after the battle of Worcester in 1651.

Paul Cordle was a regular officer in the Grenadier Guards, first raised in 1656 by the exiled King Charles II. He traces the narrow escapes of the refugee King as he fled via Dorset and Wiltshire to the south coast and a boat to France.

Tuesday 6th June.

Annual outing.

Details to be announced.

Tuesday 22nd August at 2.30pm at Gold Hill Museum.

2023 Annual General Meeting, followed by Garden Party.

Tuesday 3rd October at 7.30pm at Shaftesbury Town Hall.

The 2023 Teulon Porter Lecture.

Professor James G Clark of Exeter University. Professor Clark is the author of *'Dissolution of the Monasteries-A new History'*, published in 2021.

Printer's advertisement?

Shaftesbury & District Historical Society.

Gold Hill Museum, Gold Hill, Shaftesbury, Dorset, SP7 8JW.

Telephone 01747 852157.

Email: enquiries@goldhillmuseum.org.uk

Website: <https://goldhillmuseum.org.uk>