

Newsletter Spring 2026

After such a gloomy winter it is good to enjoy the longer days and signs of spring. Our Events programme for 2026 is now in full swing, we hope to see you at some of them which you can find at the end of this newsletter. Thank you for your continuing support.

History Club

Our popular Childrens' History Workshops are now on Sunday afternoons in the Rausing Building – fun interactive sessions whilst learning about our local history.



A lot of work has been carried out by the History Club team to promote this important Museum activity. The new poster design is shown above left, from a previous event, and museum displays have been developed alongside some of the workshops. Social media is also well engaged and volunteers are being asked to promote the sessions. Topics covered so far this year are Moving Pictures, Wartime Malmesbury and Elmer the flying Monk. The topic for 26th April is Railways.

The picture above right is the display to support the Moving Pictures workshop in January. During this workshop a zoetrope, pictured below, was shown to the children and they then made cardboard replicas. After History club the zoetrope was taken into the Museum for the day on 19th February and visitors were able to see it working.

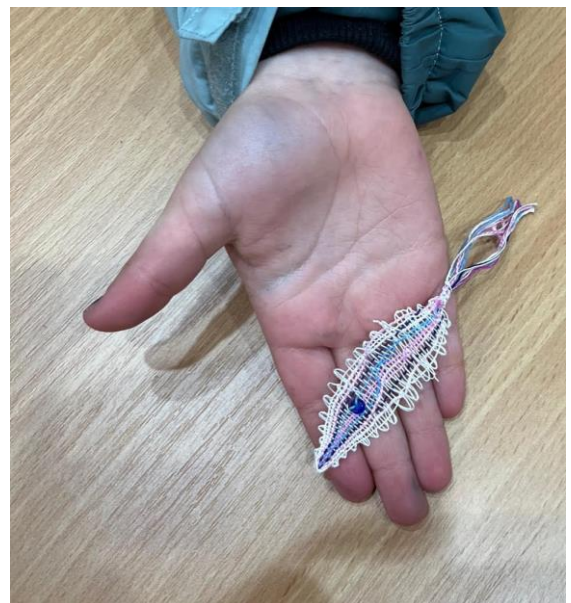


So what is a zoetrope? It has two strips which are placed inside the drum. When the drum is spun (by hand) and the viewer looks through the splits on the sides of the spinning drum it appears to show a 'moving' picture. The zoetrope strip above shows a dog and a monkey. The dog passes through the hurdle while the monkey jumps over it.

This zoetrope was borrowed from Chippenham Museum.

Lace making activities

The Children's Lacemaking Day run by Janet, Linda, Rachel and Liz was a great success, the pictures below from Bill Reed show the skill involved.



Lace Maker Teresa Wheeler is shown demonstrating lacemaking in the Museum. She is using a pillow on which she is making a length of Malmesbury lace using a Malmesbury pattern and Malmesbury style bobbins. The next Lace making workshop will be at the end of May but Teresa will be demonstrating in the museum on alternate Wednesdays from 25th March.



New acquisitions

Currently on display is a selection of items recently taken into the museum's collection.

It is an eclectic group, well illustrating the wide variety of aspects that make up the fascinating story of Malmesbury and the villages. It includes a silver ring found near the river, a fragment of stained glass from Dauntsey, the old Linolite factory whistle, a somewhat surreal painting of the Market Cross and 19th century Volunteer military long service awards.



The photographs here show the beautiful sewing box and contents that once belonged to Mary Luce and some 19th century cartes de visite of the Malmesbury photographer W M Hanks. These were used for publicity purposes and include portraits of some identifiable locals from Cowbridge House.

Putting Malmesbury on the map

If you have been to the Museum lately you will have spotted the new display board over the Malmesbury town model. The idea came about following a talk by David Witt on the relationship between Malmesbury and its underlying geology.

Visitors to the Museum love the town model and often ask about the rivers and why it is on a hilltop. The new display board explains all of this and is a great addition to the Museum.

Here Susan Mockler and David Witt prepare to install the board. Thanks to both of them for their hard work.

This board also features in my forthcoming Teatime talk on 15th April (Editor).



Did you ever wonder how the model was built? Read on.

From the archive

More pictures from Roger Griffin's archive showing the construction of the model in 2008.





Quiz night February 13th 2026

A very enjoyable evening and thank you to all who supported us. Spot the quizzers in the photographs below answering questions on the left and enjoying the meal on the right. Images Bill Read



Linolite



Since the publication of "Linolite - The Inside Story" I have sent out annual updates, digitally or by post, to those who contributed to the book and the Linolite Voices collection.

I am no longer sending them out by post but have printed them all off into a folder which is now at the Museum reception desk, but will later be transferred to the library shelves.

Volunteers are encouraged to show this to any visitors interested in the Linolite story.

Image and text Bill Reed

Malmesbury and the American connection



The Exhibition team have started work on their next exhibition planned to start in June. The title is “Malmesbury and the American connection”, it aims to highlight the many people in Malmesbury who chose to emigrate to America. The links with Cleveland are well known but the exhibition will also cover those from a much earlier time.

Some team members are shown reviewing research material with the help of Tony McAleavey, the Trustee supporting the exhibition.

Museum Library update

Whilst the Museum is closed in early January is a great time to carry out “housekeeping” jobs.

This year new additions to the library were catalogued and duplicates identified. Here is Janet with just some of the books being processed.

You may have noticed that some of these duplicate books are now on sale in the Museum shop. This is a great way of finding them a new home and generating funds for the Museum.



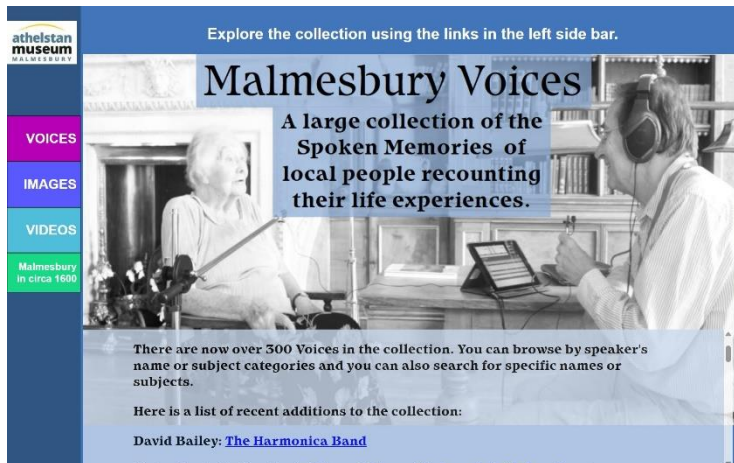
Fragile books are carefully stored in the Museum Office. The catalogue has been updated and as always is on top of the Museum bookcase. Do take time to browse our list of books.

Better Data, Better Discovery project

More activity behind the scenes. The Museum’s Forward Plan aims to make our collection more accessible to the public. As another step towards this we have taken part in the next stage of the Data to Discovery project run by the Wiltshire Museum Advisory Service and museum consultant Tim Burge.

A number of training sessions were provided and volunteers have now loaded Museum Collection data on to the Museum Data Service to allow other Museums to investigate our collection.

Malmesbury Voices update



With Peter Holland's technical help, several recordings have been added to the Voices collection in the past few weeks. They include an interview with Brian Reeves, who is the last Commoner farming his own land up on Malmesbury Common. Here is a screenshot of the Malmesbury Voices front screen which Peter Holland has redesigned.

It now has direct links to the latest additions to the collection.

I have also been delving into my own archive and have digitised three older recordings for the collection. Ken Silveston, who was Malmesbury Mayor in the 1980's, also owned Malmesbury Wholefoods on Abbey Row, and the collection now includes his account of both these activities. The Wholefood Shop was later taken over by Steve Cox (see attached photograph) and his story is also now included.



Items to be added soon include more stories from Ray Sanderson and a recording on Lacemaking with Teresa Wheeler. Using extracts from the Voices collection, I have given talks recently to Women's Institutes at Kington St Michael (Malmesbury's Secret Radar Factory) and at Hullavington (Wiltshire Dialect).

A reminder that you can listen to the Malmesbury Voices page on the Flying Monk Radio website. Here is the full link:

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

Text and image Bill Reed

Website news

Work has started on a review of the Museum website by the team of volunteers. Any changes will not be drastic but aim to make the site easier to use and more attractive to potential visitors. More updates in future newsletters.

We are also pleased to renew our hosting service with 34SP.com who provide a great service to us.

EVENTS 2026

THREE TOP SPEAKERS COMING TO MALMESBURY!

Julian "Meet the Ancestors" Richards, Professor Ronald Hutton and author Ben Kane are all delighted to return to Malmesbury for Evening Talks this summer.

Julian Richards is a TV & Radio presenter known to us from his Meet the Ancestors from Abbey House.

Professor Ronald Hutton was a huge hit when he came to talk about our Malmesbury Witches.

Ben Kane gave a most engaging and fascinating talk - now here for the launch of his new book in July.

More details below - and on our website under Whats On - plus lots more!

Please book early - all are likely to be popular sell outs.

For details on all our events please see:

<https://www.athelstanmuseum.org.uk/events/>

Please note

HISTORY CLUB - NOW SUNDAY AFTERNOONS

1.30 - 3.30 pm in Rausing Building

April

Weds 15 April - **Teatime Talk** - Anne Goodyer - Malmesbury's History as a Border Town from Wessex/Mercia to WW2

Sun 26 April - **History Club** - Railway in Malmesbury

May

Fri 8 May - **Evening Talk** - Julian Richards - **A Career in Ruins**

Weds 20 May - **Teatime Talk** - Bill Reed & Mike Lewis - Napoleon after Waterloo & The lock of his hair in our Museum

Thursday 28th May **Lace Making** 10.30 – 12.30 and 1.30 to 3.30 Rausing Building

June

Wed 3 June - **Evening Talk** - Ronald Hutton - **Did King Arthur Exist?**

Weds 17 June - **Teatime Talk** - Susan Mockler - Malmesbury Union Workhouse: Why? Where? When? Who?

July

Weds 1st July - **Teatime Talk** - Sue Poolman – Malmesbury's American Connections – title tbc

Weds 8th July - Evening Talk - Ben Kane - New Book due July - A Land Aflame - Second Punic War but no Hannibal?! Will include author book signing and sales
Sat/Sun 11/12th July – Magic Malmesbury – Lace making and History Club tbc

August

Carnival Talks

Tues 11th, 18th & 25th - Evening Talks - details tbc by Carnival Committee.

September

Oaksey Church - 15th Century Wall Paintings - date of Teatime Talk plus Visit tbc

November

Weds 18th November - Teatime Talk - Charles Boundy - The Bayeux Tapestry - Embroidery or Fabrication? Will include book signing by author and book sales.