

D Dorset Museums Autumn 2000 NEWSLETTER



I had hoped to bring you news of the DMA Millennium Competition, however the judging has not yet taken place. I can tell you that the competition was not well supported but that the standard of entries was high. You will find in this issue a copy of the proposed DMA Constitution to be voted on at the AGM on Sept 22nd.
ARM

Postcard Pieces

Shaftesbury Abbey Museum

Computer technology of the 20th century has been used to interpret events in Wessex during the 10th century.

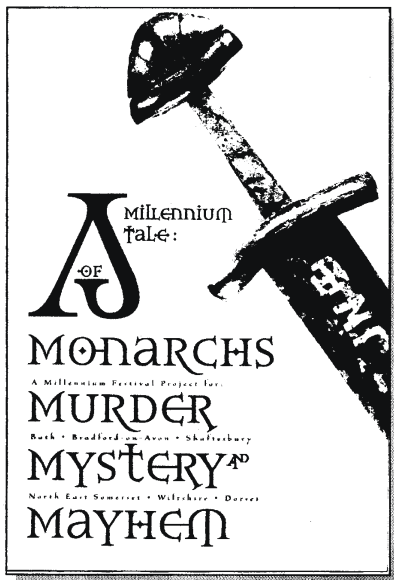
Friends and visitors to Shaftesbury Abbey can now view the events of 1,000 years ago with a touch screen exhibition, opened on Friday 23 June 2000.

Our story starts in 973 with the crowning of Edgar, King of Wessex, in Bath Abbey. The monastic revival, the murder of King Edward the Martyr and the crowning of King Aethelred the Unready are a few of the important events covered. The story ends with the invasion of the Vikings and the crowning of the first Dane, King Swain, at Bath Abbey in 1013.

With the help of the touch screen, these events, together with the daily and social life of the people of Wessex, can now be viewed using new technology:

A CD Rom of the interactive display and a book relating to the period can be purchased from the museum shop.

As part of our Millennium celebrations, around 200 school children in Anglo-Saxon dress recreated the hustle and bustle of an Anglo-Saxon market including stalls of herbs, spices, fruit and vegetables, and a juggler all helped set the scene. From the time



of their arrival until they departed at 2.00pm, the day was packed with activities centred on the story of Shaftesbury Abbey. Our Millennium celebrations end with a talk by Julian Richards, Presenter of the BBC 2 programme Meet the Ancestors, on 20 October. Anyone interested in attending please contact Anna McDowell at Shaftesbury Abbey Museum & Garden.

Shaftesbury Abbey has joined with Bradford-on-Avon and Bath to finance this project which has the support of a grant from the Millennium Lottery Fund.

The Keep Military Museum

The Spring Exhibition "Captured Foreign Weapons" caused quite a bit of interest and evening visits from two gun clubs, whose stay included light supper and weapon handling, were well received.

The current exhibition, "The Korean War", which has been extended until 29 September by popular request, has also been greeted favourably and many Korean War veterans have signed the commemorative book after their trip down memory lane.

We are running the "Family History Workshop" again this year from 23 October - 24 November and are looking forward to The Dorset and Somerset Family History Society members again assisting our own volunteers to set people on the right track when they start their genealogical trail (if that isn't too many metaphors).

Technology took a great leap forward at The Keep last month when we went "e". Our e-mail address is keepmuseum@talk2.com and our Web site is almost finished and can be accessed at -
www.keepmilitarymuseum.org.

Postcard Pieces

Royal Signals Museum

It is some time since we contributed so the first thing is to update you on personalities. The new management team comprises the Director, Colonel (Retired) Cliff Walters, and the Curator, Miss Stella McIntyre.

The Museum is still on its upward spiral of increases in admissions and shop sales. We have been open in our current form for only 3 years so this is very encouraging. But who knows where the spiral stops!! Our success is obviously based on Adam Forty's excellent marketing strategy.

This in turn relies on a good product to sell. We have made significant strides with audio-visual aids and interactive activities. We are continuing in this vein and if you want to learn Morse Code then we're your man!! Our special exhibition of the Special Forces *-who cares who wins!!-* has also proved very popular. In this we were also kindly assisted by the Imperial War Museum and The Keep Museum who have loaned some weapons to us -kids love weapons.

Our various trails and quizzes for all age groups are unbelievably simple and cheap but extremely cost effective indeed - like almost zero cost. A little innovation can go a long way.

We would be very happy to help any Museum :who might wish to pick our brains on trails, quizzes and interactive computer games that we have used. .Incidentally, we have used PowerPoint for computer quizzes.

The Blue Pool

The Blue Pool Tea House celebrated the 65th Anniversary of its opening on Sunday 11th June. We invited everyone to come and see us for 2p, the nearest that we could get to the original charge of sixpence. The sun shone, the music played and over 2 thousand people came. Everyone enjoyed themselves. The Tea House offered a beaker of tea, also for 2p and by the end of the day had served 1400 people.

Water Supply Museum

A relic of Dorset's steamy past has returned to Sutton Poyntz pumping station and Wessex Water's Water Supply Museum.

In store since 1975, the relic, a triple expansion steam engine, spent its working life at Sutton Poyntz, pumping water to Weymouth. One of the last steam engines of its type built by Hathorn Davey of Leeds, it is the only surviving steam engine of six, which worked at Sutton Poyntz.

Steam was introduced to Sutton Poyntz in 1869 to supplement the water driven turbine pumps. Other steam engines were added at later dates as the pumping station expanded to meet the ever-increasing demand for water. The last was the Hathorn Davey in 1934. It worked until electrically powered pumps were installed in 1958.

Weighing around 26 ton and with a flywheel measuring just under 10 feet in diameter, the engine will require extensive restoration, however it is an important survivor of the pumping station's, and Dorset's, steam power era.

Tolpuddle Martyrs Museum

All the old black and white ad-hoc displays have been removed and the Museum has been turned into an inter-active, educational visitor experience. There is a bright new interior with the story of the Tolpuddle Martrys depicted on colourful hanging banners and four iMac interactive touchscreens which include over 300 questions about the Martrys' story narrated by actors including Tony Robinson. As Key Stages 2 and 3 include Social History and touch on the Tolpuddle Martrys it is anticipated that many more schools and colleges will visit and will benefit from the CD Rom and new brochure subsequently produced to coincide with the refurbishment of the Museum

Charmouth Heritage Coast Centre

New web site about the Dorset Coast and Field Trips - www.jurassiccoast.uk.com

The Priest's House Museum

The sparkling new East Dorset Villages Gallery opened on 1 April, thanks to funding from the Millennium Festival Fund, East Dorset District Council and other local supporters. Our designer, Alan Murray, fitted a tremendous amount into a small space, without the displays looking crowded. They include a hands-on Victorian Village Schoolroom, a Post Office and General Store crammed with nostalgic packaging, and a shop front showing Local Industries, covering everything from paper and pottery-making to smuggling! Other themes include East Dorset before the Villages, Churches and Chapels, Leisure, Farming, The Great Estates and Almshouses. A perfect, slightly scaled-down, replica red telephone box, made by our exceptionally talented volunteer carpenter, has changing displays on particular villages, created in association with local schools and historical societies.

The Local Information Area is especially popular. It has 29 ring-binders with information on each local village, including census returns, directories, articles, newspaper-cuttings etc, and a touchscreen computer with historic and modern local photographs which can be searched by parish or subject. These are being added to constantly, as members of the public donate photographs or lend them for scanning - the next update of the database should bring us to over 800 images. The gallery has been very well received so far .

The Millennium Project continues, with visits to local schools to talk about the history of their village, give them a binder with photographs and information, and ask the children what and whom they think should be photographed in the village this year as a Millennium Photographic Record for people in the future. We are also taking historic photographs and information out to village fetes every weekend (3 fetes on the busiest Saturday!). And then there's actually taking the millennium photographic record !

This season's special exhibition is *From Dinosaurs to Star Wars - a Millennium Celebration of the Museum's Collections*. Shamelessly using buzz words to appeal to children, but we need the visitor numbers! Our programme of special events throughout the season is also a way of drawing in different audiences.

The Nothe Fort

We are still waiting for some progress with our lottery bid. Much of the grant is for support in assuring the structure of the Fort for the next fifty years and this involves English Heritage as well as the HLF. Trying to urge these two to get together and "extract digit" is quite impossible.

Meanwhile our visitor figures are slightly down - disappointing, though nowhere near the drop in the Town's figures. We suspect the usual reasons, the weather and the strong pound.

However one growing success has been the number of schools attending our "Evacuee Experience" day where the children and their teachers arrive suitably 1940 attired, labelled and carrying their suitcases and gas masks - the latter having been made in school following a briefing visit by our staff. The day is spent learning about rationing, wartime shopping, clothing, laundry and of course air raids. The siren wails; the kids race to the shelter; sounds of the air raid vibrate and, after the "all-clear", there are fires to be put out with stirrup pumps and much water. Gas masks and wartime memorabilia are studied and the young pupils sample a lesson in our replica WWII schoolroom. The children depart with a feel for the times of their grandparents.

The Dorset Museums Assessment Centre

DMAC offer the full range of Cultural Heritage NVQs.

Inclusive prices are -
£970 each for levels 3 to 5
£670 for level 2.

Single units can be arranged including G3 for AMA

Advice is available on financial assistance.

Contact Alisdair Murray
Tel: 01305 787243.

DMAC is a consortium of the Nothe Fort and Weymouth College.

Postcard Pieces

The Russell-Cotes

The 'diggers' have moved in and landscaping has begun in the final phase of the magnificent restoration of the Russell-Cotes Art Gallery & Museum. There have been a few surprises -all good we're pleased to report.

A garden gnome only 2 inches tall has been unearthed. The history attached to this gnome is quite delightful. It belonged to the children of Norman Sylvester, a curator at the Museum who lived in this remarkable building with his family from 1933 to 1958. His daughters, Joy, Ruth and Faith created a gnome garden with little pagodas and Chinese bridges.

Other finds have included a horses tooth, pieces of marble sculpture, sculpture plinth, tiles and even a headless doll!

The most important discovery has been the excavation of the original paths with the wrought iron footings to the decorative arches. This information, together with photographic evidence, has enabled their accurate reconstruction. Pieces of the tiled foundation of the Japanese summerhouse have also been found. The restoration of this, the pavilion, the rustic summerhouse and the Torii (the entrance to the Japanese shrine) will become part of future fundraising projects.

Planting of the garden is scheduled for the Autumn. The Russell-Cotes Art Gallery & Museum is open to the public at weekends 10.00- 5.00 pm. Entry is free.

Shaun Gamer, Museums Officer at the Russell-Cotes Art Gallery & Museum would like to hear from anybody who has information concerning the history of the garden. He can be contacted on 01202451812 or email - sgarner@russell-cotes.demon.co.uk.

Article 31 Founders Award.

The Russell-Cotes Art Gallery & Museum has been nominated as one of the first organisation's in Britain to receive an Article 31 Founders Award.

The awards are part of a growing national campaign steered by the Article 31 action network to allow children the right to participate fully in cultural life and the arts. This includes involving them in the decision making processes that shape children's services.

The award recognises the Museum's commitment to children's views following the very successful Russell-Cotes' Children's Consultancy project last year.

Eight local children were given the opportunity to become museum consultants for the day, advising senior management staff from the Museum on ways to improve it's services for children.

The report produced by the young consultants has been widely used by staff at the Museum to inform a huge range of decisions, from what to sell in the Museum shop to seating in the new cafe area.

The awards ceremony took place on July 31st at The Symphony Hall, Birmingham.

Shaftesbury Town Museum

Don't really have anything to report from up here in Shaftesbury, except perhaps:- 'People do still give things to museums'. Shaftesbury Town Museum has just acquired a free standing cast iron framed mangle. Must be one of the heftiest models produced. The rollers show little sign of wear and came complete with detachable drain tray. As a result we may have to re-think our laundry display in order to show it off to best advantage.

Beaminster Museum

Every one here has worked hard to produce our millennium exhibition "The way we were then" which ran from 12th to 31st August inclusive. The exhibition depicted life in rural Dorset around 1000 AD. Local characters, costumed suitably, illustrated the occupations of the time.

DORSET MUSEUMS ASSOCIATION CONSTITUTION

1. MISSION STATEMENT

The Dorset Museums Association exists to represent the museums of Dorset, and to support and encourage them in their endeavours to reach and maintain the highest standards of museum practice.

2. AIMS

2.1 To provide training through workshops, seminars, and presentations; to provide a library of relevant publications.

2.2 To provide a programme of special events.

2.3 To facilitate networking.

2.4 To publicise and promote the member museums and their activities.

2.5 To provide, or to co-ordinate the provision of publications, including a newsletter.

2.6 To lobby relevant people and organisations.

2.7 To liaise with:

- 1) Dorset Museums
- 2) Dorset local authorities
- 3) relevant people and organisations.

3. COMMITTEE

3.1 The Committee will comprise the following:

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| 1) OFFICERS | Chairman Secretary Treasurer |
| 2) MEMBERS | Seven (minimum number) |
| 3) CO-OPTIONS | Up to two at any one time, for a period of one year only. |
| 4) EX-OFFICIO | County Advisory Teacher County Museums Adviser South West Museums Council |

3.2 The Officers and Members to have three-year appointments, with one third of them retiring each year.

3.3 Committee members (Officers, Members and Co-options) to be drawn from professional museum workers and volunteers working in, or closely associated with the following museum types:

- Local Authority
- Ministry of Defence
- Independent
- Private and/or Commercial

This is to ensure that the interests of the various museums in Dorset are represented.

3.4 A minimum of four committee meetings will be held at regular intervals throughout the year, with four members forming a quorum.

3.5 Special, or emergency meetings may be called at other times, provided that committee members receive at least seven days' notice.

4 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

An Annual General Meeting will be held in the Autumn. All members will receive at least 14 days notice.

5 MEMBERSHIP

5.1 Membership is open to everyone working in, associated with, or interested in museums.

5.2 The following categories of membership are available:

- 1) **INSTITUTIONAL** This entitles the museum to:
 - a) two copies of each newsletter
 - b) one vote at the AGM.
 - c) eligibility for all paid and unpaid staff to attend social and training events and the AGM.
- 2) **INDIVIDUAL.** This entitles the individual to :
 - a) one copy of each newsletter
 - b) eligibility to attend social and training events and the AGM.
- 3) **AFFILIATED** (related and interested bodies) entitled to:
 - a) one copy of each newsletter
 - b) no voting rights.
 - c) eligibility to attend social and training events

Blandford Forum Museum

We felt considerable relief and pride when the refurbished museum was finally ready on time for re-opening by the Mayor of Blandford on April 22nd, 2000. It had been with great reluctance, back in 1998, that we agreed to be closed for the 1999 season, to prepare for a proposed extension and improvements to the building. So it was a huge disappointment when, in August 1999 after considerable expenditure on the project and nearly twelve months' of packing-up of displays by volunteers, we were told of the failure of the application for Lottery funding.

A subsequent proposal to try a second application, much-reduced but still requiring a professional designer, was not this time supported by the committee, who considered it would involve more expense with no guarantee of success and risked further months of closure in the 2000 season. At this point, the curator of the previous two years resigned.

Advice was then sought from DMA and others, on how to retain our national registration and still be able to re-open in April 2000. Improvements in disability access and aspects of museum management were advised, and an important necessity was a store with sufficiently stable conditions of temperature and humidity. Eventually, a far less costly plan was conceived, many new volunteers came forward, and Trust members responded generously to an appeal for funds. The now-augmented team of dedicated volunteers continued their efforts with increased urgency, and, through January, builders created the new store and made the other structural changes and repairs at minimal cost.

Elsewhere in the town, over the winter months, small displays of museum objects were set up to maintain public interest. We also, in cooperation with the Civic Society, ran a second series of lectures, which were well-attended, helped to keep members in touch and raised a good profit for the museum. Members' involvement was also encouraged by our newsletter, and social events such as the annual dinner and a summer outing.

The main theme of the Museum this year is "The Story of Blandford" and it includes (to name but a few): a diorama of the Great Fire of 1731; old photographs, paintings and maps; the town pillory; model houses; memorabilia of Alfred Stevens (the famous Blandford-born painter); Victorian domestic and agricultural items; and a WWII display.

Much approval has been expressed since the re-opening and visitor numbers are gradually increasing but we are frustrated that there are still a few people who, despite all our efforts at publicity and signs, say "Blandford Town Museum? Where is it?" (It is, by the way, in Bere's Passage, opposite the church!) But we hope continued efforts to spread the word will soon make it as well-known as our Georgian Town Hall!

The new season of talks for 2000 - 2001, arranged in conjunction with the Blandford and District Civic Society will be held at the Methodist Church Hall, Blandford, at 7.30 p.m. on the following Tuesdays:-
Sept 19th, 2000 Sq. Leader Colin Pomeroy "Military Dorset Today"
Oct 17th, 2000 Mr. John Smith "The Romans on Hod Hill"
Nov 21st, 2000 Mr. Richard Dagger "The Somerset and Dorset Railway"
Jan. 16th 2001 Mr. Peter Roberts "The history and work of the Verderers of the New Forest"
Feb 20th 2001 Dr. Betty Haines "Leather - what it is and what it does"
March 20th 2001 Mr. A. Barrett "William Barnes"
Entrance fee per lecture £2.00 (members), £2.50 (non-members). Contact: Pam Le Bas at the Museum, Bere's Yard, Market Place, Blandford or at 01258 454515.

The Tudor House

For those who may not know it, Tudor House, Weymouth, is a very small museum run entirely by volunteers. Our knowledge of present day management of museums has been very slight. Now, with the support of Janet Bell and the South West Museums Council we are moving forward and hope in due course to have a new management structure.



 **DMA** 

Christmas Party
A must for your Diary
Friday 1st December
Nothe Fort

People

A letter to the Editor -

Due to illness we were not able to attend the Christmas party but understand it was a great success - well done. However now seeing the light at the end of the tunnel, and hopes of a fuller recovery, we were able to visit Nothe Fort with our local branch of the Multiple Sclerosis Society (Wareham), being voluntary helpers. It was a super day with a splendid meal (Tea) by the catering staff who were most caring and helpful. Our many thanks to all concerned.

Maurice and Lorna Pascall

"Chippy" Pearce

We have heard with great sadness of the death of "Chippy" Pearce, a staunch member of the DMA and one time member of the committee. We shall all miss him.

Next Issue

The next issue will appear in December 2000. Copy/articles are requested to the editor by the end of November please.

Pictures and photographs gratefully received and will be returned.

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The Dorset Museums Diary - 2000

August

| | | | |
|------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| To Oct 1st | <i>A Gentleman in Khaki</i> | Boer War Exhibition | Red House |
| To 29 Sept | <i>Korean War</i> | Exhibition | Keep Dorchester |

September

| | | | |
|-------|---------------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| 9-10 | Cheese Festival | | Sturminster Newton Mill & Museum |
| 16-17 | <i>Spreading the Word</i> | Civic Trust weekend History of writing and printing | Priest's House |
| 22 | DMA AGM | | Russell-Cotes |

October

| | | | |
|----|----------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| 25 | <i>Witches and Wizards</i> | Families event | Priest's House |
|----|----------------------------|----------------|----------------|

November

| | | | |
|----------|---------------------------------|---|---------------------|
| 4 | DMA Cathy Callow lecture | | Town Hall, Wimborne |
| 6-24 Dec | <i>A Military Connection</i> | Exhibition - History of Christchurch Barracks | Red House |

December

| | | | |
|---|----------------------------|--|------------|
| 1 | DMA Christmas Party | | Nothe Fort |
|---|----------------------------|--|------------|

Published spring, summer and Christmas by the Dorset Museums Association: Editor - Alisdair Murray, Barrack Road, Nothe Fort, Weymouth, Dorset, DT4 8UF Telephone 01305 787243. The views expressed are those of each author and do not necessarily represent those of the Dorset Museums Association.

DORSET MUSEUMS ASSOCIATION COMMITTEE

Chairman Dawn Webster - The Priest's House Museum
Deputy Chairman Rodney Alcock - Weymouth Museum
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Secretary Jim Hunter.-.The Red House Museum
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Bumble Newman - Sherborne Museum
Sophie Brien - West Dorset Museums Service
Bill Moore - Shaftesbury Museum

Programme Sub-Committee

Janet Bell
Rodney Alcock
Alisdair Murray

Dorset Museums Association - three dates for your diary

- | | | |
|---------|----------------------|--|
| 22 Sept | AGM | Russell-Cotes Museum and Gallery, Bournemouth Talk and tour of museum <i>10.00am for 10.30</i> |
| 4 Nov | Cathy Callow Lecture | "Museums Face the Future" At present there are two speakers - Caroline Dudley of the Royal Cornwall Museum and Stephen Price of Bristol City Museums and Galleries <i>Town Hall Wimborne 10.00am for 10.30</i> |
| 1 Dec | DMA Christmas Party | Party cheer by Annette Instructive entertainment by Rodney and Alisdair <i>Nothe Fort, Weymouth 11.00am for 11.30</i> |

A programme of seminars and lectures organised by both the DMA and SWFMAG will be announced shortly. **As usual reminders and booking forms will be sent out approximately one month prior to each event.**