



WAREHAM TOWN COUNCIL REPORT

Meeting Date: 29 April 2025

Agenda Item: 17

Subject:	Report of the Museum Co-ordinator
Prepared by:	Katie Seal, Museum Co-ordinator
Purpose of Report:	To provide an update on issues arising and confirmation of Museum Co-ordinator's actions.
Background:	<p>Wareham Town Museum provides historical and cultural opportunities for residents and visitors of Wareham. These services are provided through the running of the museum's exhibitions during the museum's open season as well as a range of community outreach activities, such as museum events, talks and workshops.</p> <p>The Report of the Museum Co-ordinator is a standing report to Council to inform members of the work undertaken by the Museum co-ordinator and volunteers and ongoing development work of the museum as a service.</p>
Key Points:	<p>Museum Reopening</p> <p>The museum reopened successfully for the season and welcomed a steady stream of visitors over the Easter half-term. The museum shop also performed well, with particularly strong sales of ammonites and the popular Wareham Rediscovered book, both of which have now been reordered. Our new range of onyx statues has also proven popular.</p> <p>Ahead of reopening, we held two volunteer training sessions, which generated valuable feedback. Several improvements were implemented in response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Cordite/WW2 displays were swapped with the gallery wall. The wall was repainted white, and the Cordite posters now sit more cohesively in the space, making the area look neater and more curated. The Cordite TV was also repositioned lower for accessibility, addressing previous concerns.• The visitor book has been relocated near the new gallery wall and now receives more attention from guests.• A new, more ergonomic chair was provided behind the front counter, giving volunteers better visibility and comfort.• Clearer, more professional signage was added throughout the museum to enhance visual appeal and aid visitor navigation.• A new daybook and up-to-date guidebook have been presented and reside on the counter. I also conducted one-to-one sessions to ensure they felt confident operating the till and settled in their roles.

- Feedback from volunteers has been overwhelmingly positive. They have expressed that they feel supported and valued, and many appreciated seeing their suggestions actioned.

Archaeology Day

Our recent Archaeology Day was a great success, attracting a steady flow of visitors throughout the day. The event included interactive displays, hands-on activities, and even VR experiences, all focused on the Arne Moor excavations. It was particularly heartening to see enthusiastic participation from families and younger audiences, reinforcing the museum's value as an inclusive and educational community space.

Although organised by Wessex Archaeology, Kier, and the Environment Agency, the team felt very supported by the museum throughout. They encouraged attendees to visit us following the event and even offered to display our museum donation box.

Recent Donations

We've recently seen increased interest in artefact donations. Notable recent additions include:

- A collection of Roman pottery donated by a local resident, originating from a 1960s excavation in Wareham. The pieces include black burnished ware and greyware, with some fragments carefully reassembled by the donor's family as children.
- Two framed comic illustrations of fishermen on the River Frome, donated by the president of the Wareham Angling Society. These are strong candidates for display in the new museum shop area.
- A baseball from a Japanese prisoner of war camp and a bronze nail collected from the beach, donated by a visitor. The latter is currently being reviewed by Professor Dave Parham (BU) for provenance.
- A small archive of articles relating to T.E. Lawrence, suitable for use in school education sessions.

T.E. Lawrence Commemorations – 16th & 17th May

The upcoming T.E. Lawrence commemorative event experienced some initial disruption, as the 17th of May programme was previously cancelled by my predecessor due to a speaker dropping out. Unfortunately, this had already been publicised, leading to some disappointment.

Thanks to support from the Town Council and Neill Child, who brought the event's significance to our attention, the day has now been reinstated with a revised programme and some new speakers from Clouds Hill. We are currently finalising a rotating display of

	<p>photographs from the museum's collection to run before the first lecture at 1pm. I've also liaised with Hilary Goodinge, who is happy for us to promote St Martin's Church events happening earlier in the day. Joint promotion has been shared via social media.</p> <p>V.E. Day Event – Thursday 8th May</p> <p>Together with Katy Babbs, I'm organising a small, family-friendly V.E. Day event from 3pm to 5pm on Thursday 8th May. The aim is to educate children and commemorate the sacrifices made during WWII — a sentiment echoed by older community members who feel these contributions are increasingly overlooked. Planned activities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wartime music in the Corn Exchange (e.g., We'll Meet Again, White Cliffs of Dover). • "Make Your Own Bunting" station. • Ration Book Trail around the museum (week-long). • Victory Garden seed giveaway. • Themed photo booth with props. • A "Memory Wall" – a tree for visitors to hang luggage tags with personal messages or memories. <p>Archiving Project</p> <p>Starting the archiving process is a critical step in preparation for our move to the new museum premises. This work will begin once our MODES licence has been approved and purchased. Encouragingly, several volunteers have expressed strong interest in helping with this project, which will provide an opportunity for deeper engagement and inclusion.</p> <p>Display Review and Corrections</p> <p>It has come to light that several informational panels and displays in the museum contain factual inaccuracies. These issues were initially flagged by a pottery specialist from Wessex Archaeology during Archaeology Day. Further inaccuracies have been noted in the Great Fire of Wareham display, archaeological cabinet, and potentially the dinosaur wall, among others.</p> <p>As education is central to our mission, I am in the process of reviewing all displays and coordinating with academic contacts, including specialists in glass, metals, flint, and maritime history from Bournemouth University, to ensure content accuracy moving forward.</p> <p>Museum Newsletter</p> <p>A new monthly museum newsletter has been launched to keep volunteers and the public informed and engaged. It includes a fun historical fact of the month, a round-up of local events, and a</p>
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	<p>crossword. It also serves as a helpful communication tool for volunteers who are not always easy to reach via other channels.</p> <p>Coasts in Mind Project</p> <p>We have established a valuable connection with the team from MOLA, who are leading the Coasts in Mind project focused on environmental change around Poole Harbour over the last 100 years. They visited the museum to view our photograph collection and will return with volunteers to scan and catalogue relevant images (with full credit and consent). They've kindly offered to provide us with digital copies, which will significantly support our own archiving efforts.</p> <p>Oral History Project: Our Identity – Past, Present and Future</p> <p>The agreement form has been signed and submitted to Dorset Council. We're now awaiting confirmation and release of the grant so we can begin purchasing equipment. We already have several interview candidates identified, and some volunteers have expressed a strong interest in assisting with this important project.</p>
Implications:	<p>The museum is a significant public service to the town and the reporting of its activities for Council allows members to contribute more fully to shaping its future development.</p> <p>The strategic documents drafted by the Museum Co-ordinator are key enablers to future developments for the museum.</p> <p>Elements of the Museum's services are supported by the successful application of grants and their reporting is brought for information and report.</p>
Recommendation:	To note the report of the Museum Co-ordinator for information.