



Wareham Town Council – REPORT

Meeting Date: October 2025

Agenda Item: 15

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:	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. 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.
Key Points:	Volunteers Our volunteers have been especially positive lately and are clearly enjoying the season. To thank them for their hard work and commitment, we are organising a celebratory get-together in the first week of November. I am co-organising this event with Katy Babbs. It will include light refreshments, party games, and an award for Volunteer of the Year. Events and Engagement The session at the Dementia Café (Wareham Rugby Club, Monday 22nd) went very well. The focus was Wareham through the 1940s–1960s, reflecting on how the town has changed and exploring its role during the Second World War. The talk was very well received, with attendees finding it both enjoyable and meaningful. I have been invited back to give another talk in the New Year. We also welcomed a group from the Red House Museum and Gardens (Christchurch) on the 22nd. Fourteen visitors attended and thoroughly enjoyed their visit, particularly the Lawrence of Arabia displays. They were very complimentary about the new museum and our current projects and kindly left a donation at the end of their tour. Another object-handling session is planned at the library for Friday 31st October. Following the success of the summer session, this one will include a “spooky twist” in honour of Halloween, with sweets for attendees. In partnership with Katy Babbs, we have organised a Pumpkin Trail around the town, running from Saturday 25th to Friday 31st October. Children can collect a trail sheet from the museum and search for ten pumpkins hidden in shop windows. Each pumpkin features an

interesting fact about Wareham, combining fun with local learning. On completing the trail, participants will return to the museum to collect a Halloween-themed goodie bag. The first 30 children will receive 'goodie' bags, sweets will also be available for those completing after the first 30. The event has been warmly received by local businesses.

Planning is also underway for the Winter Lecture Series 2026, originally started by Paul last year. The series will run January–March, with weekly Wednesday afternoon talks featuring speakers on archaeology, local and social history, palaeontology, and related subjects.

Partnerships and Loans

Unfortunately, the planned event with Coasts in Mind had to be cancelled due to limited eligible participants. However, I have been in contact with both Hazel and Oliver from the organisation, and we are exploring ideas for future collaboration.

We have begun receiving long-term loan items from the T. E. Lawrence Society, which will be joining our collection shortly. Additionally, we have been contacted by a lady who wishes to bequeath a Mecca Dagger to the museum in her will. The dagger is believed to have belonged to T. E. Lawrence, who gave it to her grandfather, T. R. G. Bennett, a close friend and colleague during Lawrence's time in Cairo.

Shop and Museum Maintenance

The shop continues to perform well, with increased book sales this month. We have also introduced obsidian arrowheads — hand-carved replicas of Bronze and Iron Age flint examples — which have been popular and received very positive feedback.

We are approaching the end of the summer season, with our final day on Friday 31st October. From November to March, we will open on Thursdays and Fridays, 10am –2pm, as a trial to gauge winter visitor numbers and assess demand for the museum presence during these quieter months. Full reopening is planned for Easter 2026.

Our new temporary exhibition, "*Whispers & Wonders: Folklore from Wareham and Beyond*," has been well received. It explores local ghost stories and Dorset folklore, timed perfectly for the Halloween season. The display will next be replaced with "*A Victorian Christmas in Wareham*," another engaging seasonal theme designed to encourage repeat visits.

Archiving Project

Although there remains a considerable backlog of material to process, the focus is now on developing a clear, forward-looking strategy that reflects the museum's priorities and visitor needs. My aim is to work collaboratively with the team to create a sustainable,

	accessible archive for the future. The reduced winter opening schedule will provide valuable time to progress this work. Oral History Project — Our Identity: Past, Present and Future I have been in contact with Dorset Council regarding this project, and the associated grant funding is finally on its way. We will therefore be launching the project imminently.
Implications:	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. The strategic documents drafted by the Museum Co-ordinator are key enablers to future developments for the museum. Elements of the Museum's services are supported by the successful application of grants and their reporting is brought for information and report.
Recommendation:	To note the report of the Museum Co-ordinator for information.