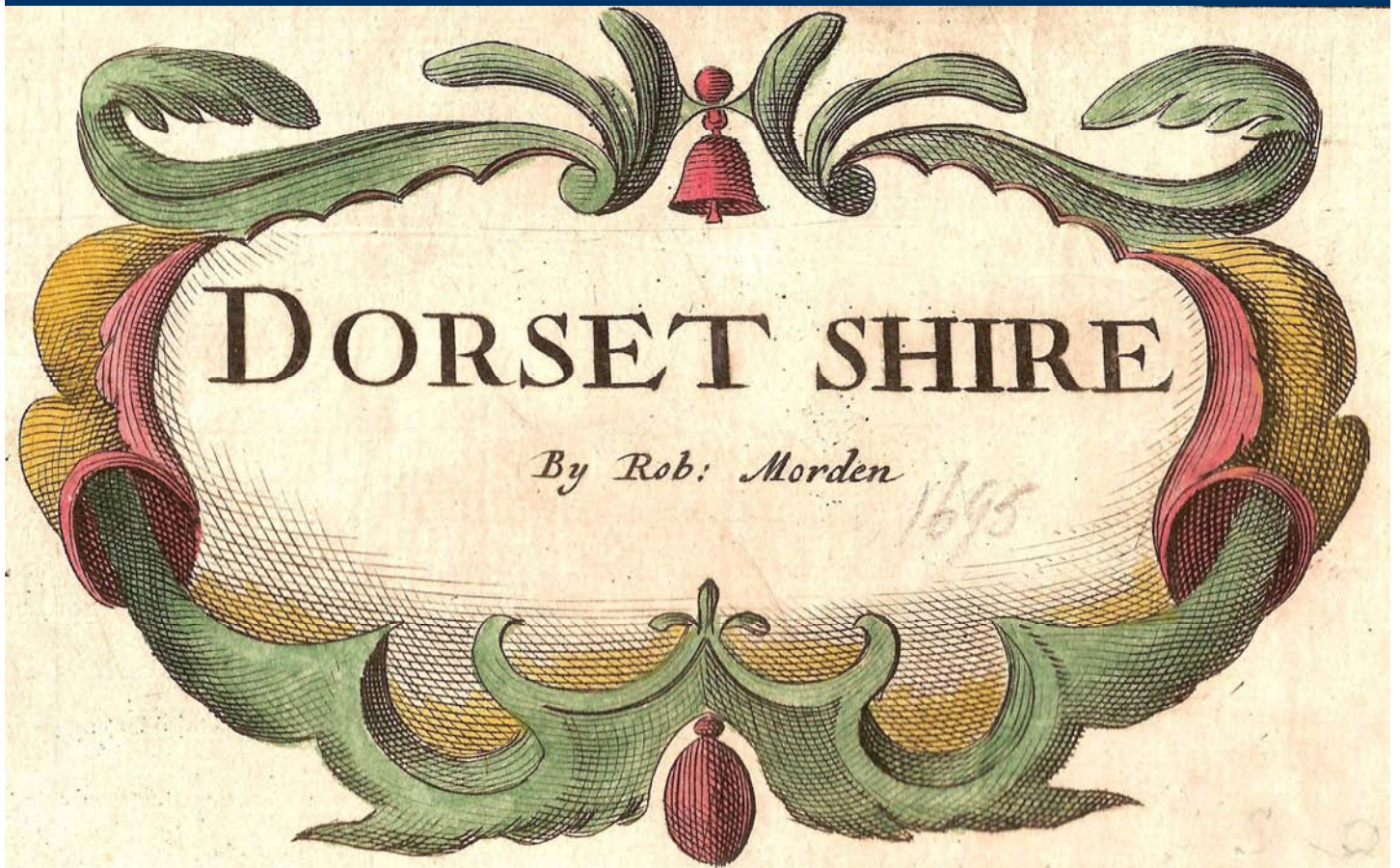


DMA Newsletter

Autumn Edition 2008



I do not have much to report in this issue of the newsletter. The Branding review is still in progress and the final successful design will be selected by members attending the AGM. The development of the website is still ongoing, please check out your details at

www.dorsetmuseums.co.uk

It would be useful for some feedback on the website as regards to content and design. If you have any comments or alterations please send them to me by email at adam@royalsignalsmuseum.com

We have been successful with a minor bid to the hub for financial support in respect of costs of the construction and development of the website - £500 and £1,500 for assistance with marketing. This will be used when the new Dorset Museum's logo has been decided. The PR "launch" will be on publication of the new leaflet, which I hope will be ready in early spring.

When the website has been completed I hope that all Dorset Museums will highlight a Dorset Museum's Logo on their home page with a link to the DMA site. This will increase the footfall and ensure a high Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) count, which in turn will ensure an increased profile and hit rate.

Search engine optimization is the process of editing and organizing the content on a webpage or across a website to increase its potential relevance to specific keywords on specific search engines and importantly ensuring that external links to the site are correctly titled and in abundance. This is done with the aim of achieving a higher organic search listing and thus increasing the volume of targeted traffic from search engines.

Dorset County Museum

A week of rocks and fossils in Bristol

Back in May 2008, Jenny Cripps from Dorset County Museum spent a week in the Geology section of Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery (BCM), shadowing the work of Tim Ewin, the then Acting Curator of Geology. (Tim has since moved to London's Natural History Museum.) The idea behind this visit was that while Jenny was assisting BCM geology curatorial and conservation staff, she could absorb information, and refresh her skills.

A new BCM display of fossil dinosaurs was being completed during Jenny's week. The dinosaurs, Charmouth 'scelidosaur', are unique to Dorset, and Dorset County Museum holds some of their remains in its display and reserve collections, so it was useful for Jenny to see the novel way in which BCM approached their interpretation. BCM's significant Jurassic marine reptile and invertebrate collections, and their permanent "Sea Dragons Gallery", also have a common link with important Dorset County Museum specimens.



A juvenile scelidosaur's skull and lower jaw (left) and an exceptionally preserved section of fossilised scelidosaur skin, currently on display at BCM Ó Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery

Jenny tried her hand at preparing fossils with air and powder abrasive pens, under the supervision of Roger Vaughan, Conservator and Collection Manager. He introduced her to approved modern preventive conservation techniques, and divulged how to make realistic casts and mounts to support large specimens. This will help Jenny effect best practice in preserving vulnerable fossil types common to the Bristol and Dorset County Museums.

Jenny saw how the storage spaces of a Designated collection in a major museum were maintained and monitored. This appraisal of BCM's geological material storage will be useful in informing Dorset County Museum's planning of its potential future store and education rooms, and providing guidance as DCM reapplies for Accreditation in 2009.

Rhian Rowson, BCM's Assistant Curator of Natural History, also spent a morning with Jenny. She advised about natural history suppliers, conservators, training and useful contacts, and suggested ideas for long-term volunteer projects.

As a regional Hub Museum, BCM fulfilled its role by giving expertise to a smaller museum with limited funds. Jenny is now cascading information from the week to Dorset County Museum volunteers. If you would like a copy of the methodology for curating and conserving geological and other natural science specimens that Jenny produced following her week's work at BCM, please contact Jenny Cripps at jenny@dorsetcountymuseum.org or 01305 756825.



Jenny would like to thank MLA South West for their Renaissance South West Museum Skills Programme grant, "Innovative Approaches to Workforce Development", that part-funded this week.

Jenny Cripps
Curator of Collections

A reconstruction of scelidosaurus crossing flooded land, © John Sibbick

Sturminster Newton Museum

After nearly a year's closure, Sturminster Newton Museum opened again on August 1st 2008 in a delightful 16th century building in the centre of the town. The decision to move the museum from a Victorian chapel on the outskirts of the town was made in November 2006 and was promoted by the Town Council putting their premises on the market. Financial support from the community enabled the trustees of the Sturminster Newton Museum & Mill Society to obtain a mortgage on the premises. A Heritage Lottery Fund grant, awarded on January 2008, made it possible to undertake the mandatory building alterations required for fire safety and to fit out the building as a museum. The trustees decided not to charge for admission to the Museum but to rely on shop sales and donations from increased numbers of visitors; August visitor numbers have, so far, vindicated this decision. Mortgage repayments are being met mainly by letting out part of the building as offices.

A Grand Opening for Sturminster Newton's new Museum is planned for Sunday October 26th to which all who have contributed towards the establishment of the Museum will be invited.

In December 2007, the Sturminster Newton Museum Society changed its name to the "Sturminster Newton Museum & Mill Society" to acknowledge that Sturminster Newton Mill is also managed by the Society.

The Priest's House Museum & Gardens

The Priest's House Museum's Learning Service is awarded the Sandford Award for the fourth time

As part of its five-yearly review, the Heritage Education Trust visited the Priest's House Museum in July. We are extremely pleased to announce that the judges have awarded the museum its fourth Sandford Award for Heritage Education. Their citation follows:

'Although small, and with collections of local and regional rather than national significance, the Priest's House Museum provides an exemplary service for schools, which is worthy of national recognition. The service depends on the enthusiastic input of a large team of unpaid volunteers who have been trained to deliver high quality museum learning experiences using hands-on, experiential and creative learning techniques. The result is a total experience using the listed building itself, artefacts, archive material and oral history (two of the volunteers have first hand experience as wartime evacuees and are interviewed by children). Behind the scenes is a highly effective and professional Learning Officer and Curator who is expert at capitalising on development opportunities to ensure that this historic gem survives and flourishes into the future.'

This glowing report is thanks to Anne Brown, and the enthusiastic and dedicated team of volunteers who act as education enablers.

CHRISTMAS SHOPPING AT THE PRIEST'S HOUSE

The annual Christmas Emporium in the museum shop of Wimborne's Priest's House Museum opens on Monday 17 November. You can peruse the well-stocked shelves for the more unusual present and stocking filler. Christmas stamps can be purchased, some of the money from which goes towards the work of the Museum. It will be open Monday to Saturday from 10.00 to 4.30, up until and including Christmas Eve.

An added attraction this year for Saturdays from the 22 November to 20 December is the opening of selected exhibitions and room displays for visitors. Discover the historic townhouse and the museum of East Dorset, with festive decorations throughout December. The tearoom will also be open serving mince pies and other refreshments. Admission to the museum will be Adults £1 and Children FREE.

THE GREAT PUDDING STIR

The Victorian kitchen at the Priest's House Museum in Wimborne Minster will be brimming with the smells of Christmas Pudding on Saturday 13 December from 10.30 to 4.00. Visitors are invited to take part in the annual Great Pudding Stir as the museum spreads a little festive cheer.

The recipe used is taken from the indispensable kitchen bible, [Beeton's Book of Household Management](#), edited by Mrs Isabella Beeton between 1859 and 1861. The original recipe for

'A Plain Christmas Pudding for Children' contained:

1 lb. of flour, 1 lb. of bread crumbs, ¾ lb. of stoned raisins, ¾ lb. of currants, ¾ lb. of suet, 3 or 4 eggs, milk, 2 oz. of candied peel, 1 teaspoonful of powdered allspice, ½ teaspoonful of salt

It took five hours to make and would feed nine or 10 children at an average cost of 1s. 9d. Today, we add 8oz. of sugar to make it more palatable for our tastes.

Visitors will get a chance to stir a huge bowl of the dry mix and make a Christmas wish, before sampling the final product heated on our coal-fired range. Admission is Adults £1.50 and Children £1.

If you would like any further information, please contact the Museum on 01202 882533.

FREE CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR OPENING AT THE PRIEST'S HOUSE

If you have had your fill of turkey and Christmas pudding, the Priest's House Museum in Wimborne Minster will be open from Monday 29 December to Saturday 10 January 2009 (closed Sundays and New Year's Day), 10am to 4.30pm. Admission is free. You will be able to see our very popular 2008 exhibition. 'Cabinets of Curiosity' takes a look at the more unusual items collected by the museum over the years. Themes include overseas travel and souvenirs brought home from as far east as the Orient, and private collectors, what they collected and why. There are also local displays on the diverse historical area of East Dorset.

And if you haven't had enough mince pies by this stage, refreshments will be available from our tearoom.

If you would like any further information, please contact the Museum on 01202 882533.

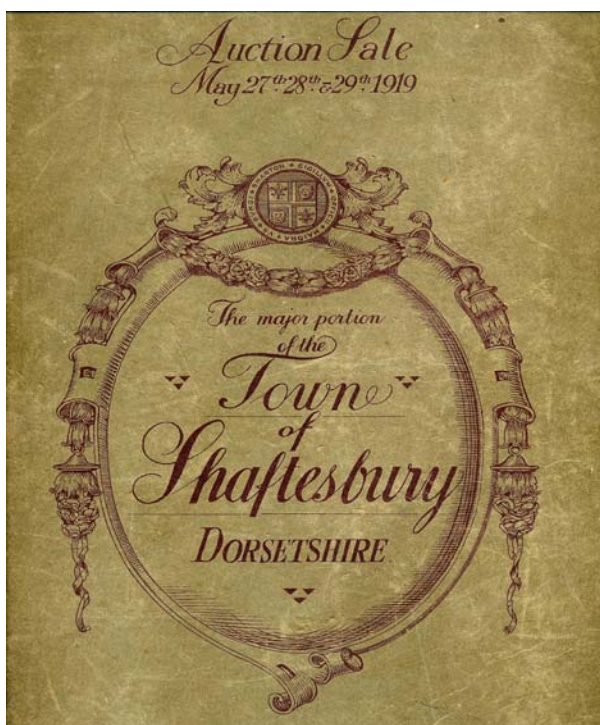
Shaftesbury Abbey and Gold Hill Museums & Gardens

Over the summer both museums have had a successful events programme, despite the bad weather.

These have included the very entertaining all-male cast of the Festival Players performing 'Much Ado about Nothing' in the Abbey garden. This years 'Film under the Stars' in the Abbey garden, which featured the recently released film 'Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull', was also a great success and drew a big audience.

As part of National Archaeology Week, we had a drop-in day at Shaftesbury Abbey with a variety of activities including dowsing, excavations and finds sorting. It was wonderful seeing children enjoying themselves and there were definitely some budding young archaeologists there.

Over the summer holidays we held various children's activities in the gardens at both museums. These included making mosaics, knights training, and the chance to meet a sailor from the Mary Rose! The feedback from these sessions from parents and children alike was fantastic.



Gold Hill Museum has recently been donated a number of fascinating artefacts including a well-preserved auctioneers catalogue describing properties comprising the major portion of the town of Shaftesbury that were sold in 1919. The sale was for a syndicate of local worthies who had bought the town outright from the Grosvenor family, ending 100 years of its dynasty in Shaftesbury. The catalogue also notes the price each lot sold for.

Jurassic Life: Coming to a Museum near You!

This summer the Dorset County Museums Advisory Service has been awarded £200,000 by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) towards the acquisition, display and interpretation of some of the exceptional fossils that have been discovered along the Dorset and East Devon World Heritage Site.

For many years, museums of all types have been facing the difficult issue of finding money to pay for exceptional objects. In response to this, HLF made £3.4 million available through an initiative called 'Collecting Cultures'. Understandably, this fund was massively oversubscribed and £13.5 million was requested by England's museums. 95 bids were received of which 23 were approved. Of the seven bids from the South West only 'Jurassic Life' succeeded and was awarded the maximum amount available. It is also the only successful natural science bid.

Clearly, £200,000, plus £30,000 committed by other both Dorset and Devon County Councils is a lot of money, but it won't buy many Van Goghs. However, it will purchase a significant amount of fossils. David Tucker the County Museums Adviser and Richard Edmonds, the Jurassic Coast Earth Science Manager aim to acquire spectacular fossils for museums the length of the Jurassic Coast. Museums as far apart as Budleigh Salterton in Devon and Swanage in Purbeck will benefit.

It is ironic that the Jurassic Coast, since Mary Anning's time the home of palaeontology has very few spectacular fossils on display in its museums. Jurassic Life aims to change all that: large and scientifically important specimens will be donated to and displayed in Lyme Regis Museum, the Dorset County Museum, Bridport Museum and a host of smaller, volunteer run museums. The large sea dwelling species of the Jurassic period, plesiosaurs and ichthyosaurs as well as smaller but equally fascinating species will be there for all to see. In East Devon we aim to purchase rare material relating to the Rhynchosaur, a small, rare pre-dinosaur reptile that lived alongside rivers in the Triassic deserts.

In the main, fossils will be purchased from the many professional collectors that operate along the coast. Just as in so many other spheres, fossils have a market value. A strict collecting code exists, and it is only through the endeavours of our local collectors that exceptional material is not lost to the sea. It is not unusual that the price of preparing a fossil, taking off the superfluous pieces of rock etc costs as much as the purchase of the fossil itself, but often the end result is a specimen that not only tells us so much about life millions of years ago, it also produces an artefact of great beauty, not unlike a magnificent piece of sculpture. Yes, some of them will be really big: we are currently investigating the purchase of a fossil skull measuring 2.4 metres in length, part of a 10 metre long, mercifully extinct, aquatic predator, significantly bigger than 'Jaws'. Now that really will look impressive...

David Tucker
County Museums Adviser

Beaminster Museum

The BIG news for Beaminster Museum is that we have been successful in our latest submission and have been awarded, again, Full Accreditation by MLA. We have worked very hard for nearly a year to ensure everything was ready. If it was on paper it was rigorously reviewed or re-reviewed. Everything was checked and double checked - our policies, collection care procedures and practices, forward plans, strategic budgets, security reviews and ... and ... and... well, you know what it's like. Our team of stalwart volunteers can certainly take credit for their contribution to our achievement.

And coming next? We are already planning for the 2009 major exhibition about the History of Gardening from the Roman's in Britain to the present day. If there is any museum which has old gardening tools or machinery in their store that might be loaned to us please contact me (01308 861146) - we do have a pair of hedge-cutters and some secateurs so we've made a start!

Jenny Cuthbert
Collections Curator

Movements & Staffing



Charles Cooper Administrator and general factotum (including Curator) will be leaving in April 2009. The position is still vacant. During the winter we shall continue to refurbish our first floor gallery and the period covering the Anglo-Boer and First World Wars 1899 - 1919. We shall have 6 new displays by March 2009.



Bridport Museum is looking to employ a Volunteer Co-ordinator for a 14 hour per week, 2 year freelance post. £6'188 per annum (Equivalent to approx £8.50 p/hour)


If you are interested in this position please get in touch for a full job description. Email- office@bridportmuseum.co.uk or write to Bridport Museum Trust, The Coach House, Gundry Lane, Bridport, Dorset, DT6 3RJ

Application deadline - Monday the 24th of November
Any questions please telephone 01308 458 703

Dear DMA Member

I have attached details regarding the DMA Christmas Lunch, to be held once more at the Nothe Fort, Weymouth on 3rd December. Please pass on this information to your staff and volunteers as all are welcome, as usual.

Sarah at the Nothe has come up with a superb menu and I have arranged some surprise entertainment which I think will be somewhat unusual but great fun. NO hints !



DORSET
MUSEUMS ASSOCIATION

DMA Christmas Lunch At the Nothe Fort
Wednesday 3rd December
Arrive 11.00 ~ Entertainment 11.15 ~ 12.15 ~ Lunch 12.30

MENU

Starter

Melon Cocktail
or
Duck and Port Pate with Toast and Salad Garnish
or
Stilton and Broccoli Soup with Crusty Bread

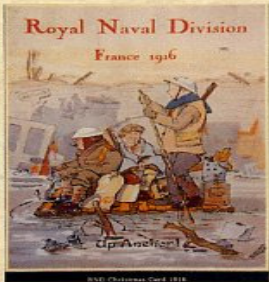
Main Course

Trio of Christmas Meats served with
Pigs in Blankets - Yorkshire Puddings
Stuffing - Potatoes and Seasonal Vegetables
or
Vegetarian Nut Roast with Apricots and Goat Cheese

Sweet

Lime and Ginger Cheesecake
Or
Christmas Pudding
Or
Cheeseboard
and
Coffee and Mince Pies

£15.00 Per Person



RSVP by 19th November with your menu selection to Adam Forty
adam@royalsignalsmuseum.com

If you would like to come please post me a copy of your desired Menu selections with a cheque made payable to the Dorset Museums Assoc. The price is £15.00 per person.

Thanks & regards Adam

Poole Museum

Poole Museum has had a record-breaking first year since re-opening after an extensive HLF-assisted refurbishment in July 2007, with 123,593 visitors to the main Museum and over 150,000 to all Museum sites. Nearly 30,000 people visited Poole Museum and Scaplen's Court this August alone.

All of the Museum sites, including Poole Museum and Local History Centre (housed in a 19th century former grain warehouse and the medieval Town Cellars respectively), medieval Scaplen's Court and its Garden, and the Roman farmstead reconstruction at Upton Country Park, were open to the public on 13 September as part of Dorset Architectural Heritage Week. Visitors also had the opportunity to meet some of the volunteers who help with the work of the Museum Service, with information packs being given out to those interested in joining them.

The museum is currently hosting an exhibition from MoDiP: the Museum of Design in Plastics at the Arts Institute Bournemouth, entitled 'Eat in or Take out: Plastics for Portability'. The exhibition, which takes a fascinating and colourful look at how plastics have been used to contain food and drink over the last 50 years or so, is on show until 15 March 2009.

Poole Museum and Poole Libraries have been awarded a grant under MLA's 'Their Past Your Future' initiative for a joint learning project entitled 'Right to Vote', which is based around the life of Minnie Baldock, a Poole suffragette. The project will address the theme of Citizenship in the Curriculum.

Trudie Cole has joined the museum from Weymouth & Portland Council as Learning & Access Manager. Louise Diffey, formerly one of Poole's Museum Assistants, has been appointed Learning Assistant.

Sue Beckett
Poole Museum