



**Athelstan Museum**  
Capturing the history of Malmesbury

## FRIENDS OF ATHELSTAN MUSEUM

### Newsletter Winter 2016

#### MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

After some dark and gloomy days at the start of 2016 we now have had a few clear frosty days brightening the town and the Museum. The "Wiltshire's Story in 100 Objects" exhibit has been carefully packed away by the collection team, and sent on its way to its next venue.

The challenge for small museums in these times is sustainability in terms of funding and volunteers. To assist with this we have several aims for the year. The first is to grow a ring-fenced resilience fund in order to finance major projects. Secondly, we want to gather legacies to ensure the future sustainability of the Museum. Another continuing aim is to grow our membership, so we will be leafleting the villages and encouraging you to persuade a neighbour or friend to join us.

Our main focus for the Collection will be the Malmesbury Coin Hoard, its conservation and eventual display. We will involve volunteers in small projects to help with this, and will be applying for grants as well as holding fundraising events ourselves.

We have begun an Oral History project to record the memories of life and work in the town from the people of Malmesbury and surroundings. If you know of anyone who has a story to tell and would be willing to be interviewed, please contact us. It is a short voice recording, which will then be transcribed and made available for all to hear.

We have an increasing number of enthusiastic volunteers. As you will have seen in the press, the demographics of volunteering are changing. The retirement age has gone up, meaning there are fewer early retired people coming into the pool.

We are therefore fortunate to have such a strong volunteer team, giving time, skills and energy to Athelstan Museum. Research shows that volunteers in a community get satisfaction from transferring their skills, learning new ones, meeting new people and receiving further learning and development when required. It increases both their wellbeing and that of the client experience, in this case, our Museum visitors. Reading our visitor book you see many positive comments regarding the quality of the help and information given by the volunteer on duty.

As you know, we rely on donations for our income. To augment it and to contribute to sustainability, the Museum Shop is now a growing part of our operation. We calculate the average spend per visitor and aim to increase it by tempting them with books, cards, gifts and small pocket money items. We use local artists to supply the artwork where we possible, and images of items in the Collection on gifts such as bags, tea towels, mugs, and soon, notebooks.

Work is being done on the visitor experience so that we can track satisfaction rates and identify areas for improvement. If you have any comments or feedback for us please email me at

[chairman@athelstanmuseum.org.uk](mailto:chairman@athelstanmuseum.org.uk) or leave a note at the front desk. I am always interested to hear from you and welcome a dialogue with members. Your views are important to us.

Sharon Nolan, Chair

#### NEWS

**Janette Williams** has been a marvellous supporter of the museum - she has a particular interest in lace - for nearly eight years. She has come in on a regular basis



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to demonstrate lace-making. She has taught many children the elements at family days, and through her we have attracted two spectacular modern lace exhibitions. She produced the booklet, *Old Malmesbury Lacemakers* which is on sale at the museum. She has put Malmesbury Lace on the map. Now sadly she is retiring. She has moved and the journey is not practical. She doesn't want a big fuss but we shall mark the occasion. Thank you, Janette, for all that you have done.

**Ceiling collapse:** Just before Christmas when we had that torrential rain the Town Hall sprang a leak and water gathered in the ceiling above the museum. Luckily a small dribble came through initially and the volunteers on duty very sensibly cleared the shop area and had just finished when with a crash a large section of the ceiling fell in.



The Town Council accepted responsibility and paid for the repair which fortunately was able to be completed over the Christmas closure. A lot of hard work for our volunteers in clearing up the mess - considerable - and sorting through the stock. It is now as good as new; better in fact as the panels have been reinforced and the entire upstairs ceiling has been re-painted.

**Trevor Baynham** has been a long-standing member and supporter of the museum. We have just learnt with regret of his death.

The collection at his funeral has most generously been donated to the Museum and we are very grateful.

### AND NOW FOR BETTER NEWS

**Wiltshire's Story in 100 Objects:** We have had to say goodbye to Wiltshire's Story in 100 Objects this month as they are continuing their tour of the major museum in the county - next stop Trowbridge. The exhibit proved to be very popular with many fascinating objects, from a 5,500 year old bowl to a Moonraker plate crafted by Mary White, who lived in Malmesbury about 40 years ago. The exhibit team had fun putting up and taking it down. We're also lucky enough to have a couple of the travelling cases for a few more months so be sure to stop by and see more items from our Collection.

**Capital Appeal:** You will have received an appeal pack for an appeal to boost our reserves. Please support the appeal and please do consider very seriously leaving a legacy to support Athelstan Museum. For those who are Family Members there are additional codicil forms at the museum if you need them. A bequest would make such a difference.

**Late night shopping** - as usual a great success. We think over 160 people came to see us and try our mull, cider this year not wine. Which do you prefer? Let us know for next year. Our shop sales benefited too which leads on to:

**Museum Shop:** There is a continuing refurbishment going on here and there is a wider range of stock; good for casual or minor presents. I think some stockings benefited too. And there is an extensive range of history books and booklets.

**Committee News:** Three members of council attended the Wiltshire Museum Group quarterly meeting to network with other museums and hear from our new



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Wiltshire Museums officer, Heather Perry, with updates on the SW Museum Development programme, the Creative Wiltshire project, and Sustainable Volunteering amongst other things.



We were then treated to a (freezing) tour of the Stones, and the new visitor centre which is magnificent. We also scrutinised their museum shop, designed from scratch, as a benchmarking exercise.

**Malmesbury History Society:** This has been formed, as you probably know, with Tony McAleavy as their chairman. We are looking forward to working with them on a variety of projects and also to hold joint meetings.

### FUTURE PROGRAMME

**Family days:** There are two events over the half term. On Monday 15<sup>th</sup> February 2016 an old favourite - lace making for six year olds plus. And on Friday 19<sup>th</sup> February 2016 it's time to make models of the Malmesbury fire pump and find out how it works.

Both sessions 1.30-4.30 pm. Children need to be accompanied by a responsible adult. Parents, demonstrate your model making skills.

**Revealing the History of Houses:** 18<sup>th</sup> February 2016 2pm in the Town Hall. This is an illustrated talk by Dorothy Treasure of Wiltshire Buildings Record Office. Dorothy is a well-known expert in architectural history and an excellent and enjoyable speaker. Focusing on, but not exclusively, Malmesbury houses this is a joint venture with the Civic Trust. Tickets a very modest £2.

**Hidden favourites from the Museum's collection:** From Mid February onwards we shall be mounting an exhibition of the Collection team's favourite objects, some not often seen. If you have a favourite object from the collection, the team would love to know.

**Quiz evening:** 12<sup>th</sup> March 2016 7.30-10pm Assembly Room, Malmesbury Town Hall. Usual format - teams of 4. Tickets £9, available at the museum, to include an excellent supper. Drinks available from the bar and there will be a raffle.

**10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Party:** 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016 6.30pm. It is 10 years to this day that the Friends of Athelstan Museum took over the running of the museum so we thought we should do a bit of celebrating and discrete bragging! It will be held in the museum but the Town Council is allowing us to spill over into the TIC space so we will have plenty of room. Wine, canapés and CAKE will be served at no charge, although as always all contributions gratefully received! Do come: we have achieved so much - let's have a really good party.

**Concert:** Early June

**AGM:** 12<sup>th</sup> September 2016: Annual General Meeting followed by a talk and slide show on Robert Holford's Westonbirt from Mrs Joy Bell - "Robert Holford's Westonbirt and the discovery of the servant bells".



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**Sherston Weekend:** 24-26<sup>th</sup> September 2016. Another anniversary: one thousand years since the Battle of Sherston where Rattlebone won fame helping Edmund Ironside fight the Danes. The Saxons won the battle, but it was all in vain. Canute became king a few months later. A full programme.

**Milton Abbas:** A trip in the autumn, perhaps early October, to see the town and Abbey (founded by Athelstan) and a Capability Brown landscape.

**Malmesbury Coin Hoard:** The museum was privileged to be able to acquire the fabulous Malmesbury Coin Hoard through generous donations from our members, visitors and prestigious grants. We are now applying for additional grants and planning fundraising to cover the costs of the very specialist conservation of these locally-found coins along with a dedicated display case. Keep an eye out for notices of talks and more events around the hoard which will help enlighten us on the Romans and their times.

**Collection Disposal:** We are starting the work to de-assess a number of items currently stored in Hullavington awaiting disposal. We will be following the standard Museum Association guidelines for disposals. For items in good condition we will try to find homes in other museums. We will keep you updated with the outcome.

## SUBSCRIPTIONS

A few members of FOAM have not yet renewed for the current subscription year. If you are one of these then please contact Sue Winlow, FOAM Membership Secretary, Town Hall, Malmesbury (or [membership@athelstanmuseum.org.uk](mailto:membership@athelstanmuseum.org.uk)). (The subscription year runs from 1<sup>st</sup> September to 31<sup>st</sup> August.)

## DISCOUNTS

The following traders are offering 10% discount to members on production of their membership cards. We are very grateful to them for their support.

Jackdaw Café in the Town Hall

Flowers Galore, High Street

E & S Ltd, on selected items,  
hardware shop, High Street

Hyams Autos on servicing and repairs,  
High Street/Cross Hayes

A4 stationers for art materials,  
High Street

C H White and Son, cycle shop,  
High Street

Malmesbury Garden Centre

Judy Jones Gardening Services  
(07973 548615)

Adeline's Farm Vegetable Boxes  
(Ros Holland 07970 729899)

J & M Flooring, on selected items,  
11 High Street

## FOAM CONTACTS

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