



# Members' News

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Issue 8

## A fitting tribute to a great Museum volunteer

More than 40 people gathered to celebrate the opening of the Stewart Tilley Research Area at the Museum this February. The culmination of three year's work, this new Museum space was formally opened by the Lord Mayor of Canterbury, Councillor Jean Butcher, who in time honoured fashion cut the ribbon, with the Lady Mayoress, Di Baldock, also in attendance.



*The Lord Mayor, Cllr. Jean Butcher cuts the opening ribbon for the new Research Area, with Museum Chair Angela Boddy joining in the celebration*

The new research area celebrates the life of Stuart Tilly, a volunteer who made a huge contribution to research at the Museum. He lived in Whitstable all his life, and his explorations into Whitstable's past led him to complete a degree in local history. He then brought these insights to inspire the exhibitions group at the Museum. As membership secretary of the Friends of Whitstable Museum he criss-crossed the town on his bicycle to deliver newsletters. At the opening Stewart's wife Val was in attendance.



*The commemorative plaque and a photo of Stewart Tilley*

Chair of Trustees Angela Boddy welcomed the Lord and Lady Mayoress to the Museum. *"Stuart would have been pleased but slightly abashed at this dedication to him. We are very pleased that his wife Val is with us tonight and we know that he is missed by all that knew him"*.

After formally opening the Research Area in Stewart's memory, the Lord



*Lady Mayoress Di Baldock looks at the Tythe map of Whitstable created by Stewart Tilley as part of his degree course*



the dedication of local volunteers at the Museum, without whom none of this would happen.

Trustee Peter Banbury then spoke about the library of local history that Stewart Tilley had amassed, which remains an excellent resource for individuals and families to use.

In the Research Area is the Museum's Douglas West Collection, which contains at least 1,000 photographs of Whitstable life. Peter said that a wealth of further information not on display was also available on request to the Museum. Peter welcomed three Goldfinch Trust Trustees representing the Whitstable Trust which has been so supportive of the Museum.



Also present were the Museum's very busy oil painting conservator, Polly Saltmarsh and work experience students who are studying "*Significant Women in*



*History*". Guests then made their way to the back of the Museum, via Polly Saltmarsh's newly conserved oil paintings towards a welcome glass of wine and some nibbles, hosted by Maggie Banbury.

## Two new displays for Museum's compact exhibition space

### Whitstable's First World War

Museum member Alan Nutten, with a local group of specialists, has been researching evidence of Whitstable's involvement in WW1. 110 years have passed since the start of WW1 which makes the task difficult and passed-down memories need to be checked carefully.

Nevertheless, a substantial body of information has been amassed, sifted and written up. A range of WW1 topics will be covered in the museum's compact display area and three research books will provide the wide range of knowledge discovered.

### Sheringham Whelk Families and their *ganseys*

Derrick West of Whitstable's famous whelk fishing family would relate how the Cox, Taylor, Green, Abel, Johnson, Martin and West families migrated from Sheringham to Whitstable from 1901.

The men sailed their 16-foot boats down the North Sea bringing their household goods with them. The families came later by train.

The relationship with the native oyster dredgers was 'interesting', as the long shanks of whelk pots got in the way of oyster dredging.

On the other hand, whelks prey on oysters, so there were benefits in their removal.

A *gansey* is a tightly knitted traditional fisherman's jumper. Sheringham Museum has researched the gansey, recording the patterns of stitches that apparently could be used to identify a dead fisherman if washed up on the shore.

In May, we will host a display of the Sheringham ganseys and the whelk families that came to Whitstable.



*A whelk fisherman with a traditional gansey jumper.*

## Inspiring children

**There is always plenty of fun in the museum, but with a learning twist!**

The latest challenge is to identify the material that a museum object is made from, given three clues. This is a more difficult challenge for youngsters of 10 and up.

### Materials in the Museum

Match the materials in the pictures to the descriptions



#### 1) What Am I?

- Millions of years ago I was a living plant.
- After dying I was buried and turned into rock.
- I burn slowly and give out lots of heat.

#### 2) What Am I?

- I am a shiny gold coloured metal.
- A magnet does not stick to me.
- The third person in a race gets my medal.



#### 3) What Am I?

- I was once a tall plant.
- When I am thin, I am bendy but strong.
- Ships and boats used to be made from me.

#### 4) What Am I?

- When alive, I kept animal's insides inside.
- I am flexible but really tough.
- Clothing made from me holds trousers up!



#### 5) What Am I?

- I was once sand on a beach.
- Extreme heat turned me into this hard, brittle and sometimes clear material.
- I can make a hygienic container for drink.

There have never been so many children crowded round the oil paintings! Three new "Spot & Dot" observation games from easy to difficult draw attention to the newly cleaned art work.

March will see the "Spring Game" which asks children to explore the different meanings of the word.

April is of course the Easter "Bunny Hunt" that is so popular with the youngest children, with the first 200 receiving a (small) chocolate on completion.

### Cushing Quest

The Exhibitions Team is now hard at work on the major Peter Cushing exhibition to be launched this summer. If you have any information or items which might contribute to the exhibition, please contact [stevekeeler@whitstblemuseum.org](mailto:stevekeeler@whitstblemuseum.org)

## Putting the public first

New guidelines for volunteers working 'front of house' are helping everyone to give the best possible experience to our visitors. By sharing 'what works' the guidelines should ensure that everyone can benefit and at the same time reflect the high standards our Arts Council accreditation expects.

The guidelines are largely common sense, explaining for example, how important it is to welcome visitors with one volunteer being ready to guide people to the reception and greeting children individually. Often children can be offered a 'Spot and Dot' card, giving them an immediate interest in going round the Museum. It is all commonsense but for the first time the Museum now has something on paper which all volunteers can refer to.

## Right place, right time

**Whitstable Museum has developed a placement programme with the University of Kent to allow history and classics students to work one day a week in the Museum on agreed projects. Georgie Evans is now in the role and is already contributing significantly to Museum presentations.**

Georgie is a classics student who has chosen a Museums Studies module at Kent which covers everything from the start of museums as 'cabinets of curiosities' created by the wealthy and well-travelled, to how 'decolonisation' impacts on museums. She is currently researching women of Whitstable and the hidden histories they were part of, for example suffragettes in Whitstable and Sarah Browning who ran the town's highly successful diving industry whilst the male owners were caught up in the Crimean War.

Georgie is creating an Object of the Month programme for the Museum and has just completed an International Women's Day display with

Museum Intern Lillie Cripps. Her experiences of Whitstable Museum will feed back directly into her course work and the Museum benefits too.

Georgie is with the Museum for around 10 weeks



*Georgie Evans and the International Women's Day display she helped create with Lillie Cripps. In the foreground are examples of Copperas which local women were paid to collect from the Whitstable seashore. Copperas was used in the tanning industry and known to us as iron pyrites.*