

2023-2024



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?

You will see in our calendar for 2024, we have scheduled a revived Tea and Talks for 6th February, when up to four members will give presentations of 10 to 15 minutes each in a relaxed and informal atmosphere.

If anyone would like to contribute to a Tea and Talks in the spring of 2025, probably in April, please contact Ian Kellett at Gold Hill Museum.

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

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Chairman's chat 2023.

As another year draws to an end, we can reflect on a good season for the museum with visitor numbers and shop sales up on the previous season although visitor numbers have not yet recovered their pre-Covid level.

Our stewards welcomed over 18,600 visitors, many of whom acknowledged the volunteers' friendliness and knowledge with complimentary comments in the Visitors' Book. Our new shop manager Jeanette Hardiman, who has also become a trustee, has already started to make a difference in the shop with sales up by 30% on the previous season.

Last year I mentioned the flat roof leak, the source of which could not be found. I'm delighted to report that thanks to Phil Hack, our treasurer's husband, it has been successfully repaired; I say that with confidence because this autumn's prolonged precipitation has been a real test. We're doubly grateful to Phil because he gave his time as a volunteer.

Now for something quite exciting: having lost yet another tenant to the current economic decline, the trustees have taken the decision to extend the museum into the rental premises which will allow us to expand the shop and, with a bit of juggling of rooms, gain more storage space for both archives and artefacts. There's the small obstacle of listed planning consent to clear first but we're fairly confident of doing so. This will also afford greater frontage to announce the museum's presence. We don't yet know the full cost of the project, but we'll be applying for grant funding. However, if you would like to make a contribution, we'd be most grateful.

This year saw the production of a museum souvenir guide; the article on page 33 gives an indication of the work that went into it. I'm very grateful to the whole team but, speaking as someone who has been trying to get this project off the ground for about ten years, I must express my particular gratitude to Rupert who, unprompted, turned it into a reality.

A year ago, the society rescued boxes and boxes of archives from Brenda Innes's house, for which we extend our thanks to the beneficiaries of her will, and Heather Blake has put her all into sorting through the contents. Much of it had to be discarded but there was still a treasure trove of original photos, interesting documents and even more interesting notes from Brenda, the author of *Shaftesbury, an Illustrated History*.

Heather also put together a well-researched temporary display about the Peach family; it attracted much interest, and her article on page 24 gives an indication of the depth of her research.

If you were among the many who attended this season's Teulon Porter Memorial lecture, you will know how fascinating Professor James Clark's take on the dissolution of the monasteries is. I, for one, am grateful to him for providing a summary of his thesis, which you will find on page 13, as I certainly don't retain information as well as I used to.

I well remember the report, in the local press, of the theft of the replica Alfred Jewel, along with several other precious artefacts, from our museum in the 1980s. I remember the shock I felt even though I had very little interest in history at the time; it certainly marked a low point in this society's life and resulted in a tightening up of security. Thanks to Dave, you can read all about both the original jewel and our replica on page 41. As I sit in the museum office writing this, the lovely longcase clock on the landing between rooms 4 and 6 has just struck the hour. We are most grateful to Phil Proctor for his gift and to Jonathan Betts for his valuation and confirmation of its authenticity and for his repair to the slightly bent pendulum. Ian has provided an informative article on page 36 as well as the story surrounding a rather atmospheric painting, donated by Jules Cross, on page 44.

I do hope you enjoy reading this year's Byzant. Don't forget, we welcome articles from members if you would like to contribute to future editions. As ever we're grateful to you, our members, for your continued support.

Wishing you a merry Christmas and a happy and healthy new year.

Elaine Barratt.

December 2023.

100 years ago – 1923.

September – Cattle Yard Scene – Two Drovers in a fight.

James Wright of St. James' Shaftesbury, a Drover, was summoned for assaulting and beating William Arnold, another Drover, and there was a counter-summons against Arnold, alleging a similar offence.

Arnold said that he worked in the market yard on Saturdays and had to clear and lock up at the end of the day. Wright also worked there. Wright wanted the paste brush to paste labels on cattle and when he couldn't find it, he started swearing and fighting. Arnold said that Wright had hit him in the face, and it had taken him 5 minutes to get Wright off him during the ensuing struggle. He said that he had taken the brush to where he was ordered to take it but did not tell Wright where it was. He denied striking the first blow or a follow-up blow, and each man called the other a liar. Arnold said that 'At the age of 67, my fighting days are over'. Mr Woodham, a farmer from Donhead St. Mary who had intervened, said that Arnold had struck Wright while he was taking his coat off and commented that it was a cowardly affair and that, instead of parting them, he should have let them have it out and settle it. In hiding the brush Arnold was accused of provoking Wright. Both men were bound over to keep the peace for 12 months in the sum of £5 (£250 today) and ordered to pay 10/6d (£26) costs.

November - Dangerous Gold Hill trees.

A petition was submitted by residents of Gold Hill calling attention to the trees there, which were a danger to their homes and lives. It was stated that during the recent storm residents there had been alarmed at the swaying of one or two of the trees, which they were afraid would crash over on their houses. The matter was referred to the General Purposes Committee for immediate attention.

November - 'Parks' for motor vehicles.

The highways committee, having considered the question of providing suitable sites for the parking of motor cars, recommended that, in addition to the Marketplace, where cars could always be parked by arrangement, the wider part of Bimport Street and Abbey Walk be used for the purpose. Mr Coaker said that Bimport Street had been described as one of the worst death-traps, as children dashed out of school and straight into the road. He believed that children had been killed there.

**Shaftesbury and District Historical Society Annual
General Meeting held in the Garden Room, Gold Hill
Museum, on 22nd August 2023 at 2:30pm.
(Charitable Incorporated Organisation no: 1156273).**

Present: Elaine Barratt, Sir John Stuttard, Sheena Commons, Dave Hardiman, Liz Hack, Jeanette Hardiman, Tony Martin, Rupert Tapper, Cath Toogood (minutes).

There were twenty (20) members in attendance.

Apologies: Mr and Mrs Atwood, Alan Carter, Mr and Mrs Martin Cross, John and Gill Hunt, Ian Kellett, David Silverside, Mark Smith, Ken and Tricia Steven, Jill Sumner.

Chairpersons Welcome: Elaine opened the meeting, commenting on a lovely sunny day and thanking all for their attendance.

Minutes: of the previous Annual General Meeting held on Tuesday 22nd August 2022 were agreed as a true representation of the meeting. They were signed and dated by Elaine.

Election of Trustees: there was no contested election, as there were three candidates for a theoretical maximum of seven vacancies. Those seeking re-election are Dave Hardiman and Rupert Tapper, and election, Jeanette Hardiman. The three candidates were **proposed by Tony Martin, seconded by Linda Wilton. All duly elected.**

Chairperson's Report to include consideration of the Trustees' Annual report for 2022/23.

Last year saw us finally back to normal after the Covid restrictions of the previous two years. Our wonderful volunteer stewards, without whom we couldn't keep this museum open, welcomed 14,999 visitors, 25% down on what had become our normal 20,000 per season but, happily, they were generous with their donations.

What I termed last year as the Covid effect, in that some of the stewards no longer wanted to commit to a regular shift, set in with a vengeance however, and it was the hardest season I've ever experienced in filling the 42 shifts per week. As always, some stewards did extra shifts when required and we opened every day as advertised.

I decided against opening for the Snowdrop Festival which has ceased to coincide with the school half term but, at their request, I ensured that the garden was accessible every day as part of the Snowdrop Trail. The garden team is dwindling, and we need more to join, to spread the load. They work to keep the garden looking good and I extend huge thanks to Barbara Perry who has toiled almost single-handedly throughout the year; she accompanied me to the Shaftesbury in Bloom celebration where we were presented with a Britain in Bloom, south and south-east region, Certificate of Excellence.

We had a very successful Winter lecture programme, also back to normal after previous Covid restrictions and my thanks go to Ian who puts a great deal of effort into sourcing and, indeed, vetting speakers. The summer outing, a privilege visit to Beckford's Tower and Museum in Bath, for the very few who attended, was very interesting. The society's thanks go to the three members who, at the last minute, were unable to join us but donated their fees, making the visit financially viable.

Ian also puts much of his time into blogging on the website, always alert for significant anniversaries to maintain interest, and into keeping the information updated. We offer thanks to Rob Frost, our webmaster, who continues to support Ian at very reasonable rates when he needs to charge. We are also indebted to Andy Hargreaves for sorting out our occasional IT problems pro bono.

Keri Jones, our Alfred community radio founder and driving force, publicises the museum at every opportunity for which we are most grateful.

This, the Anna McDowell Garden Room, continues to be well used for Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council Adult Learning classes as well as Shaftesbury Fringe performances, a couple of external exhibitions and a few workshops.

Chris Stupples continues regularly to add information to the Shaftesbury Remembers the Great War section of the website.

We are indebted to Cath Toogood who takes the minutes of our committee meetings and produces them within 24 hours. Also, to Chris Coney who counts, balances and banks the takings twice a week, leaving the Treasurer time to concentrate on paying invoices and maintaining the accounts; Liz Hack has done an amazing job as treasurer in this her first year including, I'm delighted to report, finally managing to close our BT account and get a refund of all monies owed. The committee celebrated this last triumph with a glass of champagne at this year's April meeting to which our previous treasurer, who also tried long and hard, was invited.

Talking of our previous treasurer, my thanks go to Linda Wilton who has taken on the role of Office Administrator and runs a fortnightly Family History group as well as continuing to steward.

The teams work well together and are gradually being expanded. Rupert Tapper oversees the archives and answers the many enquiries we receive, and, librarian, Ann Symons works tirelessly with the archive team who had already done an amazing job of sorting and cataloguing when, in the week before Christmas, we finally received boxes, and boxes, of archives gifted to us by the beneficiaries of Brenda Innes' estate; they're still working on those.

Special thanks go to Heather Blake who, during the closed season, put together a fascinating temporary exhibition about the Peach family.

Ann also, with Claire Ryley, runs the very popular reminiscence sessions at the Town Library as part of our Lifelong Learning programme.

Tony Martin is now comfortably in charge of collection care and is working with a small team to sort and catalogue the artefacts in the storeroom.

Sheena Commons could do with some help on display; we've had a couple of attempts at building a team which, for various reasons, have failed. We certainly impressed at least one visitor who couldn't believe how quickly we'd produced a tribute to our late Queen; it was the Platinum Jubilee temporary exhibition with RIP and the date of her death added. I am most grateful to her for taking on membership secretary. She also takes responsibility for most of the documentation required by ACE.

Dave Hardiman has had a busy year, as detailed in his re-election statement, on buildings. He has maintained his enthusiasm for the role and completes all tasks with good humour. He has also taken responsibility for the Byzant newsletter and produced an excellent one at the end of last year.

Mark Smith has had some health problems and has decided not to seek re-election as a trustee although he will continue to steward and to lend a hand in the garden and with buildings for which we are most grateful. I thank him for his input during the last three years, including overseeing the purchase of two new display cases, promised for the end of March but which, due to supply issues and one major hiccup, weren't finally in use until the middle of July. I hope it didn't contribute to his decision to step down.

I'd like to welcome on board Jeanette Hardiman who has already proved her worth in the library and won a Dorset Museum Association Volunteer of the Year Award for it during this, the 2022-23, financial year. She has taken responsibility for the shop with enthusiasm and is keen to expand, and I'm delighted that she agreed to join the committee as a trustee.

For several years I have been trying, without success, to get someone interested in producing a souvenir museum guide. Rupert, as a new trustee, saw the need and initiated the project. Ian brought in Alan Booth without whose expertise, we would have been floundering and, between them, they produced the very professional guide, now on sale in reception at £3.50. My sincere thanks go to Alan who volunteered his services and seemed to enjoy being involved.

We still need more trustees and, under the constitution, could accommodate another four so, if you're interested, or know someone who might be, don't be shy. Come and talk to me about what it entails. Unsurprisingly in the present economic climate, our current tenant who asked for a six- month get out clause in her lease, has had to call it a day and next season will see some changes to the building as we incorporate the rental premises into the museum to give us much needed extra storage space.

We currently rely on around 57 active volunteers to keep Gold Hill Museum open and to provide a community resource; we are so grateful to all of them and to our president, Sir John Stuttard, who is unfailingly supportive.

I also thank you, our members, some of whom are also volunteers, for your support. We are privileged to own and occupy this building in its wonderful location and I'm proud to be a part of it.

Dave Hardiman proposed the report be accepted; Sir John Stuttard seconded. The Chairperson's report accepted.

Treasurers Report to include consideration of the Statement of Accounts for 2022/23.

A copy of the report was given to each person for perusal. Liz reported the income was much the same as before however we did not get some grants expected. Income from Gift Aid was similar to previous years.

Membership Fees for 2023/24: the Trustees have no plans to increase the membership fees in the coming year.

Lectures and Events Programme 2023/24: all members received a programme of events with the AGM notification.

Appointment of Accountants: Liz reported to the meeting that Andrews & Palmer had increased their bill this year for preparing the accounts from £250 up to £528 inc. Vat. Dave Hardiman commented perhaps we should now look around for another firm, Liz said this was in hand. Several firms were mentioned from the floor. Roy Mitchell asked if we were committed to Andrews & Palmer for the coming year, Liz confirmed that we are not.

Elaine reported that she had searched the constitution and could find no requirement to approve their appointment at the AGM. The Treasurer had only received notification of the increased fees within the last two days so the trustees had not had time to make other arrangements but would do so as soon as possible.

Any Other Business: there being no other business the meeting closed at 2:47pm.

100 years ago - 1923.

March – Postman’s 150,000 miles.

An interesting ceremony took place at the Shaftesbury post office under the chairmanship of Mr C H Trowbridge (Supervisor) and the staff, who met to do honour to Mr John Brown, to whom the King had approved the award of the Imperial Service Medal (I.S.M). The Postmaster, Mr J P Pemberton, made the presentation and, as well as the medal, Mr Brown also received a certificate of meritorious service.

He had entered service with the post office in 1883, when conditions of service and pay were vastly different. His pay at the start was 15/- per week (£38 today), rising eventually to 19/- (£48), and without a uniform.

It was estimated that Mr Brown, who had retired through ill health the previous year, had travelled 150,000 miles in the performance of his duties as a postman. He was wished well in his retirement, and it was hoped that he would enjoy the honour now conferred upon him.

Mr Brown was the third postman at Shaftesbury to have been awarded the I.S.M., the others being Mr A Burden and Mr C J

The Dissolution of the Monasteries: Shaftesbury and the South-West

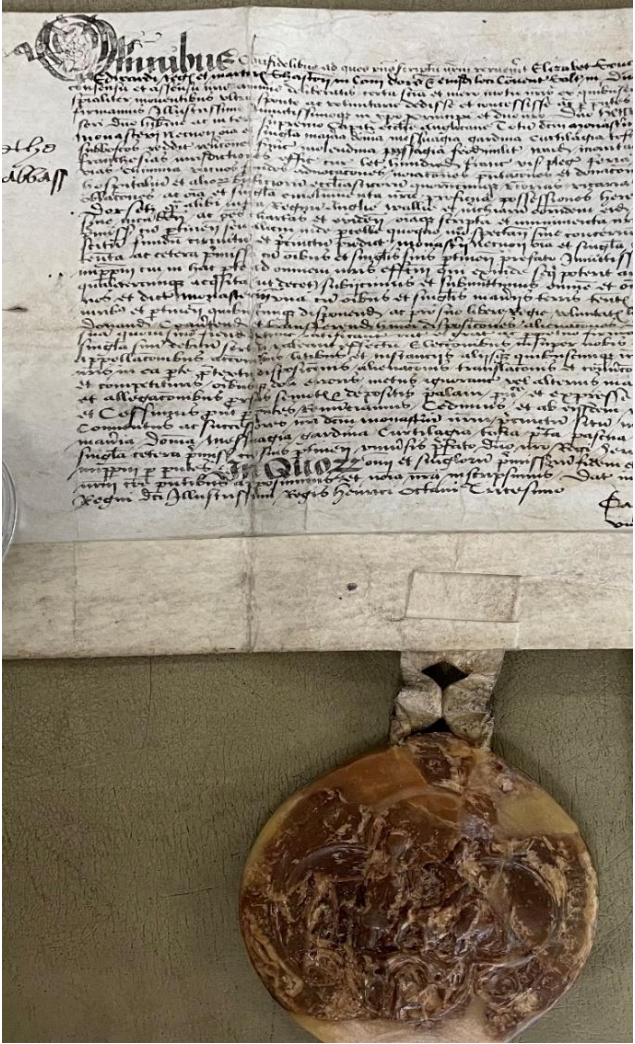
Professor James G. Clark (Exeter University)

Over a hundred members and non-members packed into Shaftesbury Town Hall on Tuesday 03 October to hear James deliver the 2023 Teulon Porter Memorial Lecture. Consistent with his widely acclaimed “Dissolution of the Monasteries: A New History”, first published in 2021, James presented a uniquely new and persuasive interpretation of the Dissolution. James has kindly provided a summary of his talk, together with some of the images he used.

One of the best-preserved examples of the seal of Shaftesbury Abbey is also the last. The sepia-toned wax disc carries the outline of a commanding church with a central tower and a clover-leaf window, transepts and a steeple. The legend is now very worn but ‘nobis’ can still be read, one word from the opening of the Latin hymn for the Virgin Mary which once surrounded the image, ‘Hail, ocean star, queen of heaven and our hope’; a signal of the abbey’s special identity as a community of women vowed to the service of God.

This seal [image copyright the National Archives] was the last (at least officially) to be made because it was fixed to the document which spelled the end of the monastery. It was the deed by which the abbess and convent of Shaftesbury surrendered the abbey and all of its properties into the custody of the crown on 23 March 1539. The modest rectangle of parchment (the lower edge folded to take the tongue that bore the seal) was, to all intents and purposes, the dissolution of the monastery. It was the instrument by which the abbey was extinguished as a legal entity.

There was a brevity, clarity and finality to its phrasing: the abbess and convent conveyed to the king each and every part and parcel of their institution all buildings, lands, churches and the rights arising from them such as appointments, pensions and exemptions from fiscal levies.



The seal of Shaftesbury Abbey.

There were just two signatories: John Tregonwell (d. 1565), a West Country gentleman given the royal commission to receive the surrender, and the abbess, Elizabeth Zouche, who took up the pen and signed for herself. After this, not only was the collateral of Shaftesbury Abbey at the king's command, so were the women themselves. As soon as the seal was pressed into place, the matrix that made it was given up to the royal commissioners who were present to orchestrate the process. Then, or soon after, it was broken to be sure it could not be used again.

It can hardly have failed to have been a moment of drama. While only the abbess and the commissioner signed, there were many witnesses. They were watched by no fewer than fifty-four sisters of Shaftesbury; the youngest of them no more than eighteen; the oldest of them seeing the extinction of the only life they had known for upwards of forty years. What followed was more prosaic and may have left the women feeling confused and unsettled: almost certainly they were advised to return to their familiar quarters inside the convent until practical arrangements could be made for their departure. When it happened, it may be that they peeled away in ones and twos over the course of the coming weeks as and when cash, clothing and appropriate company could be summoned to see them out of the precinct.

The dissolution of Shaftesbury occurred as the climax to a wave of closures which had advanced across the West Country counties since the last week of January. In scarcely eight weeks the monasteries of men and women from Cornwall to Wiltshire were all but swept away. Only the Augustinian canons of St John's Hospital in the city of Exeter continued into 1540, the last year of any monasteries in England.

The last in the sequence to surrender was also an abbey of women, Wilton, just two days after Shaftesbury.

The West's monasteries had withstood the first phases of Henry VIII's interventions in church affairs. A handful of meagre foundations had been closed under the terms of the statute of 1536, which targeted those whose annual income was below £200. But two which should have joined them – Polsloe near Exeter and Bindon near Wool – had managed to mobilise their patrons to pay for royal permission to remain.

What caused the sudden change in their fortunes three years on at the turn of 1539 was a growing suspicion in government that they were beginning to take undue advantage of their position, and to plan the conveyance of their properties and rights through their network of supporters in the region beyond the gaze of the crown. Commissioner Tregonwell had already warned his Westminster masters that he was sure they were tying up their portfolios this way and that. By the New Year, it seems he was under instruction to act without delay and to pressure them, one by one, to give themselves up.

Until then, there was nothing inevitable about the end of the West Country abbeys. At the accession of Henry VIII (1509), the greater – that is to say, wealthier, larger – abbeys and priories in the kingdom were flourishing. Riding the peaks and troughs of the Tudor economy remarkably well, they could commit to new schemes of building work and to the entry of new recruits. Even in the shadow of the king's break with the Roman papacy (1534), it appears the monastic population was rising. This prosperity was evident in the monasteries of the southwestern counties: costly architectural additions were committed to at Cerne, Milton and Sherborne. Schemes of stained glass were seen in the windows of the women's priories at Polsloe and Kington St Michael (Wiltshire).



Commissioner Tregonwell.

[Milton Abbey memorial brass, photo copyright Paul Ravenscroft]

These almost certainly reflected the continuing attachment of generous patrons. The religion of monasteries was not falling out of fashion. Perhaps for Tudor worshippers increasingly it was seen to meet particular spiritual needs: abbeys and priories appealed as settings for funeral observances, burial and perpetual family commemorations. The number, quality and age of their panel paintings, statuary and relics lent them the allure of rare spiritual power. For a society which still accepted the imperative for sacred intercession, their place in personal religious practice could scarcely be questioned.

Early in Henry VIII's reign it became apparent to the leadership of the Church that the king would look to extend the crown's oversight of their affairs. For the monasteries, especially those larger and wealthier foundations which knew well the benefits of lay patronage, this was not unwelcome. Above all, the greater abbeys valued their ancient lineage and their independence, and their understanding of their own past history advised them that more often than not the English crown had come to their aid against a grasping nobility and a needy papacy. When in the 1520s Henry and his first Chief Minister, Cardinal Wolsey (d. 1530), began to take an interest in their administration and their appointments, they did not erupt in conflict but instead aimed to build a collaborative relationship. The hierarchy of monastic houses and their heads hoped to secure positions of influence in the Henrician regime.

It was for this reason that almost without exception they supported the king's divorce from Katharine of Aragon in 1533 and the break with Rome in the following year. In 1534, for the most part, monastic England was confident it could prosper under the king's new headship of the church. The first measures that followed did not unduly unsettle them. The nationwide audit of Church wealth – known as *Valor ecclesiasticus* - carried out in the spring of 1535 was not resisted. Heads of monasteries in the south and west of England helped to complete the returns. The royal visitation of all religious houses that came hard on the heels of the audit targeted especially the smallest and poorest foundations and although the greater abbeys and priories did not relish receiving instruction from Crown Commissioners, they were sympathetic to the aim to rationalise and reform their institutions. Again, they judged that cooperation with the crown's schemes would bring them a reward in time.

When a bill for the poorest monasteries to be closed passed through parliament in March 1536, members of the greater abbeys and priories were still inclined to see it as the working through of a policy they had come to trust.

Six months later the midland and northern counties rose in rebellion – the movement now known as the Pilgrimage of Grace – and Church policymaking was paused. King Henry himself seems to have suffered something of a change of heart. Now, he allowed monasteries slated for closure to secure a licence to continue; and when Queen Jane Seymour died in October 1537, Henry thought to commemorate her in a new foundation. The remaining rump of abbeys did not anticipate any change in their position.

The greatest threat to the monastic tradition in the wake of the closure of poor foundations and the popular rebellion that followed was the waning of support for the convents of the friars, spread wide, if thinly across England and Wales.

By the winter of 1537-38, it would appear that many neighbourhoods were wary of continuing their investment in these houses: why keep them going if the government would now, or in the near future, demand that they be rationalised? When the crown's appointed visitor began a circuit of the network in the spring of 1538, he found most were ready and very willing to give up. Friaries in the southwest were all standing empty by the turn of the year.

The collapse of the friaries alone did not convince the remaining monasteries that future crown policy might threaten them. Four years after the king claimed headship of the church, they were suffering the attrition of constant scrutiny of and interference in their affairs. Royal demands for cash payments and their choicest properties undermined their solvency. By the end of 1538, there are hints and gestures in the surviving documents that abbeys and priories in the southwest were beginning to place property in the custody of their local clients. Tregonwell's suspicions were not without foundation.

It was not only these fears that fuelled the sudden acceleration seen in 1539. King Henry's anxiety for his Church Headship was now acute. Conspiracies, or at least suggestions of them, led to the trial and execution of three Benedictine abbots.

As the year turned, many of the greatest abbeys gave themselves up to the king. By the spring of 1540 only a handful remained.

It is difficult to see the dissolution of all monasteries as a policy planned from the outset of the Break with Rome, implemented systematically and with a large measure of success. The end of the observant life of monasteries was the definitive achievement of the crown's interventions in these years. Yet it delivered few other enduring benefits to the king. Of course, the royal estate was enlarged as the manors, urban tenements and church benefices long in the possession of monastic foundations were now taken in. But Henry was obliged to grant the bulk of them out again to reward his commissioners and to buy the compliance, if not the heartfelt support, of the kingdom's most influential families. Both benefited in the south and west. Tregonwell who had taken the surrender of so many monasteries in the spring of 1539 was granted Milton Abbey. Other grants in the region went to Baron Russell (d. 1555), President of the Council of the West and Edward Seymour (d. 1552), brother of the late Queen Jane, now earl of Hertford. In fact, the king's determination to realise an immediate return from the property windfall saw families of lower, local profile also secure such grants. Sir Thomas Arundell (d. 1552) took the site of Shaftesbury Abbey and some of its outlying properties such as the manor of Fontmell Magna.

Before the surrender of the women, he had been their Chief Steward, a role which gave him oversight of the administration of the abbey's property portfolio. The dissolution brought no discontinuity to his position; on the contrary it lent it a degree of permanence.

By contrast, for the former professed members of the monasteries and their staff closure brought a profound change to their lives.

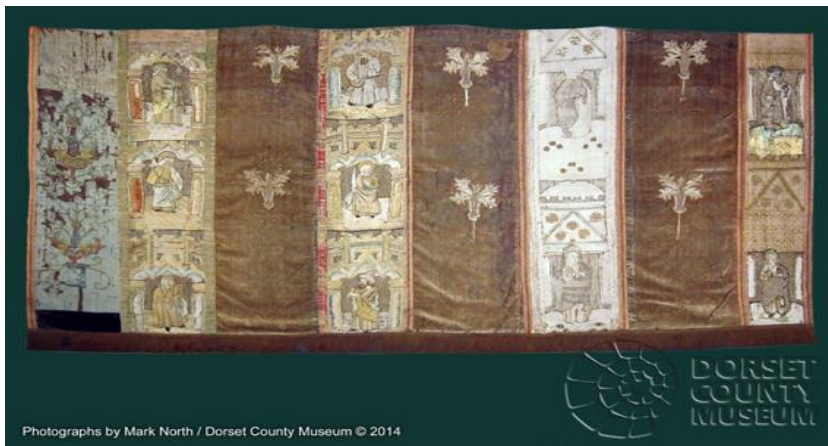
Women religious were released from their convents but not from their vows, preventing them from pursuing marriage as a means of support. The restriction remained in place until King Henry's death.

They received pensions the value of which was set by the length of their monastic careers. Longer-serving women were awarded a pension of around £6 per annum, the equivalent of the stipend of a beneficed priest at the lower end of their scale. There is no doubt that some of the women looked to their family network for a home and further financial aid but perhaps just as many lived independently alone or alongside others they had known as nuns. Two of the women of Shaftesbury appear to have shared the same household in the town early in the reign of Elizabeth. Generally, they are not easily traced beyond the record of their pension payments but just occasionally their wills have survived. From these we know that Margaret Russell, a former nun at Tarrant, was buried at Bere in 1568 and twenty years

later Jane Forget, who had been at Wilton Abbey, was buried at Mere (Wiltshire).

Monastic men, former monks and friars, are often more traceable because many of them secured licences to serve as priests and took up Church appointments. Those from the monasteries and friaries in the southwest counties can be found as parish incumbents and chantry priests in villages and towns close by their old foundations. Dorset's Benedictines were spread evenly across the county, some still serving village congregations until late into the reign of Elizabeth.

If the men and women of monastic England were still visible in their neighbourhood so too was much of the fabric of their old foundations. Recent research has revealed how many fixtures, fittings and possessions of these houses were recovered and re-used. Vestments were taken into parish churches to be used just as before, at least until the end of the sixteenth century. The medieval altar frontal preserved at Holy Rood Church, Wool – now displayed at Dorset County Museum [below] - may well have been retrieved from Bindon Abbey.



Books were also preserved, and the liturgical calendars made for monastery worship now guided the family devotions of private Tudor households. Indeed, it would not be an overstatement to suggest that in Henry VIII's final years, and even later, much of the old monastic tradition was still to be seen on local horizons. The principal buildings still stood; some of them remained places of worship. In many parish churches the celebrant at the Sunday Mass was a priest who had begun his career living under vows; and he and his church were dressed, at least in part from the sacristy and vestry of a former monastery. It is a fitting marker of how much was unchanged from these years of reformation that at the last King Henry himself was surrounded by the old monastic world. When he died in January 1547 his coffin was first placed at Syon Abbey, which as a wealthy, royal foundation was a symbol of the age-old ties of the crown to the monastic tradition.



'Absorbing
and formidable.'
Diarmaid MacCulloch,
LRB

The

'The fullest account
of the Dissolution
ever written.'
Eamon Duffy, *Tablet*

DISSOLUTION
of the
MONASTERIES
A New History

JAMES G. CLARK



Discovering the Peach family.

In 1983 (three years after moving to Shaftesbury, writes Heather Blake), I bought a book from Harding's bookshop named 'A Dorset Camera 1855-1914' by David Burnett. Towards the front was a photo of Peach's Tobacco Stores & Toilet Saloon in Shaftesbury 1895. The black and white photo of people gathered around the shop with their buckets and milk churns has always intrigued me. What was it all about? Who was in the photo? Who were those two little girls in the front surrounded by boys and men?

Fig 1.



Forty years on, I was sorting and cataloguing a box of donated personal items for the archives in Gold Hill museum when I came across two wonderful Victorian photos. One was a studio photograph of an elderly gentleman (**Fig 2**) and the other was of the same man and his family posing outside against a wall (**Fig 3**).

On the back of the family photo someone had written 'Peach' and 'Mrs Hussey in front'. I began to wonder if this family were anything to do with the photograph in **Fig 1**. And so began my interest in the Peach family and the context of the photographs starting with the first photo in **Fig 1**.



Fig 2. Walter Peach.



Fig 3. Three generations of the Peach family (about 1894).

The 1891 census gave the first insight on the family as entries for 11 Salisbury Street describe the family in the photo **Fig 3** as Walter and Caroline (seated) and their three sons William (2nd left), Sidney (1st right) and Harry (2nd right) standing, and their daughter Mary also in the back row. Next door in No 9 Salisbury Street lived Walter's eldest son John (1st left on back row) with his wife Susan (seated) and daughter Hilda (aged 1). It states that John had a barber's shop. This was indeed the Peach's saloon of the first photo (**Fig 1**). All the ages recorded matched the apparent ages of persons in the photos. In 1892 John and Susan had another daughter Margaret Rosina who is sitting next to her sister on the ground in the photograph which was taken a few years after the census information.

We are fortunate that there is a wealth of information available to find out about life in Shaftesbury at these times. There were several photographers actively recording street life, shops and families, and the Peach family appear on several photos in the early 20th century. With census information, Kelly's directories, Western Gazette archives and various artefacts in the museum and additional information from living relatives and David Lloyd of Gillingham Museum, it has been possible to find out quite a lot about this seemingly ordinary but rather special family.

Walter comes to Shaftesbury.

Life in Dorset in the mid-19th century was very tough for ordinary people. Walter Peach (1832-1901) was born into a typically large family of labourers in Beaminster. He moved to Shaftesbury in 1862 with his widowed mother possibly to join a branch of his family already living in Cann. He married Caroline Sims from Butts Mead the next year. They started married life at the top of Gold Hill in a tiny cottage where they stayed for some 20 years. During this period, they had 7 children of whom 5 survived past infancy. The eldest was John. Walter worked as a porter and Caroline was a seamstress. The children appeared to have attended Holy Trinity school.

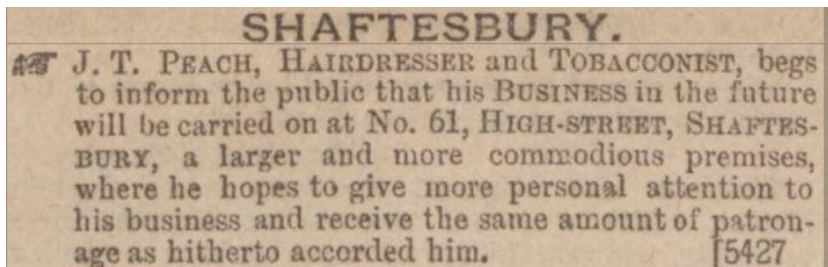
By 1891 they had literally moved up in the world to 11 Salisbury St which was altogether a different world from Gold Hill, with bustling shops and cleaner streets and houses. The census describes a busy family with Walter now being a cowman and his various offspring learning the barber trade no doubt from their brother John next door in No 9. Mary was a seamstress like her mother. It was around this era (About 1894) when they would have had the family photo (**Fig 3**) taken probably at the back of their cottages in Salisbury St. The three adult sons sported fine moustaches and the two little girls in front were John and Susan's girls – Hilda (later to be Mrs Hussey) and Margaret Rosina.

These two little girls were pictured in the photo of 1895 outside Mr Peach's saloon (**Fig 1**) wearing warm clothes and hats possibly made by their grandmother or aunty Mary. One of the girls is looking back at her father John holding the water tap and bucket in the middle of the photo. The winter of 1895 is well documented in Shaftesbury as having experienced a Beast from the East in the spring. For nearly three weeks the town froze over and water pipes seized up except John Peach's shop tap. This tap lay deep underground and he supplied his neighbours with water regularly over this period. Not only was he generous and kind, but it would have been extremely cold and arduous filling all those buckets several times a day. The townsfolk wanted to thank him and made a collection which he would not accept for himself. Instead, a bench was made at Boyne Mead (a local beauty spot at that time) and a brass plaque was made to thank John Peach. Whilst the seat has long since perished the brass plaque is in the Gold Hill museum artefacts collection.



This was an early example of John's philanthropic nature. At this time in Shaftesbury, the Congregational Church in Muston's Lane was thriving. John and his brother William were active members of the church throughout their lives. The Western Gazette annually reported on the November Bonfire Carnival held in Shaftesbury which was a grand affair and the money raised was given to the Westminster Memorial hospital. John Peach and his brothers, and later his children, were major players in making this a success every year.

In 1896 John moved round the corner to 61 High St to larger premises. The following appeared in the Western Gazette.



The museum archive holds another photograph of John outside his High St. shop (**Fig 4**) with his two brothers William and Harry (without moustache) and the two girls Hilda and Margaret R being now a little older.

The turn of the century brought many changes to their lives. Sadly, Walter died in 1901 and Harry (the youngest son pictured in **Fig 4**) died too in 1902. However, William and Sidney both married and John and Susan had another daughter Doris in 1902.

Sidney moved to Gillingham and set up his own barber's shop (**Fig 5**) and had a successful business. His widowed mother Caroline went to live with him until her death in 1913. Like his brothers, Sidney and his family took an active part in supporting and galvanising the carnival to support the local hospital. He was a volunteer barber in Station Rd and Red cross volunteer during the period of WW1.

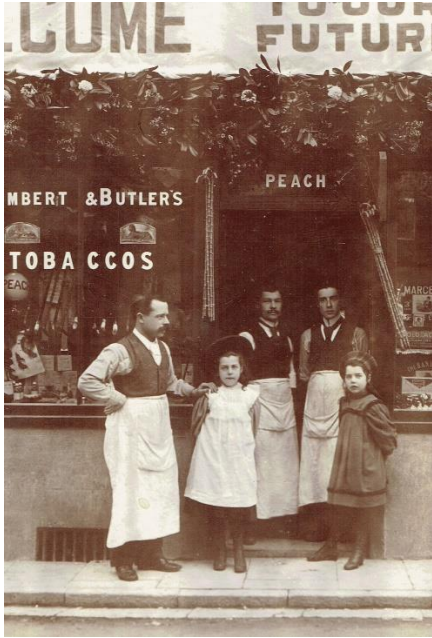


Fig 4.



Fig 5.

Sidney's son Reginald was highly thought of in the town and he was a great supporter of local bands, playing in Gillingham, Shaftesbury and some surrounding villages. He was a volunteer fireman and keen footballer. He sadly died unexpectedly after surgery at the age of 26 in 1930. The Western Gazette obituary describes a well-loved and much mourned young man.

Back in Shaftesbury John and Susan were making a family home after buying their house at No 61 in the great sale of Shaftesbury in 1919 and years later acquiring the premises next door – no 59.

The barbers/ tobacconist shop was very popular. F. C. Long recalls in his 'Tales of Old Shaftesbury' (1979) that 'Shaftesbury has never been quite the same since these two gentlemen passed on. When you went into the shop for a shave or haircut you were laughing from the time you went in until you came out – always someone cracking a joke'.

The 'two gentlemen' were John and his brother William who worked with him until his death in 1936. This shop became a happy home and at the back the Peach's kept a beautiful garden. This was painted for posterity in 1928 and a photo of the painting has been kindly shared by John Peach's grandson John Hillier.



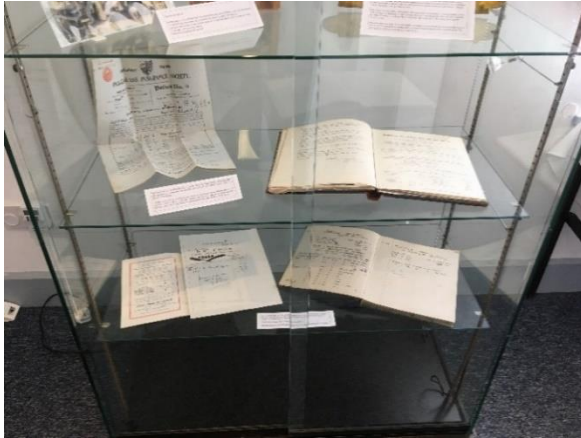
John Peach was an active member of the community in many different ways beyond the carnival involvement. He appeared to be passionate about helping the hospital and formed the Shaftesbury Hospital League and served on its committee.

Like other shopkeepers he had a policy to insure the plate glass in his shop windows with a company formed in the 1920s in Shaftesbury. Later he became involved in its running, eventually becoming a director.

The museum archives hold John Peach's policy from 1927 and the minutes books of directors' meetings in his hand. The next photograph shows the items on display in the recent museum exhibition.

In addition to all this John was a deacon in the Congregational church.

His three girls grew up with the same values. Each becoming St John nurses, with Margaret Rosina being listed in 1933 Kelly's directory as Secretary to St John Ambulance at 59 High Street. Hilda, the eldest daughter married Sidney Hussey in 1917 – hence solving the mystery on the photo **Fig 3**, which had 'Mrs Hussey' written on the back.



Shaftesbury Plate Glass Insurance Society policy and minutes book.

Hilda and Sidney lived in the Corn and Coal merchant's shop opposite Peach's barbers in No 58 High St. In later years the St John ambulance was kept at the back of their shop and the family down the generations took responsibility and drove it when required.....all before the NHS ever existed.

Margaret Rosina never married and stayed at number 59 until her older age. In 1959 she was invested as an officer of the order of St John in recognition of her devoted service. She organised Red Cross parcels for POWs in WW2 and helped in a nursing capacity at the hospital in Guys Marsh during the war. In later years she was a member of the Civic Trust and Chamber of Trade. She died in 1978.

Doris (the youngest) married John Hillier in 1931. He was a premium apprentice for Great Eastern Railway and later a senior manager for British Rail Engineering. The report of their wedding gives more hints of Doris's commitment to others - like her sisters. The St John Ambulance Association formed a guard of honour at the wedding and gifts had been given by the St John Ambulance as well as the Sunday School of the Congregational Church where Doris had been a pupil and teacher. Doris and John Hillier inevitably moved away from Shaftesbury due to Mr Hillier's job, but they came back often, and their son John was born in Shaftesbury.

He kindly sent the photo below of their wedding reception taken in the back garden of the family home at 59/61 High St.

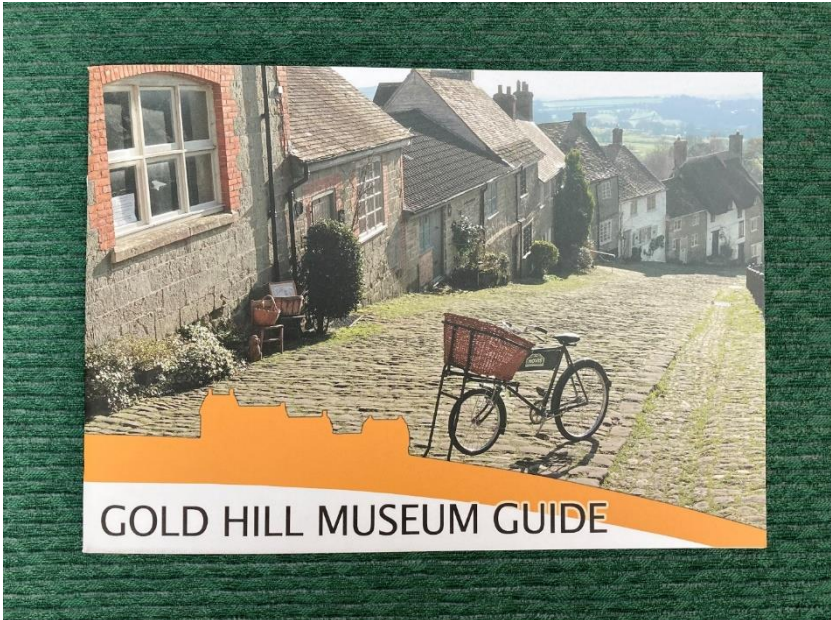


In the 1931 photo we see Doris (nee Peach) & John Hillier. John Peach is holding the cat, and behind him (to the left) is his wife, Susan. Behind John Peach to the right is his daughter, Hilda. Peeping between the bride & groom, we can see Margaret Rosina.

William's son Walter moved to Bournemouth and married starting another dynasty of Peach's. He too ran a barber's shop. John died in 1941 and like others in his family the obituary offered a warm view of his life and service to others. Remembering his dad Walter, moving to Shaftesbury from Beaminster in 1862 – no doubt with very little money, it is a heart-warming story to follow the family he created with Caroline. They clearly enjoyed life, worked hard, cared about the community and treasured their families. It somehow rounds off the story nicely that I first came across the Peach family in 'that' photo from 1895 from a book I had bought in Harding's bookshop. Harding's was of course the same premises at No 59/61 as Peach's barber shop and confectioners acquired after the death of Margaret Rosina.

Heather Blake.

A New Museum Guide.



During the decade or more since reopening in 2011 after its part Heritage Lottery funded transformation, Gold Hill Museum lacked a printed guide worthy of its attractive and instructive displays. A short-term expedient, the loan of a laminated double-sided floor plan, highlighting an artefact in each room, became and remains part of the free offer to visitors. However, for those wishing to understand the provenance of exhibits in more detail, and the history and location of the Museum buildings themselves, there needed to be something more substantial. Between July 2022 and May 2023, a small team, initiated by Rupert Tapper, planned and published a 32 page (including covers) all-colour A5 guide designed to supplement the information in our signage and provide an attractive souvenir to take away and show others. Initially the printers' quote was £884 for 500 copies, but rising prices meant the final cost was £930. In an era of escalating bills, for a free-entry Museum mainly dependent on visitor donations for most of its income, this outlay would represent a considerable gamble.

What if the new guide simply didn't sell? A generous £500 grant towards the cost of publication from the Dorset Museums Association helped to assuage some of these fears. The all-volunteer production team also felt that it was a recognition of their efforts – thank you, DMA.

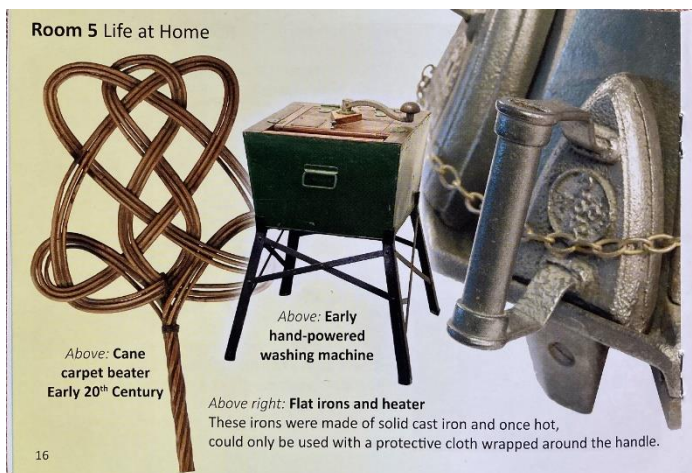
The key member of the team was superb local artist and graphic designer Alan Booth who generously volunteered all his time and expertise to photograph artefacts and use advanced publishing software to produce the pages. He also gave valuable advice about content in order to provide the most user-friendly end-product for a souvenir guide. When the guide was ready for local printers Blackmore Ltd, he was able to send it digitally to them without hiccup. Their helpful allowance of what they called 'overspill' has allowed us to give some complimentary copies to friends and supporters of the Museum.

Originally, (writes Rupert) I had in mind a highly detailed guide, full of background information to provide historical context for the reader / visitor. Our graphics expert gently pruned this down, explaining that it would be 'too busy'! We arrived at a compromise of picture-full pages and some, more information-rich pages. The four-strong production team each provided valuable different perspectives, from cautioning about copyright issues to providing historical detail such as the significance of the colour of backing card holding hand-made Dorset buttons. Comments on early drafts were sought from individuals, some of whom had never been inside the Museum, and feedback was acted upon.

Since publication, we discovered the added value of having copies of guides to give as gifts to special visitors. For example, we gave out over 20 to visiting mayoral dignitaries from around Dorset. Priced keenly at £3.50 per copy, it has been selling steadily. By 31 August, 146 copies had been sold, and the guide sat second in the list of best-selling items (behind the Gold Hill fridge magnet.) It is, of course, a snapshot of the Museum and its collection at the turn of the year 2022 into 2023. There are interesting new accessions and possible developments that might have to feature in any new edition.



Alan photographing the Flat Iron Heater from Room 5, Life at Home and (below), how the object appears on page 16 of the guide.



Photos by Ian Kellett.

A Dynasty of Shaftesbury Clockmakers, All Named Jasper Guy.

By Ian Kellett, with genealogical research by Linda Wilton

In April Gold Hill Museum was delighted to receive the generous donation of an antique Shaftesbury-made longcase clock from Historical Society member Phil Proctor. Painted on the clock face above **Shafsbury** was, it was reasonable to assume, the name of the maker, Jasper Guy, though he might only have been the supplier.



The installation of the clock on the first-floor landing, where it continues to keep good time, display the date, and strike the hours, prompted a surge of interest in the Guy family and clockmakers in Shaftesbury. The Pigot and Co. trade directory for 1830 lists five watchmakers: Frederick Belzoni of Bell Street; John Cole of Salisbury Street; Jasper Guy and Robert James, both of High Street; and Thomas Mansfield of Salisbury Street.

If five seems a high number for a small rural town, Tribe and Whatmoor comment in **Dorset Clocks and Clockmakers** (1981) that *clockmaking was strong and continuous in Shaftesbury ... Surprisingly from the evidence so far of the known seventeenth-century lantern clocks, Shaftesbury and Sherborne were the homes of the earliest established makers.*

In 1842 according to Pigot there were four watch and clockmakers: Frederick Belloni (sic) of High Street; Jasper Guy of Salisbury Street; William Guy of High Street; and Joseph Mansfield of Salisbury Street. This was not the same Jasper Guy as 1830, however, but probably his son. On 14 November 1831 the Salisbury and Winchester Journal reported: *Died Wednesday last, after a short illness, deeply and deservedly lamented by all who knew him, Mr Jasper Guy, auctioneer etc of Shaftesbury aged 61 years.* The sale of the deceased's property in January 1832 included *wheel and straight barometers, and eight-day and thirty-hour clocks and alarums.*

Neither of these Jasper Guys can have been the maker of our clock. As Tribe and Whatmoor state: *It was thought that the dials and movements of the painted-face or white-dial clocks were purchased ready-made from manufacturers, particularly in Birmingham. It is now known that the dials alone, already painted to order, would more often have been supplied from the specialist firms and the clockmaker (using some expertise) would have assembled a movement to go with the dial ... an 8-day movement, with certain mechanical complications [such as displaying the date] needed an additional plate (called a false-plate) between the dial and the movement. Very often the name of the factory which made the dial is cast into this iron false plate.*

Jonathan Betts is Vice Chairman of the Antiquarian Horological Society and a former Master of the Worshipful Company of Clockmakers. Thanks to our President, we were fortunate enough to be able to call on the expertise of Jonathan, who also advises the National Trust about their clocks. Jonathan inspected the false-plate and assigned a date of 1780 to our clock.



This means that the maker, Jasper Guy, belongs to a previous generation, and was almost certainly father and grandfather to the Jasper Guys already mentioned. Our in-house genealogist, Linda Wilton, was able to clear up a lot of the confusion. (Linda hosts a Family History session at Gold Hill Museum on alternate Thursday mornings.) The first Jasper Guy was born in 1740 in Compton Valence, Dorset, and married Ann Elliot in Shaftesbury in 1768. He made our clock, using a bought-in painted face, and was buried in Shaftesbury in July 1801. Their son Jasper was born in 1771 and married Dorothy Hannen in 1804, dying in 1831. He still dealt in clocks but was widely respected as an auctioneer. The third Jasper Guy was born c.1808, married Jane Brockway in Cann in 1833, and seems to have moved to Beaminster by the time of the 1851 Census.

An 1851 trade directory lists a Jasper Guy as a watch and clockmaker in Little Street, Beaminster. A fourth Jasper Guy was born in 1839 in Shaftesbury, but nobody of that name appears on a Dorset Census after 1851.

The Central Somerset Gazette of August 1881 reported *the theft at Somerton of one wood box, 7 pairs of spectacles, and 13 watch chains belonging to Jasper Guy an itinerant watch and clockmaker.*

A later report from March 1882 refers to an *assault on Jasper Guy, a pedlar of Shaftesbury.* It is tempting to assume that the fourth Jasper Guy took inherited family skills on the road and away from Dorset.



(Thanks to Rob Frost for supplying this image of a Bellone clock face.)

Frederick Belzoni / Belloni / Bellone all appear to have been the same person, also described in trade directories as a silversmith. In July 1825 Belloni married Mary Anne Russell in Shaftesbury. The 1846 Boxing Day issue of *Perry's Bankrupt Gazette* reports his bankruptcy, with the *Patriot* of the previous week reporting a first payment to creditors of 1s 3d in the pound. Shaftesbury watch and clockmakers seem to have done well to survive for so long, in the face of industrialised foreign competition. Rebecca Struthers writes in **The Hands of Time** (2023): *The British watch industry went from being the centre of the horological world in the 18th century to the brink of ruin by 1817*. Belloni moved to Southampton where he died in 1872. By 1896 the American Ingersoll Watch Company was selling a pocket watch by mail order for one dollar. A comparable British-made watch would have cost twelve times as much.

100 years ago – 1923.

November – Shaftesbury's working man mayor.

A notable page was added to the annals of Shaftesbury, when the council elected the first working man mayor of the borough. He was Mr James Peddle of St. James, a carpenter by trade, a nonconformist and a Liberal. He was stated to be a good representative of the artisan class, had been a member of the council for 4 years and had actively interested himself in the affairs of the borough. His election was unanimous.

The Alfred Jewel.

The Alfred Jewel is a matchless piece of goldsmith's work by a master-craftsman operating under the patronage of the West Saxon court. The Jewel represents the pinnacle of Anglo-Saxon technological achievement, while the name of the monarch which it proclaims places it among the most precious of royal relics.

The Jewel came to light in 1693, ploughed up in a field at North Petherton, Somerset, which is some 46 miles west of Shaftesbury. Even its find-spot contributes to its interest, since North Petherton is only a few miles from Athelney Abbey, the stronghold in the marshes from which Alfred launched his counter-attack on elements of the Great Army of the Danes; an attack that led ultimately to his crucial victory at Edington in 878. The Ashmolean's registers record its presentation in 1718 to the Museum, where it has formed one of the principal treasures of the collection ever since.

Over the years the Jewel has been the cause of much speculation as to what might have been its purpose and was a source of much uncertainty. More recently opinion has moved towards its being a pointer, used to follow the text in a book.



The Alfred Jewel.

The figure represented in delicate colours on enamel, on a plaque protected by rock-crystal, is also enigmatic. It is thought to represent the sense of sight: a contemporary silver brooch in the British Museum, engraved with figures representing all five senses, shows sight as a man holding two prominent plant-stems or flowers, exactly as on the Alfred Jewel. Such an allusion would be entirely appropriate for an instrument dedicated to the practice of reading.

As to the inscription: '**AELFRED MEC HEHT GEWYRCAN**' - 'Alfred ordered me to be made', no one has ever doubted that the sponsor of the piece was King Alfred the Great. He died in 899 after turning the tide of battle against the Scandinavian warriors who threatened the continuing existence of Anglo-Saxon control over much of England.

The jewel is on display in the 'England 400-1600' gallery on the second floor of the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford.

Replicas of the Alfred Jewel were made around 1901, in celebration of the Millennium of King Alfred's death. Some were made by Payne's of Oxford and others by Elliot Stocks of London, but no records survive for either of these companies from this period. A few replicas were later made by the Ashmolean's conservation department.

An early accession book at Gold Hill Museum, records that a replica of the Alfred Jewel was presented to the museum on the 16th March 1964. It was presented to the museum by Major Meyrick-Jones of Layton House, Layton Lane, Shaftesbury. The Major was the son of the Reverend Frederick Meyrick-Jones who had passed away at Shaftesbury on the 25th October 1950, aged 83. The accession book notes that the replica had an 'Ashmolean look about it'.

REV. FREDERICK MEYRICK-JONES was an English clergyman and a schoolteacher; and he loved cricket. He was known during his lifetime both as a hard-hitting batsman and as a wicket keeper who, between 1887 and 1896, played in 18 first class cricket matches. He made a single appearance for Norfolk County Cricket Club in 1909. He was also an antiquarian of some note.

After graduating, Meyrick-Jones was ordained and became a curate and a preparatory school master until 1896 when he moved to Bristol.

In 1899 he became the manager of the Rugby School Mission, which was a religious mission in the deprived neighbourhood of Notting Dale in North Kensington, West London, with the aim of improving conditions for the population of the area. He served there until he retired in 1905, promoting rugby union in the area then, afterwards, moving to Holt in Norfolk where, from 1909 to 1915, he ran a private school based just outside the town at Voewood, teaching boys classed as "difficult".

He married Olive White in 1908, with whom he had one son. He is also notable for restoring Woodlands Manor at Mere in Wiltshire, which was an early attempt to restore a medieval manor house that had been in his family since the 18th century.

Not many of the replicas were made and, whilst the original is priceless, the replicas are quite valuable in their own right. One of the Elliot Stocks replicas is currently being offered for sale on Ebay at a price of £5,500 and, In January 2019, Woolley & Wallis sold another Elliot Stock replica jewel for £2,600, having previously given it a valuation estimate of £200-£300.

So, if Gold Hill Museum's was one of the Ashmolean made replicas, it would be worth many thousands of pounds today.

With King Alfred's great association with Shaftesbury due to his foundation of the Abbey and installation of his daughter as the first Abbess, the replica jewel was proudly displayed at the museum for some 20 years until, sadly, it disappeared, believed stolen and has never been recovered. Security was tightened as a result of the theft but, 40 years later, we will probably never know who stole it, or where it is today.

If he's looking down, the Reverend Frederick Meyrick-Jones will certainly not be very happy that his jewel is no longer with the museum to which it was entrusted.

But, who knows, perhaps it will turn up one day.

Dave Hardiman.

Who Let the Bloodhounds Out? William Beckford

Apparently.

Bridport-based artist Jules Cross has very kindly donated his latest creation, a striking and atmospheric oil painting of Fonthill Abbey by moonlight, to Gold Hill Museum, Shaftesbury. This follows his generous gift of first edition guides to Fonthill Abbey published by Shaftesbury printer John Rutter and his competitor John Britton. Their rivalry featured in the **Fonthill Fever Exhibition**, curated by Beckford Society Secretary Sidney Blackmore, and retained for a second and final season to coincide with the bicentenary of the second sale in September 1823.



Though Jules has lived in Bridport since 2005, exhibiting a series of paintings of Bridport shops and shoppers, he acquired a special interest in William Beckford while resident in Hindon. His 2023 work is entitled **An Intruder at Fonthill – Evading Mr Beckford’s Bloodhounds**. It was inspired by a story told by the renowned Victorian painter William Powell Frith (1819-1909) in his *Autobiography and Reminiscences* published in 1887.

Frith was famous for panoramic scenes such as *The Derby Day* and *The Railway Station* (Paddington) and for portraits of fictional characters from literature. The story may owe a great deal to fiction too.

A curious visitor finds the gate in the formidable wall encircling the Fonthill estate unattended. He wanders inside and encounters a man he takes to be a gardener, who provides a detailed tour of the gardens. An invitation is then extended to view the interior of the house and its art treasures. When the visitor worries that the owner might object, his host replies: *I don't think Mr Beckford will mind what I do. You see, I have known him all my life, and he lets me do pretty well what I like here.*

The internal tour is followed by a magnificent dinner, served on massive plate – the wines of the rarest vintage. Rarer still was Mr Beckford's conversation, for the host had revealed his identity. Replete, the guest dozes off in an easy chair, to be woken by a footman who says:

'Mr Beckford ordered me to present his compliments to you, sir, and I am to say that as you found your way into Fonthill Abbey without any assistance, you may find your way out again as best you can: and he hopes you will take care to avoid the bloodhounds that are let loose in the gardens every night.'

Jules's painting is on display in Room 8. The intruder is visible fleeing the scene after spending an uncomfortable night in the branches of a tree. This article first appeared in a News Blog at www.goldhillmuseum.org.uk

100 years ago – 1923.

New wireless wonder.

The Western Gazette reported on some international news about a revolution in radio. Mr Marconi said that important tests had been carried out with regard to an entirely new system of wireless communication with distant countries.

According to this system, electric waves which carried messages were propagated and projected in a beam in one direction only, instead of being allowed to spread in all directions. By this system communication had been successfully carried on between England and St. Vincent, in the Cape Verde Islands, a distance of 2,250 miles.

Lectures & events in 2024.

Tuesday 9th January at 2.30pm at Gold Hill Museum.

William Beckford - The latest

Dr Amy Frost, Curator of Beckford's Tower and Museum, returns after an impressive 2022 Teulon Porter Lecturer to update us on how her research into Beckford's letters has informed the ongoing redevelopment and interpretation of the Tower.

Tuesday 6th February at 2.30pm at Gold Hill Museum.

By popular request – The return of Tea and talks.

Short presentations by S&DHS members in an informal atmosphere. There will be cake.

Tuesday 5th March at 2.30pm at Gold Hill Museum.

The life of Catherine of Braganza (1638-1705), Queen of King Charles II.

Professor Maria Hayward, Head of the History Department at the University of Southampton. Maria has published widely on the dress and culture of the Tudor and Stuart royal courts. She is currently researching a biography of Catherine of Braganza.

Tuesday 9th April at 2.30pm at Gold Hill Museum.

The life and work of Sir Richard Colt Hoare (1753-1838) Antiquarian, Artist and Traveller.

Hannah Severn, the National Trust's Collections and House Officer at Stourhead, reviews Colt Hoare's pioneering contributions to the study of the history and archaeology of Wiltshire, and his major additions to the house itself.

Tuesday 4th June or near.

Annual outing - Details to be announced.

Tuesday 20th August at 2.30pm at Gold Hill Museum.

2024 Annual General Meeting, followed by Garden Party.

Please note that lectures are free to members, and open to the public on payment of £3 at the door (£5 for Teulon Porter). Membership details at <https://goldhillmuseum.org.uk/membership/>

Printer's advertisement.

Shaftesbury & District Historical Society.

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Telephone 01747 852157.

Email: enquiries@goldhillmuseum.org.uk

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