

Letter from Chair of the Trustees

Dear members and supporters

I hope you have enjoyed the wonderful Athelstan 1100 Exhibition. It has been great to receive your positive feedback and to have the Museum full of excited visitors. We couldn't have done it without you so once again thank you to all of you who have given donations and your time to make this wonderful event possible.

Sharon Nolan
Chair of the Trustees, Athelstan Museum Malmesbury
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ATHELSTAN 1100 EXHIBITION

Our exhibits loaned from national institutions have now returned safely home but our more local Athelstan exhibits will remain on display until the end of Wessex Week.
<https://wessex-week.org/>

Whit and Kim Hanks, main sponsors of our Museum Athelstan 1100 exhibition came to visit the exhibition in July, before they flew home to Texas. We presented them with the Exhibition Guide and gave them a guided tour. They were very interested in the Charter and loved the Minety School children's Athelstan artwork. The artwork reminded them of folk art.



Image Sharon Nolans

As we had all hoped, both visitor numbers and shop takings showed a massive increase.

Last year the total number of visitors for July was 1351. This year, with the exhibition starting on July 2nd, visitor numbers were 2445, a great result. August figures were also showing an increase of over 20%.

Kingston-upon-Thames Saxon Fayre

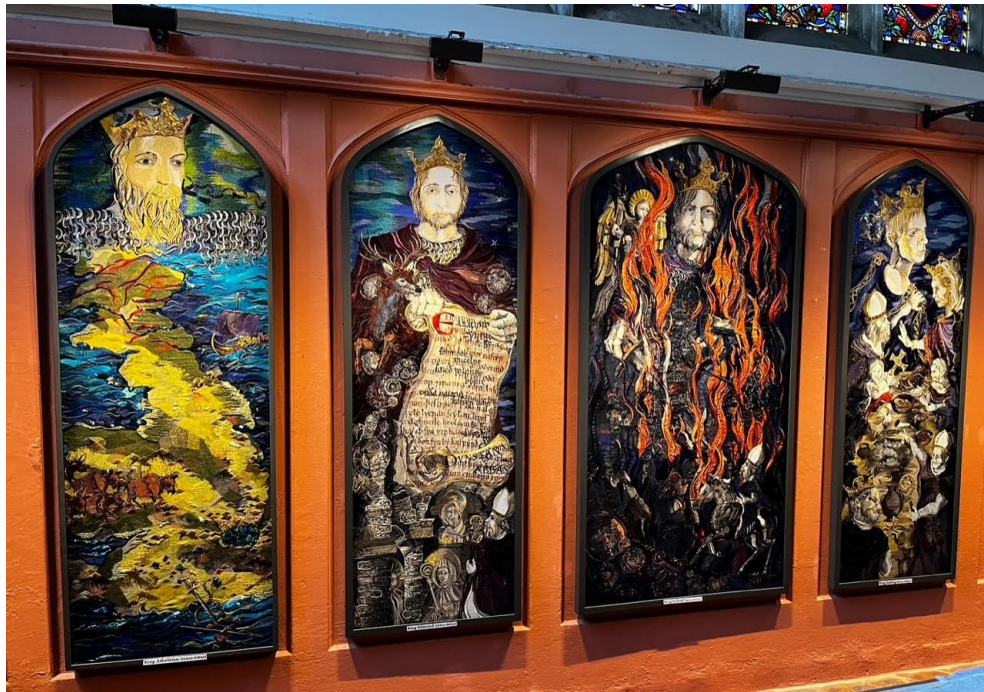
King Athelstan was crowned in Kingston-upon-Thames and buried, as he wished, in Malmesbury, where his tomb remains.

In recognition of this link between the two towns, a Kingston delegation visited the Museum on 29 June to open the Athelstan 1100 exhibition. In return, on 27 July, six Museum volunteers (Sharon Nolan, Susan and Terry Mockler, Chris Juson, Jackie Tong and myself) manned a stall at Kingston's Saxon Fayre. We responded to lots of questions from visitors (young, old and Saxon-costumed) about Malmesbury and Athelstan's association with the town; and we were busy all day with sales of books and merchandise from the Museum Shop and the Athelstan 1100 project.



Jackie, Susan, Terry and Sharon with visitors to the stall. Image Bill Reed

Sharon and Susan were invited to All Saints' Church to view the spectacular embroideries depicting Kings of England crowned at Kingston. The first to be completed, in 2021, was that of Athelstan; now four of the seven are in place and you will find the full story in "Seven Saxons Embroidery Project" on the website www.allsaintskingston.co.uk or here.



The Embroidery Project :Athelstan (924-939), Edmund (939-946), Eadred (946-955), Eadwig (955-959). Image Bill Reed

We are grateful to Emma and her team at Kingston Museum for inviting us, and providing such a well-placed stall and gazebo at no cost to us. Plans are in hand to repeat the experience next year, when the coronation of Athelstan in 925 will be commemorated.

Bill Reed, July 2024

We have only achieved our Athelstan 1100 success with the help of the team of volunteers.

Become a Museum Volunteer

Why not join our enthusiastic team of Museum volunteers? Learn about the town and the surrounding area, meet new people, give something back to your community and have some fun! The amount of time you commit is entirely up to you from a couple of hours a month to several hours a week.

If anyone is interested in joining our vibrant and friendly team please contact Bridget at barobison12@gmail.com

Members' Tea @ The Grange

Nearly 60 Friends of Athelstan Museum Members came to the Thank You tea party on 1 September. It was a pleasure to welcome you all to The Grange and share some of the history of the house including a map of the entire Cole Park estate dated 1921. Generous volunteers helped provide a lavish selection of cakes and the rain held off long enough for everyone to enjoy tea in the garden. I am hoping that this could become a regular event - we could not run the Museum without the loyalty and generosity of our Membership - all 441 of you!

Marie-Clare Brind - Membership

Malmesbury Voices

I have been working with Julia Bowen and Stefano Vandelli who are compiling a history of Malmesbury's Youth Exchanges with Niebüll, which began in the 1950's.

Bob Brastock and Chris White have kindly allowed me to interview them, and their memories of these exchanges and their Youth Leader "Skip" Cartmell are now on the Voices screen, in addition to the account Jill Stephens contributed a few years ago.

The picture to the right is a photo of the Youth Exchange at Niebüll in 1955. Flying Monk Radio have now posted Youth Exchange memories on:



<https://flyingmonkcommunityprojects.weebly.com/niebull-youth-exchange-70th-anniversary.html>

Malmesbury Voices now has its own page in the "Listen again" section of the Flying Monk Community Radio website.

<https://flyingmonkcommunityprojects.weebly.com/malmesbury-voices-collection.html>

The first three of a series of interviews with Ray Sanderson are now on the screen, with his memories of childhood in Brokenborough, his work as a driving instructor, and the extraordinary "Round Britain Non-Stop" fund-raising exercise he took part in.

The Voices collection now comprises well over 300 items. To facilitate searches, Museum Volunteer Peter Holland has added an on-screen keyboard which allows visitors to enter part of a name or part of a title. A list then pops up of relevant items. One nice aspect of this is that if you type in "NEW", all the recently added items come up. My thanks to Peter for the time he has spent on this.

Bill Reed

Positive Disposal in Action

Like all museums, Athelstan has many items in its collection that were taken in before a clear Collections Development Policy was put in place. The policy now is that *"The Museum will ... collect items relating to the history and heritage of the Malmesbury area. Items falling outside this remit will not normally be collected unless they are of very significant intrinsic interest."*

Those of you that have seen our collection store on the balcony of the Rausing will know that we have very limited space. If we are to release some items to enable the acquisition of relevant things into the future we need to dispose of those that do not meet our policy requirements. Museum bodies, such as the Museums Association have recently highlighted that the importance of the disposal of items is as much of a key museum activity as acquisition.

As an Accredited Museum, we obviously cannot just throw things out! We have a responsibility to try and keep things that have been accepted into our collection within the public domain and there are various stages that have to be gone through.

However, almost by definition, most of the items we are attempting to dispose of are the sorts of things of which there are already too many in the collections of other museums, such as agricultural implements. Therefore, even after carefully attempting to pass them on to other public bodies, they often end up being sold off for a few pounds, or even going to the recycling centre.

It was therefore with enormous pleasure that we very recently found a much more appropriate home for one of our many items of clothing with no known connection to Malmesbury or the villages.

Janet Casselden, a member of the Management Team with a particular interest in textiles, suggested that a quilted underskirt, which she noted had been dated wrongly, would probably be of interest to the Collection of the Quilters Guild of Great Britain. Rather than offering this more widely to other museums, I therefore contacted them directly; sending what (very) little we had recorded about the garment, and some photographs.



The response from their Curator, Heather Audin, was immediate and enthusiastic. She identified the item as being older than had been estimated on its accession into the Athelstan collection (late 18th century, rather than late 19th century) and being rare in its floral designs, which included roses, thistles and leeks.

Image Quilted pattern - rose thistle and leek. Both images Janet Casselden

Janet was attending the Festival of Quilts at the NEC in August, right, so we were able to take the skirt with us for hand over (with all the correct paperwork!) to the Curator.

The underskirt was much admired and welcomed by numerous members of the guild and Heather was able to tell us a bit more about it even on this first sighting. She promised to do some further research which she will share with us.



Apparently underskirts or petticoats like these were professionally quilted in sections and a design like this one would have probably been commissioned by a family of

some significant standing. Heather noted that the warm woollen lining went right up to the waistband and that the lining was a closely woven and good quality fabric.

Shop News

The Museum Shop took to the road for Petticoat Lane as part of the Malmesbury Carnival celebrations. Below is a view of our very colourful stall.



Image Bill Reed

Although it seems a long way off we have already started to plan for Museum Shop Sunday on 1st December 2024. This is part of an international campaign to highlight the vital role of retail in helping arts, cultural and heritage venues to survive and thrive. Worldwide over 2,000 visitor attractions take part. Now is the time to put the date in your diary.

In the shop we aim to showcase local authors. One popular book is “The Same Tree” by Chas Gould. As background Chas tells us that the title refers to the view that everybody in the world is a leaf on the same tree and therefore in helping others we are in some way helping ourselves.

The book also explores the idea of finding a positive purpose to our lives in order to give us a sense of direction and achievement. The story follows four individuals who are each seeking a purpose to their lives. Their separate paths are set over three time periods including 7th century Jerusalem and 11th century Malmesbury.



What's On

We have some great autumn events lined up:

Monday 7th October - 7pm, **Athelstan Museum AGM**

This will include a review of Athelstan 1100

Thursday 24 October - 7pm, Dr Bendor Grosvenor **SOLD OUT**

Bendor will talk about "**The Invention of British Art**", he is an art historian best known from the BBC series *Britain's Lost Masterpieces* and *Fake or Fortune?*

Wednesday 30 October - 7pm, John Hammond

Halloween. John Hammond will talk about the origins and real meaning of Halloween which in recent times has been all but lost.

Friday 22 November - 7pm, Bradley Hopper

Noonans Coin Specialists. Noonan's is the specialist auction House which kindly arranged the loan of the Anglo-Saxon coins for the Athelstan 1100 exhibition.

Don't forget Sunday 1 December, **Museum Shop Sunday**

Tickets & further details for all Museum Events available from our website

<https://www.athelstanmuseum.org.uk> or in the Museum.

Forthcoming exhibitions

As we say goodbye to our wonderful Athelstan 1100 loans, between 1st October and 5th November the more local exhibits from our Athelstan 1100 Exhibition are still on display to support [Wessex Week](#). In particular the wonderful digital manuscript display is centre stage and the story of Athelstan is still told in the Mezzanine area.

We will be moving much nearer to the present day for our following exhibition starting in November 2024. By popular demand we are returning to Malmesbury Railway with another chance to see some of the information from the 2022 exhibition.

Malmesbury Station. Image Athelstan Museum



I hope you all enjoy the Museum website. We have updated the "News and Newsletters" page to show more recent newsletters, a good place to remind yourself of our previous activities. Finally, a polite reminder for anyone who hasn't paid that Membership renewals were due on 1st September.

Anne Goodyer