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TEAROOM ORGANISER

John Claxton 874330

SHOP

Judy Wood Rogers 874641

GROUP BOOKINGS

Kathy Morris 875681

VOLUNTEER CO-ORDINATOR

Andy Simey 876649

SECRETARY

Jan Betteridge 876339

Into the 2015 season....

Sitting here at the end of the winter, may I wish you all a rather belated Happy New Year! We were lucky that the sun came out for our recent coffee morning for potential volunteers. The attendance was very encouraging — a real boost for all concerned, especially as it is not that long before the 2015 season begins!

I'm glad to report that 2014 proved to be a highly successful year for the Museum. Our visitor numbers were down slightly but our income from the Shop and Tea Room were up, and on top of that we had a record Secret Gardens event. This gives us great satisfaction but no sense of complacency. We know that we have to improve each year just to stand still and that costs are likely to grow faster than income. We also have to ensure that we have the volunteers we need for our plans — so if you have a friend who might be interested please let us know.

This season we start with an exhibition celebrating 50 years of the Topsham Society. Do come and take a look at our model of Topsham because phase one of a refurbishment programme was carried out this winter to ensure that this star attraction now appears at its best.

A well-known architect who knows one of our volunteers has kindly offered to give us an hour or two of her time looking at the layout of the Museum, starting with an open discussion that she would chair for anyone interested. If you are interested in how the Museum uses its space, be it the grand design or just the need for more storage, please let us know. If you have points to raise, please do get in touch.

I do hope to see you all at the AGM on the 14 April.

John Dunsford



Signs of Spring in the Museum Garden



Topsham Museum Society AGM, 2015

You should shortly receive the formal Notice and Agenda for this year's AGM which will be held at 6pm on Tuesday 14th April at the Museum. You are also asked if you have any nominations for Trustees. If you would like any information about the role of a Trustee at Topsham Museum please do contact the Chairman (John Dunsford) or me, the Secretary. We will do our best to answer your questions.

The formal business will be followed with a short and interesting presentation from John Wokersien, a *Jurassic Coast Organisation* Ambassador. If you are unsure about the relevance to us in Topsham – just come along to the AGM and find out!

Jan Betteridge

School Visits

We had a very chilly start to our programme of school visits, when Year 3 children from St Peter's Primary School in Budleigh Salterton came to visit the Museum in early February. They are studying rivers this term and had visited the RSPB hide at Bowling Green Marsh, before walking along the river to the Museum. Kathy Morris and I used the collection of model ships to show the children what vessels were like in the past. We went on to tell the stories of two vessels with Topsham connections. Our new display on HMS *Terror* and the freshly-refurbished Town Model helped to explain how Topsham built outstanding ships. The ever-popular *Cygnets* showed how the River Exe was used for fun and relaxation in the past, as it is now. Everyone had an enjoyable morning before the children left for Topsham School, where their coach was waiting for them.

Sheila Stephens

Winter Conservation Work

Work has been carried out on the town model to repair damaged parts and to stabilise the trees, hedges and fields. Built in 1982, it had become quite frail and the recent work will extend its life. It is one of the best loved features in the museum and is a constant attraction for both visitors and residents.

Exeter City Council have inserted new lintels above the windows in the Parlour, which is why the front of the Museum has been covered in scaffolding recently. Dry rot has (yet again) been dealt with in the Local History Room, which has recently been re-decorated and re-furnished.



Winter Conservation Work



Museum Publications

Copies of the Museum's annual journal, *Topsham Times*, are currently sent to all members (one copy for two at the same address). All those living in Topsham receive a copy hand-delivered by our volunteers, and the others are posted. With postage costs constantly increasing and environmental concerns regarding waste of paper we would like to offer all members, near and far, the opportunity to receive their copy electronically in PDF format. If you are happy for us to use this method, please could you email this request to: info@topshammuseum.org.uk. The next edition, which usually comes out in June/July will then be emailed to you. If we do not hear from you we will continue to send paper copies.

Cathy Maguire

Lunchtime Lecture Programme

The lunchtime lecture plan for 2015 is now complete. One major change this year is that lectures will be held on the **last Tuesday of the month**, as this is a day when the Museum is not open to the public in the afternoon. We hope this will put less pressure on the many valued volunteers who make the event possible, by removing the 2pm deadline to get the tearoom back into normal working order. Coffee will be available from 1045.



Excavations of the Roman Bath House

The first lecture of the year on Tuesday 28th April will be given by Topsham resident, Professor Valerie Maxfield and is entitled "Re-visiting Exeter's Roman Baths – current plans to display the legionary baths". It is ten years since Professor Maxfield last spoke to us on this subject and it is hard to believe that it is really 40 years since many of us watched the progress of the excavations (pictured on the left). You will have read recent reports in the newspaper about the plans to open them up for display – and are perhaps puzzled as to how this can be achieved.



The lecture on Tuesday 26th May will be given by Professor Sam Smiles (pictured on the left), who will talk to us about the Newlyn School and other art colonies of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Their portrayal of fishermen and the ordinary working life of the harbours and villages remain popular pictures with historic as well as artistic interest. Later lectures will be linked to exhibitions that are planned for the museum on the themes of "Crossing the Exe, Topsham's Ferry and River Exe Bridges" and, in conjunction with the RSPB, on the wildlife seen on the River Exe. Check out the programme on our website.

Anna Adcock



Paul Holman

Local History

Commemoration of the Death of Paul Holman, Hon. Artillery Company

As part of the Dawlish World War I project, a Service of Commemoration was held at the Dawlish Methodist Church on 15 February to mark the centenary of Paul Holman's death. Paul, who was Dorothy Holman's brother, was killed whilst on sentry duty outside the billets at Locre when he was hit by a "stray shot". His grave is at Ypres Salient. The family received an "enormous pile" of condolence letters from friends and relatives. He was included in the Dawlish project because his name is on the Dawlish War Memorial and at that time the Holman family owned Holcombe Down, near Dawlish.



Could any members help us to positively identify the buildings shown in the photograph (left) which forms part of the Cecil Holman Collection?

Did any of your family live or work in Topsham during the First World War? There will be a special exhibition at the Museum next year and we do need your help! There must be many fascinating and moving stories concerning local people which deserve to be recorded, so your contributions, photographs, stories and any other information would be very welcome. We look forward to hearing from you!

Catriona Batty

Membership Matters

Topsham Museum Society continues to thrive, with almost 400 members. We greatly value the support provided by our members through their subscriptions, through volunteering or through influencing the overall direction of the Museum's activities by participating in the AGM and electing the Officers and Trustees. In each of the past two years, we have put on two events for members only: these have proved extremely popular and well attended. We are planning another two events this year and will be letting you have details and booking information nearer the time.



We know that some members have been disappointed at not being able to get into some of our very popular lunchtime lectures so we're going to try out a ticketing system on the day to see if we can improve the situation. Don't forget that we have changed the day for lectures to Tuesday! Some of you have already made use of the Museum's subscription to "Findmypast" to research your ancestors or the people who once lived in your house. Members

may use the computer in the Local History Room to access this service and we have a number of volunteers who are experienced in using it and can help you to start. This free facility is only available to members of Topsham Museum Society so if you are interested please call or email for an appointment.

Membership subscriptions will become due on 1 April. Many of you pay by bank standing order and therefore need to take no action. But those who pay annually by cash or cheque should complete the renewal form included with this Newsletter. If you have any queries regarding your membership subscription, please don't hesitate to contact me, either by telephone (873927) or to the Museum's e-mail (info@topshammuseum.org.uk)

Anthony Jennings



Topsham Ferry, 2014



Crossing the Exe (1930's) – the ferryman is a member of the Bolt family



The newly redecorated and refurbished Local History Room

2015 Exhibitions

We have three exhibition spaces which we are using for seasonal and guest exhibitions, as well as displaying pictures from our reserve store.

The first exhibition in the local history room celebrates the fifty years in which the Topsham Society has been in existence, showing some of its achievements and concerns. In July this will change to "*Wild about Topsham*", showing the wildlife, flora and geology of our area. The Entwistle room will revisit the displays about the Civil War, and the connections with Monmouth and William Orange and will be replaced in June by an exhibition called "*Crossing the Exe*". The Tearoom will initially show a selling exhibition of Topsham and estuary scenes before pictures from the reserve store are revealed. Meanwhile, in the Sail Loft the restored model and history of *HMS Terror* continues to be of great interest, as will a small exhibition about some of the Topsham schools. Changes in the **Period House** have been kept to a minimum for 2015 but maintenance work is always ongoing.

The Local History Room has a completely new look. It has been refurbished, using a lovely partners desk and an antique glass-fronted bookcase that was formerly on the top floor, creating an attractive and welcoming area conducive to research, browsing and networking as well as showcasing our seasonal exhibitions. As well as the family history information, there is now an enormous amount of local history research accumulating in the files in that room, together with the reference books we have now been able to bring down from the second floor. Please contact us if you would like to help us build up this information. Members are also encouraged to use the computer for research and our subscription to Findmypast.



New Volunteers' Coffee Morning

Rachel Nichols

New Volunteers' Coffee Morning

The New Volunteers' Coffee Morning was held on 3rd February. The event had been well advertised and we had an excellent response. In all 43 people came along — 26 current helpers and 17 prospective volunteers. The encouraging result was that all 17 filled in Registration forms and hence many gaps in the rotas for the Room Stewards, Tearoom and Shop have now been filled.

Thanks to all team leaders and volunteers who helped to encourage and welcome the newcomers.

Andy Simey

Seven Topsham Sailors & Topsham VAD Hospital



This superb photograph from the Museum archive, shown in the last newsletter, shows seven local men who served together on *HMS Challenger* in West Africa and the Cameroons in WW1. Their names were: C. Wannell, G.F. May, A. Wreford, T. Pym, G. Pym, A. Norton & I. Pym.

Do you have any information you could share with us about these sailors?

Or about the Topsham VAD Hospital, run by Dr Ashford and his wife, shown in the photo on the left?



Forthcoming Events/Dates for your Diary

- ◆ April 1st Museum re-opens
- ◆ April 1st Exhibition: *50 Years of the Topsham Society* opens
- ◆ April 14th AGM, 1800 at the Museum
- ◆ April 28th Lunchtime Lecture, *Re-visiting Exeter's Roman Baths*, 1045 for 1130
- ◆ May 26th Lunchtime Lecture, *The Newlyn School*, 1045 for 1130
- ◆ July 3rd Exhibition: *Wild About Topsham*—wildlife, flora and fauna of this area opens
- ◆ Dates of Members Only Events to be announced

Latest News of *The Vigilant*



Despite the failure of their Heritage Lottery Fund bid, sufficient funds have been found to begin another phase of work on the *Vigilant*. Dave and Andy and some of the Topsham volunteers are getting ready for a bit of chainsaw action down on the quay.

The plan is to saw up the larch that was kindly donated by the good people of Budleigh and we think we now have enough wood to re-plank the sides of the barge.

So if you are in the mood for donating anything then please let us know – anything from Cadburys cream eggs or cake for the workers or some Douglas fir for the decks! That's our next task.

So do have a saunter down to Topsham Quay and who knows we may be back at work once again.

Ben Squirrell



Topsham Museum Society 25 The Strand Topsham Exeter Devon EX3 OAX Tel: 01392 873244

E: info@topshammuseum.org.uk W: www.devonmuseums.net/Topsham Registered Charity No. 289367



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