



Newsletter Summer 2014

Inside the e-newsletter

Museum news

Eric Voysey Art Exhibition

From the Archives

AGM

Topsham Secret Gardens

June Lunchtime Lecture

Activities for Young People

Lives of the First World War

Museum Shop

Exhibitions

Forthcoming Events

Who's Who of Volunteers

TEAROOM ORGANISER

John Claxton

SHOP

Judy Wood Rogers 874641

GROUP BOOKINGS

Kathy Morris

VOLUNTEER CO-ORDINATOR

Andy Simey 876649

SECRETARY

Jan Betteridge 876339

Museum News

I've just returned from Secret Gardens — what marvellous gardens, excellent refreshments, interesting plants and such hard work from the extended Secret Gardens team.

On 6 May we held our Museums at Night event; an amazing success. 129 people came along, including 18 children. Thanks to the sympathetic approach and vigilance of our stewards, a great time and a lot of fun was had by all. Thanks too to Ben Squirrel, owner and 'commodore' of the *Vigilant* (the Thames Sailing Barge undergoing restoration work on Topsham Quay), creating great interest in the town and from visitors. Ben used his network to encourage visits to Museums at Night which we very much appreciated. In the Sail Loft we currently have a new section devoted to Thames barges that regularly visited Topsham, which includes information on the *Vigilant*.

I am also thrilled by our 'Shipping the Serge' Exhibition developed with Tuckers Hall in Exeter and the prominent part our research team played. The woollen trade in Devon in the 16/18th centuries is a marvellous story of achievement which the exhibition reveals and it should be on the curriculum of all schools in Devon. After its time here, the exhibition goes on tour to other Devon museums.

The Annual Report for the Museum, includes a Public Benefit Statement, as charities are expected to do, showing how different aspects of our work benefit residents and visitors to the area. It gives us something to live up to but it also brings out how much more we do than just providing a display of artefacts. This is entirely due to our volunteers and the 14,500 hours they worked for the Museum last year — and those are just the hours they declare! Well done everyone!

John Dunsford



Voysey Exhibition

Eric Voysey Exhibition

Over Whitsun weekend, we held an exhibition and sale of paintings by the late Eric Voysey, well known local character, fisherman, boat builder and artist.

His paintings encompass a wide range of techniques and sizes, with subjects including scenes of Topsham, the coastline and ships at sea, all based on careful research.

Nina Voysey said how wonderful it was to see so many of Eric's paintings properly displayed in the Underloft gallery.

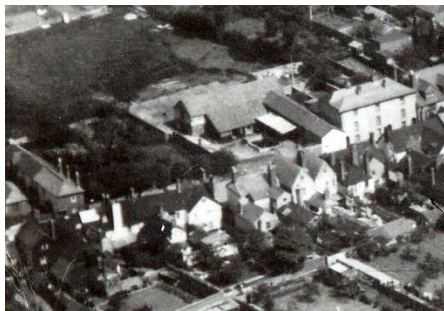
During World War 2, Eric worked on the production of wooden motor fishing boats in the dock where Halyards now stands. Alice Murphy used to paint the boats—any colour as long as it was grey!

Hurdle's Farm & Matthews Hall

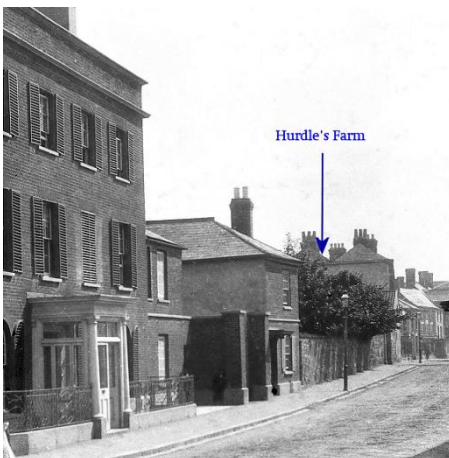
Continuing the series of photographs in the Museum archive taken by Cecil Holman (1877-1958), this extract (shown left) from one of Fore Street in about 1910 shows Grove House and, next door to it, George Hurdle's Farm (just beyond the trees).

When George (nicknamed "Fiddle" Hurdle) was dying, sawdust was laid across Fore Street in front of his house to deaden the noise made by passing carts. In 1924, following his death, his farm, consisting of 22 acres of farm land and the farmhouse, yard and buildings in Fore Street ('a building site') was put up for auction. The building site in 'a central position in Fore Street' (shown right) was advertised as a 'Splendid Site for a Factory'!

As John Willing states in his book, *A River at my Garden's End*: "James Woodrow Matthews made the offer of £5,000 for the building of a hall which he felt was 'his chance to give the inhabitants what they undoubtedly deserved and which he hoped would not merely be used for dancing and similar amusements, but the training of mental and moral faculties would also be considered'." The Hall, built by H Gould & Son, was opened in 1928 and continues to this day to meet Mr. Matthews' aspirations for his donation to the town.



Extract from Aerial Photograph 1920s
(courtesy of Sadru Bhanji)



Fore Street, around 1910

Catriona Batty

Annual General Meeting, 8th April 2014

Anthony Jennings, the resigning Treasurer addresses the meeting. Members welcomed his successor, John Claxton and also a new Trustee, Gri Harrison.





Beautiful Gardens



Volunteers at work!



Topsham Secret Gardens, 2014

A combination of carefully planned advance publicity, sponsorship by local estate agents, Wilkinson Grant, and some extremely eye-catching signs and posters brought a record numbers of visitors to Topsham for the twelve Secret Gardens that were very kindly opened by their owners for this fund-raising event.

Over 1,100 programmes were sold, many online through our e-shop for the first time. The money collected, together with the proceeds from increased sales of interesting and unusual plants from Rebecca Baldwin's stall on the Strand plus unimaginable consumption of cream teas and home-made cakes, raised over £7,500 towards the future work of the Museum.

The atmosphere in Topsham on Sunday June 8th, despite the rain, was electric and shows just how much the Museum, the local community and visitors can interact to everyone's enjoyment and benefit.

By the time you read this, I hope that all the volunteers who put so much time and energy into making the event such a success, are fully recovered. Don't ask the committee about doing it all again in 2016... well not for a couple of months anyway!

John Claxton

Lunchtime Lecture in June

Topsham... to... Topsham — Over the sea to Maine

The third lecture of our summer series will introduce us to one of Topsham's American namesakes, Topsham, Maine, named in 1717 and incorporated 250 years ago, in 1764. The speaker will be Dr Margaret Wilson, who spent most of her childhood in Topsham, England but now lives in Woodbury. She has travelled widely and is the author of several books on local history. Margaret has visited Maine and took part in the archaeological dig that revealed Fort St George to be the first British settlement dating from 1607. Her interest in the early history of Maine continues and this year she has been much involved in linking the two Topshams for the 250th year celebrations. Please note that although the lecture starts at 11.30am, the doors open at 11am. Seating is limited and attendance always high so early arrival is recommended to avoid disappointment. As usual, soup and crusty bread will be available after the lecture for those who would like to stay on for lunch.

Anna Adcock



Young People's Activities

This month, Year 3 and Year 4 children from Topsham School will visit the Museum to study Victorian children. They will find out about what Topsham youngsters did at school, how they helped with chores at home and how they relaxed and played together.



In the same week, Topsham Toddlers will meet at the Museum, rather than at The Dorothy Holman Centre, to help Museum Ted to go on a Bear Hunt, exploring the building and gathering lots of teddy bear friends along the way. We'll sing a well-known song, perhaps have a story and certainly make time for a snack before heading home.



On Saturday 2nd August we will run a Family Event so watch out for further details on posters and on the website. The following Friday, 8th August, we'll once again host Topsham Youth Activities who plan a collage workshop this year. I hope that they will find our building, garden and collections inspiring!

Sheila Stephens



Lives of the First World War

The Imperial War Museum needs your help to piece together the life stories of more than 8 million men and women who made a contribution in the First World War. If you have ancestors/relatives who were involved in the conflict and have photographs, memories or other evidence, then please do share these via the IWM website to help them compile a complete digital record—it's very easy to do! If you need advice, contact Rosemary Hatch at the Museum. The BBC are running WW1 live events across the country from May to September. The nearest ones are August 14th at the Okehampton Show and August 8-10th at the Bristol Balloon Festival

<https://livesofthefirstworldwar.org>



Museum Shop & E-shop

Summer is here at last! We have a selection of summer hats and pretty scarves and lots games for the children - board games, racket and ball sets, frisbees, gliders, glitter balls and jitterbugs who need a name! Do you need a gift for a bridge player? We have some first quality playing cards and bridge scorers plus tea towels, mugs, books and much more. So do come and visit!



Judy Wood Rogers



TOPSHAM MUSEUM
Challenge

Mapping Topsham

Can you draw an illustrated map of Topsham?

We are looking for both traditional and innovative ways of depicting the town for the August – November Exhibition

ENTRIES CLOSE 30th JUNE 2014

Details from the Museum, 25 Strand, Topsham EX3 0AX or www.devonmuseums.net/topsham

Sunday, Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday (and Tuesday in August)
Open 2 pm - 5 pm Cream Tea served from 2.30 - 4.30pm
Gifts, cards and books available in the Shop

* email: museum@topsham.org.uk website: devonmuseums.net/topsham



Repairs to Museum River Wall and (below) to the Goat Walk



Exhibitions, 2014

Art Exhibition (Underloft)

Throughout June and July we are exhibiting work from two local well-known artists, Susan Thomson who lives in Topsham and Anna Donovan from Exeter. Susan is a botanical artist and Anna Donovan more of an abstract, semi abstract artist. The two very different styles make this exhibition both vibrant and beautiful. All works are for sale and there are also be prints and unframed works available.

Topsham, Maine, USA 5 July—30 October, Entwistle Room



Our sister town, Topsham Maine, was incorporated in January 1764 and this year is commemorating 250 years of its township. This exhibition celebrates the links between the two Topshams.

Mapping Topsham: 2nd August —30th October

The start of a project to update and create new maps of Topsham. A complete plan can be created, a panorama, aerial view or indeed a single street could be selected and illustrated in many different ways. We are looking for both traditional and innovative ways of depicting the town. The new maps will be displayed at Topsham Museum between August and November 2014. **Please send your completed form to the Museum as soon as possible if you are offering a map for this exhibition.**

Full details of all exhibitions and entry forms for Mapping Topsham are available on our website:

<http://www.devonmuseums.net/Topsham>

Last chance to see:

Shipping the Serge : Topsham and the Woollen Cloth Trade—ends on 28th July and From Civil War to William of Orange—ends on 28th June.

Rachel Nichols

In the last newsletter, we printed photographs of the storm damage to the Goat Walk and river side. Happily the repairs have now been finished, as you can see in these photographs.

Forthcoming Events

25th June	Topsham...to...Topsham; over the sea to Maine (Lunchtime Lecture) 11.30
5th July	Topsham, Maine, USA exhibition (Entwistle Room)
30th July	Gavrillo Princip—the assassin who started WW1 (Lunchtime Lecture) 11.30
2nd August	Family Event (details to be announced)
2nd August	Mapping Topsham Project commences (see above)
11th August	Heritage Day, evening opening of the Museum 5-8 p.m.
24th September	The Terror of Topsham (Lunchtime Lecture) 11.30
29th October	Cess Pits, Cemeteries & Sewers (Lunchtime Lecture) 11.30
20th November	Christmas Fayre, morning in Matthews Hall & Oboussier Lecture - Brunel's work in the South West, evening



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

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



*This newsletter has once again be sent electronically to members with email addresses. Please tell us if you change your email address. If you would prefer **not** to receive a paper copy at all in future please contact us. This initiative saves both paper and funds. Members without email addresses will of course continue to receive a printed copy.*