



# Wells & Mendip Museum

and Visitor Information Service  
"Home of Wells City Archives"

## Newsletter

Issue 18

January to March 2014

**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](mailto:admin@wellsmuseum.org.uk)

**Christmas and New Year closing**  
**Winter opening hours**

**Saturday 21 December to Sunday 5 January**  
Monday-Saturday 11am-4pm. Closed Sundays.

### **Museum opening Monday 6 January with FREE admission for everyone until Easter!**

Come and watch the staff and volunteers creating new exhibitions and displays in at least three of our rooms, Health & safety permitting! Over £7000 has been raised from the Wookey Hole Caves and the Sustainable Development Fund of the Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to redisplay the "Witch" of Wookey Hole and many of Herbert Balch's early prehistoric finds from the various caves of Ebbor Gorge and Wookey Hole valley. At the same time further funds have been raised to contribute to the national remembrance of the WW1 – **Wells Remembers 1914-18** opening in the summer and is being created in partnership with the Wells Blue School and the Cathedral School, and other organisations.

Finally, work has begun on a new room for the **History of Wells**, including Phillips City Photography Studio, Bob Fry railwayman and wartime St John Ambulance volunteer, Policing in Wells, and a display of fine 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century English wine glasses and bottles, illustrating the way of life of the inhabitants of 8 Cathedral Green, the house that later became the museum in 1932.

The first main exhibition of 2014 will open on Saturday 18 January  
**Bristol & Somerset: Vanishing Lives**

### **An exhibition of mid-20c photographs by Reece Winstone FRPS** **6,000 photographs, 17 cameras, 4 decades, 2 counties, 1 freelance**

By 1964 the late Reece Winstone FRPS had taken 38,000 photographs across 'Beautiful Britain' as a freelance photographer, of which some 6,000 were of Bristol and Somerset. In this exhibition and accompanying catalogue his son has selected 150 photographs of Vanishing Lives in the two counties, in town and country. Since the period 1930 to the mid-1960s life has changed immeasurably, for almost all, culturally and in expectations. It is this shift that this broad range of photographs illustrates; even the practice of photography has not been left untouched. As contributor Ian Sumner says – *'He became a consummate freelance photographer ... his way of working has all but disappeared today ... nobody will ever work like Reece again.'*

Reece, best known for his many books on *Bristol As It Was*, showed Bristolians their inheritance - what had come before their personal memories of the city -



and what had been lost. Reece's books gave birth to a new genre of published photography, to be adopted across the world.

The Reece Winstone Archive is delighted to be showing this travelling exhibition in Somerset following a very popular showing in Bristol. There will be a talk and exhibition tour by Reece's son, John, for the public at 2.30pm on Saturday 25 January. Admission free for both the exhibition and talk.

## A new "Witch" of Wookey Hole



The Trustees are now moving forward with the next phase of updating the displays throughout the museum. The owners of Wookey Hole Caves have agreed to fund a large photo panorama of the first chamber of the cave with the "witch's" bones sensitively displayed. Other artefacts found with her will also be included. Over £7000 has been raised from the Wookey Hole Caves and the Sustainable Development Fund of the Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to redisplay the "Witch" of Wookey Hole and as well as many of Herbert Balch's early prehistoric finds from the various other caves of Ebbor Gorge and Wookey Hole

valley. Work will start in January 2014 and should be complete by Easter.

## Wells Remembers 1914-18

Work has already started on this new exciting exhibition due to open in Summer 2014. The project is being co-ordinated by a partnership including The Blue School, Wells Cathedral School, Wells Cathedral, Wells City Archives, the Wells branch of the Royal British Legion and the Museum. We would love to hear from anyone who has stories, memories or artefacts to share. More information will be available on our website soon.



## AVALON MARSHES 'Hands on Heritage' project

### CRAFT WORKSHOPS at the Avalon Marshes Centre

10am to 4pm Saturday 18 – Sunday 19 January **"Bronze Age Metalcraft"** with Neil Burridge. Two days of practical tuition learning the art of casting bronze and smelting copper. Gain an insight into the almost forgotten technology of the Bronze Age and take home your own bronze artefact. £20.

10am to 4pm Saturday 25 – Sunday 26 January **"Iron Smelting"** with Marc Cox. Two days of practical exploration into early methods of iron production, based upon archaeological evidence from Somerset. Discover the process of how to turn iron ore and charcoal in a clay furnace into workable metallic iron. There will be an experimental iron smelt on Sunday, which will be open to the public. £20

### VOLUNTEER DAYS at the Avalon Marshes Centre

Every Wednesday 10am to 3.30pm FREE. The weekly volunteer days will provide you with the ancient skills needed to help construct a Roman building, carve a dugout canoe and furnish an Iron Age roundhouse. For further information or to sign up as a volunteer visit: [www.avalonarchaeology.wordpress.com/](http://www.avalonarchaeology.wordpress.com/) get-involved or call Volunteer Development Officer Kevin Anderson on 01458 860556. Avalon Marshes Centre, Shapwick Road, Westhay, nr Glastonbury, BA6 9TT

## Wells and Mendip Astronomers



On Tuesday 7 January at 6pm you are invited to discover the Moon, Jupiter and the Winter Sky, as part of the BBC **"Stargazing Live"** event. There will be talks and slide shows, exhibitions, a quiz and activities in the Museum, plus the chance to observe

and learn about night sky wonders through WMA members' telescopes on Cathedral Green. Refreshments available.

Entry Free

### **Finds Identification Day Thursday 23 January**

The next Finds Identification Day at the Museum will be on Thursday 23 January 11am – 3pm. Robert Webley, the 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.

## **DIARY OF EVENTS & TALKS**

### **January**

Tues 7 at 7pm “**The History and Operation of Bristol Airport**” by Mike Littleton - Mendip Society

Weds 8 at 6.45pm “**History of Wells Through Local Memorabilia**” Civic Society

Sat 25 at 2.30pm “**Vanishing Lives**” talk & exhibition tour with John Winstone

Tues 28 at 7.30pm “**Urban Gulls: so what's all the fuss about?**” Somerset Wildlife Trust 01749 673563

### **February**

Sat 8 at 2pm “**Recent Excavations in Gulley Cave, Ebbor Gorge**” by Prof. Danielle Schreve

Wells Natural History & Archaeology Society

Tues 11 at 2pm “**Quarry Faces**” by Robin Thornes - Mendip Society 01934 641461

Wes 12 at 6.45pm “**Farming and the need for Diversification**” with David Cotton – Civic Society

Tues 25 at 7.30pm “**Badgers: their lives your questions**” Somerset Wildlife Trust 01749 673563

### **March**

Tues 4 at 2pm “**The Avon Gorge Area**” by Dan Evans - Mendip Society

Fri 7 at 7pm “**Policing in Victorian Wells**” by Bob Love – Wells Natural History & Archaeology Society

Weds 12 at 6.45pm “**The History & Conservation of Stained Glass**” by Stephen Clare – Civic Society

Tues 25 at 7.30pm “**Wildlife at Arnos Vale**” Somerset Wildlife Trust 01749 673563

2-5 January at the Royal Hotel, Weston-super-Mare

### **Geoscience in South West England**

This 53<sup>rd</sup> annual three-day conference for geoscientists with an interest in south-west England and related areas comprises two days of presentations and a day of field excursions. Full details at <http://www.ussher.org.uk>

## **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](mailto:archives@wellsmuseum.org.uk).

## **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](mailto:admin@wellsmuseum.org.uk)

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Issue 19

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### **Museum now open with FREE admission for everyone until Easter**

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

### **Bristol & Somerset: Vanishing Lives – NOW OPEN**

The social and historical photographic record, created by freelance photographer Reece Winstone, of the changes in cultural and social life from the 1930s to the 1960s is a unique and beautiful record of an important time of change and development in the 20th Century.

Reece Winstone took over 38,000 photographs of "Beautiful Britain" 6,000 of which were of Bristol and Somerset. These pictures document the "Vanishing Lives" in the two counties, in the town and in the country. Famous for his genre of books - ***Bristol As It Was***, Reece Winstone took amazing photographs of the daily work and lives of the people of Bristol and Somerset. Reece's son, John Winstone, who lives in Wookey, has carefully selected photographs, in black and white, which show wide-ranging subjects in historical context.



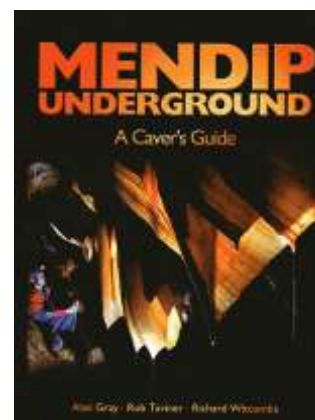
This collection is one that will never be repeated and captures a time, which, although not too far in the past, has disappeared forever. It is a nationally important archive that is now available to see.

**John Winstone** will be giving a FREE talk and exhibition tour about his father's work and life at **2.30pm on Saturday 25 January**.

### **MENDIP UNDERGROUND – now available in the Museum.**

This amazing book of almost 500 pages and over 100 hundred beautiful colour photographs & dozens of plans of Mendip caves and mines, as well as detailed descriptions of their histories and discoveries, is now available at the astonishingly cheap price of £25. It has been compiled by Alan Gray, Rob Taviner & Richard Witcombe, and published by the Mendip Cave Registry and Archive.

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# Wells & Mendip Museum

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Issue 20

April to June 2014

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### **Museum still open with FREE admission for everyone until Easter**

Monday-Saturday 10am – 5pm. Closed Sundays.

### **Bristol & Somerset: Vanishing Lives – Last few days! Open until 5 April**

The social and historical photographic record, created by freelance photographer Reece Winstone, of the changes in cultural and social life from the 1930s to the 1960s is a unique and beautiful record of an important time of change and development in the 20th Century. This collection is one that will never be repeated and captures a time, which, although not too far in the past, has disappeared forever. It is a nationally important archive that is now available to see.

### **Jack Seymour – retrospective exhibition of paintings, drawings & prints**

Saturday 19 April to Monday 5 May

"Jack Seymour is one of those old-fashioned landscape painters whose fine brushwork and acute sense of atmosphere captures the essence of places you know and love, and make you want to visit those you don't know"



### **"Stratum" an exhibition of paintings by Jason Nosworthy and of photographs by Christina White**

28 May – 7 June



These two artists explore the theme of landscape and surface texture quite differently, yet there is a parallel relationship in their work. The deconstruction of what is real and viewed is in part the substance of Jason's work, while Christina explores the industrial man-altered landscape of the Mendip Hills.

### **Witch of Wookey Hole & Balch Room**

Thanks to the generous donation made by Wookey Hole Caves, the new display of the famous "witch" and her artefacts is well underway now that the Balch Room has been decorated. Text and photographs are receiving their final amendments and it is hoped that the printing of the panels will commence in the next few weeks. New display cabinets have been purchased to show the finds in the most modern interpretation possible. It is hoped that the exhibition will open towards the end of April.

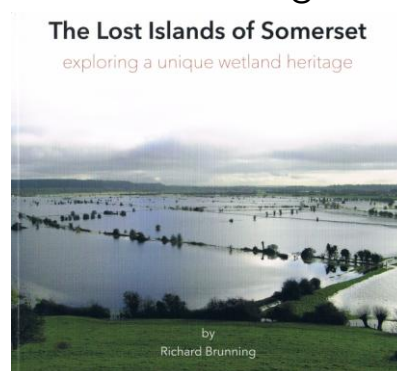


## **“The Lost Islands of Somerset” - exploring a unique wetland heritage**

With this winter's flooding of the Levels this book has been a best seller from the Museum shop! Over 100 islands of hard geology in the Somerset Levels and Moors floodplain have been the focus of human activity for the last 10,000 years.

These fascinating places have seen relatively little modern development and as a consequence little archaeological work. For this reason a “Lost Islands of Somerset” project was established to investigate the mysterious islands and their unique history.

Copies of this wonderfully illustrated book explaining the project are still available in the Museum shop for only £5.00.



## **Caving Photo Exhibition**

10 May – 9 June

The Museum's first ever caving photographic competition will be held during May with a prize-giving on 6 June. The photographs must be of Mendip Caves or Mines and can be entered as prints or electronically. The images will be on display at the Museum for a month. If it proves successful, it is planned to hold the event annually. For more information visit

[www.wellsmuseum.org.uk/competition](http://www.wellsmuseum.org.uk/competition)

## **Finds Identification Day – Thursday 22 May**

The next Finds Identification Day at the Museum will be on Thursday 22 May 11am – 3pm. Laura Burnett, the 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.

## **DIARY OF EVENTS**

Friday 4 April at 7.30pm – **“Death, Ritual & Ceremony: Mendip in 3<sup>rd</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Millennia BC”** by Dr. Jodie Lewis - Wells Natural History and Archaeological Society

Wednesday 9 April at 7pm – **“Blooming Wells”** by Non Hobson & Jenny Jones from the Wells and District Floral Art Society – Civic Society

Tuesday 29 April at 7pm – **“A Celebration of 50 years of the Somerset Wildlife Trust”** There will be a warm welcome and free admission for everyone, with a glass of wine and light refreshments provided as the Trust celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup> birthday. As well as a presentation from Simon Nash there will be displays from SWT Specialist Groups.

Wednesday 14 May at 7pm – **“The Blue School Council – Learning to Lead at the Blue School”** – Civic Society

Wednesday 11 June at 7pm – **“Milton Lodge: The House & Gardens”** – Civic Society

## **Wells Natural History & Archaeological Society 2014 Summer Expeditions**

### **Doultong Quarry Thursday 15 May 2pm**

The Mediaeval workings have been filled but it is still possible to see the stone being cut and shaped in the traditional manner

### **Acton Court Saturday 12 July**

A recently restored, Mediaeval and early Tudor House owned by the Poyntz family between 1364 and 1680. The visit will be accompanied by John Bucknall who was an advisor on the restoration. Booking essential

### **Possible trip to Steepholm**

Archaeologists will be working on the island all season – they go with every boat trip to work on a Roman site and a Mediaeval priory (Augustinian)

To book a place, or for any more details on any of the 3 trips, please ring Gill Kelly on 01749 673334 or email [gillkellywells@gmail.com](mailto:gillkellywells@gmail.com)

### **Britain: One Million Years of the Human Story**

In addition to the **Viking** exhibition at the British Museum ([www.britishmuseum.org/Vikings](http://www.britishmuseum.org/Vikings)), we also recommend this major exhibition at the Natural History Museum, London which is running until 28 September. Experience the dramatic story of ancient Britain, its changing landscapes and the people who lived here. This major exhibition showcases more than 200 specimens, objects and life-size models. Please go to [www.nhm.ac.uk](http://www.nhm.ac.uk) to find more information and to book tickets.



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Issue 21

May - July 2014

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**NOW OPEN WITH NEW DISPLAYS of the 'Witch' of Wookey Hole, a prehistory of Mendip in the Balch Room, and fine English drinking glasses from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Work is in progress on 'Wells Remembers' the First World War.**

Open Monday-Saturday 10am – 5pm. Closed Sundays. Normal admission charges now apply.

## 'Witch' of Wookey Hole & Balch Room

Thanks to the generous donation made by Wookey Hole Caves, and support from the Mendip Hills AONB Sustainable Development Fund, the new display of the famous "witch" and her associated relics is now complete. Recently commissioned radiocarbon (C14) dating has produced some interesting results! The Balch Room has been moved and redecorated with new displays will replace the old over the coming months.



## Caving Photo Exhibition

5 May – 6 June

The Museum's first ever caving photographic competition will be held during May with a prize-giving on 6 June. The images will be on display at the Museum for a month. It is hoped to make this an annual event. For more information please visit [www.wellsmuseum.org.uk/competition](http://www.wellsmuseum.org.uk/competition)

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## "Stratum" an exhibition of paintings by Jason Nosworthy and of photographs by Christina White

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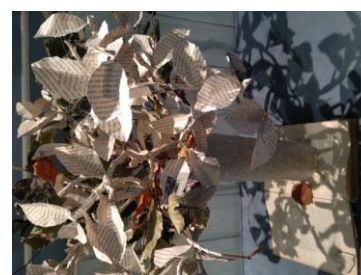


These two artists explore the theme of landscape and surface Texture quite differently, yet there is a parallel relationship in their work. The deconstruction of what is real and viewed is in part the substance of Jason's work, while Christina explores the industrial man-altered landscape of the Mendip Hills. Preview of the exhibition 6pm – 8pm on Friday 30 May

## Wells Cathedral Art Exhibition

17 – 28 June

Exhibition of art by the A and AS Level art students at Wells Cathedral School.





## Mendip Hills Historic Environment Day

Saturday 19 July

Speakers for the day, which will partly have a 'witch' theme, now include **Stephen J. Yeates**, author of "The Tribe of Witches: the Religion of the *Dobunni* and *Hwicce*", **Barry Lane** on a re-evaluation of the 'Witch' of Wookey Hole, and **Zema Kamash** on Roman Somerset. Full details to follow on our website. Tickets £12.50. Booking essential and priority will be given to Museum Friends!



## Mendip Hills Festival of Archaeology 2014

12 – 27 July

For the fifth year, the Museum will be co-ordinating a Mendip-wide programme of special events as part of the national CBA Festival of British Archaeology. Visit [www.archaeologyfestival.co.uk](http://www.archaeologyfestival.co.uk) for full details of the national event. The museum itself will be organising a number of events including visit to a Cold War underground bunker, special visits to a prehistoric cave excavation, plus much more.... Full details will be in our next newsletter and on our website shortly.  
[www.wellsmuseum.org.uk/festivalofarchaeology](http://www.wellsmuseum.org.uk/festivalofarchaeology)

### DIARY OF EVENTS

Wednesday 14 May at 7pm – **"The Blue School Council – Learning to Lead at the Blue School"** by the Civic Society

Wednesday 11 June at 7pm – **"Milton Lodge: The House & Gardens"** – Civic Society

Friday 13 June at 6pm – Drink and canapé reception for the launch of **Moorcroft Pottery** with a presentation and demonstration by the Artist – Somerset Wildlife trust

## Wells Natural History & Archaeological Society 2014 Summer Expeditions

**Doultong Quarry** Thursday 15 May 2pm

The Medieval workings have been filled but it is still possible to see the stone being cut and shaped in the traditional manner. Booking essential, see below.

**Acton Court** Saturday 12 July

A recently restored, Medieval and early Tudor house owned by the Poyntz family between 1364 and 1680. The visit will be accompanied by John Bucknall who was an advisor on the restoration. Booking essential, see below.

### Possible trip to Steepholm

Archaeologists will be working on the island all season – they go with every boat trip to work on a Roman site and a Medieval priory (Augustinian).

To book a place, or for any more details on any of the 3 trips, please ring Gill Kelly on 01749 673334 or email [gillkellywells@gmail.com](mailto:gillkellywells@gmail.com)

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Issue 22

August - September 2014

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## WELLS REMEMBERS

Open from Saturday 9 August



To mark the start of the Centenary of the First World War, the Wells and Mendip Museum is opening the **Wells Remembers** First World War exhibition on Saturday 9 August. The exhibition, which is part of a four-year project, will evolve over this period to tell the story of the events of one hundred years ago. Visitors will experience the sights and sounds of the trenches, see and learn about curious and disturbing artefacts and discover the stories of individuals from Wells and the surrounding villages, with displays covering the home front and the fighting fronts.

The exhibition will draw on the City Archives, the museum's collections of images and artifacts and a wide range of objects which have been generously lent to the Wells Remembers Project, including the Knight Collection – a fascinating collection of weapons, uniforms and equipment. The Project is a partnership between the Wells and Mendip Museum, City Archives, Blue School, Wells Cathedral School, Cathedral, Bishop's Palace, Wells Journal, City Council and the Royal British Legion and has been supported by a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund and a matching contribution from local donors.

Martin Grass, the Chairman of the Wells and Mendip Museum said "We are very excited to be opening this exhibition, which has been created by volunteers and a genuine community partnership. The stories being told are fascinating, engaging and moving – and more stories are emerging each week from the research being carried out and through members of the community coming forward with letters and memories. We want people to get involved – not just by visiting the exhibition but by attending events and sharing their families' experiences."

The Project includes a second exhibition at the Wells Town Hall, opening later in the summer, and a programme of events listed on the website [www.wellsremembers.com](http://www.wellsremembers.com) - which has been designed by a Wells sixth-former and will be expanded by other school pupils. The City's commemoration will commence with the service at Wells Cathedral and acts of dedication and remembrance on the evening of 4 August.

## Art Exhibition by ROBIN GRAY

Monday 4 August to Friday 29 August – Free Entry

As Chairman of the International Society for Spelaeological Art and a keen caver, Robin Gray's interest in natural history, geology and fossils greatly influenced his work and he soon became known as a creator of "organics and abstracts". He is best known for his realistic paintings of the Mendip caves. This abstract art exhibition may come as a surprise to local collectors who think they know his work.



## **WELLS ART CONTEMPORARY Exhibition**

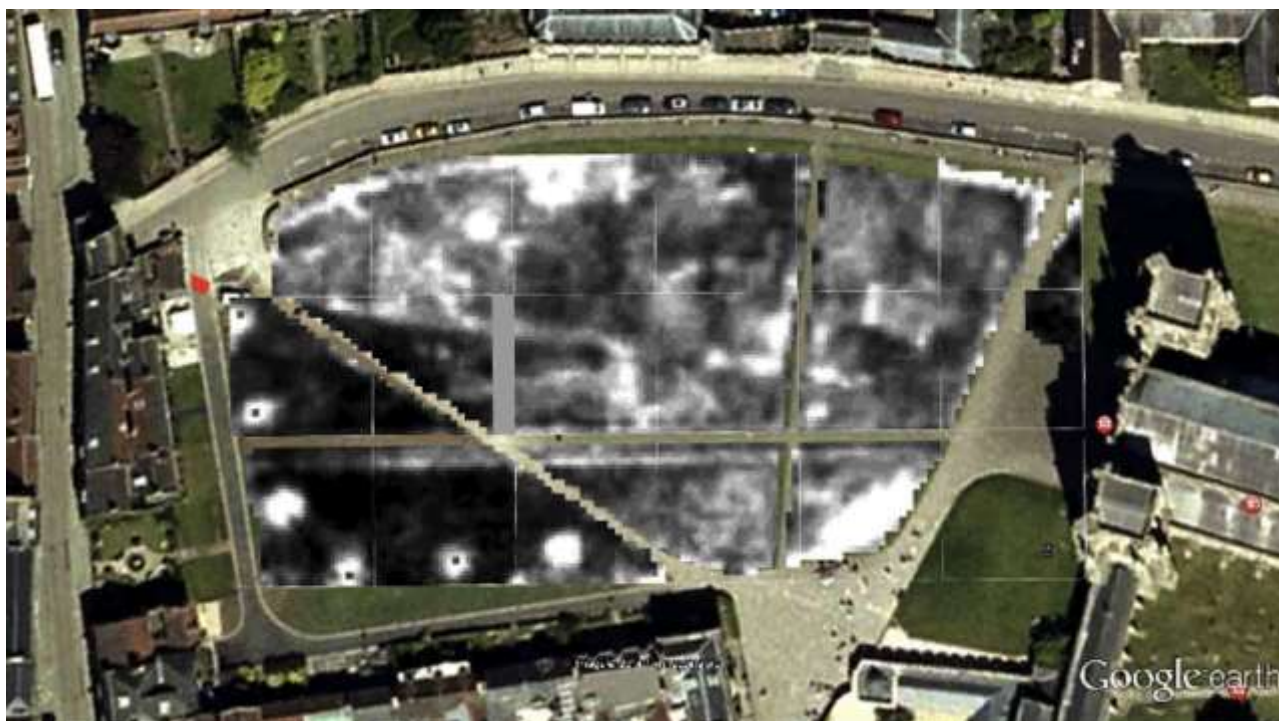
Friday 10 October – Saturday 25 October – Free Entry

For the 3<sup>rd</sup> year WAC will be running this open competition and exhibition for artists from all over the world. Entries will be in every possible media, and this year includes entries by students from Wells Blue School, Wells Cathedral School, Millfield School and Strode College.



## **GEOPHYSICS ON CATHEDRAL GREEN**

Members of CHERT (the Charterhouse Environs Research Team) and Museum volunteers spent 3 warm days in July on the Green undertaking a Resistivity survey. Members of the public bravely joined in, as part of the Mendip Hills Festival of Archaeology.



The survey instrument measured ground resistance, which is higher where there are stones and lower where there is deep soil. In the plot above higher readings are in the lighter tones. The large dark area on the south west side is likely to be dumped soil put there when the Green was levelled, and the lighter spots in it are pits for trees and drainage soakaways put in in 2009. Other patterns suggest paths and buildings. Interpretation of the rest will take more research and time. A full report will be published in due course.

## **DIARY OF EVENTS**

**NHS BLOOD DONATIONS** - 7 August 1.30pm – 3.30pm & 4.30pm – 7pm  
at Wells Town Hall

**“WEIRD & WONDERFUL WELLS”** – Sunday 17 August 12pm – 5pm

A family day of fun and tales of old! Come to the Museum and meet some of the children from “Wells Bookworms” who wrote “Heather’s Bracelet”, a true story set around Wells during WW11. You can chat to the real Heather, and see her bracelet! And do not miss the Museum’s new and exciting WW1 exhibition

(details above). Check out our website [www.wellsmuseum.org.uk](http://www.wellsmuseum.org.uk) for details of the day's events happening all over the City. Organised by Wells Civic Society.

### **SOMERSET WILDLIFE TRUST – Tuesday 23 September 7.30pm**

Well-known local birder and expert wildlife photographer, Nigel Milbourne presents an illustrated talk, “**A Month in Alaska**” introducing the rich and varied wildlife and landscapes he recorded during a visit in 2012.

There will also be more details of a walk that Nigel will be leading around Blagdon Lake on Tuesday 30 September at 10am to see migrant wading birds and large numbers of ducks.

### **HERITAGE OPEN DAYS – Thursday 11 September - Saturday 13 September**

Once again the Museum is playing its part in the City-wide contribution, which celebrates Wells' fantastic architecture and culture, to this national event. It will be offering completely free admission to all parts of the building over three 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 **Wells Remembers** exhibition, and the new displays in the Balch Room, including the ‘**Witch**’ of Wookey Hole.

There will also be **free guided tours** of the museum, the backroom stores and the City Archive with Honorary Curator, Barry Lane as follows:

2pm Thursday 11 September and 11am Friday 12 September. The Museum is closed on Sundays.

Visit [www.hodswellsomerset.com](http://www.hodswellsomerset.com) for full details.

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