



Athelstan Museum  
Capturing the history of Malmesbury

## FRIENDS OF ATHELSTAN MUSEUM

Spring Newsletter 2014

### Best Wishes for 2014.

First a report on the Chairman. Ernest celebrated Christmas by falling down the stairs; like Eilmer he failed to make a perfect landing and broke his wrist and his eye socket. We are pleased that he is recovering well and our hopes are for his continued and rapid recovery.

### Viking Exhibition at the British Museum Monday 14<sup>th</sup> April

We are running a trip to this exhibition which from the publicity and details so far revealed promises to be fantastic. The Viking invasions fundamentally changed this country and of course Malmesbury through Alfred and Athelstan was right at the centre of things. This trip will follow the format of the two previous ones (both tremendously successful) with coffee and biscuits on arrival followed by an hour's lecture by an expert on the Vikings. After lunch you will have a ticketed entry to the exhibition. Coach will leave the Station Car Park at 7.30am sharp Tickets on sale at the museum; only £45.00. For further information contact Christine MacLachlan on 01666 823168 or [mrsmac@southfields.biz](mailto:mrsmac@southfields.biz)

### CIVIL WAR

On 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> June Col. Nicholas Devereux's regiment from the English Civil War Society will be garrisoning the town as they did 367 years ago; they will also be fighting a couple of skirmishes. This is being organised by a group with the backing of the council and museum. Look out for more details

## CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

I am sitting at my desk pecking out this newsletter message using a method that I haven't used in almost 60 years. You see, I am wearing a cast on my left arm and that means that I have had to resort to the good old "peck and search" mode of typing using only my good wing. So, of necessity and because exhaustion sets in earlier these days, this message will be short. "That's a relief", I hear you collectively saying.

However, I have been made aware of certain rumours concerning my 'accident' and I feel compelled to set the record straight. Yes, I did fall down a flight of stairs, but it was at home, not at the Museum. And yes, it was after I had completed some work for the Museum, but it was nothing as esoterically satisfying as a new exhibit. Rather, it was after completing some work on accreditation at 3:30 am when the house in a total blackout.

In any event, I spent four days at Great Western Hospital receiving the very best of care. Swindon really does have something to be proud of in that institution.

Even though I was laid up, the work of the Museum does not stop and I want to thank Mike Johnson, Vice Chairman, for taking up the reins so ably at very short notice. I also want to thank the members of FOAM Council for their hard work and dedication during my recovery. Most of all, I want to thank the folks who sent notes and emails expressing their good wishes. You are wonderful.

Turning to the business of the Museum, I can report that our Accreditation submission will be going to the Arts Council on time. With that out of the way (almost), our attention has turned to a new venture also involving the Arts Council. Our Museum was selected as one of two in Wiltshire to participate in a pilot programme on museum sustainability. The reward for us in completing this programme is two-fold. There is the immediate and tangible potential to receive a grant of £2,000. The intangible reward is making our Museum fully sustainable economically, environmentally, socially, culturally and almost every other 'ally' you can think of.

We have put together a small team of myself, Chris Perrin, Bridget Robison, Julia Bowen, Mike Johnson, Maria Marsh, Robert MacLachlan and Sharon Nolan to look at how we are doing with our governance, leadership, workforce management, community relations and five other topics and figure out ways we can do them better over the next two years. We will be assisted in this by a mentor or outside person whose role it is to help us find the better way of doing things. The teams planning exercise will be done by mid-March so it will be intense. However, much of the work has already been identified as part of the Forward Plan exercise. Even so, I think we will discover things we can do and should do.

I hope you have made plans to join us for the Viking exhibit at the British Museum on 14 April. Liz and I are looking forward to seeing you on the coach. In the interim, take a look at our new exhibit honouring the 50 years that the Civic Trust has served Malmesbury. Congratulations to them and to Maria Marsh who devised the exhibit.

Ernest Buchner

Chairman

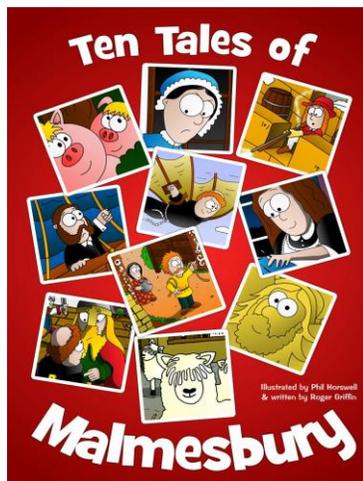
## MISCELLANEOUS

**Visitor numbers** The number of visitors last year (Jan – Dec2013) was 14477; 12096 adults and 2381 children. This is more children and more adults than any other year so not surprisingly our best ever annual total. Moreover after a few years of stable numbers we are on the march again. Congratulations everyone.

We continue to get small groups visiting the museum. The **Beavers** came recently and seemed to enjoy themselves. This a pre-scout group, all under eight, so how much history they absorbed is questionable but they pressed buttons with enthusiasm.

We have received from **Artfund** a **grant** towards a new high security show case to house some of the new treasures we have acquired. Construction will take a time so be patient; all will be on show soon.

**Late night shopping** proved very popular; we dispensed 15 litres of mulled wine! You can work out for yourselves how many visitors that represents and, by the way, by no means all the visitors had a drink so it comes to a goodly number.



### TEN TALES OF MALMESBURY

is the title of a booklet we have published with some fabulous and colourful cartoon illustrations by Philip Horswell. There are ten episodes from Malmesbury history, I expect you can guess which ones they are, told simply and designed to appeal to young children. It is only £2-50, so easy to afford and fun to give. For older children Malmesbury's Past might be more suitable. Copies, as with all our other titles, are available at the museum.

### MEZZANINE LIGHTING

As you may know, the museum wishes to replace the current mezzanine lighting system with more efficient, environmentally friendly, LED lighting given that the current system is very inefficient as well as causing spatial heating problems for both visitors and exhibits. A replacement lighting scheme has been designed by specialists with the specific purpose of both resolving these problems and improving the overall effectiveness of the lighting system for future exhibitions.

The estimated cost of this project is c £4000. The decision was made some time ago by the FOAM Council to try and fund this scheme primarily through grants and accordingly a series of applications were made to local organizations and groups seeking assistance. We are pleased to report that the following grant applications have now been successful:

- The Malmesbury Area Board – who have awarded us a grant of £2000.
- Malmesbury Carnival – who have offered a grant of £1000.
- The Jack Lane Trust – who have offered a grant of £500.

The total being £3500 –which is sufficient to allow us to proceed with this project at the earliest opportunity. The residual amount will be taken out of our savings. We are of course very grateful to all of these organisations for their kind help and assistance with the funding of this project.

The decision has been made to appoint Wiltshire Electrical Contracting Ltd. to undertake this work. This followed a full tendering procedure with WEC putting forward an acceptable tender. Following discussions with those responsible for the exhibitions/displays we have asked WEC to start this work on the 19th May. We anticipate that this work will take about 2 weeks to complete. The mezzanine area will therefore be “out of bounds” during this period although, for the avoidance of any doubt, it remains our intention to keep the museum open downstairs throughout this period.

## COLLECTION

The current exhibit running through February at least, is the Civic Trust: Fifty Years in Malmesbury. The exhibit is an overview of the founding of the society in 1963, and of some of its good works in the town. Without the Civic Trust in the town over these past 50 years helping to conserve historic sites, Malmesbury would look quite different. The exhibit also includes a very popular slide show of pictures taken by Graham Carey of Malmesbury in 1964. If you haven't seen this yet come along, pull up a chair and settle down comfortably. There are only 143 pictures to see.

Once the lighting work has been done there will be an exhibition on the Civil War to link with the re-enactment. This will be followed by a exhibition featuring World War I to coincide with the national events to mark the start of that war 100 years ago

## EVENTS

### FAMILY DAY

Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> February 11.00 – 1.00pm, 1.30 – 3.30pm in the museum.

Let the children try their hand at lace making. No charge although of course donations are welcome and children should have a responsible adult with them.

### QUIZ

Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> March Maltings room, Town Hall, Malmesbury at 7.30pm.

Teams of 4 – 6. Tickets are £7 per person to include some refreshments and are available at the museum.

## DISCOUNTS

The following traders are offering discounts to members on production of their membership cards. We are very grateful to them for their support.

E and S, High Street  
Flowers Galore, High Street  
Jackdaw Café in the Town Hall

## FOAM Contacts

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