



## Newsletter Summer 2025

### Letter from Chair of the Trustees

Dear Members and Supporters

I hope you are all enjoying the fine weather, and the wonderful exhibition on the mezzanine of Warden and Freeman exhibits and information.

At the end of May, after ten years of being chair firstly of FOAM (Friends of Athelstan Museum), then of the Trustees of Athelstan Museum Malmesbury I will be handing over to Steve D'Arcy who will be our next Chair of the Trustees. We will introduce you to Steve in our next newsletter. I am sure you will support him in the same way you have supported myself and the museum in the last ten years.

These years have been an unforgettable experience with so much to learn and enjoy. Now, when I visit another museum I look with my "Athelstan Museum" eyes; we compare more than favourably. I have loved meeting and working with all the desk volunteers and listening to their concerns; talking to visitors from all over the world who are loving their visit to Malmesbury; and being in various of our museum teams who work together to keep the museum a stimulating place where visitors can immerse themselves in the history of the town. Museums and places of culture are increasingly recognized as contributing to mental health and wellbeing.

Sometimes, on opening the museum door I get a sense of belonging. I hope you do too.

Together we have bought and renovated the former Moravian Church, purchased the Turner Watercolour of Malmesbury Abbey and renovated the mezzanine to display it. The Coin Hoard finally went on display after many hours of conservation and enthusiastic volunteer work. We have the replica Athelstan sword, King Charles I letter, and the Athelstan coin amongst other acquisitions. Last year the Athelstan 1100 exhibition in the museum was outstanding. It is always a team effort and I shall still be a part of the team, leading the shop group, on the front desk, and as a Trustee for continuity. Also look out for our Patrons Circle initiative.



Some photos of the last ten years.....



*Images Bill Reed*

Very best wishes

Sharon Nolan

Chair of the Trustees, Athelstan Museum Malmesbury

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### Catherine Doody



Catherine has recently retired from the Museum Management Team and I am sure we all join with the team shown left in thanking her for all her years of service.

I am pleased to say that Catherine will continue as a Museum volunteer.

### New Exhibition

#### **Warden and Freeman of Malmesbury 28<sup>th</sup> April 2025 to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2025**

The Warden and Freeman have played a key ongoing role in the history of Malmesbury. We are delighted to host an exhibition that tells their story and their unique, continuing contribution to the town. Exhibits on display have been loaned to us by the Warden and Freeman, many have not been seen before outside their own archives.



Members of the Warden and Freeman attended a preview evening on 28<sup>th</sup> April together and enjoyed touring the displays and sharing their own stories.

To the left are Richard Robbins (W&F), Susan Mockler, Barbara Pell (W&F) and Anne Goodyer who all worked on the exhibition.



Two highlights from the exhibition are seals used on old indentures by the Warden and Freeman probably dating from 1696 and a Twig and Turf as used in the Twig and Turf ceremony.

### Collections – Elspeth Huxley's stove

The stove in the corner of the Museum is from a cottage in Oaksey, the home of author Elspeth Huxley.

Volunteer Harri Rawlings, seen right by the stove, has been researching more information on Elspeth. This is now on display above the stove and includes her description of Malmesbury in the 1970s.



## Children's History Club

There has been lots of fun at the Children's History Club. Below are great pictures of "Castle Chaos" and the Victorian session. These two could have stepped straight out of a Victorian picture portrait. Future club dates are in the Whats On section below.



## Malmesbury lace in public art

Janet Casselden recently had the opportunity to advise on new public art for the Backbridge Estate. Organised by Caerbladon, Janet advised the artist on the lace design on the edges. There was also a picnic in May when Janet told people about Malmesbury Lace and taught children how lace is made. I think you will agree that from pictures below the lace edges look wonderful.



## Updated Malmesbury research

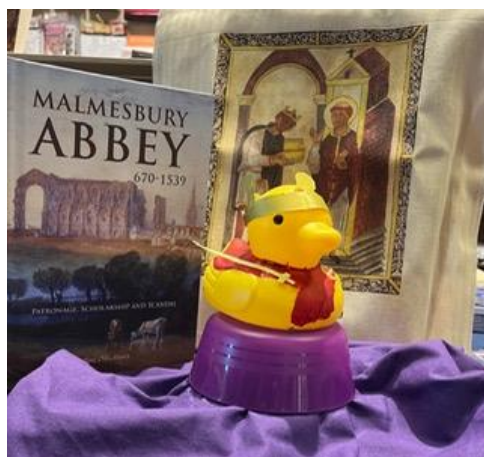
Many thanks to Tony McAleavy for providing updates to our web page on the Old Bell Hotel. The Old Bell is sometimes described as the oldest hotel in England and there is evidence to back up this claim as described by Tony.



Do take some time to find out the latest information on the new page at [The Old Bell Hotel.](#)

## Sports news

On Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> May our very own duck, King Quackelstan took part in the Malmesbury Duck Race. He is seen below in a pre-race interview in which he was confident that he could lead the ducks of Malmesbury in time honoured tradition. Museum supporters turned out to cheer him on the big day.



Recollections of the race may vary but he was certainly heard quacking “onwards to Brunanburh” at one point.

Despite the loss of his sword he remained upright throughout the race and of course the winning duck, on the far right, asked him to join the victory picture!

The rather non buoyant duck in the middle is in fact the winner's trophy.



## Planning the Malmesbury and World War 2 exhibition

Work is well underway on our forthcoming exhibition to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the end of World War Two. It will take place from Tuesday 30th September 2025 in the museum and will include exhibits and information boards on many aspects of the war, focussing on everyday life in wartime Malmesbury.



Photograph of the 'Wings for Victory' event on May 15th 1943.

The two aircraft were a Hurricane, which had to be taken apart to get it into Cross Hayes, and then reassembled, and a Horsa glider.

Image Charles Vernon

We have assembled an important and diverse group of objects and visual displays to celebrate this important anniversary of the war's end including rationing, evacuees, prisoner of war camps and much more. We hope you will come and visit the exhibition.

### Isabel Pratt

It's with great sadness that we inform you of the death of Isabel Pratt. Isabel was a volunteer with the Museum for many years, joining her friend and fellow Crudwell neighbour, Helen Lee, every Sunday in the Museum until she retired several years ago. Isabel was part of the collection team and when the collection was audited in 2009, a major task, she was the main volunteer. As one of the few volunteers able to use MODES, the Museum collection computer system, she played a key role in archiving the collection.

She remained an invaluable member of both the collection and the Museum stewarding teams and was greatly missed when she retired.

## **What's On**

### **Teatime Talks - Wednesdays at 2.30pm**

Weds 16 July Mike Howarth - Revival of the Cotswold Canals

Weds 17 Sept Malcolm Sinclair - Dauntsey Doom Painting & the Reformation

Weds 5 Nov Bill King - The Poppy - Symbol of Remembrance

### **Evening Talks - 7.30pm in Rausing Building**

Tues 12 August CARNIVAL History Talk - Triple Max!!

Tues 19 August CARNIVAL History Talk - Bill Reed

Tues 26 August CARNIVAL History Talk - Tony McAleavy

Please see the Malmesbury Carnival website for information on these talks

Fri 19 Sept Malcolm Sinclair - The Dauntsey Doom, Heaven & Hell, & the Art of the Last Judgement

Mon 13 October - Annual General Meeting

### **History Club**

10.30 - 12.30 FREE for 6-10 year olds + Adult

Saturday 28 June - Eilmer the Flying Monk

Sunday 28 September - Amazing Athelstan

Sunday 26 October - Roman Relics

Sunday 23 November - Christmas Traditions

Saturday 24 January - Moving Pictures

### **Exhibition**

Now until 30 September - Warden & Freeman of Malmesbury

5 & 6 July - 11.00 - 3.00pm - Rausing Building

Malmesbury Secondary School - Art Exhibition

Student artwork - inspired by JMW Turner and Malmesbury Abbey.

October – Malmesbury and World War II

### **Other Events**

Sunday 15 June - Members Only Event - afternoon tea @ Avon House

Friday 15th August Lace Workshop. Two sessions, morning and afternoon, no booking required but limited numbers. ages 5-95. Look out for posters.

Sunday 21 Sept @ 1.30pm Visit to Dauntsey Church to see Doom Painting following Malcolm Sinclair's talks in Sept

Tickets & further details for all Museum Events will be available from our website <https://www.athelstanmuseum.org.uk> or in the Museum.

All our talks are in The Rausing Building

Tickets required in advance unless otherwise stated