

# Wells & Mendip Museum

and Visitor Information Service  
"Home of Wells City Archives"

## Newsletter

Issue 25

January – February 2015

**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)

### Now closed until Monday 5 January 2015

#### Winter opening hours

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

The Museum is now closed for a winter break and will open again on Monday 5 January 2015 with another exciting programme for the year.

### WELLS REMEMBERS "trench not a patch on ours"!



We have recently received a postcard "I have just returned from a visit to the Imperial War Museum in London to see their new WW1 exhibition. I felt I had to write and tell you their WW1 trench isn't a patch on yours!! Keep up the good work."  
Thank you for writing to us.

So, if you have not yet been to visit please drop in when we open again in January. So far we have also had visits from children from nine local schools!

### Old military medals and badges lying in a drawer?

Do you have any family heirlooms from the First World War – medals, photos, badges or souvenirs brought back from the Fronts? Do you want to know more about them? Then why not bring them to the drop-in session being held at Wells & Mendip Museum on Saturday 7 March from 11:00 to 13:00. Some of the local experts who helped create the 'Wells Remembers' exhibition will be there to answer your questions or, if they cannot, then to point you in the right direction. If you have photos or letters of local relevance that you're willing to share, do bring them along too and we will digitise them.

### EXHIBITION 28 February to 12 March

#### Recent paintings & collages by Michael Creed

Michael's interests have always been in abstraction, with influences ranging from the post-war abstract expressionists of America to Europeans like Hans Hartung and many British painters like Patrick Heron, Peter Lanyon, Terry Frost, Roger Hilton and William Scott have all played a part in his artistic education. His work is often monochrome, avoiding over-use of colour, and finding expression through mark-making and gesture.



### Firefighting in Wells - Volunteers needed!

Are you interested in helping put together an exhibition on firefighting in Wells? This will be taking place at the Museum next summer, and will encompass firefighting from the C17th right up to the present day. Assistance is sought with a variety of tasks. If you'd like to offer your time, please email Julia at [archives@wellsmuseum.org.uk](mailto:archives@wellsmuseum.org.uk).

## Research opportunities

The Museum's special collections of objects, archives and library books offer a unique opportunity to pursue research interests. Recent visitors have not only been looking at family history and the history of individual houses around Wells but also prehistoric microliths (for a PhD) and most recently academics from the Natural History Museum, funded by the Wellcome Foundation, have taken away a number of Mesolithic (10,000 – 5,000BC) human bones for **Ancient DNA** analysis. This is part of a large project investigating how the human genome has changed over the last 10,000 years, particularly in terms of the ability to deal with a more restricted diet, and higher incidences of infectious disease.



## Wells City Archives

Just to let you know that Archivist Dr Julia Wood's hours have changed. She is now usually in the Museum on Mondays 9-12.30 pm and Tuesdays 9-4pm.

## Finds Identification Day Thursday 12 February 11am – 3pm

The next Finds Identification Days at the Museum will be on Thursday 27 November 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

### January

#### Wednesday 14 January at 7.30pm

Civic Society AGM with special guest, Sarah Briton, the Lady Mayoress who will be talking about plans for the **International Women's Day** in March.

#### Tuesday 27 January at 7.30pm

**"The History and Natural History of King's castle Wood"** Local bat expert, David Cottle will trace the way it has been used by man from its earliest use as an iron age hill-fort to its present status as a nature reserve managed by the SWT. Its rich variety of woodland flowers including many unusual specimens attracts butterflies and other insects. Fauna include important nesting birds, roe deer and badgers.

**Somerset Wildlife Trust**

### February

#### Saturday 7 February at 7.30pm

**"Gramfers and Dumbledories"** Christine Billingham, a long time member of the Somerset Wildlife Trust will give a talk based on folk tales and the natural history of common garden invertebrates.

It will be illustrated with slides by Andy Callow. **Wells Natural History & Archaeological Society**

#### Wednesday 11 February at 7.30pm

**"Democracy and Community Action"** a talk by Mel Usher, leader, Frome Town Council, and Cllr. Peter MacFadyen - **Civic Society**

#### Tuesday 24 February at 7.30pm

**"Mendip Hills through the Time Tunnel"** Les Davis MBE, professional countryman, environmentalist, writer and broadcaster will give an illustrated talk on this area where, for nearly twenty years, he was the AONB Senior Warden. **Somerset Wildlife Trust**

#### Friday 27 February at 7.30pm

**"14 Pioneers of Astronomy"** a talk by Bob Mizon MBE, FRAS, Co-Ordinator, Campaign for Dark Skies  
**Wells and Mendip Astronomers**

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# Newsletter

Issue 26

March - April 2015

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### Winter opening hours

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

### From Tuesday 7 April 2015

### Summer opening hours

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

### MICHAEL CREED exhibition runs until 12 March



#### Recent paintings & collages

Michael's interests have always been in abstraction, with influences ranging from the post-war abstract expressionists of America to Europeans like Hans Hartung. Many British painters like Patrick Heron, Peter Lanyon, Terry Frost, Roger Hilton and William Scott have all played a part in his artistic education too. His work is often monochrome, avoiding over-use of colour, and finding expression through mark-making and gesture.

### MUSEUM LIBRARY'S FORGOTTEN TREASURES – A World Away from Wells

The Museum's Library has made a surprise discovery of a magnificent document, which is now on display. It is a large parchment Commission issued to the captain of the sloop *Jane* by Sir George Brydges Rodney – the future Admiral Lord Rodney. The formal confirmation was signed on 29 March 1782, only a fortnight before Rodney's famous defeat of the French at *Les Saintes* in the West Indies – for which Rodney received the thanks of Parliament and a peerage as the first Baron Rodney of Rodney Stoke. Do come along to see this extraordinary document.



### Saturday 7 March 11am to 1pm

#### World War One drop in day - Old military medals and badges lying in a drawer?

Do you have any family heirlooms from the First World War – medals, photos, badges or souvenirs brought back from the Fronts? Do you want to know more about them? Then why not bring them to the drop-in session being held at Wells & Mendip Museum on Saturday 7 March from 11:00 to 13:00. Some of the local experts who helped create the 'Wells Remembers' exhibition will be there to answer your questions or, if they cannot, then to point you in the right direction. If you have photos or letters of local relevance that you're willing to share, do bring them along too and we will digitise them.

### WELLS REMEMBERS



The "Wells Remembers" exhibition has now been open for six months and has attracted a wide range of visitors of all ages. The volunteers and school pupils are now busy working on changes for 2015: the schools are looking at the impact of the use of gas (the Blue School has just returned from the battlefields of France and Flanders, and the Cathedral School goes in March), the U3A History Group is undertaking research on the wartime hospitals in Wells, the Archivist has extended her research in the hope of updating the displays at the Town Hall, the trench will be redesigned to reflect the changing conditions 100 years ago, and other volunteers are working on how best to display the many objects and artefacts that have been brought in from the local community in the last few months – from uniforms to a bedspread! If you have artefacts, stories or ideas, please let us know.

## EXHIBITION 16 – 30 March

### “Colour and Cloth” by Barbara Duncan

This exhibition comprises oil paintings and fabric appliqué. The paintings are mostly landscapes featuring parts of Northumberland, Somerset and Brittany, where one of Barbara's daughters now lives. In recent years Barbara has worked with fabric- mostly silk and cotton - to create images, some with a biblical theme.

All proceeds from sales will be sent to *Medicins sans Frontieres*



## MENDIP HILLS HERITAGE DAY

Saturday 18 April



The 2015 Annual Heritage Day will take place on UNESCO World Heritage Day with an exciting line up of speakers including, in alphabetical order, Stuart Bardsley on the HLF funded “Discovering Black Down” project, Alan Gray on the “Rediscovery of the Lost Cave of Hutton”, Zena Kamash “From Mendip to Levels: landscapes and identities 1500BC to AD1086”, Dr. Jodie Lewis on 2014 excavations at Priddy, Pip Osborne on her Chewton excavations and Robin Thornes on new research on Burrington Hams.

Tickets to be booked in advance - £12.50 to include lunch.

Full details of programme can be found at : [www.wellsmuseum.org.uk](http://www.wellsmuseum.org.uk)



### Firefighting in Wells - Volunteers needed!

Are you interested in helping put together an exhibition on firefighting in Wells?

This will be taking place at the Museum next summer, and will encompass firefighting from the C17th right up to the present day.

Assistance is sought with a variety of tasks. If you'd like to offer your time, please email Julia at [archives@wellsmuseum.org.uk](mailto:archives@wellsmuseum.org.uk).

## Research opportunities

The Museum's special collections of objects, archives and library books offer many opportunities to pursue research interests. One item that has not been investigated for over 100 years is an almost complete skeleton of a young person found buried deep in a swallet at St Cuthbert's Lead Works at Priddy. It was collected by our Curator Herbert Balch who wrote that it was found in 1908 and was that of a young girl.

Radiocarbon dating last year found that the skeleton dated to the late Iron Age. More recently museum volunteer Erin Morris and Dr Linda O'Connell, a Consultant Forensic and Biological Anthropologist, have made further discoveries. Firstly, a press cutting has been found,

probably from the Somerset Gazette of 1906, reporting the discovery, two years earlier than Balch had recorded, and secondly, that there is no evidence from the bones that the young person was a girl. That must have been an assumption based upon the plaited hair and the beads around the neck. But who knows how Iron Age boys groomed and decorated themselves!



## DIARY OF EVENTS

### March

Friday 6 March 7.30pm

AGM followed by “How well do you know your City?” an illustrated talk by Roger Cookman **Wells Natural History and Archaeological Society**

Wednesday 11 March 7.30pm

A talk by Siobhan Goodwin and representatives of Wells Bookworms, “Investing in Young Readers and Writers” with local writer and illustrator, Rebecca Gryspeerdt - **Wells Civic Society**

Sunday 22 March 3pm

“Bass Attack” An exciting concert of international music for double bass from around the world. Music from the 19th century to the present day featuring various styles from Spain, Eire, UK, Finland, France, Italy and Macedonia. Tickets: Adults £7.50 Child/Student £4.50 available from Recital Music 01963 370051 or [doublebass@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:doublebass@tiscali.co.uk)

All proceeds will be donated to the Donkey Sanctuary in Sidmouth



**Tuesday 24 March at 7.30pm**

An illustrated talk on “**Stearth Marshes**” by Alys Laver, the marshes Senior Conservation Officer describing how Somerset Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust and the Environment Agency are creating one of the UK's largest new wetland reserves. **Somerset Wildlife Trust**

**April**

**Wednesday 8 April 7.30pm**

Local artists will lead a discussion, “**Public Art in Wells**” about the role of public art in the community and our legacy for the future of Wells. **Civic Society**

**Friday 10 April 7.30pm**

A humorous talk by Phillip Hoyland, “**Local Village and Parish Friendly Societies**” on the history, organisation and place of clubs in village life followed by a talk about the tradition of parading the Club's brass emblem on feast day. **Wells Natural History & Archaeological Society**

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# Wells & Mendip Museum

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Issue 27

May - June 2015

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## Summer opening hours

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

## The War changes - WELLS REMEMBERS



The Museum participated in parent/pupil events at the Blue and Cathedral schools following trips by Year 9 pupils to the battlefields in Belgium and France and the pupils' work will be introduced into the exhibition and website in the second half of May. The U3A has embarked on further research on the Cedars Red Cross hospital in Wells and the conversion of the "parlour" into a hospital scene within the exhibition is planned for the end of the year. Changes to the trench are also underway – these include the introduction of helmets and elements of gas warfare in 1915. We are also grateful to the library team, who consented to the re-siting of the exhibition on Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner". This has enabled modification of the trench exit to incorporate a first aid post and images of a battlefield cemetery and local monuments to encourage visitors to pause and reflect before they move on within the building.

## Finds Identification Day

**7 May 11am – 3pm**

The next Finds Identification Days at the Museum will be on Thursday 7 May 11am – 3pm.

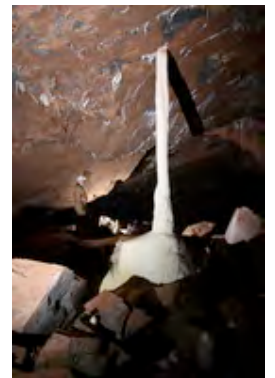
Laura Burnett, the Finds Liaison Officer for Somerset County Council, will be available to identify your finds from digging your garden or while walking your dog. No charge or booking necessary.

## Caving photography Competition and Exhibition

**10 May – 5 June**

For the 2<sup>nd</sup> year, the Museum will be hosting the Mendip Cave photography exhibition, which will finish with an award evening on Friday 5 June. There will be an overall winner, plus two "highly commended" images.

Anyone wishing to submit an entry should send it in j-png format to Peter Glanvill at [pglanv@aol.com](mailto:pglanv@aol.com) by **25 April latest**. Up to 5 entries per person will be accepted and, after a pre-selection process, 100 entries will be chosen. Photographers of the 100 selected will be asked to then supply mounted A4 prints for final judging and display in the exhibition. Entries that do not make the final 100 will be shown on a digital imaging screen.



It is proposed to make a CD of the 100 selected entries for sale, and the profits made will be donated to the Museum. **It is advisable to contact the Museum beforehand if you wish to visit the exhibition as the room is occasionally used for meetings.**



## Exhibition by Wells Cathedral School art students - 16 – 27 June

The Museum will once again be hosting the work from the A & AS-level students. This year the theme is "Fluid Sculpture" – interactive moving sculpture, designed to be placed in natural surroundings to accentuate the differences between organic and inorganic.

## “Firefighting in Wells” Exhibition

The City Archives is collaborating with the Museum to create this exhibition which will open on 8 August. Paul Pickford is the organiser, assisted by Dr. Julia Wood the City Archivist, and other volunteers.

We have been loaned some wonderful historic photographs, and an old fire helmet has been discovered in the Museum's Strong Room, which may have belonged to Mendip Hospital's Fire Brigade. If you know anybody who may have photos or artefacts they would be prepared to lend to the Museum for the exhibition, please let us know.

this photo of firemen marching past the conduit  
was taken almost exactly 70 yrs ago



Peace Day – Wells 13 May 1945

© Wells & Mendip Museum

## Museum Library's Forgotten Treasures – A World Away from Wells



The Museum's Library has made a surprise discovery of a magnificent document, which is now on display. It is a large parchment Commission issued to the captain of the sloop *Jane* by Sir George Brydges Rodney – the future Admiral Lord Rodney. The formal confirmation was signed on 29 March 1782, only a fortnight before Rodney's famous defeat of the French at *Les Saintes* in the West Indies – for which Rodney received the thanks of Parliament and a peerage as the first Baron Rodney of Rodney Stoke. Do come along to see this extraordinary document.

Admiral Lord Rodney

## Research

This plait of hair from the Iron Age skeleton mentioned in the last issue has now gone off to have its DNA tested, as part of the Ancient DNA of Britain project. We may also learn the gender of the young person from the results.



## DIARY OF OTHER EVENTS

### May

**Mon 4 May 10.30am**

Leo Tolstoy's "What is Art" with Colin Stott – **Philosophy Group**

**Weds 13 May 7.30pm**

"The Role of the Bishop's Barn in Wells – past, present and Future" **Civic Society**

**Fri 22 May 7.30pm**

"Light Fantastic" – a talk and demonstration by Hugh Allen and Brian Davidson – **Wells and Mendip Astronomers**

### June

**Mon 1 June 10.30am**

"If Materialism is true, how are umbrellas possible?" by Alan Hobbs – **Philosophy Group**

**Weds 10 June 7.30pm**

"Celebrating the Characters of Wells and the Civic Society's Commemorative Plaques"

**Clare Blackmore, Wells Journal and the Civic Society**

## 11 – 26 July MENDIP HILLS FESTIVAL OF ARCHAEOLOGY

Put these dates into your diary for a full programme of local events. Full details in the next Newsletter.

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Issue 28

July - August 2015

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## Summer opening hours

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## BIRTHDAY HONOURS

The Museum is delighted that the extraordinary voluntary work that Victoria Dawson has done for museums in the South West has been recognised in the Queens' Birthday Honours list. "Vicky" as she is known to us has been a friend & adviser to our museum for many years.

## Firefighting in Wells Exhibition

### 8 August – 5 September

The exhibition will encompass firefighting from the seventeenth century. It will focus on the very beginnings of a Fire Brigade being established in Wells around 1874 right up to the present day.

Come on the opening day (Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> August) and you can see a vintage Wells fire engine! It was built in late 1959 by DENNIS brothers of Guildford, Surrey, as a result of an order by Somerset Fire Brigade, for five fire appliances. It was known as a Pump Escape which meant it carried a Wheeled Escape Ladder. It served at Wells Fire Station from 1960 until 1976.



## The War changes - WELLS REMEMBERS



The Museum participated in parent/pupil events at the Blue and Cathedral schools following trips by Year 9 pupils to the battlefields in Belgium and France and the pupils' work will be introduced into the exhibition and website in the second half of May. The U3A has embarked on further research on the Cedars Red Cross hospital in Wells and the conversion of the "parlour" into a hospital scene within the exhibition is planned for the end of the year. Changes to the trench are also underway – these include the introduction of helmets and elements of gas warfare in 1915. We are also grateful to the library team, who consented to the re-siting of the exhibition on Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner". This has enabled modification of the trench exit to incorporate a first aid post and images of a battlefield cemetery and local monuments to encourage visitors to pause and reflect before they move on within the building.

## Finds Identification Day

### 23 July 11am – 3pm

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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.

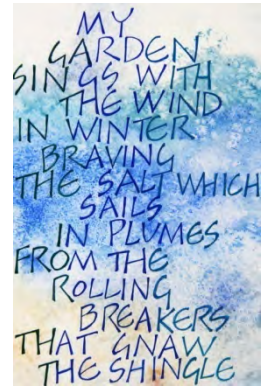


## Exhibition by Mendip Calligraphy

18 July – 1 August

Mendip Calligraphy Group will be returning for their biannual exhibition this Summer. The exhibition will showcase all styles and variety of traditional and modern writing and calligraphy from members of their group.

This will include prints, original hand written artwork, small books and other painted and written objects. There will be original works for sale, and a variety of prints and cards. Free entry to exhibition



## Museum Library's Forgotten Treasures – A World Away from Wells



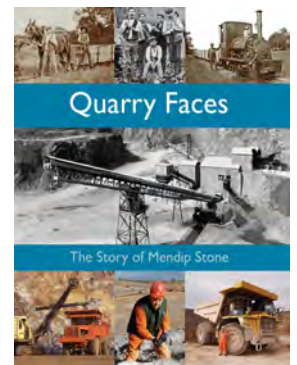
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Admiral Lord Rodney

## “Quarry Faces: - the Story of Mendip Stone”

This book tells the story of Quarrying in the Mendips, with special emphasis on the area's nationally important roadstone industry. It traces the history of that industry from 1865, when the first mechanically crushed stone left the Mendips by rail, to the present day. The book charts the growth of the industry in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and its close relationship with the railways and road haulage.

It has 328 pages in full colour and contains over 400 illustrations, including many historic photographs, and draws much of the information included from local people across the Mendips. Price: £19.50 – available from the Museum shop

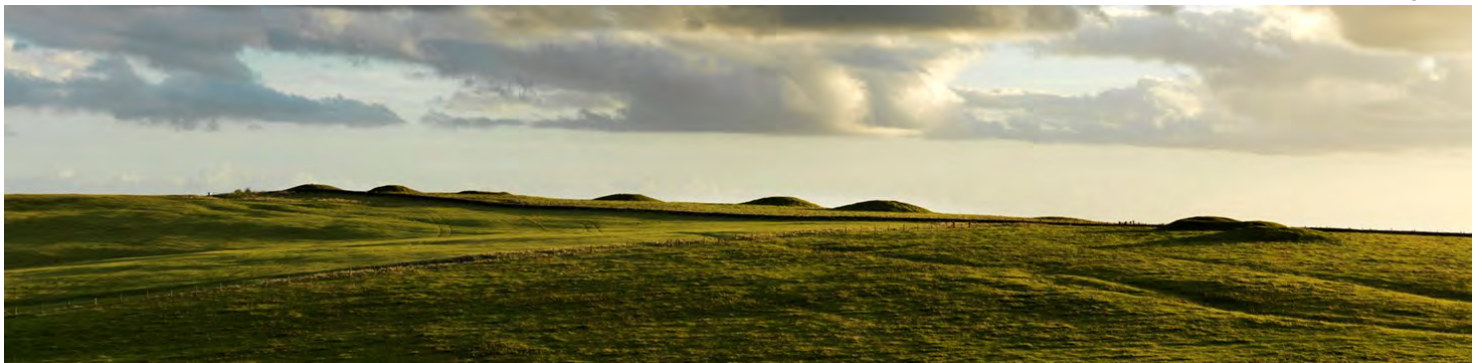


**Historic Landscape of the Mendip Hills** – the new Historic England publication on the Mendip Hills AONB will be launched on Thursday 23 July at Cheddar caves with short presentations on the history of Cheddar Gorge.

Free but booking essential at

<http://www.mendiphillsaonb.org.uk/contact-us/>

Ashen Hill Barrow cemetery, Priddy, Somerset © James O Davies/Historic England



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## **The Mendip Society – Visit to a Royal Observer Corps Bunker**

### **Wednesday 12 August at 7pm**

Built in the 1950's to monitor radiation levels in the event of a nuclear war and closed in 1990's. Now restored to its original condition, it is a unique place and well worth seeing.

You must be able to climb a 15ft vertical ladder.

Directions: From West Harptree take the A368 towards Weston, turn left up Harptree Hill, and turn first right after the Wellsway Inn. Meet at the site opposite Harptree Hill Farm (BS40 6EL)

ST 544 560, using the lay-by away from the farm entrance. £3.00 Booking Essential

To book a place, please contact Richard Frost On 01275 472797 or email [r.e.frost100@btinternet.com](mailto:r.e.frost100@btinternet.com)

## **Heritage Open Days 10 – 13 September**

For details of all the events happening during the Heritage Open Days, please visit their website

[www.heritageopendays.org.uk](http://www.heritageopendays.org.uk)



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September - October 2015

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**Summer opening hours** Monday-Saturday 10am-5pm. Closed on Sundays.

**Winter opening hours** (commencing 26 Oct) Monday – Saturday 11am – 4pm. Closed Sundays

### Our new look!

We have recently commissioned designer and historian Robin Thornes to produce a new look for the Museum. Robin was researcher, author and designer of the book and exhibition *Quarry Faces*. This Newsletter is the first appearance of the logo, to be followed by a new large display board for the front of the museum, generously sponsored by the Wells Rotary Club. Robin is also working on a new general leaflet to promote the museum more widely for use over the coming few years.

### HERITAGE OPEN DAYS 10-13 September

#### England's biggest free heritage festival!

Once again the Museum joins Wells Town Hall, the City of Wells Almshouses, Wells Cathedral Chained Library, St Cuthbert's Church and Wells Walking Tours in this annual festival. Barry Lane, the Honorary Curator, will give FREE guided tours of the Museum on Thursday, Friday and Saturday starting at 11am.

For further details of the festival programme visit [www.hodwellssomerset.com](http://www.hodwellssomerset.com).



### The War changes - WELLS REMEMBERS

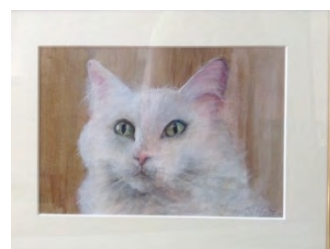


A first aid post has now been created by Geoff Dickson, (and the history of the Wells GP Hincks is being researched), and a 100 year-old hospital bed has been located to add to the planned conversion of the "parlour" into a hospital scene. Other changes have been made to the trench including the sniper shield loaned by Wells Reclamation which will shortly be incorporated. A "schools box" has been created using artefacts which have been loaned to the museum with the specific request that these are made available for visits to schools – the box will be made available to schools this term. 2016 school visits to France and Belgium are likely to focus on the Somme, and a joint screening of the film being made available by the IWM is being arranged.

### EXHIBITION BY THE WELLS PAINTING GROUP

#### 15 – 25 September

Wells Painting Group will this year be holding their annual exhibition in the museum. The group's diversity encompasses all manner of art, including some exquisite wood-turned pieces and cards. A perfect opportunity to buy



an original Christmas gift. This picture is just one of the 200 pieces that will be on show.



## WELLS ART CONTEMPORARY ART EXHIBITION

**9 – 25 October**

Once again, WAC will be exhibiting the top works of art entered into its annual competition. Hundreds of pieces were submitted online, and the best will be selected by their prestigious judges and exhibited in the Museum.

**PLEASE NOTE:** During the exhibition, the Museum will also be open 11am 4pm on Sundays 11, 18 & 25 October.

## “THE BIG DRAW” – a drop in event for all ages and abilities

**Saturday 17 October 10.30am – 3.15pm. Free Event.**

As part of the national Big Draw event - Wells Art Contemporary will be joining with Wells Museum to offer a day of free drawing for individuals and families of all ages and abilities.



Using viewfinders, sketchbooks and paper, along with a variety of materials and approaches, visitors will be encouraged to draw fragments of ancient artefacts and contemporary art which co-exist in the museum during the WAC exhibition. Together, the drawings will form an installation which celebrates the old and the new. The drawings can be later returned for the cost of an SAE. Friendly professional artists and art students will be on hand to help. All welcome from kids to grannies.

Drop-in for 20 minutes or stay for as long as you like. No previous experience or special skills required. Children must be accompanied by a participating adult. (Normal museum charges apply for non-participatory adults).

Further details from: Liz Hand (WAC Education) on [lizhand2@hotmail.com](mailto:lizhand2@hotmail.com)

## DISPLAY OF SEALS – COMING SOON !!



This new display, due to open in early November, charts the emergence of Seals as the primary means of authentication and/or security by the 12<sup>th</sup> Century, and their subsequent evolution and expansion into everyday life, continuing into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Despite featuring notable historical figures, from Medieval popes to Victorian politicians, the display also has clear and recurring ties to Wells and the local area.

## FIREFIGHTING IN WELLS DISPLAY

Following the very successful exhibition created largely by volunteers and the City Archivist, a selection of items from the exhibition and owned by the Museum will be turned into a small permanent display in the Wells Room on the first floor.



## CURATOR'S CHOICE

Currently on display as our “Curator's Choice” is an autographed cricket bat signed by players in the England v Australia Test Match at The Oval in 1930.

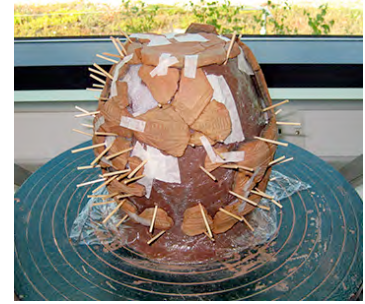
It was donated by one of the umpires, William Robert Parry, to the Wells Athletic Cricket Club and was displayed in their clubhouse for many years. Parry presented it



to Mr. E. Paul as the most consistent Wells player of the season in November 1930.

## CONSERVATION OF POTS

As a result of a recent generous donation to the Museum we have been able to commission the conservation of several important pottery vessels, including this Bronze Age beaker, that came to us in over 60 small fragments! It was excavated from the Charterhouse Warren Farm Swallet back in the 1970s and will this autumn be included in a new display of finds from that site in the Balch Room. The work was done by the Wiltshire Conservation Service.



## RESEARCH



The Museum holds much unique and special material that is very much in demand by current researchers. Recently, PhD student Ella Egberts from Bournemouth University spent some time with the museum's collection of Palaeolithic flint axes from Wood Green and Bemerton, taking photographs and measurements. Also Dr Tom Booth from the Natural History Museum took human bone samples, from several of our skeletons excavated from Mendip caves, for Ancient DNA analysis as part of a major project looking at the genomic impact of historic migrations into Britain, such as during the Neolithic, Roman and Anglo-Saxon periods.

## Finds Identification Day

**Thursday 17 September 11am – 3pm**

The next Finds Identification Days at the Museum will be on Thursday 17 September 11am – 3pm. Laura Burnett, the Finds Liaison Officer for Somerset County Council, will be on maternity leave, but Julie Shoemark will be available to identify your finds from digging your garden or while walking your dog. No charge or booking necessary.

## Mendip Rocks! 2015 – “Wells – A History in Stone”

**Wednesday 7 October 3.30pm – 4.30pm**

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

Meet outside the Wells and Mendip Museum

£3 per person. Booking Essential: Adel Avery 01749 840240 or [adel@nettlebridge.com](mailto:adel@nettlebridge.com)

## OTHER EVENTS

Tuesday 22 September 7.30pm **Trees in Somerset** – an illustrated talk by Brynley Andrews on the trees of Somerset highlighting the effects of globalisation and the results on our wildlife. **Somerset Wildlife Trust** Non-members £3.00. Friday

2 October 7pm – **“The Lost Islands of Somerset”** Richard Brunning's book has sold very well in the Museum shop. His talk will cover his investigations into this fascinating subject and the discoveries made. **Wells Natural History & Archaeological Society**

Members and Friends of the Museum Free. Non Members £2.

Wednesday 14 October 7.30pm. **“Wells Art Contemporary – new perspectives and challenges”**. A talk and an informal tour and discussion around the new exhibition with Liz Hand, other artists and curators. **Wells Civic Society**

Tuesday 27 October 7.30pm **The fight against the Illegal Trafficking of Wildlife** – Charles MacKay MBE will describe his work with the UK Border Agency in combating the illegal trade in wildlife, with graphic examples of some smuggling cases he has been involved with.

**Somerset Wildlife Trust** Non-members £3.00.

Tuesday 24 November. **The Brue Valley Project** – David Leach, the Brue Valley Living Landscapes Manager from Somerset Wildlife Trust will take you through the project mentioning the species conservation success of the cranes, breeding waders, eels, moth & butterflies.

**Somerset Wildlife Trust** Non-members £3.00.

*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 at*

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

## Newsletter

Issue 30

November 2015 – January 2016

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**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)

**Winter opening hours** Monday – Saturday 10am – 4pm. Closed Sundays.

### CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR

**PLEASE NOTE:** The Museum will close at 4pm on Saturday 19 December and will re-open at 10am on Monday 4 January 2016.

### WAITROSE "COMMUNITY MATTERS"

Thanks to one of our garden volunteers, the Museum garden will be one of the causes supported by Waitrose "Community Matters" for the whole of November. By voting for the garden with the green counters that you receive for your shopping, the Museum will receive a share of the £1,000 that Waitrose put into this fund each month. This will pay for new plants, garden structures and repairs to make our garden even lovelier.

### FIREFIGHTING IN WELLS DISPLAY



Following the great success of this exhibition and numerous enquiries as to why it did not run for longer, we are delighted to announce that it will be put on again, with the inclusion of new information. Watch this space!

The exhibition featured a fantastic Children's Quiz, devised by volunteer Tony Lee. After it closed, the names of the winners were drawn from a fireman's helmet containing all the correct entries.

The winners were: Sophie (aged 8), Winnie (aged 11), Lawrence (aged 6), Ben (aged 11), Alfie (aged 5½), Louie (aged 2½) and Orlando (aged 8).

The firefighting exhibition also included a caption competition, which was judged by the Senior Editorial Team at Mid Somerset News and Media. There were numerous hilarious entries. The winning suggestion was made by Lis and Dave Price of Holcombe, and was, "OK chaps, time for your colonic irrigation". The picture for which they wrote the caption is shown below.



## **VIRIDOR CREDITS ENVIRONMENTAL COMPANY**

Following a successful application for funding to Viridor Credits Environmental Company, the Museum will shortly be having a new boiler installed that will maximise efficiency and reduce costs. The remainder of the grant will be put towards repairing windows and replacing the existing glass in our display cases with new safety glass.



### **“LOOKING AT SOMERSET CHURCHES” by buildings Archaeologist**

#### **Jerry Sampson FSA**

This series of 6 talks (1 per month November – May 2016) will commence on Saturday 14 November at 2.30pm with **“Never Buy the Guidebook Again”** – an introduction to church archaeology.

£3 for SANHS members £5 for non members. Booking essential.

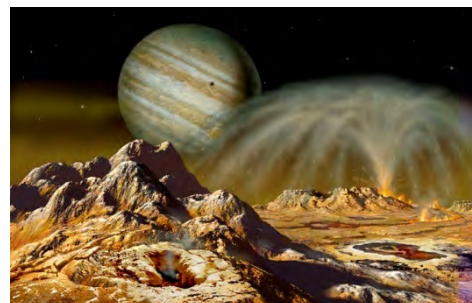
For full details of talks or to book please contact 01823 272429 or

[www.sanhs.org](http://www.sanhs.org) **Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society**

## **“VISIONS OF SPACE” – AN EXHIBITION OF ASTRONOMICAL AND SPACE ART**

**7 – 21 November**

Wells and Mendip Astronomers, in association with the British Interplanetary Society South-West, present an exhibition including works from renowned artist and illustrator David A. Hardy FIAA FBIS, former President of the IAAA. The show will also feature works by former BIS President Bob Parkinson MBE, as well as a number of other well-known US space artists.



## **EXHIBITION BY MENDIP ART GROUP**

**2 – 12 December**

Following their very successful first exhibition in the Summer, Mendip Art Group return with a wonderful collection of pieces.

## **“MENDIP WAYS” ART EXHIBITION BY ROY & SARAH SHALLISH**

**7 – 19 December**

This exhibition will feature landscapes and characters of Mendip in various media, painted by Axbridge artists, Roy and Sarah Shallish.



### **“THE ART OF WARFARE”**

**23-30 January 2016**

A selection of drawings and paintings dealing with all aspects of warfare as seen by artist, Geoff Dickson. The works will mainly focus on WW1, but will also have aspects showing troops behind the line, humorous illustrations and more modern paintings that have been commissioned by various regiments.

Free entry to exhibition.



## CURATOR'S CHOICE

A very special exhibit goes on display in November: a velocipede, or 'boneshaker' bicycle, made around 1869. This remarkable and very uncomfortable-looking means of transport was possibly made by William Plenty of North Wooton, near Wells. The cycle is a direct relative of the famous 'penny-farthing', and features pedals directly connected to the hub of the front wheel, solid tyres, and a brake operating on the rear wheel.

This exhibit has been kindly sponsored by local specialist bicycle company Bike City.



## RECENT RESEARCH



Helen Harris recently visited our stores to see Bronze Age pottery & other items excavated from Nettlebridge Cave, Ashwick in the 1940s as part of her MA in Photography and the Land at Plymouth University. Helen has lived in the Nettlebridge Valley for over 25 years and has produced a book from her research entitled "*Inland*".

## THE BIG DRAW 2015

On Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> October, the Museum was delighted to collaborate with Wells Art Contemporary to organise a free drop-in drawing event as part of the national 'Big Draw' festival. Over 60 participants of all ages drew ancient artefacts from the museum collection on fragments of 'aged' paper. While details from the 'new' art were drawn on white paper. The drawings were then displayed on a large pot- structure (inspired by a Bronze Age pot in the Balch Room).



The Museum would welcome more volunteers with an interest in working with schools and families.

## FINDS IDENTIFICATION DAY

**Thurs 10 December**

The next Finds Identification Days at the Museum will be on Thursday 10 December 11am – 3pm. Laura Burnett, the Finds Liaison Officer for Somerset County Council, is still on maternity leave, but Julie Shoemark will be available to identify your finds from digging your garden or while walking your dog. No charge or booking necessary.

## OTHER EVENTS

Saturday 7 November 2.30pm **"Shapwick Heath National Nature Reserve"** – Shapwick Heath is a large nature reserve in the Avalon Marshes extending to over 500 ha. Apart from the numerous plants, birds and animals, it is the site of a Neolithic pathway known as the "Sweet Track". Simon Clarke is the reserve manager who oversees the work to ensure the site is protected for both present and future generations. **Wells Natural History & Archaeological Society**  
Members and Friends of the Museum Free. Non Members £2.

Wednesday 11 November 7pm **"World War 1 Remembered"** – A talk and guided tour of the Wells Museum's WW1 exhibition with Andy Webb, Trustees and others, with tales from the Wells Journal archives from Clare Blackmore. **Civic Society**

Sunday 15 November 3pm – “**In Flander’s Fields**” a fundraising concert supporting “**Help for Heroes**”.

This concert will feature a wealth of beautiful and reflective music, which also provides a positive and uplifting theme from many composers who lived during the Great War.



Tickets: Adult £10 to include glass of wine and cake, Child £5 to include soft drink and cake.

To book or for more info please contact Recital Music on 01963 370051 [doublebass@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:doublebass@tiscali.co.uk)

Tuesday 24 November. **The Brue Valley Project** – David Leach, the Brue Valley Living Landscapes Manager from Somerset Wildlife Trust will take you through the project mentioning the species conservation success of the cranes, breeding waders, eels, moth & butterflies.

**Somerset Wildlife Trust** Non-members £3.00

Friday 4 December 7.30pm – “**The History of the Local Post Service**” and a Christmas party.

Allen Cotton – a long-time member of the Society, will shortly be publishing a book on the local postal service. Although his book concentrates on Glastonbury and street, he has also gathered much material from Wells to share during his presentation. Any donations of food would be very welcome. **Wells Natural History and Archaeological Society**

Members and Friends of the Museum Free. Non Members £2.

Wednesday 9 December 7pm – “**Seasonal Celebration and Cheese Tasting**”. Local cheese expert and writer, Richard Green, will talk about his book and offer a range of cheeses for tasting.

**Civic Society**

Wednesday 13 January 7pm – “AGM followed by WCS President, The Rt Revd Bishop Peter Hancock reflects on his year in Wells **Civic Society**”

Tuesday 26 January 7.30pm “**Greylake RSPB Reserve**” with Harry Paget-Wilkes the Reserve manager  
**Somerset Wildlife Trust**

**SUPPORT THE MUSEUM - RECYCLE YOU INKJET CARTRIDGES** **Recycle 4 Charity**



Register with [Recycle4Charity.co.uk](http://Recycle4Charity.co.uk) and then request freepost bags to return your old inkjet cartridges. For each usable cartridge, £1 will be donated to the Museum - so just send off your items and help the Museum with little effort. Alternatively, just drop your cartridges off at the Museum and we will send them off for you.

**The Museum Trustee, staff and volunteers would like to take this opportunity to say thank you for all the support received this year and to wish everybody a very Happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year**



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