



Wells & Mendip Museum

and Visitor Information Service
"Home of Wells City Archives"

Newsletter

Issue 15

June – Sept 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

Time Team's Mick Aston dies

The archaeologist and broadcaster, who found fame with the Channel 4 series, passed away on Sunday 23 June aged 66. Mick lived in Somerset and was its first county archaeologist. He opened the new buildings at our Museum in 2002.

Congratulations

Allen Cotton, of Glastonbury, was awarded an OBE for services to agriculture and to the community in Somerset, in the recent Queen's Birthday Honours. Allen served as a trustee of our Museum (1989-2012) and was Treasurer for 16 years. He continues to act as the Museum's Honorary Curator of Photographs.

Summer opening hours

Monday-Saturday 10am-5pm. Closed Sundays

This summer we are hosting four exciting art exhibitions as well as welcoming visitors to our new permanent exhibition, Netherworld of Mendip. We are also involved in two festivals: the **Mendip Hills Festival of Archaeology** in July and then in September we will be celebrating the fascinating geology of the Mendip Hills with **MENDIP ROCKS! 2013**. More details of all this and other news below...

Museum Exhibitions

Peter Coate RWA

Fifty years of landscape painting of the Mendip Hills and the Somerset Levels

6 July – 3 August

Peter Coate was born in Somerset and has spent most of his life here. After training at Chelsea Art School he became the first qualified Art Teacher at Wells Cathedral School, where he taught for 9 years, and was elected to the Royal West of England Academy. He founded the independent and hugely successful Mendip Painting Centre at Rickford, near Blagdon where he taught hundreds of adults to paint, mostly out of doors in the Mendip landscape. Later he was attracted to the peaceful Somerset Levels. Peter is the longest subscribing member of the Royal West of England Academy in Bristol, whose current President Janette Kerr, will open the exhibition on 5 July.

Mendip Calligraphy

29 June – 13 July

After a very successful exhibition in 2011 the Mendip Calligraphy group is returning for a second show. Preview Saturday 29 June 2.30 – 4.30pm

Somerset Guild of Glass Engravers

19 -30 August

An exhibition by the South West branch of the Guild of Glass Engravers.

Glass is always an exciting medium and, in the hands of skilled and experienced engravers, intriguing and astonishing results can be achieved. The work on show will all be carefully selected to demonstrate the versatility and beauty of glass.

Society of Disabled Artists

21 September – 5 October

This exhibition from **SODA** as part of Somerset Arts Week will feature recent work by the Mendip members of the Society, and will include painting and ceramics, amongst other media.

Netherworld of Mendip

The ***Netherworld of Mendip*** is a new, permanent exhibition at the museum portraying the fascinating world of caves that lies hidden beneath the Mendip Hills and charting the development of caving and cave diving that has led to their discovery and exploration. The exhibition covers exploration right up to the present day including the magnificent find last year of the largest known underground chamber in Britain in Cheddar Gorge.



We thank the many sponsors who have helped to create this new display.



History of Policing in Wells – extended by popular demand to 12 November

This exhibition, which has been researched and put together by volunteer Bob Love, showcases some of the material available in the City Archives and 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.

2013 Mendip Hills Festival of Archaeology 8 July – 28 July

For the fourth year the museum has co-ordinated a Mendip-wide programme of special events as part of the national CBA Festival of British Archaeology. Visit www.archaeologyfestival.org.uk for full details of the national event.

The museum is itself organising a number of events, including the launch event on **Monday and Tuesday 8 & 9 July** when Museum staff and volunteers will be undertaking a **geophysical survey of Cathedral Green**, in partnership with the Cathedral office. There will be practical opportunities for people of all ages, including children, to get involved. Several archaeologists and historians have suggested that there may be a Roman road crossing the Green and its use as a burial ground may be revealed in the results. Join us 10am to 5pm; no charge.

The other Museum events for the festival include:

Explore a Cold War Underground Bunker at East Harptree

Wednesday 24 July at 6pm and Saturday 27 July at 2.30pm

with former Chief Observer of the Royal Observer Corp Mike Parfitt. See the primitive measuring instruments and scary instructions! Organised by Wells & Mendip Museum. Booking essential as number limited.

Tickets £3, to be collected from the museum in advance. Tel: 01749 673477 or e:

admin@wellsmuseum.org.uk. Meet at Harptree Hill Farm BS40 6EL or grid ref ST 544 560 for roadside parking.

Finds Identification Day Thursday 25 July

The next Finds Identification Day at the Museum will be on Thursday 25 July 11am – 3pm. Robert Webley, the new Finds Liaison Officer for Somerset County Council, will be available to identify your finds from digging your garden or while walking your dog. No charge or booking necessary.

Gully Cave, Ebbor Gorge Wednesday 24 July and Sunday 28 July 2pm

A special opportunity to visit unique prehistoric cave excavation led by Prof. Danielle Shreve of Royal Holloway, University of London. The numerous small caves in Ebbor Gorge are well known for their later prehistoric remains, but in contrast to the better known Cheddar Gorge, only glimpses of early human occupation and Ice Age fauna have been seen thus far. Professor Schreve has been carrying out excavations at the previously unexplored Gully Cave, which have exposed the upper part of the cave fill and exposed deposits spectacularly rich in fossil remains.

A wide range of mammal and bird species, including reindeer, arctic fox, wild horse and lemmings, reveal biological responses to very abrupt climate change at the end of the last Ice Age and the early part of the current interglacial. This provides a high-resolution backdrop to patterns of early human activity in the region during this period. There is no charge for this visit, but booking is essential as there are very limited spaces. Participants will need to be reasonably physically fit as there are a lot of steps in order to reach cave. Good walking shoes are a must. Booking essential as numbers limited. Tickets £3 to be collected in advance from the museum. Tel: 01749 673477 or email: admin@wellsmuseum.org.uk.

For a full programme for the Mendip Hills Festival of Archaeology please visit www.wellsmuseum.org.uk

MENDIP ROCKS! 2013

A Festival to celebrate the fascinating geology of the Mendip Hills

1 August to 6 September

Once again the Museum is pleased to be able to support this exciting Festival with a special afternoon walk and an evening talk:

Monday 3 September 2pm

Wells – A History in Stone

A journey through time to the ancient landscapes of the Wells area, by looking at the rock types used in and around the Cathedral Green on a guided walk with David Rowley. Meet at Wells and Mendip Museum.

£3/person. Booking essential – 01749 673499 or admin@wellsmuseum.org

Friday 6 September 7.30pm

The Netherworld of Mendip

Illustrated talk about the fascinating world of the caves beneath the Mendip Hills, including photographs of the largest known chamber in the UK recently discovered in Cheddar Gorge.

For further information please contact Martin Grass 01934 742710 or m.grass@btinternet.com

For full details of the many events in this Festival please see the programme leaflet on our website www.wellsmuseum.org.uk or contact Ruth Worsley, Somerset Earth Science Centre, 01749 840156, email ruth@earthscience.org.uk

GRANT TO DATE THE WITCH'S BONES!

The Museum has been offered a grant of up to £2000 to date the bones of the Witch of Wookey Hole, and other important burials from other caves and locations on Mendip. The Maltwood Fund of the Somerset County Archaeological and Natural History Society reviewed a proposal earlier in the year and agreed that it fell within one of the key criteria of the Regional Research Agenda – to improve the knowledge and study of under-utilised museum collections. The Witch's bones were excavated in 1908-12 by the Museum's founder Herbert Balch, but he had no way to tell their age. This grant will enable the Museum to commission dating by the scientific Carbon-14 technique. The results should be available in the Autumn.

A WEEKEND TO CELEBRATE 10 YEARS OF THE OLD DEANERY GARDEN PROJECT Saturday 28- Sunday 29 September 2013



WILLIAM TURNER IN WELLS Dean of Wells 1551-1554, 1560-1568

Tudor physician and botanist "The Father of English Botany"

Part I of Dr William Turner's famous *New Herball*, the first important plant book written in English, was published in 1551, the year that he became Dean of Wells. The book was completed in 1568, the year he died. This weekend will explore aspects of his life and work in

Wells, and is based at the Old Deanery, where he lived and had his garden. It will include speakers, a tour of the Cathedral in the 1550s, the medieval Cathedral Library with his books and related manuscripts, exploring the adjacent part of the city and the Deanery itself, with time to enjoy "my garden at Wellis".

For further details and booking contact Frances Neale (01749) 674640 fneale@mbzonline.net
Diana Wheeler (01749) 673408 dianajwheeler@btinternet.com

WELLS OLD DEANERY GARDEN PROJECT The Old Deanery, Wells, Somerset BA5 2UG

NEW RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES – City Archives open to readers

There is now a regular Readers' slot to enable you to consult material from Wells City Archives. This takes place each Tuesday morning, from 9.30 to 12.00. Visits are by prior appointment only; you can make an appointment by letter, phone, or email. The Archivist of the 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.

FLAVIA COFFEE

The Museum has now installed a Flavia coffee machine, with a full range of teas, coffees and other delights in order to make the place more sociable and comfortable. It makes good coffee! **Cheddar Garden Centre** has also donated a set of outdoor tables and chairs so that everyone can enjoy the summer in the museum garden!

FACEBOOK AT LAST!

Don't forget the museum now has a Facebook page where you can find lots of interesting information about our upcoming exhibitions and events. We also welcome any comments or questions you might have about us. The page is called "Wells & Mendip Museum". Please "like" our page and you will be updated each time something new is put up.

Sponsors



The museum would again like to thank **Morris & Perry (Gurney Slade Quarries) Ltd** for their generous sponsorship towards the redisplay of the Geology Gallery and **Geniprinting** for their sponsorship of the new display panels.

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

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Winter opening hours (from 1 November)

Monday-Saturday 11am-4pm. Closed Sundays

Last chance ... to book a place on the series of Saturday *Making Sense of Pottery* training days at the museum starting on **Saturday 7 September**; to purchase a signed copy of Jack Paul's recent book about his family building firm – "***It was like this in Old Brown's time***". And don't forget the last event of **Mendip Rocks!** at the museum on Friday 6 September – an illustrated talk on the caves of Mendip. **Coming soon** - once again we are open freely for **Heritage Open days** and the second exhibition by **Wells Art Contemporary**. See below for more information.

Museum Exhibitions

A39 Artists

5 – 17 September

Brought together as a result of a Life Drawing group run by Linda Bird, currently based at the Red Brick Building, this is the second exhibition the A39 artists have had at Wells and Mendip Museum. It is not solely life drawing, but a real mixture of work from landscapes to digital, to mosaics and of course, figures. There are also many different mediums, from pastel to oil, to ink pen.

Society of Disabled Artists

21 September – 5 October

This exhibition from **SODA** as part of Somerset Arts Week will feature recent work by the Mendip members of the Society, and will include painting and ceramics, amongst other media. There will also be an opportunity to meet the artists at their open day on Friday 27th September between 2pm - 4pm.

Wells Art Contemporary

11 – 20 October

The second exhibition of contemporary work from an open submission.

Netherworld of Mendip

The ***Netherworld of Mendip*** is a new, permanent exhibition at the museum portraying the fascinating world of caves that lies hidden beneath the Mendip Hills and charting the development of caving and cave diving that has led to their discovery and exploration. The exhibition covers exploration right up to the present day



including the magnificent find last year of the largest known underground chamber in Britain in Cheddar Gorge.

We thank the many sponsors who have helped to create this new display.

History of Policing in Wells – extended by popular demand



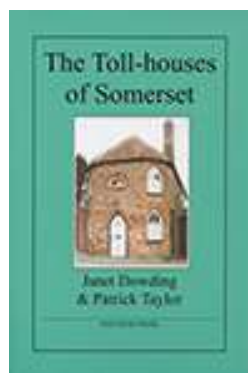
The Blake Museum, Bridgwater has now generously agreed to extend their loan of this truncheon for a period of five years so the exhibition will remain for a while.

The museum and City Archivist are extremely grateful to the Bridgwater trustees for this loan.

The exhibition traces the history of the original Wells City Police Force, formed in 1836 and surviving until 1856, and demonstrates the range of documents, which are held in the Wells City Archives.

“It was like this in Old Brown’s Day”

On 12 August Jack Paul launched his second autobiographical book on the history of his family building firm W & H Paul (Wells) Ltd. from 1893-1990. There is a limited number of copies of this book, signed by Jack at the launch, still available in the museum shop, price £9.99. Hurry while stocks last! Jack has donated many items to the museum over the years relating to this important local business, including this unique hand cart that was used by the builders before motorised transport! It now stands in the museum garden.



The Tollhouses of Somerset

Another excellent book just published and in stock at the museum is this comprehensive volume, full of pictures and detailed text about the tollhouses and turnpike roads of Somerset, produced by Janet Dowding and Patrick Taylor. It illustrates several items from the Museum collections and costs £9.95.

Finds Identification Day Thursday 31 October

The next Finds Identification Day at the Museum will be on Thursday 31 October 11.30am – 3pm. Robert Webley, the new Finds Liaison Officer for Somerset County Council, will be available to identify your finds from digging your garden or while walking your dog. No charge or booking necessary.

MENDIP ROCKS! 2013

Once again the Museum is pleased to be able to support this exciting Festival with a special evening talk: Friday 6 September 7.30pm

The Rushing Waters and The Frozen Deep

Illustrated talk by Peter Glanvill about the fascinating world of the caves beneath the Cheddar Catchment, including photographs of the largest cave chamber so far found. Tickets £3.

HERITAGE OPEN DAYS Thursday 12 – Saturday 14 September 2013 10am to 5pm daily Once again the museum is playing its part in the City-wide contribution to this national event. It will be offering completely free admission to all parts of the building over four days. The Grade 2 Listed building opened as a museum in 1932, having been founded by curator Herbert Balch. Visitors will be able to explore the museum’s new **Netherworld of Mendip** exhibition about the history of caving on Mendip, a display of the **History of Policing in Wells** from the City Archive, as well as **Linda Bird’s Life Drawing** exhibition.

There will also be **free guided tours** of the museum, the backroom stores and City Archive with Honorary Curator, Barry Lane as follows: 11am and 2pm Thursday 12 September and 11am Friday 13 September

Visit the special Wells Heritage Open Days website for all events in the city: hodswellssomerset.com.



A WEEKEND TO CELEBRATE 10 YEARS OF THE OLD DEANERY GARDEN PROJECT

Saturday 28- Sunday 29 September 2013

WILLIAM TURNER IN WELLS Dean of Wells 1551-1554, 1560-1568

Tudor physician and botanist "The Father of English Botany"

Part I of Dr William Turner's famous *New Herball*, the first important plant book written in English, was published in 1551, the year that he became Dean of Wells. The book was completed in 1568, the year he died. This weekend will explore aspects of his life and work in Wells, and is based at the Old Deanery, where he lived and had his garden. It will include speakers, a tour of the Cathedral in the 1550s, the medieval Cathedral Library with his books and related manuscripts, exploring the adjacent part of the city and the Deanery itself, with time to enjoy "my garden at Wells".

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WELLS OLD DEANERY GARDEN PROJECT The Old Deanery, Wells, Somerset BA5 2UG

RECENT DONATIONS

The museum has relatively few works of art in its collection and is therefore very pleased to have received two recent donations of painting. The first now hanging upstairs is a panoramic oil painting of a north-west view of Wells dating from the 1970s by local artist Evelyn Franklin, and donated by her son. It will form an introduction to the forthcoming History of Wells displays. The second painting is by artist Peter Coate RWA and is of *Gruffy Ground and Beech Trees* at Priddy, which was used in all the publicity for Peter's recent exhibition at the museum. It will be hung upstairs in the Mendip displays. The museum depends upon such donations to increase and improve its collections and displays and is grateful to these recent donors.

RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES – City Archives open to readers

Do remember that, if you wish to consult material from Wells City Archives, there is now a regular Readers' slot to enable you to do so. This takes place each Tuesday morning, from 9.30 to 12.00. Visits are by prior appointment only; you can make an appointment by letter, phone, or email. The Archivist of the 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.

"EXPLORE YOUR ARCHIVE" SPECIAL EVENTS

Make a note in your diary of the date **Saturday 16 November!** This is the launch day of a national campaign to raise public awareness of archives, and there will be special events happening in Wells. This is your chance to see what the archives of Wells have to offer! Wells City Archives and Wells Cathedral Archives will be collaborating, and hopefully the Archive of Wells & Mendip Museum too.

- At **Wells Town Hall**, come and **Meet the Archivist** between 10.00 and 4.00 in the new Gallery Bar. Drop in and get an idea of what Wells City Archives holds which may be of interest to you! - Perhaps concerning your family history, the history of your house, or the history of Wells. Find out how to arrange a visit to the Archives Reading Room. See some treasures from the City Archives along with a display of facsimiles.
- At **Wells Cathedral**, visit the beautiful ancient Library and view some treasures from Wells Cathedral Archives. Facsimiles will also be on display.

New Approaches to Roman Archaeology Saturday 19 October

Museum of Bath at Work, Camden Works, Julian Road, Bath BA1 2RH

A day school organised by the Somerset Archaeology and Natural History Society. Panel of speakers and full details are available at www.sanhs.org. Tickets £15 may be booked by e-mail with programme@sanhs.org

FLAVIA COFFEE

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Monday-Saturday 11am-4pm. Closed Sundays.

STOP PRESS NEWS

The Museum has received a donation of £4000 from Wookey Hole Caves to re-display the bones of the "witch" of Wookey Hole. See the story below.

Museum Exhibitions

ARCHIVE EXPLORED

16 - 23 November

Would you like to find out more about your Wells family history, your house or local history? Join us on **Saturday 16 November** to do so.

As part of a national campaign, a number of archives in Wells will be hosting exhibitions and events on that day to promote the use of their resources by everyone – more details below. The Museum's contribution will be a new exhibition

based upon the extraordinary collection of photographs and glass negatives from the **Phillips City Studio**, active on the High Street for over 100 years from the 1860s. The exhibition will run until Saturday 23 November and entry to it will be free. On Saturday 16 only, you will also be able to **Meet the Researchers** and chat about how to research family history, photographs and house history. This photograph by Phillips of the Wells City Carnival dates from 1927.



ARCHIVE EXPLORED SPECIAL EVENTS

Make a note in your diary of the date **Saturday 16 November!** This is the launch day of a national campaign to raise public awareness of archives, and there will be special free events happening at three sites in Wells on that day between 10.00 and 4.00. **This is your chance to see what the archives of Wells have to offer!** Wells City Archives and Wells Cathedral Archives will be participating, along with Wells & Mendip Museum. At each venue there will be archivists and researchers to answer queries.

- At **Wells Town Hall**, come and **Meet the Archivist** in the new Gallery Bar. Drop in and get an idea of what Wells City Archives holds which may be of interest to you! Perhaps concerning your family history,

the history of your house, or the history of Wells. Find out how to arrange a visit to the Archives Reading Room. See some treasures from the City Archives along with a display of facsimiles.

- At **Wells Cathedral**, visit the beautiful ancient Library and view some treasures from Wells Cathedral Archives. Facsimiles will also be on display. Find out what records the Cathedral Archives holds relating to the people of Wells.

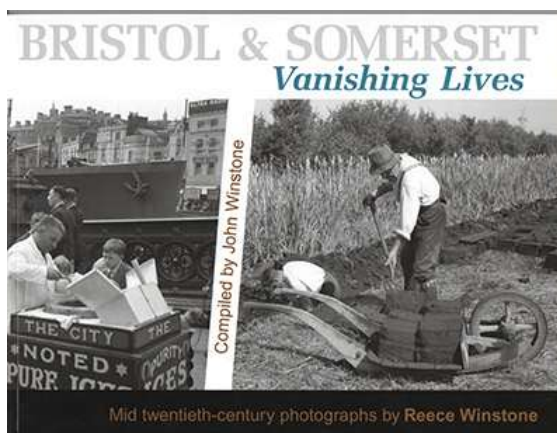
A new "Witch" of Wookey Hole



Museum Trustees plan to move forward with the next phase of the project of updating the displays. It was always planned to move the Balch Room from its present location into the meeting room adjacent to it. With this in mind bookings for the room have not been taken beyond the end of this year. At a recent meeting with the owners of Wookey Hole Caves a proposal was put forward for a large photo panorama of the first chamber of the cave with the "witch's" bones tastefully and sensitively displayed in front of them. Other artefacts found with her would also be displayed. I am delighted to say that Wookey Hole Caves agreed to offer £4000

towards the costs. We still need to raise another £15,000 to move all of the collection and display it in a more modern light. This however is a fantastic first step forward and we are very grateful to the caves owners. Work will start in January 2014. Martin Grass, Chairman.

Shop News



Amongst the new stock in the shop we would like to recommend two new books – **Vanishing Lives** and **Heather's Bracelet**. **Vanishing Lives – Bristol & Somerset** photographs from the 1930s to 1960s by Bristol photographer Reece Winstone is a stunning collection and accompanies an exhibition at the Royal West of England Academy, Bristol until 13 November. Entry free! The selection has been compiled by his son John Winstone of Wookey. Retail price £14.95.

We hope to bring the exhibition to Wells in the New Year!



The second book which has received much local attention is **Heather's Bracelet** a story written by local children based upon the real life experiences of people living in Somerset during the Second World War. A moving story, and good stocking-filler. Retail price £4.99; there is also an edition in Italian.

DIARY OF EVENTS & TALKS

8 November 7.30pm **"A Tale of Comets....and a Dog in the Night"** by Nick Howes. A talk on comets in conjunction with the BBC's "Stargazing Live" event. Wells and Mendip Astronomers.

12 November 2.30pm **"A landscape reconciled"** by Christina White MA, ARPS. Photographs like you have never seen before of our rich lead mining industry. Visible archaeology at its best. The Mendip Society.

26 November 7.30pm **"Wild animals that come from the farm"** ex-dairy farmer Pauline Kidner, founder of Secret World, will talk about the many and variety of wild animals that are brought in for care. Somerset Wildlife Trust.

3 December 2.30pm **"Otters on my Doorstep"** by Gill Brown. Back by popular demand. Learn more about these lovable creatures from a member of YACWAG. The Mendip Society.

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New Trustee

The Board is very pleased to welcome Wells City Councillor, Chris Briton as new trustee. The Board is always interested to hear from others who would like to support the museum as a trustee, particularly anyone with marketing, retail, fundraising or educational experience. The Museum is also looking for more volunteers to work with the staff on a more daily basis. A shortage of volunteers has led to the closure of the Museum on Sundays.

Become a Friend of Wells & Mendip Museum

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