



Wells & Mendip Museum and Visitor Information Service “Home of Wells City Archives” Newsletter

Issue 13

January-March 2013

Welcome to Wells & Mendip Museum's newsletter with information about exhibitions, talks, events and developments at the Museum. If you would like to receive a copy by e-mail please contact admin@wellsmuseum.org.uk

Winter opening hours

Monday-Saturday 11am-4pm. Closed Sundays

Museum Exhibitions



New Mendip Caving Displays

The Museum has been successful in gaining a grant of £4000 from the Mendip Hills AONB Sustainable Development Fund to create two new permanent displays of the history of Mendip caving, including the recent discovery by a small team one of whom was the Museum's Chairman Martin Grass, of Reservoir Cave and *The Frozen Deep* at Cheddar. It is planned that these displays will open to the public at the end of March.

Quarry Faces exhibition– extended by popular demand until the end of February



This display has been created by Quarry Faces, the locally based project which is documenting the history of the quarrying industry in the Mendip Hills. Quarry Faces is hosted by the Somerset Earth Science Centre and supported by grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Mendip Quarry Producers, and the Mendip Hills AONB Sustainable Development Fund. The project is working closely with schools, local societies and community groups, and has organised a number of successful events to explain the work of the project and encourage local people to share their photographs and memories. A second community event will be held at Wells & Mendip Museum, on Wednesday 30 January, see below.

Children play at stone breaking in Croscombe in the early 20th century (courtesy of Hazel Tucker).

Quarry Faces – Talking Teashop Event FREE

Wednesday 30 January 2-4pm

Doors open from 1pm for lunchtime refreshments & to view the exhibition FREE. An illustrated talk by Robin Thornes, Project Coordinator. Please bring along any photos or other quarry-related items, and your memories! All welcome.

The Quarry Faces team is keen to hear from any individuals or groups who would like to find out more about the project. It will also be contacting schools in the area to encourage them to participate in its popular and successful programme of workshops, a key element of which are sessions in which pupils record interviews with retired quarry workers.

For more information visit www.quarryfaces.org.uk or contact the Project Coordinator Robin Thornes robinthornes@quarryfaces.org.uk



History of Policing in Wells

19 March to 16 July

This exhibition, which has been researched and put together by volunteer Bob Love, aims to showcase some of the material available in the City Archives at the Museum and is being made available for public viewing for the first time. The exhibition relates to the original Wells City Police Force, formed in 1836 and surviving until 1856, and demonstrates the range of documents which are held in the Archives; documents which in most cases have never been properly studied and allowed to take their place in the rich story of the City. The force itself has not been the subject of academic study and its existence was effectively unknown to historians of policing. The Museum has also been fortunate enough to have obtained on loan from the Blake Museum, Bridgwater this truncheon which actually belonged to the Wells force during this period and can be attributed to the first officer to carry it.

Stargazing live Events

Saturdays 12 January and 19 January at 6pm

Local astronomer, Chris Starr from "Starscape" will be hosting these two events to coincide with the BBC's "Stargazing Live" programmes. Saturday 12 January – "Discover Jupiter and the Winter Sky" and Saturday 19 January – "Discover the Moon and the Winter Sky". He will also be turning his telescopes on the Milky Way star fields and clusters, the great Orion Nebula, the Pleiades and other wonders of the winter night sky (weather permitting). There will also be a mini planetarium and an exhibition. Tickets £3 for adults, £1 for children; refreshments will be available. For more information and to book, contact the Museum 01749 673477.

Chris will also be launching a new Wells and Mendip Space Society.

NEW HONORARY ARCHIVIST

Museum Trustee Jean Imray, who was a former Archivist for the Wells City Council, resigned from her trusteeship on 11 December after serving over 11 years on the Board. However, in order to retain a strong link with the Museum Jean willingly agreed to become the Museum's Honorary Archivist. Her role will be to support and advise both the Museum's Curator and Archivist.

NEW RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES – City Archives to open in March

Is your New Year resolution to undertake research into your family history, the story of your own town house or village? If so, then the Museum can provide new opportunities in 2013. From March, material from the City Archives will be available to readers for additional hours and on a professional basis. The regular Readers' slot will be on a Tuesday morning, from 9.30 to 12.00. Visits will be by prior appointment only; you will be able to make an appointment by letter, phone, email or in person. The Archivist, of the Wells City Archives, Dr Julia Wood, is usually in the Museum on Mondays from 9 - 5pm and Tuesdays from 9 - 12.30pm. Her email address is archives@wellsmuseum.org.uk.

Appeal – A laptop is one of the items of equipment we need for the re-opening of the Wells City Archives to the public. Julia requests that if anyone has a laptop which they no longer need, they might consider donating it to us. Do get in touch!

2013 MUSEUM CALENDAR – available in the Shop

At the end of last year the Museum produced a calendar for 2013 **Wells, Past & Present**, as a thank you present to its sponsors, partners and many volunteers. It includes historic photographs from its own Phillips Collection, together with recent photographs by Mid Somerset News & Media, Stephen Tudsbery-Turner (whose 2011 book **Wells Through Time** is also still available in the Museum Shop), and others. Buy now at the bargain price of £5.

MEMORIES OF MENDIP HOSPITAL by Josie Bosley



We anticipate being able to bring this publication back into print and for sale in the Shop early in January at a price of £9.99. It will also be available at the same price in a Print-on-Demand version from our website – www.wellsmuseum.org.uk. The book was first published in 2000 and is a remarkable insight into how the Hospital coloured Josie's life. It also provides a revealing look at the psychiatric hospital and how it served the people of Wells and district. The Museum would like to thank designers Dr Robin Rees & Henry Rothwell, as well as Josie's daughter Jane Weightman, who has donated the rights and all profits to support the Museum.

NEW ICHTHYOSAUR DISPLAY



During November conservation specialist Nigel R. Larkin cleaned and restored the Museum's large Ichthyosaur in the Entrance Hall. The work was made possible through a grant from The Geologists' Association **Curry Fund**, which has offered a second grant to improve its presentation with detailed captions, photographs, an original 19th century portrait of the local ichthyosaur collector Thomas Hawkins, a magnifying glass to see the remains of the creature's last meal, and additional contemporary fossils.

SHOP REFURBISHMENT

Visitors will be welcome, but apologies are offered for any inconvenience caused by refurbishments to the Shop during January/February. Relatively new furniture and fittings have been purchased, at a nominal price, from The Bishop's Palace, which will considerably upgrade the shop displays and Reception area. In addition, the **Armandine Gallery** of Sadler Street will be creating a new display of historic prints of the history of Wells and surrounding places, which will also be available for purchase.

FINDS DAYS

No new dates for visits by the Finds Liaison Officer, Laura Burnett, have been arranged as she is about to start maternity leave and interim arrangements have not been finalised. Further details will appear in the March Newsletter.

CONSTANTIA WYN



This seal, on part of a broken 18th century wine bottle found during the excavations in the Museum garden, has travelled a long way. "Wyn" means "wine" in Dutch, and research has shown that it has come all the way from the first winery in South Africa that was founded by the Cape Governor Simon van der Stel in 1685. The winery's carefully restored buildings have been declared National Monuments and are maintained by the Groot Constantia Trust. A similar fragment was found on the beach in Chesapeake Bay, Delaware and research on that fragment revealed that it originated from the wreck of *The Severn* that sailed from Bristol in

1774! Apparently the wine that it would have contained was a fine dessert wine, which is still made today. We hope to obtain a bottle or two! For display only, of course.

COMING EVENTS

2013 Mendip Hills Annual Heritage Day

Saturday 16 February POSTPONED UNTIL 20 APRIL.

Full details later. Do get in touch if you would like to make a contribution. Meanwhile there are now two other excellent conferences in February to satisfy your interests, see below.

Philip Rahtz – Archaeologist

A day conference to celebrate his life & work in Somerset

Saturday 2 February at the Kings of Wessex Academy, Cheddar, BS27 3AQ.

Organised by Somerset County Council, SANHS & the Society for Medieval Archaeology

Programme includes contribution from Lorna Watts, Mick Aston, Bob Croft, Roberta Gilchrist & John Blair. Tickets must be ordered in advance, price £15 & students £10. Full details and tickets from heritagecentre@somerset.gov.uk or Helena or Bev on 01823 278805.

Somerset County Council presents

THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE SEVERN ESTUARY AND BEYOND

Saturday 9 February 9am - 4.30pm

A day conference presenting the most exciting archaeological discoveries from the Severn Estuary region, from major excavations at Hinkley and Steart in Somerset to prehistoric human footprints on the Gwent coast and the fantastically preserved finds from the Newport medieval ship. The latest discoveries from Aller in Somerset will be revealed as will the mysterious interaction between prehistoric humans and beavers. The highlight is Must Farm, Cambridgeshire, the 2012 British Archaeological Awards 'Project' and 'Discovery' winner.



Tickets £15, includes buffet lunch, tea and coffee; book now at <http://tickets.strodetheatre.co.uk/>

Strode Theatre, Strode College, Church Road, Street, Somerset, BA16 0AB.

BOOKS WANTED

Sometime in the Spring we plan to hold a book sale to raise funds for the Museum. We will sell second-hand fiction and non-fiction, paperback and hardback and DVDs, as long as they are in good condition. How about using the long winter evenings to sort through your attics and bookshelves? De-clutter and raise much needed Museum funds at the same time! Books should be handed to the Museum Reception with a note that they are for the attention of Sue Marley. Any queries – contact Joan Goddard (01934 732760) or Sue Marley (01749 673477).

REGULAR SOCIETY EVENTS

Mendip Society (MS)

Somerset Wildlife Trust talks (SWT)

Wells Civic Society talks (WCS)

Wells Natural History & Archaeology talks (WNHAS)

7.30pm Wednesday 9 January. **WCS. AGM** followed by **Development & design in the historic context of Wells** by Kevin Hunt, Associate Director – Planning & Development, Jones Lang Lasalle.

2.30pm Tuesday 15 January. **MS. My Life with Shire Horses** by Mike Horler.

7.30pm Tuesday 22 January. **SWT. 100 Years of the Wildlife Trusts** by Simon Nash, Chief Executive of Somerset Wildlife Trust.

7.30pm Friday 1 February. **WNHAS. Birds of the Somerset Levels** by James Packer

2.30pm Tuesday 12 February. **MS. The Great Crane Project** by Amy King.

7.30pm Wednesday 13 February. **WCS. The development of Wookey Hole Caves** by Chris Godchild & Gayle Pennington, Duty Managers at Wookey Hole Caves.

7.30pm Tuesday 26 February. **SWT. The Great Crane Project** by Damon Bridge.

7.30pm Friday 1 March. **WNHAS. AGM** followed by **The other Phillips Collection** by Ann-Marie Wilkinson, Chair of the Somerset and Dorset Family History Society.

2.30pm Tuesday 12 March. **MS. The Hyltons of Ammerdown** by Dr Janet Tall.

7.30pm Wednesday 13 March. **WCS. Thomas Fowler & the Connect Youth of Wells.**

7.30pm Tuesday 26 March. **SWT. The Rocky Shores of Somerset** by marine biologist Dr Mark Ward.

New Sponsors



The museum would again like to thank **Morris & Perry (Gurney Slade Quarries) Ltd** and the **Wells Evening Society** for their generous sponsorship towards the redisplay of the Geology Gallery and **Geniprinting** for their sponsorship towards the new display panels, now including a facsimile of our famous Elizabethan Mendip Mappe. Additional sponsors during the autumn have been **Christopher & Elizabeth Hawkes**, the **Westbury Society** and the **Sir Isaac Newton Lodge**.

Become a Friend of Wells & Mendip Museum

If you are not already a Friend please join now; the annual ticket for individual membership is only £7.50 or £12 for family membership. Museum membership entitles you to free entry to the museum and all exhibitions for 12 months, regularly emailed newsletters, and free use of the museum library for research, free entry to WNHAS lectures, invitations to selected previews and openings of museum exhibitions as well as a 10% discount on purchases from the museum shop. For more details and an application form, contact 01749 673477 or admin@wellsmuseum.org.uk

Become a Volunteer

We are looking for more volunteers to help with front of house and visitor information, particularly on weekends. If you would like to join our welcoming team we can offer you a varied role providing local & regional information to visitors, making accommodation bookings, selling concert/event and entrance tickets and dealing with shop sales as well as free membership of our Friends Scheme, an opportunity to work in an interesting environment and gain experience for your C.V. There are also other opportunities in areas of collection and archive management, marketing, exhibitions and website.

Data protection and email addresses. If you have received this newsletter by email we clearly hold your email address. If you do not wish to receive information in this way, please let us know.

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