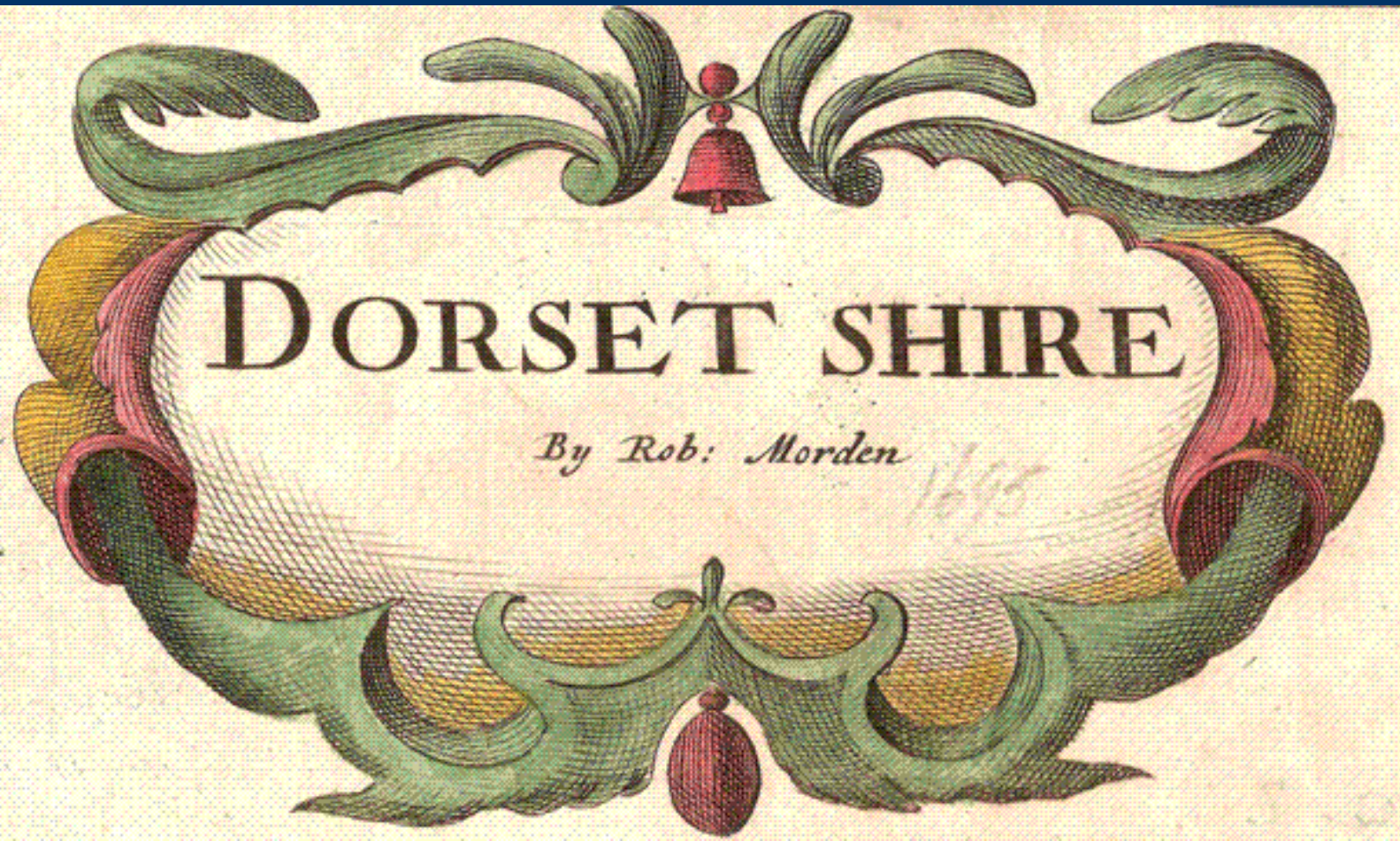


DMA Newsletter

Spring 2009



Chairman's Report.

I am afraid I do not have much to report at this moment. The branding is complete and we have selected the following as the new Dorset Museums logo.

dorsetmuseums

On the website this will include an animated GIF (which will scroll through a series of images representing individual Dorset Museums. If you have a good quality image that represents your museum or collection please email it to me for inclusion. (adam@royalsignalsmuseum.com) The progress of the website has slowed a little as the designer has had some personal problems I therefore intend to get him to hand over the completion of the design to me as soon as possible, so that we can ...finally ...get it fully up and running!

If you did not receive this email from SWT I think you will find them of interest. They certainly reflect the trends we are seeing at the Royal Signals Museum.

Predicted Tourism trends for 2009

South West Tourism has produced a Position Report, containing current market conditions, key predictions for 2009 and proposed actions for the tourism industry to help during the current recession.

- January to March 2009 is down on the same period in 2008 by over 10%
 - Easter 2009 was better than 2008, especially for the attractions sector, but Easter in 2008 was in March and outside the school holiday period that year
 - The weakness of the £ against the Euro is a positive impact by deterring UK residents to holiday in the Euro zone
 - Whilst there is still the potential for 2009 to be a bumper year in terms of visitor numbers it is very unlikely to be a bumper year in terms of visitor spend. More worryingly there is no real evidence that 2009 will be a bumper year for the South West. (NB: based on the whole of 2009, not only the summer weeks, for staying / day visits, secondary / direct spend)
 - 2009 is likely to be a 'patchy year' with some sectors performing well or better and some lower or even poorly
 - Secondary spend on food, drink and retail will be down
 - Customers are looking for value, deals, and inclusive packages
 - Consumer confidence and the weather will be one of the key factors
 - Research has shown a predicted growth in overseas visits (International Markets USA and Europe), estimated at between 5 to 15%
- Business tourism has been hit harder than leisure tourism with trade down by up to 20%

COULD COSTUME CARERS COLLABORATE?

Dorset County Museum's team of volunteers for Costume and Textiles try to tackle the backlog of accessioning, cataloguing, labelling and storage of items in the collection as well as assisting with events such as exhibitions and study days. Many of them have very useful textiles-related specialist knowledge and practical skills to a high standard.

Sadly, very little is on 'permanent' display although researchers may examine stored items by appointment. Being largely acquired by donation, it is a random collection, ranging from an ambassador's uniform to Thomas Hardy's dust-sheets. There are some lovely 'posh frocks', but humbler and work-related items are especially welcome as illustrations of county social history and fewer survive. The main criterion for acceptance is a Dorset connection; several items have good provenance. Needless to say, space is insufficient!

Costume study was in the past widely regarded as a frivolous interest rather than a serious discipline but academic respectability improved decades ago. Clothing interlinks with other subjects (e.g. economics) but there is a perception of its being misinterpreted to suit some sociological theories. Eminent writers (and curators) such as Anne Buck, Valerie Cumming and Naomi Tarrant have stressed the importance of 'real things' as evidence to illuminate research.

Visitors to D.C.M.'s textiles include students, of all ages and varied interests; needlewomen and researchers for T.V. and cinema. Some request examples or knowledge we do not have. Others seek to find a good home for objects we cannot accept for various reasons. **We are sure that other textile carers, especially of small collections, must have similar experiences.**

Could we not help each other? If we knew the resources of and gaps in each other's collections, we might be able to re-direct enquiries which we ourselves cannot satisfy and also perhaps support each other with comparisons of similar objects or with exhibitions and publicity? A least a relatively informal network with listings of resources, opening hours and contact details (either in print or on-line) could be established. Swapping problems, solutions and useful experiences at occasional gatherings might be useful too, perhaps combined with visits to different collections.

The Dorchester group would be very happy to host an initial such gathering in the early summer to discuss the whole idea over a 'cuppa'.

Please contact Billie Brown at Dorset County Museum

Lyme Regis Museum



Mary Godwin receiving the 'Highly commended' award at the Dorset Archaeological Awards with Mick Aston of Time Team

I started here last October, bringing our paid staff numbers up to a magnificent two full time equivalents! However, with the support of over 90 volunteers, this year we are continuing to cram a lot into our tiny building. There will be five exhibitions, over 50 talks, walks, free family fun days and various other events. A highlight this spring will be the Lyme Regis Fossil Festival 22nd - 24th May at which the museum will have its own marquee and, in the museum, loans from the National Portrait Gallery and National Museum of Wales.

In recent months, the museum has been awarded a number of grants for a wide range of projects. These include funding to mount an exhibition about MaryAnning as part of the Royal Society's 'Local Heroes' initiative, an AIM Sustainability Grant for new shop fittings and signage, an award from the Curry Find of the Geologists' Association to enable us to build a new website and a grant from West Dorset District Council to make our reference collections more accessible in a new study area.



6th formers and their teacher from Woodroffe at the private view of our exhibition 'Students' Choice' which they curated.

We have been working hard to strengthen our links with the local community. Our relationship with local schools got off to a flying start in 2009 with an exhibition curated by local 6th form art students. We were also delighted to receive recognition for our volunteer-led Farming History project, with a 'Highly Commended' in the Dorset Archaeological awards (along with the Priest's House Museum!) This project continues to snowball and another farming exhibition will be held 'over the border' at Axminster in June.

On the collections management front, we are introducing IT to the museum for the first time and will be embarking upon transferring our object records from cards onto MODES this summer. Looks like it will be a busy year!

Lyme Regis Museum
Curator Mary Godwin

Shaftesbury Museums

Shaftesbury's two museums opened their doors to the public on 1st April. Both museums are looking forward to a successful year and have an exciting range of events lined up. Shaftesbury Abbey Museum also won the South West Tourism Excellence Silver Award for Small Visitor Attraction 2008-2009 and had to go through an exhaustive selection and judging process, and as a volunteer run museum it is an amazing feat.

Added to this, Shaftesbury Abbey Museum is celebrating ten years since its' new museum was built and have created a special exhibition. It looks at how the dream of building a new museum turned into reality and will show the original building, the archeology work and the construction of the new building.

Continuing a tradition on Good Friday (10th April), there was free entry to both the Abbey and Gold Hill Museums.

Events over the season include a Herb Workshop on dyeing and medicinal preparations, the interesting and popular Herb Walk, a outdoor 'Film under the Stars' which this year will be 'The Young Victoria', and Shakespeare's 'The Merchant of Venice' performed by an all-male cast. There will also be a couple of events for families over the half term week. Added to this there will be an 'Archaeology Roadshow' at the Abbey in July.



The Blandford Fashion Museum



This year, The museum, previously known as the Cavalcade of Costume Museum will be known as The Blandford Fashion Museum. This re-branding has come about as a result the nature and function of the museum and our desire to reach, and appeal to a wider range of the general public who may have had some misconceptions as to the visual impact of the displays and aims of the museum.

With this in mind and our new exhibitions it was decided to celebrate the new branding together with the two new exhibitions and to this end we were lucky enough to have Shelley Tobin accept our offer to open the exhibits for us. Shelley Tobin is at present Costume Curator for The National Trust at Killerton House near Exeter and also Curator of Costume and Textiles for the Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter.

A Victorian Life

Our first new exhibition is of a series of pictorial scenes of life in Victorian times. Anyone who knows the museum will be familiar with the standard and accuracy which is portrayed in these vignettes. The period is covered from 1840 with a scene of a young family at home with their new baby and daughter. The second scene shows a family from 1860 also at home with a young daughter, the mother is repairing a dress on a tailor's dummy and the daughter in a cream dress is watching. The third view is of a family visit to the sea side 1889-1893, one of the women is wearing a grey serge bathing dress. The fourth scene is from 1880 - 1890 of the family attending a mourning scene. They are dressed in sombre attire for the occasion.



The Little Black Dress

The little black dress has been attributed to Coco Chanel, however the wearing of black has existed throughout history. In the fourteenth century black was an expensive dye and was worn by only the wealthy and black became a symbol of elegance and style. During the eighteenth there was a change, both men and women favoured colourful clothing and black became associated with older or poorer people, things remained this way up until the mid-nineteenth century when

chemical dyes were invented and black became fashionable for men's clothing but women only wore the colour as a symbol of mourning. In the 1920's Premet introduced a plain boyish little black frock with white satin collar and cuffs, known as La Garconne after the best selling book of that name, it was a sensational success. Chanel's "little black dress" was launched in 1926 it was much acclaimed by American Vogue as the dress all the world would wear.

Chanel had been designing and wearing black dresses for many years but this was the dress which was most influential. Throughout the next four decades almost every designer from Dior to Balmain, Fath to Balenciaga, all produced their own version of "A Little Black Dress" designed to take the wearer to cocktail hour and onwards. In 1961 Givenchy designed the iconic little black dress for Audrey Hepburn in the film Breakfast at Tiffany's. By the 1970's colour was briefly back in fashion and in the early 1980's Yves St. Laurent, Karl Lagerfeld together with Dolce and Gabbana were amongst the many designers creating the little black dress yet again. In 1994 Gianni Versace took punk culture into the little black dress with his safety pin creation worn by Elizabeth Hurley. It was a sensation, and hit the headlines in magazines at the time. The "Little Black Dress" continues in its popularity and as Dior said, "you can wear black at any age. You can wear it on any occasion. A little black frock is essential to a woman's wardrobe. I could write a book about black"



Tudor House Museum

Weymouth

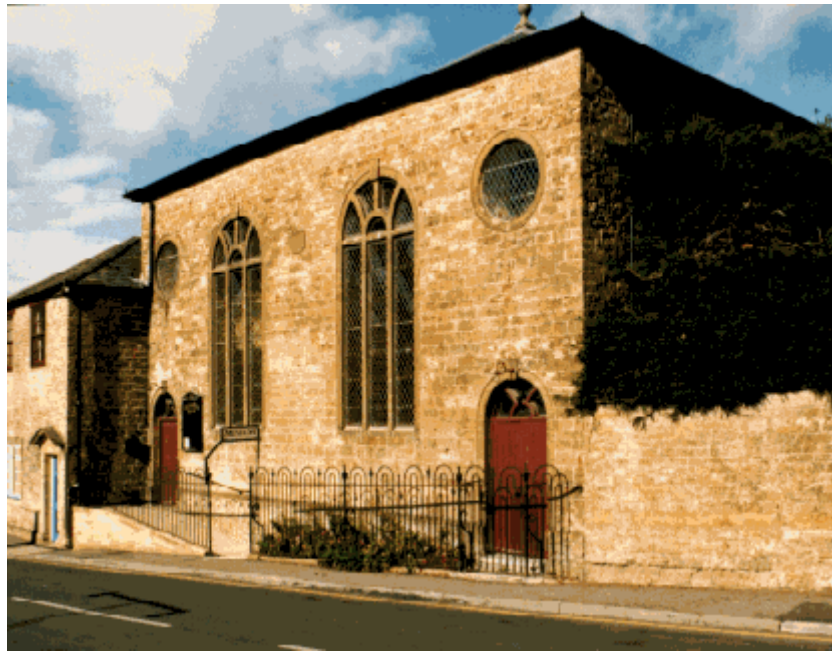


We have had a change of management as Pru Bollam, our custodian for 16 years has handed over to Eileen O'Brian. Pru remains a regular guide as well as President of Weymouth Civic Society who own the Museum. Winter as usual was a relatively quiet time as we are only open on the first Sunday of each Month. We had school visits, 90 children from Wyke Junior School, (over three mornings) and also visits from several groups including the members of Blandford U3A in March.

Are main season runs from May the 5th to the 30th of October Tuesdays to Fridays 1-4 pm. (Adult 3.50 Child £1)

Vivian Soule

Beaminster Museum



‘Flowers, Fruits and Follies: a short walk through Garden History’ opens at Beaminster Museum on Saturday 18th July 2009. As usual we manage to come up with ridiculously grandiose plans for such a little museum – this summer we will ‘recreate’ the whole history of gardening – indoors and in very limited space! From displaying our ideas about the garden of the Romano-British villa at Halstock to celebrating the RHS Chelsea successes of local horticulturalists nearly two thousand years later, by way of a Cistercian monastery garden, Medieval and Tudor gardens, as well as 18th, 19th and 20th century ones. We are also delighted to be able to display some panels from the Royal Albert Memorial Museum’s ‘Global Gardeners’ exhibition to tell the story of the plant hunters. The exhibition runs until Sunday 6th September.

We opened our season with **“Tea Clippers to Clipper Teas”**, supported by one of Beaminster’s local companies, Clipper Teas, and in June **“Arthur Bell’s Dorset”**, an exhibition of paintings and drawings loaned by Poole Museum, will be presented as part of the Beaminster Festival.

As always, we are very grateful to the wider museum community for their support. Many individuals also lend us artefacts and the volunteers put in so much effort to enable us to provide three ‘major’ exhibitions each year as well as one or more small ‘Friends Exhibitions’ in our temporary display space, The Niche. No small feat for us but impossible without help from many sources.

Jenny Cuthbert
Collections Curator

Bridport Museum

Aside from our old favourites such as the oral history gallery, rope & net displays and Bridport's Ancient history we also have a host of new and exciting exhibitions for this our first year as a free museum.



A new Jurassic coast gallery with over £10,000 of local fossils purchased through the Heritage lottery fund and a accompanying interactive computerised learning centre. On display upstairs are the jewels of our textile collection in a special house designed and built by a local theatre group Encore and divided into four separate time periods; the regency, Victorian, Georgian and 19th century. From our art collections comes the works of Henry Walton, a talented 19th century painter who recorded fabulous scenes of 19th century Dorset life. This includes a watercolour kindly loaned from Lyme Regis Museum. Alongside this are the works of local photographer Walter Stephens showing life at the turn of the last century.



Daniel Taylor Almshouses, South Street 1903/2009



And just for fun we have a display of novelty teapots!

Blandford Museum

Where is it going?

Blandford Museum is in the process of change from objects in cases to try and form an exciting part of the artistic, scientific and historical life of Blandford. This change is being achieved in two ways, both of which may be considered the principal functions of any museum. One is heritage-driven: the preservation of heritage through exhibits, archive and photographs, all of which are preserved for, and are provided by the local community, and the degree of interaction with the local community is a measure of the success of this aspect of museum function. The second way is education-driven: museums provide unique opportunities for hands-on education, for museums can provide direct access to artefacts and records from the past both for schools and the community generally.

What is being aimed for in these two museum functions in Blandford is the integration of the museum with the local community both in terms of the general population and the community groups active in Blandford such as the local schools, the Town Council, DT11, and other museums. Without community support and interest, Blandford Museum might as well not exist, for the heritage we seek to preserve is only of significance if it is shared with the community. This is a major departure from the concept of museums as repositories of artefacts, and it means that museum collections become secondary to the use to which they can be put, both in the telling of their story and the involvement of local communities in museum activities.

To achieve these aims, Blandford Museum has been passing through several stages:

1. the first stage was to make the museum more interesting to the visiting public by changing the exhibits from rows of objects in cases to fewer objects but exhibited in the context in which they were used: examples are the reconstructions of a forge, cobblers workshop, prehistory of Blandford area, Victorian child's play room, Victorian kitchen, and reconstruction of Blandford railway. At the same time, the historical displays are being simplified so that they give visitors a glimpse into the past without inundating them with facts: if they want to know more, the museum archive is being catalogued and cross-referenced so that they can follow up the information on display in the archive material.

2. the second stage was to build an active education programme to bring the opportunities of the museum to the attention of Blandford residents, both young and old: the young through schools' visits and the Family Saturday Club, young adults through the HLF Young Roots programme, and older adults through evening courses; all of these were set up and are being run by Sylvia Hixson Andrews;

3. thirdly, and in order to increase visitor numbers, the admission charge was dropped so that all could come into the museum for free; this has resulted in a fivefold increase in visitor numbers, and as far as possible we have made most of the museum accessible to all, and we are still exploring ways of making it completely accessible;

4. to broaden the appeal of the museum, several clubs have been formed, each one catering to different interests: the Saturday Club mentioned above, and new clubs such as the Railway Club and Garden Club, both with their own constitution. Both have extended museum activities into new sections of the community with weekly activities at the museum additional to other museum activities; even when the museum is closed to the public, the clubs continue to operate and bring new life to the museum;

all of these stages are still in progress, and the final one just coming into play is to increase community involvement in the museum, both in the education programme and in mounting displays. Three examples of community activities are as follows:

One further aspect of museum activities where Blandford Museum had an outstanding record under its former curator, Ben Cox, was the establishment of a research programme into Blandford's history. Ben Cox built up an extensive archive, and based on this he wrote and published a series of books and short leaflets. His work is being carried on by Michael Le Bas, and the museum archive is currently being reorganized and catalogued by Pam Le Bas, with important new additions of a major collection of railway maps and plans brought in by the Railway Club and books on the railway and garden being provided by the two clubs.

How is it doing?

Museum activities are being monitored by visitor surveys and by recording numbers of visitors to the museum. The reports on the 2008 visitor surveys are given at the end of this paper, and they show a 14% increase in visitor numbers compared with 2007. They also show that over 70% of visitors are from out of town, including some who had visited the museum before, and there was a healthy number of repeat visits by local residents. Answers to the survey are shown here compared with figures for 2006 and 2007.

Peter Andrews, Curator

	2006 N = 122 %	2007 N = 482 %	2008 N = 110 %
What brings you to Blandford?			
local	49.6	34.6	26.4
holiday	50.4	65.4	73.6
How did you hear about the museum?			
poster or sign	24.4	38.5	50.0
leaflet	15.4	12.9	16.2
advertising	20.5	4.6	6.1
word of mouth	15.7	20.6	7.8
passing through town	10.7	16.3	8.8
other	9.9	7.1	12.0
What decided you to visit the museum?			
interest in history	42.3	34.5	30.6
like museums	26.9	5.9	14.0
railway exhibits	21.2	12.2	26.3
general interest	9.6	38.6	30.5
it was free and to see what is new	0.0	9.1	6.6
Most interesting exhibits			
context exhibits	35.3	27.2	34.0
history cases	18.2	12.6	2.6
railway exhibit & plans	3.2	22.3	24.9
all exhibits	42.8	36.8	36.8
Comments			
museum matters to staff, helpful staff	42.6	22.7	5.5
excellent for town of this size	18.5	25.7	55.0
good displays, well laid out	29.6	43.5	34.0
good for children	0.0	6.6	6.2
negative comments	9.3	1.1	0

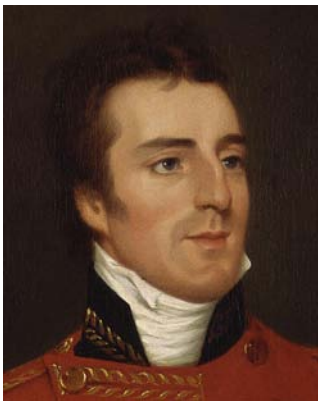
South Somerset Museum Service

A Yeovil Riot Jug on YouTube

As part of a touring exhibition, staff at the Museum of South Somerset in Yeovil were asked to pick their favourite, not necessarily most important, object in the Museum Collection. After much discussion, it was decided that a riot jug dating from 1831 was our favourite object.

History of the riots and the jugs

On the evening of Friday the 21st of October 1831, Yeovil was subject to riots that were a result of the great Reform Act being opposed. They occurred after the narrow defeat of the Blandford Parliamentary candidate, who was promoting a reform. In April 1831 the House of Commons put forward a request for a Reform Act. On 22nd of September the House of Commons passed the Reform bill. However the Conservatives who still dominated the House of Lords launched a complaint and the bill was defeated. When the ordinary people heard the news, the Reform Riots took place. They took place in several British towns, including Yeovil and Bristol in October 1831. In fact, the riots in Bristol were the most serious in the country.



Duke of Wellington

Following his election success in 1830, the Duke of Wellington was forced to resign after making a speech where he pledged to never to introduce any Parliamentary Reform and also to oppose any reform proposals. This as you can imagine caused a great uproar, and his resignation was welcomed. On March 1st 1830 the Reform bill was presented to the House of Commons. However the bill was denied, and 4 MPs resigned. Finally the great Reform Act of 1832 was passed and marked one of the most important changes to the British Electoral System. Lord Ashley was voted into power shortly after the Reform Bill was put forward, and he refused to let it take place, the Riots were also a result of this.

In Yeovil the Riots were one of the worst scenes of violence that it had ever witnessed, and the Mudford and Martock troops were called in, to attempt to put an end to the assault. An account from the Western Gazette that was printed in 1831 says that: 'they went to the house of Mr White, one of lord Ashley's agents, and where they also broke the windows.' This refers to the rioters' and the 'action' that they took against Lord Ashley. Total chaos was apparent, and in the Western Gazette it show this by saying that: "Mr Charles Cattle unfortunately shot himself in the thigh and we are informed that the ball is not yet extracted."

Following the riots where it took some time for the troops to restore order, the Mudford and Martock troops were awarded, with an earthenware jugs which had a silver lip, with the inscription on each: 'Presented by the inhabitants of Yeovil and it's vicinity in testimony of their approval of the conduct of the Mudford troop Yeomanry Cavalry during the riots in that town in 1831. Followed by name of person it was presented to.' It is



believed that 67 were made; the Museum of South Somerset has 3 in its collection and knows for certain of 12 more. It has been mentioned that there may be one at Bovington Tank Museum can anyone confirm this?

Volunteer Stephen Bartlett was filmed talking about the riot jugs and this has now been posted onto Youtube. To view it go to www.youtube.com and then put in Somerset Museums, click on more Somerset Museums and then the riot jug is under the Hamstone Line.

Nothe Fort

Nothe Fort is into its second year of a 5 year project to completely upgrade all displays and interpretation. A major project to set up 3 small cinema areas has now been successfully completed, with each cinema showing a different short film. An introductory film, covering the history of Nothe Fort and its role in the defence of Portland Naval Base, is on show in the casemate next to the reception area. This casemate has been completely refurbished as part of the project, when not being used as a cinema it is in great demand as a meeting and lecture room.

The second film tells the story of the period when the Fort fell into a state of dereliction and its restoration by Weymouth Civic Society. This film includes interviews with the then younger members of the Weymouth community who defied the attempts of the Council to keep them out of the Fort. Their stories tell of unexplained noises, police raids and visits by some unsavoury characters who vandalised the Fort and used it as a place to shelter.

Long need improvements to the Weymouth at War exhibition have been undertaken this winter. New exhibits and interpretation panels have been produced, including the bombing of Weymouth. This upgrade has been undertaken in tandem with the upgrading of the D-Day display that covers the embarkation of thousands of British and American troops from Weymouth and Portland Harbours for Normandy.

We will be holding a D Day festival on the 6th and 7th June. Both American and British groups are programmed to attend, including a bomb disposal team. There will be the opportunity for the public to locate bombs hidden on the Fort's Ramparts; we have been reliably informed that the bombs will have no fuses or explosives.

A highlight of the D Day festival will be an evening concert by the Light Calvary Band on the 6th June. Details of this event and other events programmed for 2009 are advertised on our new website. www.nothefort.org.uk, which hopefully will be up and running by the end of March.

A big thank you must go out to all the volunteers at Nothe Fort who are working so hard to making a visit to Nothe Fort more informative, interesting and enjoyable. May their good work continue.

David Joy, Director.

The Priest House & Garden Museum

New season

The new season begins at the Priest's House Museum on the 1 April. Visitors will be able to see two new exhibitions.

'Love and Marriage' is the new costume exhibition celebrating weddings in East Dorset through the ages. Beautiful wedding dresses and outfits will be on display, while the exhibition will also take a look at some of the customs that take place on the big day.

'Seeds of Change - Food and Farming' will open at the end of April. This exhibition will look at how farming has developed in East Dorset from prehistoric to modern times, and the changing face of food. For the first time, the exhibition will be developed and displayed by MA Museum Studies students from Bournemouth University.

Their first day involved field research, using questionnaires to gather data on users and non-users of the museum. They are now undertaking research and selecting possible objects for display. The students will have the opportunity to write the content for the interpretation panels and object labels, and design associated activities and interactives. In the week beginning the 20 April, they will install the exhibition to open at the end of that week. It is a fantastic opportunity for the museum and the students. The latter are gaining valuable practical experience and the museum will benefit from a fresh perspective on exhibition development, with new ways to engage our audiences.

Replica costume for schools

Glynis Beal, on placement at the museum at the end of 2008, has produced a rich collection of replica period costume to be used as an education resource for schools.

Her background is in fashion and she was trained as a designer pattern-cutter at the London College of Fashion. Over the years she worked in most fields of the fashion industry. A keen interest in period costume developed after running her own arts and antiques business.

Glynis spent a good deal of time on research and then designed the collection. She produced the patterns and made the costumes. Examples include costume worn by the early Britain's at the time of the Roman occupation; medieval headdresses and clothing; and smocks, dresses and bonnets worn by Victorian children.

The Dinosaur Museum

This June the Dinosaur Museum, situated in Dorchester gateway to the Jurassic Coast, is celebrating its 25th anniversary. From its inception in 1984 the museum has attracted acclaim and praise for its innovative and interesting approach to the topic of dinosaurs from visitors, teachers and museum professionals. It has become Dorchester's foremost visitor attraction bringing thousands of dinosaur hungry families and schools to the county town.

The museum has consistently enthralled and entertained children with its mix of fossils, skeletons, dinosaur reconstructions combined with hands on and multimedia displays. It has almost taken of a life of its own, with many people who visited the museum when they were children in the early years now returning with their own children to let them enjoy the Museum's unique appeal.

The Museum was nominated for the European Museum of the Year Award in 1985. Since then it has won many accolades including twice being voted one of Britain's Top Ten Hands on Museums, as well as earning itself Dorset's Family Attraction of the Year Award and most recently was chosen as one of Britain's Ten Best Child-Friendly Museums.

It was the first museum to use computers in a display environment with specially dedicated programs. It also invented the 'Feely Box' the most successful of all the hands on displays within the museum. Representatives from many other establishments have come to the Dinosaur Museum to seek inspiration and take away ideas and adapt them for their own environments. Most notably these include Eureka! The children's attraction in Halifax, the Ulster Museum, and The Beijing Natural History Museum.

The Dinosaur Museum has frequently appeared on television usually in children's programmes such as Blue Peter, Tickabilla and the Tweenies. It has an extensive and lively educational programme with many schools from a wide region visiting year after year.

Look out for several events in June to mark this important anniversary.



EXHIBITION

The Bird Man from Lyme Regis

John Gould and Charles Darwin



LYME REGIS MUSEUM
10th MAY TO 21 JUNE 2009



DARWIN200