



Newsletter Autumn 2025

Letter from Chair of the Trustees

Dear Members and Supporters

I am pleased to introduce myself as the new Chair of the Trustees for Athelstan Museum. Taking over from Sharon is quite a daunting task and I would like to thank her for her continuing help and support.

I have always viewed Athelstan Museum as an outstanding museum with high-quality exhibits offering an engaging experience for visitors of all ages. It is a source of pride to the town that it has been developed and maintained over decades by a volunteer force of Malmesbury and district residents. It is a privilege to be involved in the next phase of development for the museum and to continue this work.



As someone who is new to this important role, I simply aim to support and maintain the high standards that have already been set by the current organisation. I also recognise the importance of maintaining a sustainable experience for volunteers that meets both their needs and that of the museum. The enticing prospect, however, is to seek out and take advantage of opportunities that will improve and expand the museum offering, ensuring the future of this valuable institution.

My priority is to listen to the views of those who are part of the organisation and I hope that my enthusiasm and previous experience will help with future developments. Over the next months I expect to meet many of you personally at Museum events, I know only too well that the success of the Museum is down to its volunteers and Members, thank you for your continuing work and support.

Very best wishes, Steve D'Arcy

Chair of the Trustees, Athelstan Museum Malmesbury

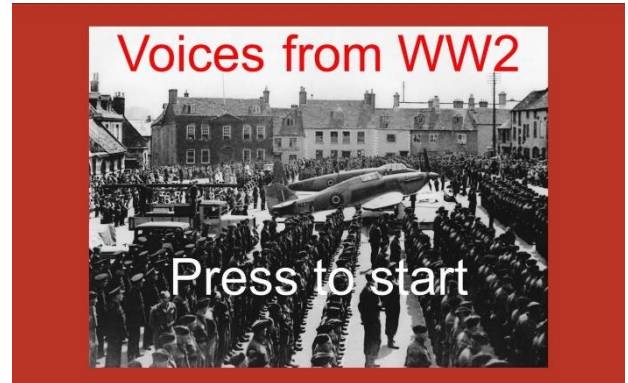
trusteechair@athelstanmuseum.org.uk

New Exhibition

Malmesbury in World War Two 29th September to 23rd March 2026

To commemorate the 80th anniversary of the end of World War Two the exhibition features the many aspects of the war which affected everyday life in wartime Malmesbury.

Exhibits cover rationing, civil defence, evacuees, prisoners of war and much more. Items are from our own collection or loaned by local contributors. All shed a light on how World War Two affected the lives of the townsfolk of Malmesbury.



One of the highlights is a World War Two Home Front Defence Medal and Box (above left). It was awarded to Mr A.F. Jones of Malmesbury and is complete with the original ribbon, wax envelope, forwarding slip and cardboard issue box. The Voices screen (above right) also has a dedicated collection of World War Two recollections that bring to life what life was really like in Malmesbury during World War Two.



Members and guests enjoyed the exhibition pre-view evening with a chance to chat to the volunteers who had put the exhibition together.

The next day Malmesbury enjoyed a visit from World War Two vehicles to publicise the Exhibition.



Many thanks to Jonathan Tucker and the Exhibition Team for their hard work in staging a fascinating exhibition which tells the story of life Malmesbury during World War Two.

Remembering Athelstan

Athelstan Museum at Kingston-on-Thames: “Athel’s Town” 2025

Athelstan (893 - 939) acceded to the throne in 924 and was crowned in Kingston-on-Thames in 925. He died in Gloucester and was buried - as he had requested - in Malmesbury. Last year, the Museum took part in celebrations in Malmesbury and Kingston for the 1100th anniversary of his accession.

To commemorate his coronation, the Museum was invited back to Kingston on Saturday 26 July to take part in “Athel’s Town”, a celebration of his life.

Sharon, Janet and Ruth managed our merchandise stand. Campbell joined us to promote the Malmesbury - Kingston walk and cycle ride reported below.



The event took place in Canbury Gardens beside the River Thames. The programme included a spectacular procession in Anglo-Saxon costume beside the Thames and over Kingston Bridge with the Mayor of Kingston, re-enactments of medieval crafts and customs by “Regia Anglorum” (who camped in Malmesbury Cloister Gardens last year), a speech by the Town Crier, and an evocative staging of the coronation of Athelstan.

Amongst many local organisations, our stand was busy all day with enquiries about Athelstan and his relationship with Malmesbury. Janet and Sharon had selected merchandise carefully and much of it was sold. Campbell spoke to lots of people interested in the walk and cycle ride.

We are very grateful to Emma and her team at Kingston for their kind welcome to such a friendly and well-attended event, which was a great opportunity to promote Malmesbury and the Museum.

Words and pictures: Bill Reed

Athelstan 1100 Pilgrim Way Walk - Malmesbury to Kingston

On 18th August a great crowd was in Malmesbury Abbey's Cloister Gardens to see Athelstan entrust his crown - made by local blacksmith Isaac Owen - to 'Stephen Mayor of Malmesbury' and the 43 walkers setting off on the first day of the walk towards Cricklade. The Museum made sure that our support of the Mayor was clearly visible.



The walk took place over 11 days, ending at Kingston on 4th September to mark 1100 years since the coronation of King Athelstan.

<https://www.kingston.gov.uk/your-council/your-kingston-newsroom/kingston-2025>

Roman Tile display from tile kilns of Brandier's Farm

We are excited to have a new exhibition of a group of Roman clay tiles found in Minety. This was a large production centre for the area.

We are grateful to Peter Lavery for the loan of the tiles uncovered during the archaeological excavations managed by Cotswold Archaeology over the past three years. According to experts the three kilns that were found were crucial in the building of Roman Cirencester (Corinium).

<https://cotswoldarchaeology.co.uk/a-roman-tile-kiln-at-brandiers-farm/>

The display is downstairs in the museum for the next six months.



Volunteer outing to Holburne Museum

Our Volunteers outing this year was to Bath's excellent Holburne Museum. A small group of us enjoyed a fascinating guided tour of the building, its history and some of the great and varied collection ranging from fine art to exquisite embroidery via a very beautiful Meissen chamber pot re-modelled with silver gilt decoration! Such a treasure house - to me it always feels like a tiny V&A. The highlight - and main reason for our visit - was to see the special exhibition of Turner & Co watercolours from a rarely seen private collection.



Turner and his contemporaries were excited and inspired by the new medium of watercolour which enabled them to paint *en plein air*. You can see how they experimented with paper types/textures and colour wash techniques - some of the examples were studies or apparently incomplete but no less charming. Included in the exhibition were works by John Sell Cotman and Thomas Girtin from around the same time. The collection has been carefully stored in drawers with little or no exposure to light so the colours have been well preserved. We did, of course, focus in on the one of Malmesbury - shown in the picture! The emphasis is clearly on the Mill and not the Abbey but we all agreed that "ours" is a much better example of his work. Not that we are prejudiced of course . . .

Many thanks to Richard Searle-Barnes for kindly organizing the whole afternoon including chauffeuring us there and back. Text and images Marie-Clare Brind

Malmesbury Carnival Petticoat Lane

Always a great favourite, this year with good weather. The Museum stall shown below looked splendid and attracted lots of attention and sales.



Dauntsey Doom Painting:

Less than 5 miles from Malmesbury, a rare artistic treasure from the late 1300's can be found in Dauntsey Church. It is believed that almost every village church had a Doom painting prior to the Reformation when most were destroyed along with most other religious art and statuary in a clean sweep of puritanism. Only a handful are now in existence. Malcolm Sinclair has studied Doom paintings - in particular the well preserved example at Dauntsey - and gave us a fascinating insight into the context, times and detail. Two talks - a teatime talk with a general overview of Doom paintings followed by an evening talk giving a much wider context right across to the Sistine Chapel - explained the Christian concept of Judgement Day and the importance of such paintings in a time when the vast majority were illiterate making visual images so important.



The talks were followed by a private guided visit to see the Doom painting in situ (left). More than 30 people came to view and Malcolm kindly gave us yet more detail and explained again for those who were unable to attend the talks. He encouraged us to think about the huge change in churches across the country when all decoration and images were taken away and

how this would have impacted both the faithful and those who created the art.

Hidden treasure indeed! Our thanks to Malcolm Sinclair for this fascinating insight.

Text and images Marie-Clare Brind

Latest Voices update

David Bailey's account of the Malmesbury Harmonica Band of the 1950s is a recent addition to the Voices collection. This was aired over the Carnival weekend.

The podcast I recorded for Flying Monk Radio, with updates on the Voices project and the Malmesbury Station model railway display, which was broadcast over the Carnival Procession weekend, is now available on the Malmesbury Voices page of the Flying Monk Community Projects website.



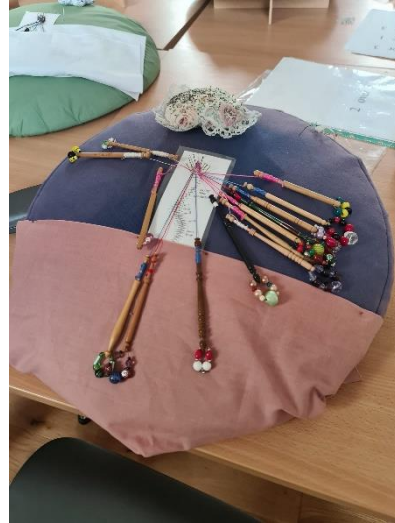
<https://flyingmonkcommunityprojects.weebly.com/malmesbury-voices-collection.html>

The photo shows Bill Reed in the Radio Shed being interviewed by Dan McAleavy about the band.

Text and image Bill Reed

Lace Day

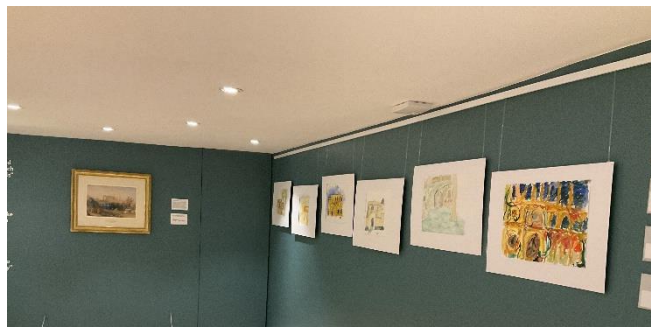
In August the Museum hosted a Lace Making Day. As we know Malmesbury was well known for its exquisite lacemaking – a home industry which helped sustain hundreds of families over the generations. The invite was to have a go at making some simple bobbin lace yourself, the day was very successful and examples are shown below.



Images Marie-Clare Brind

Art Display

The museum was proud to present the work of Malmesbury School Year 8 students who had been studying the work of Turner. After a highly successful exhibition held in the Rausing Building twelve watercolours of Malmesbury Abbey have been on display next to the Turner in the museum.



Text and images Susan Mockler

What's On

We already have a full programme of events for Spring 2026, more details coming soon

Teatime Talks - Wednesdays at 2.30pm

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

History Club

Saturday 25 October - Roman Relics

Saturday 22 November - Christmas Traditions

Saturday 24 January - Moving Pictures

Exhibition

September 30th 2025 to March 2026 – Malmesbury and World War II

Other Events

Sat 11 Oct - Canals Visit

Mon 13 October - Annual General Meeting

Lace making day

Thursday 23 October - Rausing Building

Two sessions - morning and/or afternoon

10.30-12.30 & 1.30-3.30

For ages 5 yrs to 95 yrs - Under 16s to be accompanied by adult

Tickets not required but £5 donation on the door.

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

Images AG and Athelstan Museum unless otherwise stated