

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

14 – 25 April

Holcombe Art Group



There are many reasons for becoming a member of an Art Group. It's a great way to meet and make new friends, and at the same time enjoy painting some attractive, interesting and at times, thought-provoking images. Why we paint probably varies with each individual.

The group meet in the Village Hall in Holcombe, every Friday between 10am and 1pm, where they all work on their own piece of art. They use Acrylic paints both out of preference and practical reasons. They are advised by professional artist, their group mentor, Barry Wills, who advises and encourages them to push their work that little bit further, which allows them to develop and improve their standard of work. While they work creatively, conversation often ranges far and wide. At the same time they often find themselves very much “in the moment” which as we are told these days, is of great therapeutic benefit!

They have staged a number of impromptu “displays” to coincide with other events that have used the village hall. By staging a more formal exhibition in the museum, they are showing a wider audience what they do. Although several of them live in Holcombe there is no bar to anyone and several travel some distance to attend the Friday sessions.

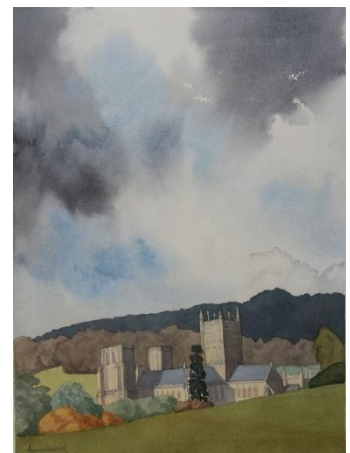
If you'd like to join them do make contact, initially with Barry Wills – Tel 01761 753457. Or just go along on a Friday morning from 10am where you will be made very welcome. **Free entry to exhibition only**

5 – 9 MAY

Anna Dmochowski

Anna has now lived in Wells for 22 years and has spent the past year working in watercolour. She paints landscapes and animals, especially horses, and also flowers, trees and cityscapes in Wells.

In summer she loves to drive into the countryside, park in front of a good view, and work from the scene in front of her,



either inside the car if the weather is unhelpful, or preferably outside in the fresh air. She especially enjoys painting skies, for which watercolour is so suitable as she says that its transparency is ideal for capturing light and colour, and the changing effects of sun and shadow.

She likes to start with a good drawing, by which she means a good composition, that is, an interesting arrangement of shapes and colours within the frame. She says she finds that accurate academic drawing gives her a firm foundation for her work, so she goes to weekly life drawing classes to keep her eye in. She also goes to watercolour classes given by a well-known local watercolourist, John Hunt (who is hoping to exhibit at the museum in 2027). Cards of Anna's pictures will also be available to buy. **Free entry to exhibition only**

Look out for exhibitions in June & July which include: Martin Bentham RWA, Thea Wilcox, iDartists & the Shepton Artists (details in next newsletter).

Roman Mendip - Lives, locations, and the pursuit of lead

Wells and Mendip Museum is celebrating the significance of the Mendip Hills to the Roman empire by opening a new permanent gallery space at Easter this year. Visitors can explore displays about Roman lead mining in the Mendip area, and see what life was like for the miners, the occupying Romans, and the communities which grew up to support the mining. We will show every day domestic and



personal artefacts used by Romans, evidence of Roman buildings in the area, Roman coins, and information about the network of Roman roads. We expect the new gallery will be a great resource for researchers and schools learning about their local history.

The renowned antiquarian and vicar of Camerton, the Reverend John Skinner, recognised Roman activity on Mendip in the early 19th Century, and our starting point has been the archaeological evidence supporting this. Over decades archaeologists associated with the museum have carried out excavations at various local Roman sites, in particular at Green Ore, Priddy, and at Hole Ground, Wookey Hole village. Twenty years ago BBC's Time Team carried out a limited programme of work for its 'Big Roman Dig' at Charterhouse. Now at last we can share just some of the finds from this practical research with residents and visitors.

The museum's Chair Sue Isherwood said:

"More recently community archaeologists have been excavating local Roman sites, supported and advised by professionals. Their work has been incredibly thorough, bringing new material to light and creating new insights. All this historical and contemporary exploration informs the new display."

The museum's Curator David Walker said:

"The Romans were on Mendip just a few decades after they invaded, and when they withdrew just over 400 years later they left a country changed forever. Our new display will reflect on their time here, and how life continued after they ended direct rule."



The new display will be open from Easter 2026. In addition to the new gallery, we are planning a 12-month programme of exciting events and activities to accompany it, including family workshops, guided walks at Charterhouse and the opportunity to visit a live dig.

Image: Work in progress

"Somerset Industrial Heritage"



Last load Kilmersdon

Lead mining on the Mendip Hills and the Somerset Coalfield are two of the industries covered in a new book entitled '**Somerset Industrial Heritage**' by local author **Henry Buckton**.

The book examines a series of industries that were based on something that was extracted from under the ground and in many cases physically changed the landscape. They were drivers of the Industrial

Revolution here in Somerset

and have now almost completely disappeared, leaving lost industrial landscapes around the county that give a clue as to what went on there. The book includes chapters on Iron Ore mining on the Brendon Hills and Exmoor; Lead Mining on the Mendip Hills; The Somerset Coalfield; Peat extraction on the Somerset Levels; Copper extraction on the Quantocks; Oil extraction on the Somerset coast; and Quarrying at places like Ham Hill in South Somerset and around Bath.



St. Cuthbert's Minery

Henry will be at the museum signing copies of his book (available from the museum shop at £15.99) 11am – 1pm on Saturday 11th April

From the Curator

Recent Acquisitions

We've had the opportunity to display some of the material that has been given to the museum over the last few years. It is impossible to display all the material we hold; some things just have to be stored until they can take temporary exhibition or in the permanent displays. The next time the museum take a look at what has been donated recently



Recent Acquisitions

I need a name!

We will soon have a wonderful crocheted ichthyosaur in the Jurassic fossils display in the Geology Room. It will give our visitors an idea of the shape of the marine reptile, but it will be a reminder not to miss our complete fossil ichthyosaur which is at Reception.

But... it needs a name, and we thought we would ask you for suggestions. Many thanks to Mary for her skilled crochet work. We will release the name on social media when it is decided.



Museum Shop



To accompany the new "Roman Mendip" gallery, we have lots of new stock – books, posters, collectables and activities from as little as £2.25.

Library News

Latest additions:

- 1489, Botanical notes. 19th book in various aspects of Botany, Revd W. H. Purchase
- 1490, Tales from Tombstones. Personal reflections. in Wells Cathedral, J. Martin
- 1491, Weston-Super-Mare & the Origins of Coastal Leisure in Bristol, B. J. H. Brown
- 1492, Star Roman Villa, Shipham, K. Barton
- 1493, Whorlbury, the story of the Iron Age hill-fort at Weston-super-Mare
- 1494, The Blue Magazine of the Blue School, Wells, Vol.50 No.1, July 1964
- 1495, Around Glastonbury: Photographic Memories, S. Wallis
- 1496, Robert Southey: The Critical Heritage, L. Madden (Ed.) [Coleridge archive]
- 1497, Catalogue of the Valuable Library of the Late Robert Southey, which will be sold at Auction. Leigh & Sotheby (1844) [Coleridge archive]
- 1498, Coleridge and Wordsworth in Somerset, B. Lawrence [Coleridge archive]
- 1499, The Wordsworth Circle Vol.54 [Coleridge archive]

Garden News



All gardening was suspended over the festive period. Since then weather conditions, including some heavy frosts, have prevented much being done. The garden is pretty much dormant at this time of year. There are, however, some harbingers of spring. Flowers are appearing on a few plants including winter-flowering jasmine, viburnum, periwinkle, hellebores and mahonia. Hopefully, there will be more to report in the next newsletter.

Somerset Day 2026

Saturday & Sunday 9th & 10th May

As part of the Somerset Day celebrations, on Saturday 9th May, the museum will be hosting a Roman "Living History"

Two Roman Legionary soldiers will show what the Roman army were wearing when they marched onto the Mendips.

With visual and sound effects, they will talk about the artefacts on display in the new "Roman Mendip" gallery.

They are happy to answer questions and will also offer photograph opportunities.

Other Events in the museum

Friday 10th April at 7pm – "Bees and Sugar"

Stewart Gould is a beekeeper of some 20 years standing, a vice president of Somerset Beekeepers Association, and has taught beekeeping for the last 15 years. He keeps his bees in Ditcheat. Honey is basically sugar but there's much more to it than that as Stewart's talk will show us.

Wells Natural History & Archaeological Society

Saturday 18th April – "Music with connections to Old Somerset"

12pm Somerset folk tunes, songs and writings from **Thomas Whythorne** b. 1528 (a Somerset born composer who wrote what some consider to be the earliest known surviving [autobiography](#) in [English](#)) and some music written on a slate that was found while excavating the site of the Manor House of the Deane of Wells.

Period instrumentalists from the cream of London's early music scene -

Jude Rees - oboe, Rauschpfeife, recorders, voice

Daniel Swani - flutes, recorders

Jenny Bliss - baroque violin, viola da gamba, voice

Tickets available at <https://ancientsomerset.eventbrite.co.uk/>

1.30 pm – "A musical journey through time" with Celtic Bard - Morgan of Mercia

Morgan of Mercia (MA, ARSM) is a Celtic Bard-Singer and history teller based in Wales. He has revived ancient Celtic instruments like the Lyre and the Carnyx (dragon war horn), singing in Welsh and many other languages. He also performs with a lute as a medieval French Troubadour, in the Occitan language of his upbringing in the Corrèze region of Nouvelle-Aquitaine.

Join him for a fantastical journey through time, to discover the mysteries of music from the past and beyond.

Tickets available at <https://morganofmerciamusic.eventbrite.co.uk/>



Saturday 16th May at 7.30pm – Finding a signal among the noise: Machine Learning for Air Quality Applications" – A talk by Lilli Helps

By combining satellite and terrestrial observations, critical air quality information can be teased out from background noise using machine learning. Lilli uses her PhD research project at Leicester University to paint a picture of cutting-edge air quality monitoring. Lilli was a junior member of Wells & Mendip Astronomers before

going to study astrophysics at Leicester. Members free, Visitors: Adult £5, Family £7.50, Student £3 **Wells & Mendip Astronomers**

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