



Museum Matters

Newsletter of Saffron Walden Museum Society Ltd

Autumn / Winter 2018 Issue 46

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Dates of future Events - see Noticeboard attached

Highlights and Happenings; From the Chairman

The Annual General Meeting of the Society was held on Friday, 24th August. In giving my Chairman's Report for the past year, I was delighted to record the Societies debt to Susan Hollingworth for her fifteen years service, eleven of which were as Secretary to the Board, as a Director. She was elected as a Vice-President of the Society in recognition of her service and presented with a certificate to record this. I also included a very sincere 'thank you' to the Museum staff and to all our Volunteers, whether members of the Society or not, for without them the Museum would never open. Development was also mentioned and the latest position on this is below. I also had pleasure in acknowledging the support of the Board Directors and members of the various committees. I regret, however, that no member has volunteered to take up the role of Secretary to the Board. The Board will have to rely for the time being on my drafting minutes and getting the Directors to vet these! The Secretary does not need to be appointed as a Director and his or her role is to record the minutes of the Board Meeting. If you feel you may be able to offer to help please contact either me or Paul Salvidge to discuss what is involved.

I am also pleased to welcome Jennifer (Jenny) Oxley who took her appointment as Collections Officer (Human History) in August. On 10th August we previewed the exhibition *Worlds under glass: Adventures in taxidermy* curated by Charlotte Pratt and helped by Sarah Kenyon and James Lumbard. Jenny Oxley then presented the current exhibition *Collections Re-Crafted*. We welcomed members of the Eastern Region Textile Forum who have provided the majority of the objects on display. The Piano in which the gold coins were found has now been delivered to the museum and will be displayed in late November. Look out for details from the Museum in due course.

Our winter series of talks began in September with Charlotte Pratt showing us how to get involved in taxidermy. In October we heard about the Archaeology dig at the Crematorium site in Great Chesterford. In November we will hear about the Great War through the eyes of women poets. Thank you Paul Salvidge for such a varied and interesting set of talks so far.

The change of 'General Data Protection Regulations' and in particular the action taken by the Board to ensure that the Museum Society complies has now been completed. It has reminded us that the articles of the society as a company limited by guarantee contain a liability on members to provide a limited £10 contribution in the event of a deficit of funds in the winding up of the company. Our current assets include the value of the Museum Buildings and the lease on the Shirehill store and a very healthy balance in investments and in the bank. So there is no risk that members will be called on for this contribution in present circumstances.

Now that the Museum has been restored to full staff the Curator and the Development Committee will be in action early next year in moving forward the planning for the next developments of the Museum. Meanwhile, volunteers will be busy in November and December in helping arrangements for the re-decoration on the Ceramics Gallery. November's object of the month will be the British Legion standard recently donated to the museum following its laying up.

Tony Watson

Curator's Column; Carolyn Wingfield

Museum Makeover

Some of you may have noticed the scaffolding round the Museum recently, or even spotted intrepid contractors dangling on ropes on the rear of the Museum where it backs directly on to backyards in Castle Street below (all undertaken with the appropriate health and safety equipment and procedures, I should add!). The Council is cracking on with a programme of work outside and inside the building, so following the removal of ivy overgrowth on the north-west corner, external windows are all now being redecorated before winter sets in.

Later in the autumn, we will be moving remaining social history collections stored at the Museum to our off-site store at Shirehill. This exercise will release storage space for the exhibits from the Ceramics gallery which we will probably close in December for redecoration. So if pottery, porcelain and glass is your special interest, do take the opportunity to enjoy the current displays before they go into temporary storage. At time of writing, I have no definitive timetable for the works, but expect this project to continue into the early months of 2019. The gallery is long overdue for redecoration since we had some water leaking from the roof several years ago, but it means that we will be very busy with this and some work on the Toys display between now and Christmas.

Adding to Archaeological Archives

The intake of archaeological reports and finds from archaeological contractors continues slowly at the Shirehill store, though as soon as these are received and processed, notification of other watching briefs, evaluations and excavations caused by planning and development, are added to the list. Here are a few examples from a long list of archaeological archives deposited with the Museum by Archaeological Solutions Ltd. Although such small-scale interventions rarely produce exceptional artefacts for display, the information and reference material which they provide earns them a place in the district archaeological collections and preserves this for posterity.

- Work at Thaxted in 2006 on the site of the Bellrope Meadow housing development found features and pottery suggesting that the area had been used in the late Iron Age and early Roman period.
- A site investigated at 83 High Street, Great Dunmow in 2007 found features from Roman, medieval and Victorian phases of the town's long history, including remains of a small Roman pottery kiln.
- In 2011, construction of a new house in Wendens Ambo led to the discovery of Roman, medieval and post-medieval features on the site, testament to a long history of occupation in the vicinity; there were also a few pieces of prehistoric struck flint.

These and many other such small-scale projects testify to the long and complex evolution of our landscape and settlements.

So what else does a curator do?

There is a myth that says that museum curators spend most of their time working on the collections (if only!) In fact the vast majority of my time is taken up with a plethora of managerial and administrative tasks, enquiries and meetings, which do not lend themselves as subject matter for this column. 'Hot topics' recently have included

recruitment, appointments and induction of new colleagues and changes to weekend staffing; various reports, documents and projects for Council and Museum Society; budgets and service plans (this year's and next financial year's); our annual regional museum 'bench-marking' survey and other questionnaires; dealing with the incessant stream of emails and documents concerning 'treasure' finds, archaeological work caused by planning & development, and other potential additions to the collections; working with colleagues on this and next year's exhibition, activities and events plans; data protection (GDPR); requests for everything from raffle prizes to participation in research projects; liaison with many other colleagues and organisations in local heritage and museums; arranging group visits to the Shirehill store and Museum; and the constant stream of small operational challenges we face day-to-day in running a complex public service in a crowded historic building with incredible collections. Oh yes, I did get to do a bit of collections work for a treat – October's Object of the Month is a beautiful if incomplete Romano-British bronze wine-strainer, and I try to make my contribution to the Museum's lively social media presence (thanks to James, Charlotte and Jenny for keeping our on-line profile high) I have also enjoyed organising the logistics for moving an historic piano from Shropshire, collecting 12 gold sovereigns from the British Museum, and arranging the tuning of said piano, to be followed by a recording session with a talented local pianist... of which more will be revealed at the Christmas Social on 12th December. Never a dull moment!

Natural Sciences: James Lumbard

The last few months have seen some interesting steps towards future natural sciences exhibitions to form stronger links with local wildlife groups, charities and artists.

Plans for the next natural sciences exhibition in summer 2019 are well under way. The ambition is to contribute to a growing number of museums who are raising awareness of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which aim to address global challenges including, but not limited to, climate, environmental degradation and education. I plan to work closely with local wildlife groups and community support organisations to help people find the time and confidence to get outdoors and appreciate the wonderful countryside and wildlife that Uttlesford is famous for. These partnerships will help support SDGs which aim to improve individual wellbeing, strengthen communities and improve local habitats to support a greater range of biodiversity for the future.

We have also recently been approached by the East-Anglian based sculptor Kabir Hussain whose work has led him to an artistic interest in geology. During a visit to the museum in September, Kabir viewed the minerals and fossils at Shirehill, with a view to a future joint exhibition of original artwork and museum objects. Kabir works in cast bronze, and has previously exhibited work inspired by the Norfolk landscape and agriculture in Suffolk. His most recent pieces include exquisite recreations of entire sugar beet plants which he created during a residency at a farm and arts centre in Suffolk, while a selection of his work contributes to a current group exhibition, 'Theories of the Earth', at GroundWork gallery, King's Lynn. Kabir has previously exhibited at the Sainsbury Centre in Norwich, Doncaster Museum of Art and the Royal Society of Sculptors, London. This is an exciting opportunity to broaden the appeal of the natural sciences collection, and we hope to strengthen our relationship with Kabir to create a stimulating and wide-ranging exhibition.

While both of these projects are still in the early stages, I'm looking forward to staging my first exhibitions and forming close working relationships with so many local people and groups.



Stingray Sugar Beet II, 2017. Kabir Hussain

Bugs and Plants - Natural Sciences News: Sarah Kenyon

More news on insect pests – the battle continues. Monitoring traps are examined quarterly and we found more moths, carpet beetles and their larvae, called woolly bears, in some stores and galleries. Those areas have been cleaned and the floors sprayed with a pesticide which kills insects on contact. New moth traps with a pheromone have also been installed. The workroom is a large job and a programme of clearing and cleaning is organised.

Thanks to all the special verge volunteers for completing their ecological surveys during an unusually short survey season. Cold due to The Beast from the East stopped plants growing, then extremely hot summer weather dried out the flowers. New survey equipment from Essex Wildlife Trust has been issued to protect volunteers when surveying by the highways.



All 3 pests in a museum trap



A Woolly bear



Modelling a survey vest and warning signs

Human History Collections: Jenny Oxley

I started in post as Collections Officer (Human History) in August, as Leah left to become Curator of Ripon Museums in May. I'm enjoying settling into my new role here and getting to know all the staff, volunteers and stakeholders involved in running the Museum.

I'm originally from Hull, East Yorkshire, but moved away to study at University, first in Nottingham (BA Archaeology & History) and then in Newcastle (MA Museum Studies). I've been working in museums for over 15 years, initially as an Assistant on a Heritage Lottery funded store move project in Lincolnshire, before working as a Documentation Officer at Peterborough Museum. I then moved to North Hertfordshire Museum Service (Hitchin and Letchworth Museums), first as Assistant Curator, then as Curator, before becoming Curator at Welwyn Hatfield Museum Service. After 5 years at Welwyn Hatfield, I took on the role of Curator/Manager at Royston Museum for 3 years, with a brief stint in the middle working as Collections Standards & Care Manager at the National Army Museum based in their Stevenage store. I mostly worked on their £23million re-development in Chelsea, co-ordinating moving collections between the store and the Museum, and managing staff setting up their new displays.



The collections here at Saffron Walden are fascinating and encyclopaedic in their nature, so it's a great opportunity to develop more collections knowledge, and building on my existing skills and experience. I'm really passionate about increasing access to collections and love working on projects which have a real social impact. Here at Saffron Walden, my day-to-day job involves co-ordinating the weekend and bank holiday casuals and staffing, responding to collections enquiries, donations and identifications of items, as well as accessioning and cataloguing new acquisitions to the collections areas I oversee, which are local & social history collections (including photographs and the document archive), decorative & fine art, world cultures and costume & textiles. In my first few months I have been preparing and installing the Collections Re-Crafted Exhibition by the Eastern Region Textile Forum, have prepared the November Object of the Month item and its interpretation for display, worked on the Piano Hoard display (Object of the Month for December), re-established the volunteers working on the human history collections at both the Museum and Shire Hill, and organised the movement of the remaining social history collections to Shire Hill, and the subsequent move of the Ceramics from their gallery for maintenance work.

On the horizon in the New Year I will be helping with preparing the "Our Towns" exhibition and changing over the "Your Stories" (Community Showcase) display, as well as carrying out ongoing display improvements and auditing of stored collections.

Object of the Month:

July 2018

Ancient Pots - Chosen by Carolyn Wingfield

July's Object of the Month was a group of three ancient pots from Little Hallingbury. They are about 2,000 years old and were from the cremation cemetery of a late Iron Age community just before the Roman period. Gravel extraction led to their discovery in 1876.



August 2018

Red Squirrel – chosen by Sarah Kenyon

August's Object of the Month was a red squirrel. This mammal was chosen as Object of the Month by Sarah Kenyon, Natural Sciences Officer.

This red squirrel was found dead at Saffron Walden, Essex in August 2003. It had been run over by a car in Landscape View. A member of the Uttlesford group of Essex Wildlife Trust gave it to Saffron Walden Museum to be preserved. The body was mounted, or stuffed, by a taxidermist. This red squirrel has russet red fur on its body and tail, with white fur on its chest and belly. Male and female squirrels look identical.



The red squirrel is no longer native to Essex. They are very rare outside Scotland, Ireland and a few refuge areas in England and Wales. So what was it doing in Saffron Walden? This red squirrel had been released from a captive breeding and reintroduction programme which failed. Most people have not seen a live one, because grey squirrels have replaced our native red squirrels over most of Britain. American grey squirrels, *Sciurus carolinensis*, were originally from North America. They were released in Britain by nineteenth century landowners.



Red squirrels have russet red-brown fur on the body and tail. They are smaller in size and lighter in weight than grey squirrels. In winter they grow large ear tufts.

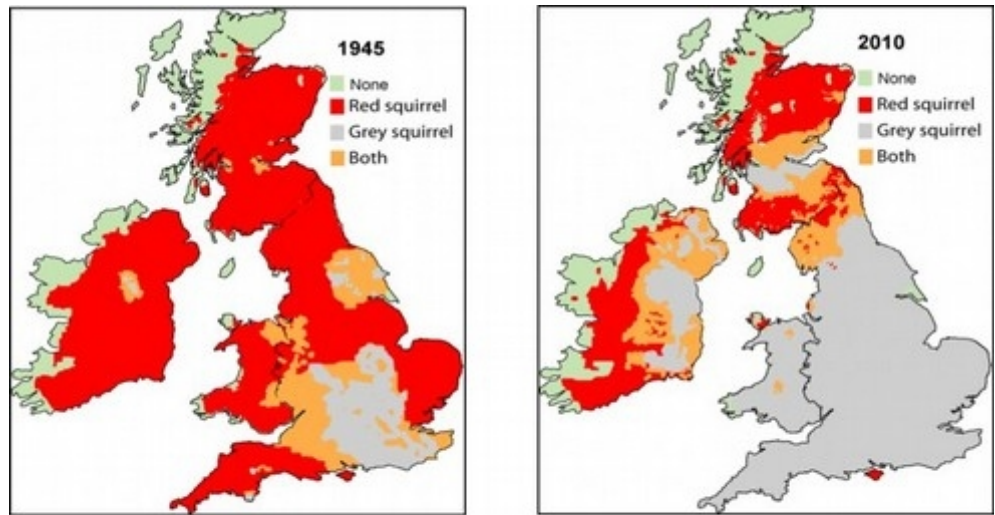
Grey squirrels are larger, stockier and rounder. They do not have ear tufts. The fur is grey-brown, with a fringe of white fur around the tail. They are often seen in parks and gardens. You can see live grey squirrels in the museum grounds.

Squirrel Summary

Red Squirrel	Grey Squirrel
Fur russet red-brown	Fur grey-brown
Ear tufts in winter	No ear tufts
Tail all one colour, or shades of red-brown fur	Tail fringed with white fur
Narrower head	Broader head
Small: 18-24 cm long 36-42 cm with the tail	Large: 24-28 cm long 46-50 cm with the tail
Lighter weight: up to 360 grams	Heavier weight: up to 720 grams

Endangered

The introduction of the grey squirrel from North America caused red squirrel numbers to plummet. It is estimated that there are only 140,000 red squirrels left in Britain, with over 2.5 million greys squirrels. This map shows that grey squirrels have replaced red squirrels across almost all of England and Wales.



Red and grey squirrel distribution in the British Isles in 1945 and 2010.
Copyright Craig Shuttleworth/RSST

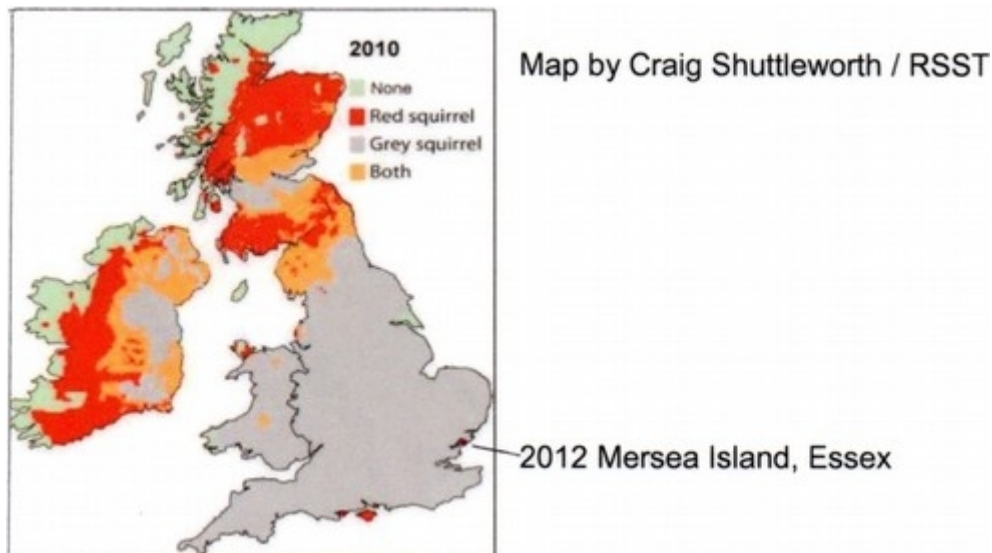
They cannot compete with the larger grey squirrels for food and shelter. Red squirrels also become infected with the squirrel pox virus which is carried by the greys. Once infected, they die of starvation and dehydration within two weeks. Other threats include road traffic and pets.

To preserve red squirrels, they must be kept apart from grey squirrels as the two species cannot live together. Conservation agencies are working on a conservation strategy that deters grey squirrels and encourages reds, to prevent red squirrels from becoming extinct.

Where are Red Squirrels?

They have retreated to wild, remote locations with coniferous woods, or they survive on islands where there are no grey squirrels. Red squirrels can feed on smaller seeds with lower calories, such as the seeds of coniferous trees like pine, spruce and larch, or broad-leaved trees like alder. They will also eat fungi, fruit from shrubs or trees and birds' eggs. Grey squirrels eat large seeds, from trees such as oaks, with higher calories. This is why most red squirrel populations are restricted to coniferous woodlands, where grey squirrels struggle to survive. Scotland and Ireland are the last strongholds of red squirrels.

In England red squirrels live on the Formby coast and in the extensive pine forests of the Lake District and Northumberland.



Islands where there are no grey squirrels also provide a refuge for red squirrels in England and Wales:

- Anglesey, Wales
- Brownsea Island, Dorset
- Isle of Wight
- Mersea Island, Essex

Since 2012 twenty red squirrels have been released on Mersea Island in Essex. So you may not have to travel that far to see one!

September 2018

Fossil Fish Teeth – chosen by James Lumbard

September's Object of the Month was a fossil showing several fish teeth. This was chosen as Object of the Month by James Lumbard

These fossilised teeth come from the extinct fish *Ptychodus* (pronounced tie-co-duss) which lived across the Americas, Europe and Asia. They are closely related to modern sharks and rays, but may not have been direct ancestors. Some species grew up to 10 metres long, feeding on the large shellfish that existed during the Cretaceous period, 66–145 million years ago. Although they had similar diet and teeth to modern rays, they looked more like modern nurse sharks, which cruise the seabed for small fish and shellfish.





Nurse shark. Tchami /
Wikimedia Commons

Ptychodus describes the shape of the teeth, from the Greek 'ptychos' (fold) and 'odus' (tooth). The ridges help grip the shellfish and to concentrate the bite force into narrow areas, making it easier to crack the shells. Like modern rays with a soft cartilage skeleton, Ptychodus could use its jaws like a nutcracker to crush its food. The ray puts the shellfish to one side of its mouth and clenches the jaw muscles on the other side. Tough ligaments keep the jaws in place, like a nutcracker's hinge, and make them act like levers meaning that the bite force on the shellfish can be 4 times higher than the force from the muscles alone.



Close up of a *Ptychodus* tooth:
© Saffron Walden Museum

October 2018

Bronze Wine Strainer – chosen by Carolyn Wingfield

October's Object of the Month was the must-have drinking accessory for Britons 2,000 years ago. This bronze wine strainer was used to filter sediment from wine. British aristocrats enjoyed wine imported from the Roman Empire before and after the Roman conquest of AD43.



This fragile bronze drinking vessel was described as a "Roman Bronze colander – origin unknown" in the Museum's registers when it was acquired in 1927. It was among a list of diverse archaeological, historic and ethnographic objects given by George Morris of the Friends' School, Saffron Walden. It measures nearly 15 cms in diameter, and the tiny holes piercing the central bowl form a delicate pattern.

Too delicate to be a colander it is more accurately described as a wine strainer, which would have been used to filter sediment from wine. It is of fine workmanship, though a little damaged and has in the past been repaired with plastic mesh to support the paper-thin edges where some pieces are missing. The handle is also largely missing although the end adjoining the pan is visible, repaired in the past with modern solder.

We can now place this wine strainer in context, thanks to finds of similar vessels, often accompanying small Roman bronze saucepans known as trullei (singular, trulleus). Trullei were part of the standard equipment of Roman legionaries, but wine strainers were not everyday items issued to Roman troops, and strainers like ours could have been made in Britain. There are examples of strainers being buried with trullei or bronze bowls, for instance the Kingston Deverill hoard *, discovered in 2005 and now in Salisbury Museum, and the Langstone hoard from Newport, Wales, found in 2007. The Langstone hoard may have been a ritual deposit made by Britons, but elsewhere, strainers and bronze vessels have been found in graves, as part of the feasting and

drinking equipment which accompanied the social elite of late Iron Age and early Roman Britain to the next world.

Certainly at the top of Iron Age society in the Essex region, there were people enjoying wine imported from the Roman world as much as a century before the Claudian invasion of AD43. We know this from high-status graves where wine amphorae were buried, and you can see examples of such amphorae in Saffron Walden Museum. So our wine strainer could date to around the 1st Century AD, either just before or just after the Roman conquest. It is a pity that we do not know where it was found, but we can imagine a local British aristocrat using this as part of a wine-drinking ceremony or special feast.

Cheers!

(* You can see the Kingston Deverill hoard on this link; <https://www.salisburymuseum.org.uk/collections/wessex-gallery/kingston-deverill-hoard> Editor)

November 2018

2nd Standard of the SW Branch of the Royal British Legion – chosen by Jenny Oxley

To mark the commemoration of the Centenary of the end of the First World War (1914-1918), November's Object of the Month is a poignant one.



The 2nd Standard at the Northern Convoys Association, St Saviour, Jersey. 2011

The Royal British Legion is a charity which provides financial, social and emotional care and support to members and veterans of the British Armed Forces, their families and dependants. The Legion is also the national Custodian of Remembrance and safeguards the Military Covenant between the nation and its Armed Forces and is best known for the annual Poppy Appeal and its emblem the red poppy.

Founded in 1921, the Legion is not just about those who fought in

the two World Wars of the last century, but also about those involved in the many conflicts since 1945 and those who are still fighting for the freedom we enjoy today. The 2nd Saffron Walden Royal British Legion Branch Standard was first sworn in at the Eastern Area Golden Jubilee Rally, to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the British Legion on the 26th June 1971 at Newmarket's July Racecourse.

Over the years it has featured at many local, national and international events, helping to commemorate those who have given military service. It has featured at annual carol services, the Festival of Remembrance at the Albert Hall, the Last Royal Tournament at Earls Court in 1999 and many times for Burma Star Association events, Poppy Race Days at Newmarket Racecourse, and HMS Lapwing Association parades. It took pride of place at the 80th Anniversary of the Saffron Walden Branch celebrations and played a key role in the 60th Anniversary of the end of the Second World War (1939-1945) commemorations in 2005.

Parading these standards for many years, can leave them liable to damage as they feature detailed embroidery and brocade, so new ones are established and sworn in, when this is the case. The retired 2nd Standard has now been donated to the Museum, and features as our Object of the Month for November, whilst a new 3rd standard has been sworn in. On Sunday 11th November, the new standard will form part of the town's annual Remembrance Sunday Parade and Church service.



The 3rd Standard was taken to the Menin Gate at Ypres in Belgium, 6th August for the First World War Centenary Gathering, along with around 1,200 other standards representing different British Legion branches from around the country.

Events: Charlotte Pratt

The summer holidays saw a range of events held at the Museum, relating to the temporary exhibition "Worlds under Glass- Adventures in Taxidermy". Children were invited to make magnificent masks, inspired by the creatures on display in the exhibition. They also made "Mythical Beast Hybrids" using collaged materials kindly donated by the Museum Society and our volunteers (Thank-you). The final activity of the summer holiday was something a little different; participants were invited to create "Vegetarian Taxidermy".

"What is vegetarian taxidermy?" I hear you cry. Vegetarian taxidermy involves making the mannequin or form, which is usually covered by the animal hide or skin, but instead is covered in wool. So it is taxidermy, without the animal hides. This challenging activity proved quite popular with visiting children and some marvellous creations were made.



On the 15th of September the Museum held its annual Open Heritage Weekend and Roald Dahl Day. Visitors to the Museum received free entry and the opportunity to get up close to some of the creatures and animals from the books and make their own Mr Twit beard. Staff participated as well and I'm sure you will agree, the Curator looks most fetching in her beard.

The 26th of October saw our biannual Museums at Night event. As well as a spooky trail, visitors could also have a close encounter with a variety of creepy crawlies in a new display in Curiosity Corner. Special thanks to Vic Lelliott who kindly donated an excellent collection of insects set in resin which made up much of the spooky display.

Learning at Saffron Walden Museum: Charlotte Pratt

September saw the start of a new school year and with it came bookings for school sessions, both at the Museum and outreach visits. A number of topics have been selected by visiting schools, including one Toys and Games session in which the pupils made their own toy cars. This session was greatly aided by members of the Museum Society and Volunteers at the Museum who kindly provided all manner of bottles tops, washers, buttons and other round objects as well as card board to create the cars from. The pupils really enjoyed the session, especially the race at the end! Many thanks to everyone who donated materials for the activity.

Loan boxes are continuing to be popular amongst schools. Thanks to a range of grants these are continuing to develop with the addition of new learning resources, including talking tiles. These are recordable devices which can be used to add sound to loan boxes, for example the calls of an animal, or the sound of an air raid siren.



A new Learning services leaflet has also been created to promote learning and outreach services at the Museum. This has been posted to all of the head teachers in Uttlesford, as well as emailed out to many more. A digital copy is available via email if any one would like to know more about the services offered by the Museum. A brief to design new dementia friendly signage for the Museum has also been sent out to a number of further education colleges offering art, design and graphics courses. It is hoped that as well of getting some well designed new signage at the Museum, which will increase accessibility; the brief will also help make new connections between the Museum and local colleges.

Exhibitions and Upcoming Events: Jenny Oxley

Collections Re-crafted

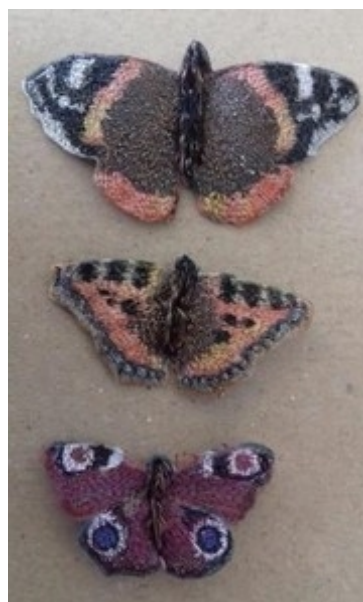
Collections Re-crafted, a new special exhibition at Saffron Walden Museum, presents a colourful and fascinating array of art textile exhibits by members of the Eastern Region Textile Forum (ERTF). The display represents the ERTF members' creative responses to the town of Saffron Walden and to objects and specimens in the Museum's wide-ranging collections.

In June and July 2017, the members of the Eastern Region Textile Forum were invited to Saffron Walden Museum to view the Museum displays. A further selection of fascinating items from the Museum's stores was provided, to help inspire their Saffron Walden-themed textile artworks. The textile artists took photographs and made sketches, which they then used as points of reference to produce their own creative responses to the town, the Museum and its collections.

The finished artworks have been divided into a range of themes for exhibition: People & Place, Collecting & Connecting, Naturally Inspired, Objects in Time and the Saffron Crocus. They reference the town's traditional industries, its architectural features and notable items from the Museum's collections and displays, such as, Wallace the Lion, archaeological finds, geological specimens and social history material. The works created by the ERTF members have gone on display accompanied by the objects or pictures of the places that have inspired them. Most of the exhibits are for sale, and purchased works can be collected after the exhibition closes in February.



Wonderful Wallace by Alison White



Claire Cousins - Butterflies

The artists were really inspired by the town and the Museum – here's just a few of the things they have said about working on this project:

"Saffron Walden Museum is a treasure trove full of amazing inspirational artefacts; a true inspiration for any artist!" (Carole Nicholls, ERTF exhibition co-ordinator)

"I was tremendously inspired by Saffron Walden as a modern, buzzing market town and as a site of historic interest: a place where past, present and future can clearly be seen. I was fascinated by the museum's encyclopaedic collections" (Lou Haywood, ERTF artist)

"Saffron Walden Museum is a marvellous local resource. We are extremely lucky to have it" (Marian Murphy, ERTF artist).

The Eastern Region Textile Forum (ERTF) was launched in April 2008 at Anglia Ruskin University (ARU) in Chelmsford by a steering group of five members: Christine Spencer, Miriam Weaver, Marie Payne, Lorraine Traer-Clark and Jenny Leslie. ERTF is open for membership to anyone over the age of 18, from any part of the UK. The group meets and runs textile events, exhibitions and projects in the Eastern Region, which they define as London (East, North and Central), Essex, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Suffolk, Norfolk and Hertfordshire.

The exhibition opened on Saturday 6th October and runs until Sunday 3rd February.

Our Towns - 16th February - 12th May 2019

Using archaeology and social history collections this exhibition will look at the very different origins of Uttlesford's four main towns, Saffron Walden, Thaxted, Great Dunmow and Stansted Mountfichet. It will also explore the origins and development of settlements, which were once major centres, but are no longer towns today, such as Great Chesterford, Newport, Clavering and Hatfield Broad Oak.

SAFFRON WALDEN MUSEUM SHOP SOUVENIRS

Shopping at the Museum

We have a range of gifts and items for sale in our gift shop. Children will love our pocket-money items, such as stationery, rocks, fossils, and they can buy one of our activity books to complete on their visit or at home. For adults, we have a range of local history books, jewellery, soaps and much more. Young and old will love our range of cuddly toys, inspired by the museum collections!

New Range of Museum Branded products

We have launched a range of reasonably priced Saffron Walden Museum Branded products to delight both adults and children alike:



New Lapel Badges

£3.50



Fridge Magnets

£3.50



Make your own Slime

£2.00

Volunteer News; Wendy-Jo Atter

'A wonderful surprise of a museum' Saffron Walden Museum given top award by TripAdvisor

Saffron Walden Museum has once again been awarded a TripAdvisor Certificate of Excellence for consistently impressing visitors.

The museum, which is run by Uttlesford District Council in partnership with the Saffron Walden Museum Society Ltd, was presented with the certificate based on a 4.5 out of 5 star rating on the travel and tourism review website during 2018. It is the fourth time the museum has received the award. Reviews posted on the website have been very positive toward the museum, with customers describing it as "excellent" and "a wonderful surprise".

One visitor said: "What a gem the museum is. It doesn't look that big from the outside but there's so much to see inside, covering hundreds of years of history of the local area and far beyond. There really is something for everyone. Excellent value."

Another posted: "[The museum] had a great range of displays across a number of rooms. It was quirky, delightful and absorbing. Definitely worth a visit."

Carolyn Wingfield, the museum's Curator, said: "This award reflects the hard work and commitment of all the team at the museum in consistently providing a friendly and welcoming experience for visitors. It is a great seal of approval to be recognised on the TripAdvisor website which is an established measure of customer satisfaction. I would like to thank everyone who took the time to share their experiences of the museum on the website."



Tony Watson, Carolyn Wingfield and Dawn French with the Trip Advisor Award Certificate

Administration Volunteers

Mary Adams provides invaluable support with the financial administration and Ian Sharpe also continues to work hard on a weekly basis documenting the accession registers.

Collections Volunteers and Exhibition Work

Paula Armstrong, Jane Evans, Peter Morrissey, Joanne Pegrum, Richard Priestley, Peter Rooley, Peter Stribling and Ron Lowe have assisted with a variety of tasks, including dismantling From the Hazeley Brick Earth exhibition of agricultural history, moving taxidermy specimens for the installation and de-installation of Worlds Under Glass exhibition, preparation of the gallery for the Eastern Region Textile Forum (ERTF) Collections Re-Crafted Exhibition and taking a delivery of archaeological archives at the Shirehill store.

Jane and David Laing have worked on the Evelyn Coleman diaries, checking for locally-relevant entries and summarizing the contents of each diary.



Peter and Richard moving a case of South American birds

Learning and Outreach Volunteers

Jane Evans has been busy in the education store and, alongside Jane Laing and Jeanette Fulcher, has helped with the children's creative crafter activities

Natural Sciences Volunteers

Heather Douglas has been updating records in Modes Complete, the Museum's computer based records system for items in the collections. Julia Wentworth assisted with documentation, care of the stick insects and identification of specimens. Verges volunteers Peter Hanson, Tony Morton, Ken Rivett Mike, Rowley, Margaret Rufus and Heather and Paul Salvidge completed ecological surveys at 23 special roadside verges sites.

Welcome Desk Volunteers

The Welcome Desk volunteers are the 'Face of the Museum' they provide a friendly welcome for visitors; sell tickets and merchandise; provide information about the museum and direct enquiries to members of staff. They also assist at evening functions and events, special thanks to June Baker for dressing the part at our 'Museums at Night' event in October.



Wishing new Welcome Desk volunteer Carol (left) a very warm and grateful welcome; thanks to June for providing excellent on-the-job training!

Warm Welcome

We extend a warm welcome to our new volunteer: Carol, who has been undertaking her induction and will soon be fully operational in her Welcome Desk Role.

Fond Farewell

We were deeply saddened at the loss of our valued volunteer and friend, Lynne Howell, and extend our sincere sympathy to her family. She will be missed



In Loving memory of Lynne Howell

We also said a fond farewell to Mary Knight who has retired after over 40 years of voluntary service and Cath Stukey, who has moved to Hampshire, we wish them both well in the next chapter of their lives.



Volunteering Opportunities

Our Welcome Desk is run entirely by dedicated volunteers. They provide a friendly welcome for visitors, sell tickets and merchandise, provide information about the museum, and direct enquiries to members of staff. They usually volunteer for a 2.5 hour shift, every day except Monday and Saturday. We are currently looking for new Welcome Desk volunteers – if you are interested, please contact the Museum on 01799 510333 or email museum@uttlesford.gov.uk

Museum Society News

Membership

There is a special offer for new members. Anyone joining the Society now will have sixteen months membership for the price of twelve. The subscription will last until 31 March 2020. Tell your friends!

Charlotte has slaved over a hot computer to design a very smart publicity leaflet for us. Thank you Charlotte. This has resulted in a trial scheme making deliveries to some areas of the town and I am very grateful to the members and volunteers who helped. We are considering extending the scheme in the New Year and would like an increase in our small team. If you are willing to spare a little time and shoe leather, please get in touch. My contact details are - telephone 01799 527546 or email: s.christinesharpe@hotmail.co.uk

Reports on Talks and Events

Worlds Under Glass - Adventures in Taxidermy

Talk by Charlotte Pratt, SW Museum staff member

10th September 2018

The word 'taxidermy', Charlotte told us, is derived from 'taxis', to arrange and 'dermy' skin. Objects preserved in this way for a variety of reasons would form part of those things exhibited in C16th and C17th in 'wunderkammers', collections of curiosities built up by rich gentlemen in Italy – Calzolari in Verona for instance – and others in different parts of Europe.

The longest surviving example of a crocodile dates to earlier than 1534 when it was recorded as being put back into a church in Lombardy, where it still is. The longest surviving mammal is King Gustavus Adolphus's horse which was shot in battle in 1632. Collected by the enemy it was preserved by them and put on exhibition. The longest surviving bird is a parrot; owned by the Duchess of Richmond. The duchess died in 1702 but the parrot survived her for a while and is still in Westminster Abbey.

Taxidermy was used by scientists such as Carl Linnaeus for study purposes as this was then the best way of being able to work on classification of animals, birds and reptiles. Moving into the C18th the method of preserving the skins involved the use of arsenic and soap, sometimes made up into a spray. This killed off bugs but was 'tricky' to work with. Around 1780 "stuffing" became more widespread and from the 1800's there was an upsurge in the general interest in natural history which led to the development of 'museums', e.g. Bullock's Museum in Picadilly housing a varied collection with some exhibits being taxidermy objects. Stuffed objects also became popular as domestic decorations displayed under glass domes.

In the 1800's the early techniques were pretty crude and the finished animal or bird worked on by "the Stuffies" would not necessarily be truly lifelike. Walter Potter (1835 – 1918) developed a taste for making grotesque and/or humorous presentations, singly or in groups, sometimes illustrating a story. One was 'The Death of Poor Cock Robin' showing at least 100 birds in the appropriate dress as mentioned in the poem. The popularity of taxidermy led to shops being opened where you could buy them, Dayrolle's in Paris was perhaps the most famous, the Roland Ward's in London and in Shrewsbury Henry Shaw's.

In 1834 our museum was given an elephant skin and handed over to the, then voluntary, curator Mr Joseph Clarke. He arranged for it to be mounted on an iron frame and stuffed with straw. It was ready for exhibition in the Great Hall in 1837. How else would most of the folk of Saffron Walden ever get to see an elephant? A copy of the bill for these services survives.

In 1896 Percy Powell-Cotton opened his museum displaying dioramas of animals and birds from many other parts of the world. He had built up his collection on his travels as an explorer and had, therefore, had to shoot the creatures that became his exhibits. Other well-known collections or museums were The Horniman in London, Sir Walter Rothschild's in Tring (now part of The Natural History Museum) and Sir Vauncey Harpur Crewe's collection at Calke Abbey which comprises several thousand cases, used largely as domestic decoration.

In the later part of the C19th, however, attitudes towards taxidermy began to change; as photography had arrived and you could now take pictures of wildlife and domestic creatures. In 1872 The Wild Birds Protection Act was passed and in 1889 what became the RSPB was formed. Then people began to become more serious about the accuracy of the finished creation, and sculptor Carl Akeley who was born in New York started taxidermy as we know it today. He did kill some animals but he said that the death of a gorilla made him 'feel like a murderer' so he persuaded the Belgian king to establish the first National Park in Africa and in 1912 Charles Rothschild brought about the Promotion of Nature Reserves. Photography improved and Box Brownie cameras were widely available in this country and not expensive. Homes were decorated with photographs not glass cases of birds and animals. Museums, too, became less keen to add taxidermy items to their collections and some altered their policies, including ours, deciding to dispose of some of the more exotic items: our elephant went to Bath.

Looking back on the legacy of earlier taxidermy it now appears awful that so much wildlife was killed, often just for display rather than learning but we have learned about the need for conservation. It was of use to science in the absence of other methods and some of the exhibits did inspire interest and wonder in the Natural World.

Nowadays, taxidermists source their material from natural deaths, including suitable road kill and there has been a revival of interest in taxidermy in the C20th and even competitions and championships.

Charlotte then demonstrated stuffing and mounting a rabbit skin sourced from road kill. It was absolutely fascinating to watch, and while she was working examples were passed round that Charlotte had brought of some of the materials that taxidermists work with and some other finished objects. All very helpful.

In the U.K. you do not need a licence to work on something so long as it is not protected in any way. There is now a Guild of Taxidermists and one of the best is Derek Frampton: he contributed to the recent temporary exhibition, "Worlds Under Glass" which Charlotte curated.

Heather Salvidge.

'The Queen of Chardonnay' - exciting archaeology at Great Chesterford.

Speaker: Jacqui Hutton from Network Archaeology

8th October 2018

Jacqui Hutton is the lead archaeologist for the excavation and interpretation of the site and finds uncovered on the hillside overlooking the new crematorium at Great Chesterford. The site is now closed but the interpretation continues. Her talk was well illustrated by photographs and plans of the areas excavated.

Area 1 was dated to the Bronze Age, much ploughed out with remnants of furrows. There were no patterns in the soil to indicate housing but there were lines of post holes that could have represented fencing of some kind or another temporary structure. The chalk surface was white but the post holes showed up as brown. There were also pits, showing as grey, degraded chalk and containing a little charcoal, a possible indicator of temporary habitation.

Area 2 was quite steep, showing a single entrance ring ditch with intercutting Iron Age pits, similar to those at Flag Fen. Debitage from flint working was found and some sherds of Iron Age pottery. Area 3 was another ring ditch, like Area 2, heavily ploughed out. The ditch was deeper at one side and at the back a single, large pit, 4 metres wide and 1 metre deep, also dated to the Iron Age by the pottery in it and a few iron rings. There was also a pot containing the cremated remains, bone and ash, of a juvenile child. The soil was not local, indicating cremation elsewhere but Great Chesterford as the chosen burial site. There were post holes, some of which followed the line of the ditch. They were quite deep, cutting down into the chalk bedrock. The stones in another pit also proved to come from elsewhere, so possibly used as pot boilers. A decorated hammer stone was found here,

The excavation of Area 4 uncovered a horseshoe-shaped ditch that had no internal features. Beyond it, though were a collection of burials! It was late on a Friday afternoon and Jacqui was in the middle of showing a local group around the area excavated so far while her deputy, Kieran, was just starting to finish off at the top. But he came dashing down and said quietly to Jacqui 'I've just found a skull!'. 'O.K.' said Jacqui and shooed him back up. He came down again. 'I've got a bead!' Jacqui continued, as calmly as possible. Then Kieran again 'I've got gold!!' This put enormous pressure on the excavators. It was Friday, there could be no further excavations until Monday and another group was scheduled to visit at 7:00.p.m. Kieran continued as rapidly as possible without compromising standards to complete the excavation so that it could be removed to safe surroundings that evening. Meanwhile Jacqui took us to Area 5 which was on the S.E. slope of a very high point overlooking the Cam valley, where there were more pits containing burnt charcoal and river pebbles used, probably, as pot boilers. Once again, such finds as these indicated temporary use of the site rather than as somewhere for permanent settlement. This area overlooked the site of the Roman temple below – itself built on an Iron Age site – and it was here some sherds of Roman glass and Samian ware turned up, more evidence for visits, as against permanent use.

Getting back to the burials, the one that Kieran was excavating proved to be that of a young woman, interred with substantial high status grave goods: remains of a bucket made of yew still with a little leather attached, a ball and socket at the end of a chain, a glass bottle, 9 green glass beads, some silver and a gold and garnet ring were some of the objects that came to light. These finds, some of which were of national importance, together with her skeleton dated the grave to C6th or C7th. No wonder the team dubbed her "Princess Chardonnay".

The second grave was also of a woman, buried with a figure of eight chain, a set of two keys and some iron pins and nails, all that remained of other objects. In grave three, the skeleton was laid out with the left arm detached and positioned askew across the skeleton which was fully articulated. Possibly the remains of a bodyguard?. The

skeleton in grave four was badly degraded but contained the remains of a small copper alloy bucket with a little leather and fabric attached. Again, dated to C6th or C7th. Grave five was that of a juvenile of 3 to 4 years who was buried with some offerings of oats and sunflower. There was a buckle and some iron studs around the body as if part of a belt. Grave six was not contemporary with these others, being dated to the Iron Age and containing a jumble of human bones.

Some of the post-excavation work has already yielded results but there is much more to be done. Jacqui is booked to return to Saffron Walden in the spring to talk to the Saffron Walden History Society so you will have another opportunity to catch up with "The Queen of Chardonnay".

Heather .Salvidge.

Distribution List

If you have an email address and would like the Society to communicate with you by email, please send an email to SaffronWaldenMS@gmail.com and we will add you to the distribution list. This would not only assist our administration greatly but also helps us in containing costs particularly of postage.

We assure members that their details will not be made available to any other organisation, Many thanks for your understanding and co-operation.

Who to contact . . .

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