

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

Opening hours: Tuesday – Saturday 10am – 4pm (Closed Sundays & Mondays)

First Floor Exhibition Room

29th July – 9th August – Art exhibition by the Old Bakery Artists

The OBA are primarily a group of artists who have come together to organise group exhibitions in and around Radstock, Somerset, and further afield, although through this they have also become a group of friends. They do not do workshops or painting days but work hard to exhibit their work in lots of places. They have other regular exhibitions at The West Barn, Bradford on Avon; Black Swan Arts, Ammerdown Retreat, to name a few.

They also have a bi-annual art trail in the Radstock and Paulton area, and appear at the Midsomer Norton Fair and further afield. One of their big claims to fame is that they are the first Art Group to have exhibited in a supermarket, RADCO in Radstock.



13th – 30th August – A mixed media & pyrography exhibition by Ruth White & Ruth Baker



Mixed media fine artist Ruth White resides in Somerset. Often landscape based, her work offers highly textured visceral landscapes that challenge perceptions combining the beauty & brutality of urban erosion & neglect. Her inspirations are rooted from a childhood filled with public information films, protect & survive leaflets & Raymond Briggs' 'When the wind blows'. Capturing raw textures & inviting the psychological mood of disquiet she blurs the lines between art & environment. Graduating with a first class honours degree from Bath Spa university her work has been awarded & exhibited over

previous years at the RWA & more recently she has been accepted in this year's Open exhibition 172 on show later in the year.

She was shortlisted this year for the Royal Academy Open exhibition held in London as well as many local exhibitions & galleries throughout the southwest.



Pyrography woodburning, Somerset artist Ruth Bakers' work captures the raw beauty of nature & human emotion through the controlled power of fire & heat. Working primarily on wood she blends subtle tones & precision to create pieces that celebrate detail, texture, realism, depth & storytelling. Self taught, Ruth draws inspiration from life, organic patterns, inquisitive lighting & the natural world. Each burn is a meditation, each mark permanent.

Her award winning art is actively exhibited in London, Wales, Somerset & Devon & been represented by many prestigious shows over the years & several worldwide publications.

Most recently she took part as a contestant on Sky Arts Landscape artist of the year, to be aired early 2026. **Free entry to exhibition only**

16th – 27th September

“Estuary” – an exhibition of paintings by Paul Davey & sound by Irving Kinnersley

“Estuary” is a collaborative exhibition which draws inspiration from the shoreline and foreshore of Bridgewater Bays estuary environment.

Paul Davey's paintings emerge from the many hours he has spent walking along the foreshore of the Steart Marshes on Bridgewater Bay. They show an interest, not in the horizon and space of landscape, but an engagement with the nearby, things stumbled upon or encountered when out walking. These are paintings that pay attention to the aesthetic possibility of surfaces, the formation of lichens on a stone wall, an area of cracked mud, a wall of reeds or a puddle of water.



The sound in the exhibition is based on field recordings undertaken at different places along the shoreline of Bridgewater Bay and seeks to give a sonic sense of both the gentle and more destructive forces at play in this environment. The sound of rocks, pebbles, sand, waves and wind form the context for the traces of human voices and the sound of birds which appear and disappear throughout.

Paul studied at Folkestone School of Art, Walthamstow College of Art and Chelsea College of Art. He has exhibited widely in London at numerous group exhibitions including the Royal Academy Summer Show and had solo exhibitions including Vortex Gallery and The London College of Furniture. He has exhibited widely in Somerset since moving here in 2008.

Irving Kinnersley is a composer of electroacoustic music and soundscape music, as well as composing sound for video. He studied electroacoustic composition at Bath Spa University and University of Manchester. His work has been performed internationally at numerous concerts and festivals. He was a finalist at the MUSICA NOVA international Electroacoustic competition, awarded first prize at the KLANG International Electroacoustic Competition and was awarded first place by British Electroacoustic Network. As a result his work will represent the Network at various international events.

Free entry to exhibition only

The Splendid Stones of Wells

This year, for Heritage Open Days, the museum will be participating in a joint event with Wells Cathedral and St Cuthbert's Church to celebrate the stonemasons and their carvings for which the city is famous. On Saturday 13th September we are offering free admission to visitors at the museum to follow our Stone Trail, the pictorial guide to the stone and carvings in the museum which we keep at Reception. Of course, in addition, we also have the Statuary permanent display. See more later on our website and social media, and the Heritage Open Days website.



On display outside the lecture hall: Four angel corbels with two carrying scrolls and the other two carrying shields, dating from the 15th or early 16th Century. These were part of the Bishops Rib, a canonical house north of St Thomas Street which was demolished in 1859.

From the Curator

Bristol Brass

The second Wells Natural History and Archaeological Society summer visit of the year was in early June, to Saltford Brass Mill. This 18th Century mill used the power of the Bristol Avon river to process brass into hollow-ware items or roll it into sheets. The mill is operated by the Saltford Brass Mill Project, a charity which preserves and maintains the building, and promotes learning about the history of the local brass industry. Over a dozen society members thoroughly enjoyed an introductory talk and escorted tour by one of the Brass Mill volunteers.



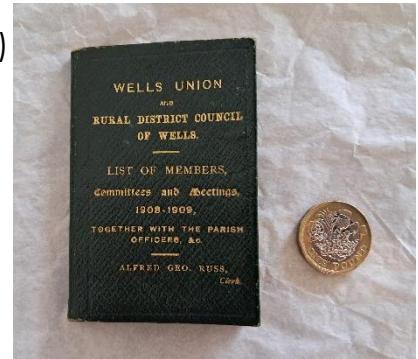
Brass is an alloy of Copper and Zinc, commonly 70% Copper and 30% Zinc, known as 'Alpha Brass'. The brass industry developed in the Bristol area during the 18th Century using Copper ore from Cornwall and Zinc ore from the Mendip Hills. It was smelted in foundries in the Bristol area fuelled by locally mined coal and processed locally in brass mills. Alpha Brass is malleable at room temperature and was cold worked into hollow-ware items or rolled into sheets.

In the brass mills skilled workers used water powered trip hammers fashion the products. Bristol brass featured significantly in the transatlantic slave trade, as well as being used by home markets. Brass was exported from Bristol to the West Coast of Africa, where it was highly regarded by Indigenous people who cast it into functional and cultural objects. The majority of the well-known Bronzes from the Kingdom of Benin, now part of Southern Nigeria, are made of brass. Also made in the area for export to West Africa were 'Manillas', bracelet shaped objects used as local currency. Typically they were an alloy of Copper and Lead, hardened by the addition of Arsenic. Goods exported to West Africa were traded for people who were then transported across the Atlantic to be enslaved workers on sugar plantations in Brazil and the West Indies. The Bristol brass industry went into decline with the repeal of slavery in the early 19th Century.

Eventually the brass mill closed but it enjoyed a new lease of life in the 1930s when it was bought by Eric Butler, a wealthy director of a local firm, who converted the mill into a sports centre. It had a squash court which was illuminated by electric light, with electricity being generated by a waterwheel driven dynamo. In the 1950s the mill was owned by Charlie Sheppard of Bristol Boats Ltd, who installed a bench saw next to the dynamo driven by the same waterwheel. For further information on the Saltford Brass Mill and the Bristol brass industry see their website: <https://brassmill.com/>

Wells City Archives

This small book, pictured, is particularly unusual (WCC/3505/2) It belonged to Councillor William Henry Derrick and includes an introduction to Wells Rural District Union. The Union was responsible for running the former Wells workhouse, now Priory Health Park, Glastonbury Road. The item from 1908 also includes an annotated diary at the back of the book. Cllr Derrick was a member of Wells City Council and, among other events, recorded several golf commitments in the diary. He must have had a very steady hand!



News from the Library

When I last reported on the Library, I recorded that 25 new titles had been acquired since the new year. At the end of July, I can record only two: a book from Pamela Robinson *In Search of England* (1937), and *A Portrait of Charles Lamb* by David Cecil (1983), to be added to the three existing Charles Lamb books that are already attached to the Coleridge Archive.

The current news carries the sad news that Andrew Haymes, a key member of the Library team, who has been responsible for the various newspapers in the Attic, as well as in the Library itself, is leaving. Anyone who would be able to take over the Attic, without committing themselves to the Main Library, who would also be in charge of duplicate copies from the Library shelves that are held in the Attic, should contact me.

Meanwhile we owe Andrew our thanks for his many years in both the Main Library and the Attic. Just how much quiet work he has achieved we shall soon discover from his absence

I was very glad to have the newly appointed Cathedral Librarian (Jolene Stevens) visit us the other day. Most of the Cathedral books are older than ours. The Museum Library, though much smaller, has a considerable number of books on the Cathedral and other churches. More unusual is that the two Libraries both have books on Captain Cook's voyages. **Stuart Andrews, Hon. Librarian**

News from the museum garden

The drought conditions mentioned in the last newsletter have continued at the time of writing this. There was, of course, one exception - the plant sale and open day!! It rained throughout. At the last moment the plant sale was moved into the lecture hall. Despite the challenging conditions almost £350 was raised towards keeping the garden in good condition - only slightly down on last year.





Spending some of the money on soil improvement is a priority. The regular gardening team would like to thank all those who contributed with refreshments, erecting gazebos, putting banners, distributing leaflets and moving furniture.

Special thanks go to Alison Fideli, a resident of Chamberlain Street, who donated plants surplus to the re-planting of her garden.

Other events in the museum

Saturday 6th September 7.30pm – 9.30pm – “I Found this on Amazon....”

A talk by Andy Hook. WMA member. Andy will give an insight into his journey into astrophotography: the kit; the potholes in the road; the expectations and the reality. Visitors very welcome. Members free. Visitors: Adult - £5; Family £7.50; Students £3.

Wells and Mendip Astronomers

Tuesday 30th September at 7.30pm – “Somerset’s Wonderful Coast” –

A talk by Nigel Phillips. Visitors welcome. £5 payable on the door.

The Wells and District Wildlife Group

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