

Newsletter Autumn 2026

As the long hot summer becomes a distant memory I hope you enjoy reading about some of the Museum's summer activities. As always thank you for your support.

Thank you to Susan Mockler



Susan Mockler has recently stepped down from her roles as Vice Chair of the Museum Management Team and as Exhibition Lead. Here she is being presented with a bouquet and gift as a token of thanks.

At the August Museum Management Team meeting she was given this vote of thanks which we all share:

"Susan successfully, professionally and with great attention to detail ran the Turner project, liaising with schools, artists, and the Arts Society which was a huge amount of work. She has been a great exhibitions lead, with all the coordination and research that entails. She has also chaired MMT meetings efficiently and with humour. She will be hard to replace. We are fortunate that she will continue as a desk volunteer, and also co-ordinate the cake making team for events."

In response Susan would like to pass on the following:

"Volunteering at the Athelstan Museum has given me many opportunities to explore the history of Malmesbury while being part of an enthusiastic team organising the many activities around museum events and the day-to day running of the museum and Rausing Building. It has been a privilege to work with many 'professional' volunteers on different exhibitions and projects."

Being part of the Museum Management Team as the Vice Chair and the Exhibition Lead has been rewarding, challenging and fun; I will miss being part of this dedicated team and thank them for their support and patience when dealing with a novice!

Although I have stepped down from these roles I will continue to volunteer and look forward to serving cake and teas, greeting visitors and helping where I can."

Photoshoot for revamped Museum website

You may recall that a review of the Museum website has been carried out and a number of improvements identified.

The navigation has been simplified and the site has a “cleaner” look and feel. More images have been added to enhance those that already exist. We are delighted that photographer Anna Durrant agreed to shoot some new images.

Seen below left with Graham McDougal, the Website Team lead, Anna has taken a great set of new images that can be used throughout the Museum – not just on the website. One of these is below right.



The review has taken a great deal of effort, many thanks to the Website Team, Graham, Peter Holland and Anne Goodyer for all their hard work.

Have a look at the changes that have been made on www.athelstanmuseum.org.uk

Oaksey Teatime talk

Oaksey Church kindly hosted our latest Teatime Talk providing 40 of us with delicious home made cakes and tea as well as a warm welcome to this pretty village church. Very few 15th Century church murals remain after the puritan purges since the Reformation - Oaksey can luckily still show 3 good examples. Jerry was able to explain the background to these images, what they show and the symbolism which was so important to communities - the majority of whom would have been illiterate so could only otherwise hear the word of God or learn more from such visualisations.



The murals, shown above, were uncovered during renovations in 1933. The best preserved shows St Christopher carrying baby Jesus across the water - complete with mermaid! This can be seen from the church doorway, possibly to encourage and reassure weary pilgrims on the way to Malmesbury Abbey. Christ of the Trades is more damaged and has been altered but still clearly conveys the message to "down tools" on Sunday and respect the Sabbath.

We were also shown the more mysterious and possibly pagan Sheela-na-gig on the external North wall. Is this a fertility symbol or ward against the devil - who knows but it has clearly been re-installed from an earlier building and a rather startling talking point!

Many thanks to Kevin the Church Warden, his team who provided the tea and to Jerry for providing such a fascinating insight into these local treasures and their history.

Text and images Marie-Clare Brind

Children's History Club session on "Making in Malmesbury"

A great session, below you can see the mouth organs that were made with the help of Dyson's members.



Images Bill Reed

Petticoat Lane

Malmesbury Carnival events are always great fun. Here is our Museum Shop stall with the new banner and volunteers Sharon, Nicholas, Judy, Chris and Bridget.



Members Summer Garden Party

This does seem like some time ago now, we were even enjoying the sunshine thinking that it may not last. Many thanks to everyone that helped and to Angela and William Sykes for sharing their wonderful garden. Images Bill Sykes.



Napoleon's hair on Flying Monk Radio

In May Mike Lewis, Will Taylor and I gave a talk on the story of the lock of Napoleon's hair which is in the Museum's collection and shown below left.

Mike and I then made a recording for Flying Monk Radio on this subject. It was broadcast over Carnival weekend and is now accessible here:

<https://www.flyingmonkcommunityprojects.com/latestshows>



Text and image Bill Reed



Deaths of Caroline Pym and Linda Banwell.

We are sad to tell you of the recent deaths of Caroline Pym and Linda Banwell

Caroline was a loyal Friend and generous Supporter of Athelstan Museum. She was an early supporter of the Museum and attended talks in the Rausing Building until recently. The Wessex flag is flying at half mast in her honour on Tower House.

Linda was a high calibre, steady, reliable museum volunteer. She is remembered for being on duty on Monday mornings (when the museum was open on Mondays) with Mary Hill. They enjoyed one another's company for many years until they became unable to volunteer.

EVENTS 2026

CURRENT FREE EXHIBITION IN MUSEUM

Malmesbury & The American Connection - will now continue into early 2027.
All other events are held in the Rausing Building unless otherwise stated.

OCTOBER

Sun 25 Oct 1.30-3.30pm

History Club interactive workshop for Children 4-11yrs with Adult.

Topic - The Making OF Malmesbury

Monday 26 October 7.30pm

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - review of the year & forward plans.

NOVEMBER

Weds 18 November 2.30 tea 3.00pm – Teatime Talk

The Bayeux Tapestry: Embroidery or Fabrication? Speaker Charles Boundy

Sun 29 November - 1.30-3.30pm

History Club interactive workshop for Children 4-11yrs with Adult.

Topic - A 1950's Christmas.

DECEMBER

Friday 4 December - Malmesbury Late Night Shopping - Museum shop open with a Mulled Wine welcome!

Looking Forward to 2027

Our Events Team are planning another full programme of teatime & evening talks, visits, workshops & exhibitions.

Topics are hopefully likely to include - The Foxley church Silver, Visions of Malmesbury, Norman Conquest - to tie in with Bayeux Tapestry in UK, our Annual Quiz, Members Only Tea, monthly History Clubs and occasional Lace Days - plus much more!

Tickets and further information available from our website and in the Museum.

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

Images AG and Athelstan Museum unless otherwise stated. Editor Anne Goodyer