



MMIX

**Sherborne Museum Newsletter  
March 2009**

**Chairman's Letter**

*Sue Taylor introduces this issue of the Museum Newsletter.*

One of my recent tasks as Chairman was to sign the Report which we send annually to the Charity Commission, after having updated it. There, in black and white, were the words, laid down in the Constitution, which put so succinctly what the Museum is all about: "the collection, preservation and display for the benefit of the public of items ... and also the holding of lectures, discussions and meetings concerning these subjects or others of a like nature." Of course, when I thought about it, this was nothing new, but somehow it sharply brought into focus all the work which is done by the Museum volunteers and which is so faithfully supported by all our Members.

This issue of the Newsletter, like the last, is written with the intention of informing and entertaining you, and, in doing this, it reflects the many ways in which all who volunteer and support the Museum work to fulfil its aims.

We are lucky to have such a dedicated band of volunteers at the Museum, whose numbers have recently grown: amongst these are several young graduates, willing to join the many of us whose student days are a dim and distant thing of the past!

As you will see from the articles which follow, although the Museum is not open so often in the winter season, this does not mean that the volunteers put their feet up. In fact they are busier than ever, for as well ongoing work such as organising the new store in the Family History Centre, dealing with new items, conservation and the archives, they are preparing the new exhibitions for the coming season, tidying the old ones and refreshing the galleries, thus benefiting from the shorter opening hours by being able to work without getting in the way of the public too much.

I, and all the Museum team, hope that you will find this issue an interesting and thought-provoking read, and we look forward to seeing you at the new season's preview and AGM on March 30th.

*Sue Taylor*

**Curator's Report**

*Judy Nash reflects on the winter activities and highlights the new season's exhibitions.*

The new season fast approaches and we are all looking forward to opening our doors full time again. However the season never really ended and thanks to the support of loyal stewards who volunteered to man Reception on Tuesday and Thursday mornings we have been able to welcome a steady stream of visitors right through the winter. It really makes a difference when there is a steward in place. Over 5000 visitors came through the door last year and we hope this will continue to increase annually. A museum in such a good position and with such a rich and varied collection should be able to attract even more than this. (Visitor numbers for 2003 and 2004 hovered around 2500 and have risen sharply since that time.)

Opening up the Stores was a national policy that I felt would work well for us and with the rolling Good Housekeeping programme uncovering a vast number of items that have not seen the light of day since being donated I started looking at ways of making the collection more accessible.

The solution is to make it searchable at a computer viewpoint in the Museum and eventually on line as both casual visitors and keen researchers could then see themed items without actually handling them. This reduces the need for unpacking items that are not exactly what the description led them to think they would be seeing and, with this in mind, photographs are gradually being taken to create a database for the future.

The Book Collection has had a major review by Sue Woodward with all ledgers, large pharmaceutical books and other worthy volumes located and listed, and all will be re-themed to make the collection a more useful asset. Thanks to the SEED funding granted last year we have purchased conservation grade book wrappers for the Pharmaceutical Ledgers. Best practice is always to retain the original where possible and not to rebind volumes but to give them the support they need to preserve them for the future.

Rotating exhibitions are really nice as they enable items from mixed collections to be displayed in interesting settings and this year we are delighted to offer a major photographic exhibition as well as 'Plastics - no new thing' which takes a look at bakelite and other early and often brittle materials that preceded the plastics we know today. The costume case is a Renoir Pastiche with a stunning Victorian child's dress and a fine array of parasols.

What do you know about Tom Poole? Come and see his spectacles in another exciting exhibition in the Marsden Gallery. Here also you will find the still evolving Diana Ruth Wilson story and the important botanical collection once housed at Sherborne School that adds a new dimension to the picture.

Photography has always been dear to my heart - as it has been to so many in the Museum's collection area. My early introduction was through my aunt who, as House Matron at West Downs Preparatory School at Winchester, learnt from her boys - including Angus Ogilvy and his brother and Sir Peter Scott, who used to borrow her watch as he liked to sketch during his lunch hour and did not have one of his own!

So Adam Gosney learnt his skills from boys at Sherborne School and his and various other photographer's names can be found on studio portraits and historic village scenes in the Museum collection. Others have played an important role in recording the past and we also feature David Hunt who had the forethought to amass a large collection of historic photographs from the area and borrowed others to copy. Lesser known but also deserving recognition is Sam Gabe of Melbury Osmond whose name can be found on rural postcards showing village life around the turn of the last century in the Museum's collection area. Come and find out more and add to the database we are compiling of useful names, facts and figures. Your input is invaluable and will ensure we leave as much information as possible about the past and the present for future generations to enjoy.

*Judy Nash*

## **The Gerald Pitman Memorial Lecture**

*Sue Taylor presents a brief review of this year's lecture, held in memory of one of the people so instrumental in the making of the Museum. (See the article "Naming of Parts.")*

Last October, Dr. Judith Ford presented an enlightening lecture, the result of her current research, into the history and plight of Gypsies in Dorset in the 250 years prior to 1800. Many interesting facts were brought to our knowledge and, whilst many would consider that today's Gypsies are victimised, such treatment was shown to be considerably worse in those earlier times.

The talk was informatively illustrated and followed by tea, cake and biscuits.

*Sue Taylor*

## **Schools' Exhibitions in the Museum**

*George Tatham, the Museum's newly-appointed Schools Liaison Officer writes about the displays, past and present, produced by local schools.*

As March 2009 will mark the tenth anniversary of the Schools Liaison Committee, it was thought worthwhile, and of interest to our Members, to record all the exhibitions mounted by schools under the enlightened stewardship of Dr. Ray Penn.

These were: The History of Cheap Street, The Civil War - Skirmish in the Shambles, The History of the Prep School, The 1940 Air Raid on Sherborne, Churches in Sherborne, Royal Visits to Sherborne, The 450th Anniversary of Sherborne School, World War 1 - Impact and Men of Dorset, Sir Walter Raleigh, The Civil War - Siege of Sherborne Castle, A Sherborne Time Line, Fossils, Toys, The Conduit, A Millenium of Illness, The American Hospital in World War 2, Transport in Sherborne, Clay Pipes, Local Children in Roman Times, Remembrance - World Wars 1 and 2, Dark Age Sherborne, The Pageant and Missal, Lettering, Abbey School Anniversary, The History of Sherborne - Essays after a Visit to Sherborne, Impressions after Visiting the Brunel Exhibition, Alan Turing.

The exhibition this coming season will feature research based on men named on the town's First World War memorial and the boys from the Preparatory School who served in the First World War.

"We will remember them." But, remember whom? How can we remember men who fell during the First World War? Some of the names may be familiar to us as 'local' names, but all we can do is hold them in remembrance, which is not the same.

The project aims to provide details which can help us to think more about those who died and to provide a tribute to those who fought and fell in the great conflict, while attempting to give a context to their lives.

The war memorial lists 173 names, limited to surname and initials, arranged alphabetically. There are no references to rank, service or regiment. But what qualified those men for inclusion on Sherborne's memorial - birth, residence, marriage, next-of-kin or close relatives living in the town?

We hope to establish the ages of the fallen, the service in which they served and the theatres in which they fought, died and are buried, including, not only the Western Front, but also Egypt, Mesopotamia, India and the Dardanelles.

If anyone has information or photographs concerning any of the men who are named on the memorial, the Museum would be very pleased to hear from them.

*George Tatham*

## **Make Do And Mend – Women In Wartime**

*Judy Nash would like to hear from you - your memories are important.*

We need your help to gather memories for our exciting new project!

Substantial funding from the National Lottery, delivered through the MLA Partnership, has enabled us to set up an attachment to our web site to enable people nationwide to contribute their family's memories.

The second phase of 'Their Past Your Future' was oversubscribed but Sherborne Museum's proven track record to deliver such packages went in our favour and we were delighted to be selected to take part.

Many applicants had chosen previously tried themes focusing on men in wartime or evacuees' memories so I chose Women in Wartime. Those tiny snippets are sometimes the most valuable, giving a real insight to thoughts and life at home in wartime and now they can be contributed on line.

Visit the Museum's website at [www.sherbornemuseum.co.uk](http://www.sherbornemuseum.co.uk) and follow the link. No Internet access? Don't worry - just get in touch and meet us at the museum or we can visit at home.

A photograph taken at the time would help and taped memories would also be really useful. Men can join in too by adding stories told to them by their mother, grandmother, friends or other relations!

The result will be a nationally searchable archive that will also be publicised on the 24 Hour Museum site and can only benefit the museum, by attracting more visitors and enquiries.

Other events are planned this year both at the museum as well as at local sheltered housing schemes to enable people to get together and recall those wartime days together.

Younger members of the family can also take part by interviewing older members of their community, under supervision for safety. What they discover will give them a greater understanding of life in wartime Britain than a textbook ever can.

Please help make this project a success.

*Judy Nash Curator and Project Leader*

## **The Museum's New Herbarium**

*Elisabeth Bletsoe introduces her latest venture into botany - more on this in the next issue.*

During the Museum's weekend celebration of the Cultural Olympiad at the end of September, I was intrigued to receive a phone call from Christine Stones of Sherborne School for Girls who had been in touch with someone who was convinced that the handwriting featured on the Wilson botanical drawings and that labelling Sherborne School Herbarium was one and the same. My first thought was that this was certainly possible, as I knew that Diana Wilson's father, Thomas, had helped to build up the Natural History collections at the Sheborne School during his 36 year teaching career. Was it also possible that Diana, who often accompanied his field trips, had also collected some of the specimens?

The Herbarium had apparently been offered to the Museum for conservation in the past but it had been refused, possibly owing to fears that it might harbour pests and mould-spores. It had travelled to Kew Gardens, where it remained until it fell out of favour after a change of Curator, but was currently residing in Cambridge with a Dr. Alan Leslie, a former Sherborne School pupil and someone who had also contributed to the collection in more recent times. He was more than happy, I was informed, to allow the Herbarium to return to Sherborne, provided the Museum was sufficiently interested and prepared to conserve it correctly. After a series of phone-calls and letters, Judy Nash and I managed to persuade those involved that we were very enthusiastic about receiving a Herbarium and we would certainly give it the attention it deserved.

Work on conservation and display of the Herbarium and on establishing its identity and connections is ongoing.

*Elisabeth Bletsoe*

## **Sad Farewell To Our Friends At MLA-SW**

*On behalf of the Museum, Judy Nash says goodbye to a group which has been most supportive.*

All of us at Sherborne Museum would like to send our best wishes to our friends at MLA-SW who will no longer be at Creech Castle, Taunton to assist us in so many ways. When I came to the Museum four years ago I had already dealt with SWMLAC (South West Museums Libraries and Archives) which shortly afterwards was re-named as MLA-SW.

Always friendly and approachable, they gave Accreditation guidance and were able to approve a vast number of grant applications from us that led to the setting up of our ELP's (Extended Learning Packages) for schools - more commonly called just Loans Boxes! Two roving officers in the region

from next month will not be quite the same.

All Accredited Museums, Libraries and Archives in the region were invited to express interest in the material assets of MLA-SW and we have just learnt we have been successful in gaining two tables for our new Research and Study Centre in the New Store, two wooden bookcases for the re-location of the museum book collection to make them more accessible to readers, a clock, waste paper bins and a much needed Christmas Tree and decorations to replace our elderly one that had to be propped up in the window display this year!

*Judy Nash*

## **Naming of Parts**

*Joanna Gibson, one of our latest volunteers, gives an insight into the origins of the names given to various areas of the Museum.*

On wandering round the Museum you may or may not have noticed the names which are given to each room, indicated by plaques as you enter. Why, you may well ask, is a display case formerly known as Marjorie Rogers? And what does the Gardner Room have to do with gardening? Even some of us here at the Museum are in the dark so hopefully we can clear things up by taking a little tour...

On entering the Museum you find yourself in the James Gibb Room: perhaps you have been struck by the lively colours of the geological map or the painstakingly built model of the castle lending a sense of the medieval to the proceedings. Both of these were made in the early days by the resourceful James Gibb, faced with the dilemma of a new museum and empty display cases. Now, somewhat ironically, we have his improvisation to thank for some of our overflow problems! James, or Jim to many, started out as a Housemaster for the boys' school and his very active interests in history and archaeology are reflected in the hands-on nature of his contributions to the Museum from founder member (and in-house model-maker!) to first President until 2007.

Proceeding to the rear of the ground floor you are met by a sign announcing the Gardner Room, ('But where are the plants?' you ask) as you find yourself in a 15th century room that was formerly the almonry of the monastery. Norman Gardner first joined us in 1986, before joining the Museum Council the following year and commencing an eight-year period as curator in 1988; it is through his efforts that the Museum became one of the first small museums in England to be registered. This room, purchased in 1996 as an extension, combines both our purpose of preserving Sherborne's history and represents our expansion into the future – a fitting recognition of Norman's contributions to the Museum.

Back out to the hallway and you meet what is unofficially the Gerald Pitman staircase and you can't have failed to notice the distinctive appearance of his jaunty hat drawing you upstairs. He was never without his hat and glasses and current staff have affectionately restored them to his bust, lending the landing a familiar and faintly eccentric touch. Gerald was from an old Sherborne family and, like James Gibb, was a founding member of the Museum with an active interest in history, returning to his ancestral home following National Service to pursue his passion for history as a teacher. Evidently he wasn't too busy with teaching, Museum and Sherborne Historical Society duties (of which he was Founder Secretary) to write *Exploring Sherborne and Sherborne Observed!* His contributions to the Museum have been extensive, the thousands of photographs and many paintings which he has provided bearing witness to his dedication to our lovely town.

Once upstairs you will notice swirling gold calligraphy announcing the Muriel Brewer Oral History Booth, one of our newest additions. Muriel worked here for ten years as Secretary, was integral to our organisation and had an encyclopaedic knowledge of the Museum. This booth commemorates her own efforts and involvement through allowing visitors to access the individual and personal memories of those who, like Muriel was, are oracles of knowledge on everything Sherborne-related.

Now we come to the largest room of the original Museum and what will be immediately apparent is

the large central glass case, currently (at the time of writing) empty and waiting to be festooned with costumes which will no doubt bring to mind fond memories of many a tea-time period drama. This case shows the evolving nature of the Museum in action and illustrates the continuing work of our very own couture expert José Wilson; chairperson from 1992 to 1995 and leader of the costume team. Originally, this case commemorated Marjorie Rogers' contribution as curator, but it has been renamed as the José Wilson Case in recognition of José's efforts in bringing a high standard to the conservation and display of our costumes. Like the changing displays it houses, this case is a small example of the overwhelming extent of contributors we have had over the years.

The key to the naming of this room itself is in the smaller display case to the left containing exquisite ladies' gloves made of Sherborne silk: Frederick Marsden bought the Sherborne Silk Mills in 1937, playing an important part in the town's economy. He used his profits to purchase the unassuming but beautiful Abbey Gate House to set up the Museum as well as providing an Honorarium fund in order to pay key members of staff. This room with its views out over the historical Sherborne so beloved of Frederick is named the Marsden Room in honour of our founder and benefactor.

Don't forget to bid these characters farewell as you leave and hopefully next time you visit us the naming of the rooms won't be quite such a mystery! Sherborne's history is not all stones, coins and books; it is brought to life and given meaning by the individuals who live here and we hope that by naming our rooms after those who have strived to commemorate their home we can share with you our Museum's personal history and bring the Museum to life.

*Joanna Gibson*

## **Task Force - Friends In Deed**

*Would you like to help the Museum in a practical way?*

As you already know, the Museum would be unable to function without all the volunteers who gamely give up their time to come in to the Museum to help in so many different ways. But the rewards are great: the value of usefulness and belonging to a team is immeasurable.

Not all are as fortunate, though, for work commitments or difficulties in getting out can mean that the pleasure of meeting people and working on a common theme are denied them.

If you would like to help the Museum as well as enrich your social life, maybe you could take on a task at home, perhaps encouraging others too, for an afternoon or evening of working together?

Do you have special skills that would be useful? Could you bake a cake for a function? Can you sew? How about picture framing? These are just some examples - I'm sure you have ideas and suggestions too.

If you would be interested in helping in this way, please contact the Museum by telephone or email. We'd love to hear from you.

*Sue Taylor*

## **Paper-Free News - Saving The Planet, Money And Time**

*Can you help the Museum to keep in step with the 21st Century?*

Have you ever wondered how much paper, ink and consequent money is used in the publication of the newsletter, the time spent by volunteers in its labelling and distribution and the postage cost to those living further away? Well, with about 240 copies to print, staple, label and either deliver on foot or by post, the answer is - well, quite a lot!

This and the previous issue have been produced by volunteers on the Museum photocopier, leading to a gratifying financial saving, but at the expense of time and effort. However, whether printed commercially or "in-house", delivery to Members remains the same. Without our stalwart band of inveterate walkers, hand delivery would be impossible and we are most grateful to them.

The proliferation of nudges by utility companies amongst others to opt for “paperless” billing or news by email, has led to the thought, mooted at about the time of the delivery of the last issue, that Members might be prepared to receive their newsletters by email. By coincidence, a couple of weeks later, joint members in Australia suggested that their future copies should be sent to them by email to save postage. This will now be done.

So, if you would like to “go green”, help the Museum’s finances and save its volunteers’ feet from fallen arches or stress fractures (as suffered by the Roman armies), stapler or letter-box lacerations and other such injuries (none of which, fortunately, having so far occurred!), perhaps you could register your wish to receive future issues of the Newsletter by email by sending an email (from the address at which you wish to receive it) with the subject “Newsletter” to:

sherborne.museum@ukonline.co.uk

In advance - thank you!

*Sue Taylor*

## **Winter Talks Series**

*Our thanks go to Katherine Barker who arranged and hosted this season’s Talks which brightened up many a winter afternoon. Katherine briefly summarises them here.*

Once again the aim has been to invite a wide range of speakers on an equally wide range of Sherborne/Museum-related topics – our history and our collection.

Three Peters featured on our programme this season: Peter Ellis on the Sherborne Abbey and School excavations and the writing up and publication of the Monograph (on sale in the Museum), Peter Loosmore on the diverting story of one of our nearest (Dorset) Museum neighbours, Sturminster Newton, and Peter Bellamy who is conducting the Dorset Historic Towns Survey for Dorset County Council.

Elisabeth Bletsoe brightened the first days of January with a wonderfully well-researched and colourful talk on the Diana Ruth Wilson collection of flower water colours and Katherine Barker gave a partly autobiographical account of her encounters with the schoolboy life and later work of Alan Turing, code breaker and ‘father of the computer.’ Both talks – coincidentally - had a King’s School ‘connection.’ Diana’s father was Housemaster of The Green from 1880 to 1905 and Mr O’Hanlon was first housemaster at Westcott House in Horsecastles from 1920 where Alan Turing was a pupil. A fifteen year gap but there will have plenty of people in Sherborne who knew both.

Thanks to everyone who help makes the series so successful – who set things up and make such a good cup of tea. Suggestions are warmly invited for our next season’s series of Talks.

*Katherine Barker*

## **Greener Still - AGM Papers**

*Can you help us to go one step further?*

All that was said about the distribution of the Newsletter applies equally well to the distribution of the paperwork for the AGM. In addition, when this is distributed along with the Newsletter, envelopes are often used to ensure that Members receive both a Newsletter and the AGM papers. Then, further expense is incurred in the purchase of envelopes, and more time spent by volunteers in putting the bundles into the envelopes - what busy fingers they have!

So, would you agree to receiving your AGM papers by email?

If so, please send an email (from the address at which you wish to receive it) with the subject “AGM PAPERS” to:

sherborne.museum@ukonline.co.uk

Again - thank you!

*Sue Taylor*

## **The 21st Century Curator**

*In the second of her series, Judy Nash gives an insight into the measures taken to counteract some of the threats to the good health of the artifacts in the Museum's Collection.*

### **Part 2 - Environmental Control**

Lovely exhibitions in the galleries – but what is going on behind the scenes?

Like most museums, Sherborne has less than 10% of its collection on display at any one time. The nationwide problem of how to make reserve collections more accessible to visitors and researchers is being tackled in a number of ways and here we try to rotate a certain number of exhibitions each year with the long term plan being to make the reserve collection searchable on line - this will allow careful selection and reduce handling as well as make it accessible to a wider audience. Searching for suitable items for display is a good way to get to know the collection well and it enables each archive box opened to be thoroughly “housekept” and the items re-packed in archive materials. Out goes the old cotton wool padding and scrunched up newspapers of yesteryear and in goes a variety of high quality acid free archive materials with each item enclosed in a finds bag. Themed archive boxes also work well, as like items of similar materials are packed together so preventing migration of contaminants. Many problems can be resolved in this way but tackling them before they start is even better.

Global warming and climate change affect museum collections in adverse ways. A rise in humidity and temperature is not only bad for many items but also encourages a large number of contaminants to raise their heads and multiply. Mould spores, mildew and other fungal growths simply love warm and damp conditions and can get out of control before affected areas of the collection are spotted. Mini-beasts are hot on their heels and often the first sign of any invasion might be the sighting of a spider building its web in a workroom corner. If a spider takes up residence it must be confident that it has an adequate food supply, although it is unlikely in itself to be anything but a good friend. The search then begins for its food supply which may be in the form of visible mini-beasts lurking in damp corners or beneath un-necessary and aged packing materials or any of a variety of microscopic life forms that are often only visible when using an eye glass. The devastation reeked by their midnight feast may become all too apparent before the source is eradicated.

Therefore the search starts early with prevention definitely better than cure.

In the last three years my meter has shown a steady rise in humidity, and to try to reduce the relative humidity (r/h) to within museum guidelines two de-humidifiers were installed, one in the Marsden Gallery and one in ground floor Gardner. We aim to keep levels as close to 55% r/h for mixed collections with an acceptable  $\pm 5\%$ . The data is logged to enable study of the fluctuations over time so that steps can be taken to remedy a situation before damage occurs.

Bug detectors - cardboard houses with a sticky and tempting sweet like tablet fixed to a strip of sticky tape - are installed in not only display cabinets but also in storage cupboards and window displays and these are inspected at regular intervals. The total absence of silverfish, bugs and spiders is good news for the collection.

Ultra-violet (u/v) levels are also checked with a light meter. Although a u/v filter is in place on the window glass it is still important to monitor the situation and also ensure that spotlights and gallery lights are not damaging. Excess light causes deterioration in the structure of many materials as well as the well known fading of fabrics. A clear u/v film has been purchased to ensure fragile items are well protected when put on display and light reduction, thanks to the proximity light sensors, has been a welcome addition.

A last check is to install a fade card in the costume case where half is covered and half exposed to light. The colours should remain the same – if not remedial measures should be sought immediately.

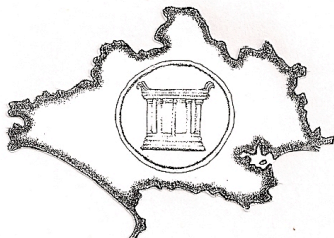
Hopefully with all of this in place as well as our rolling good housekeeping programme we will

have a stable collection to pass on to future generations and can pride ourselves in meeting the highest museum standards.

*Judy Nash*

## **Dorset History Forum Comes to Sherborne**

*The Museum will be partnering May's meeting of the Dorset History Forum at which several Museum members will be presenting their work. Do join us - the day is open to anyone interested - further details below.*



The Dorset History Forum will be meeting in Sherborne on Saturday 16 May in the RC Church Hall in Westbury.

The Dorset History Forum was set up in the autumn of 2007 as a network organisation for everyone interested in Dorset's history from primary school to postgraduate from the remote past to the almost present. Members may remember the notes in recent newsletters about the inaugural meeting in Dorchester and the

mounting of the first-ever Saturday Forum in Blandford [also Forum!] in May of last year, 2008. There is already a website of useful information and a twice-yearly Newsletter.

Meetings move around the County and it is a great pleasure to announce that the next May Forum will be held here in Sherborne on Saturday 16 May and 'co-hosted' with Sherborne Museum.

The overall theme for the day is 'the Making of the Sherborne Story.' Sherborne has a well-deserved track record in local historical scholarship both past and present and those many people currently involved are all warmly invited to take part and share things with historically-minded people from across the County.

The meeting will be hall-based during the morning when people are invited to bring leaflets, posters and similar about their various activities – and some will be happy to fill a five minute 'slot' with news of their current activities – or research. We will be setting up from 9.30 and 'kick off' at 11 with a Welcome by the Mayor. After a sandwich lunch we will be arranging for a selection of afternoon guided visits to Sherborne's interesting sites – including (of course) the Museum.

**The guest speaker will be Dr Joe Bettey**, historian, lecturer and author of the well-regarded volume *Dorset* in the City and County Histories Series; as he explains in his Preface he sought to 'give a concise introduction to the long and often complex story of the development of the county of Dorset.' Against the background provided by Sherborne he will be exploring with us the nature and range of historical sources for the County as a whole – how we know what we know – and how we may learn lots more.

**The programme for the day** is now in the planning and will be posted up in due course in the Museum window together with a note about ticketing arrangements. Suffice to say everyone is welcome. If you have not already been contacted and have something interesting to present – or a good idea you would like to share - please don't hesitate to get in touch with Katherine Barker. (Offers of assistance are also very welcome). This promises to be an interesting day for us all.

**The meeting place**, the RC Church Hall in Westbury, is not a historic building (yet), but the date of its opening in 1998 marked the thousand years since the founding of the Benedictine monastery here in Sherborne – in 998. And further, the dedication of the church is to St. Aldhelm whose death is recorded for May 709 – exactly thirteen hundred years ago.

*Katherine Barker*

Telephone: 01935 816764, or e-mail: [katherinebarker@lanprobi.org.uk](mailto:katherinebarker@lanprobi.org.uk)

## **Hundreds of Years Ago**

*The result of John Firmin's browsing of the Museum's archives is this - the second in his series of articles on local life a hundred years ago (and beyond).*

To assist me with this item, a member of our team drew my attention to the relevant paragraphs in Seymour's "Logbook of Sherborne from AD634 to 1934", which we are fortunate enough to hold in our collection.

Going back one hundred years, 1909 was a significant year with respect to properties:

Firstly, the building known as the "Manor House" on Newland was purchased with the intention of erecting a Town Hall on the site. This development never took place, but the Council offices are lodged there instead.

Secondly it was decided to erect a Church Hall in Digby Road as a Memorial to the late Mr. J. K. D. Wingfield Digby. The estimated cost of the building was £2665.

Then thirdly, from 1909 to 1910, Sherborne School established Westcott Art School together with an enlarged armoury, a new museum and four lecture and class rooms.

Thus, just one hundred years ago, prominent features of our town came into being concerning three mainstays of our community - The Town Council, The Abbey, and Sherborne School.

It was then suggested to me that if I was prepared to extend my brief beyond just one hundred years perhaps I might be interested in three hundred years ago. At this present time when we wax eloquently about terrible weather, we noted that in 1709 there was a remarkable hailstorm which resulted in a great flood. A record of this event can be seen on a tablet in the South Aisle of the Abbey, near the Ambulatory. It records that 1222ft. of pavement was displaced, and water (about 3ft. in depth) rushed through the North Aisle door, across the Ambulatory, and out of the South East door, near the present location of the tablet.

This dreadful event serves to give us a sense of proportion when we are inclined to complain of "extreme" weather. History, the constantly growing story of our past, can help give perspective to present day events.

*John Firmin*

## **Museum Funding - Looking To Ourselves As Well As Outside**

*A plea for support to help the Museum safeguard our historical heritage for the benefit of all.*

The Museum could not function without financial support from its faithful Members, bequests or grants from external bodies, such as West Dorset District Council, the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council and others to whom applications are made whenever possible. For all of these the Museum Association is most grateful.

The Curator and President are constantly searching out and applying for offers of funding from appropriate organisations. But in spite of all these, many of which are, by their nature, only to be used for specific purposes, for example the conservation of artefacts, particular events or the installation of energy-saving equipment, and despite annual subscriptions and cost-cutting exercises throughout, a study of the Museum's accounts shows that a loss is made each year in terms of the day to day running costs.

Perhaps there is a particular area of the Museum's Activities that you would like to sponsor?

Hence an appeal is now being made to all Members, and in particular Life and Honorary Members, for additional donations, which, especially if use is made of the Gift Aid scheme, would bring in more to boost the Museum's funds, to both provide a buffer against the current winds of economic doom and enable the Museum to continue to progress and fulfil the aims set out at its inception.

Any monetary donation, whether large or small, would be most welcome. If you could help, please

contact the Museum, which is most grateful for your continued support.

*Sue Taylor*

### **Sherborne Museum 100 Club**

*Joanna Gibson, on behalf of Sherborne Museum, is looking for your feedback on this scheme to help the Museum's finances.*

Remember the 100 Club? Now is the chance to finally join in and have your say as we re-launch our fund-raising and prize-winning extravaganza! This is a fun way to help support us, bringing you all the excitement of a lottery draw confident in the knowledge that your money is going to a valuable cause (and with much better odds)!

Our original plan was to reserve numbers 1 – 100 to members paying £1 per week for their chosen number with a monthly draw selecting a winner of the top prize of £100 and three prize-winners of smaller amounts. Alternatively we are considering launching the Club with a lower fee such as £1 per month and these payments could be made either monthly or annually – we'd like to know what you'd be prepared to contribute so:

Don't miss out on the chance to win that £100! In order to set this up we need to establish potential numbers of participants – simply fill out the tear-off slip below stating your preference and pop it into the museum or, even easier, e-mail your response with the relevant details to:

sherborne.museum@ukonline.co.uk.

Thank you for your help in this.

*Joanna Gibson*

---

NAME:	
ADDRESS: (Please include your postcode.)	
TELEPHONE:	
E-MAIL:	

I would be interested in participating in the Sherborne Museum 100 Club:

- at a weekly rate of £1
- at a monthly rate of £1
- at some other amount (please suggest)

I would prefer to pay on a:

- monthly basis
- annual basis